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English as a Second Language and Children’s literature

An empirical study on Swedish elementary school teachers’ methods and attitudes towards the use of children’s literature in the English classroom

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Abstract

Previous research has shown multiple benefits and challenges with the incorporation of children’s literature in the English as a Second language (ESL) classroom. In addition, the use of children’s literature in the lower elementary English classroom is recommended by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Consequently, the current study explores how teachers in Swedish elementary school teach ESL through children’s literature. This empirical study involves English teachers from seven schools in a small municipality in Sweden. The data has been collected through an Internet survey. The study also connects the results to previous international research, comparing Swedish and international research. The results suggest that even though there are many benefits of using children’s literature in the ESL classroom, the respondents seldom use these authentic texts, due to limited time and a narrow supply of literature, among other factors. However, despite these challenges, all of the teachers claim to use children’s literature by reading aloud in the classroom. Based on the results, further research exploring pupils’ thoughts in contrast to teachers would be beneficial. In addition, the majority of the participants expressed that they wanted more information on how to use children’s literature. Therefore, additional research relating to beneficial methods of teaching English through children’s literature, especially in Sweden, is recommended.

Keywords: children’s literature, teacher attitudes, teaching methods, lower elementary school, Sweden
Table of contents:

1. INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1. AIM OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................. 1

2. BACKGROUND ............................................................................................................................... 2
   2.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS ........................................................................................................ 2
   2.2 METHODS OF INCORPORATING CHILDREN’S LITERATURE ............................................. 2
   2.3 BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING CHILDREN’S LITERATURE ............................................. 3
   2.4 TEACHER ATTITUDES ......................................................................................................... 4

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ................................................................................................. 5
   3.1 KRASHEN’S INPUT THEORY ............................................................................................... 5
   3.2 VYGOTSKY’S ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCAFFOLDING .................... 6
   3.3 SUMMARY ............................................................................................................................. 6

4. METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................................................... 6
   4.1 DESIGN ................................................................................................................................. 6
   4.2 PILOTING THE STUDY ......................................................................................................... 7
      4.2.1 Design of the pilot study .............................................................................................. 8
      4.2.2 Results of the pilot study ............................................................................................ 8
   4.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS ........................................................................................... 8
   4.4 ANALYSIS ............................................................................................................................. 9
   4.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ............................................................................................. 10
   4.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS ............................................................................................................. 10

5. RESULTS ........................................................................................................................................ 11
   5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ......................................................................................... 11
   5.2 TEACHING METHODS – HOW DO THE TEACHERS USE CHILDREN’S LITERATURE? ........ 11
   5.3 ATTITUDES – WHAT ARE THE TEACHERS’ OPINIONS ABOUT CHILDREN’S LITERATURE? 13
   5.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS ......................................................................................................... 14

6. DISCUSSION .................................................................................................................................. 15
   6.1 MAIN FINDINGS ................................................................................................................... 15
      6.1.1 Methods ....................................................................................................................... 15
      6.1.2 Attitudes ...................................................................................................................... 17
   6.2 LIMITATIONS ....................................................................................................................... 18

7. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................. 19
   7.1 FURTHER RESEARCH ........................................................................................................... 20

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................................................ 21

Appendix 1: Questions used in the survey ..................................................................................... 24

Appendix 2: Letter of consent ......................................................................................................... 26

List of figures
Figure 1: Number of participating teachers from each school ......................................................... 9
Figure 2: How often teachers use children’s literature in classrooms ............................................ 12

List of tables
Table 1: The grade(s) in which the participants are currently teaching .......................................... 9
Table 2: Methods for reading aloud ............................................................................................... 12
Table 3: How teachers choose children’s literature ..................................................................... 13
Table 4: Opinions about the use of children’s literature

Table 5: Content analysis through theoretical perspectives
1. Introduction

In the national curriculum for compulsory school in Sweden, the Swedish National Agency for Education, Skolverket, highlights the importance of language learning when they state that “language is the primary tool human beings use for thinking, communicating and learning” (2011b, p. 32). In addition, the English language is specifically identified as a prominent feature of the daily lives of Swedes. Therefore, the English language is emphasized as an important subject in Swedish education, since it can help in peoples’ work life and personal life on a daily basis.

Along with the national curriculum of 2011, the Swedish National Agency for Education also published a commentary material (Skolverket, 2011a) that explains the parts of the curriculum in more depth. In this commentary material for the English syllabus, additional importance is placed on knowing English, since English can be found in every aspect of Swedish society, ranging from politics and the economy, to music and entertainment (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 8). Therefore, it is essential to know English to be able to assimilate and communicate information.

In the English syllabus a core content can be found, which mentions areas that should be taught in the different compulsory school grades (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 3). The core content is divided between grades 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9, with a clear aim for steady progression throughout. For the lower elementary grades 1-3, the core content identifies key areas that can aid development in English, such as “subject areas that are familiar to the pupils”, “interests, people and places”, “clearly spoken English and texts through various media”, and “songs, rhymes, poems and sagas” (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 3). It can be argued that these areas could be supported through the incorporation of children’s literature. However, even though the syllabus never mentions tools or materials for teaching the core content, the commentary material indicates the value of literature: “literature and knowledge about history and living conditions in different societies and areas can give the pupils keys to knowing the language” (author’s own translation) (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 10). In addition, it is also stated that both fictional and non-fictional literature, with content adapted to the pupils’ age and knowledge, should be incorporated in the lower elementary English classroom.

Therefore, children’s literature is clearly intended to be used in the ESL classroom in the lower grades of the Swedish elementary school. And yet, through her student teaching periods the present author has not experienced the employment of children’s literature when teaching English; the present author has even met with some unwillingness from teachers to incorporate authentic texts. Therefore, the interest of the author is to examine teachers’ thoughts on this subject. The questions that are taken up in this teacher-focused study consequently aim to assess some key issues surrounding the practical implementation of these perspectives.

1.1. Aim of study and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine Swedish elementary teachers’ incorporation of and attitudes towards children’s literature in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. This thesis is an empirical study, based on data collected from seven schools in a Swedish municipality. To fulfill the aim, the following research questions were posed:

- How do teachers from sample schools in a Swedish municipality work with children’s literature in the ESL classroom?
- What are these teachers’ attitudes and/or beliefs towards incorporating children’s literature in the ESL classroom?
2. Background
This section will primarily present previous research on the incorporation of children’s literature into the ESL classroom along with a definition of terms used throughout the thesis.

2.1 Definition of terms
To clarify the research questions, and the terminology that will be used throughout this study, the following terms will be defined.

**Authentic text** – Authentic texts are written with a social purpose and are not intended for language learning (Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007, p. 17). With this definition, texts such as novels, recipes, handbooks, postcards and timetables are included.

**Children’s literature** – The broad term “children’s literature” has many meanings. This study focuses on literature with supplementing pictures. The following definition is used for the term children’s literature:

> The body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people. The genre encompasses a wide range of works, including acknowledged classics of world literature, picture books and easy-to-read stories written exclusively for children, and fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folk songs, and other primarily orally transmitted materials. (Fadiman, 2015)

**EFL** – EFL is an abbreviation of English as a Foreign Language. EFL is defined as a language that is taught to learners who need it for their studies and/or careers (EFL, 2015). However, the language that is taught is not spoken in the country of residence and the learners rarely get exposed to it outside of the classroom.

**ESL** – ESL is an abbreviation of English as a Second Language. Moreover, “a Second Language is a language taught to people whose first language is another, but who need the Second Language in their everyday life. The learners have daily contact with the target language” (ESL, 2015). In Sweden, citizens have daily contact with English mostly through various media such as TV, radio and the Internet. Therefore, based on the definition above, and for the purposes of this thesis, English is considered a Second Language in Sweden.

**Grades F-3** – In the Swedish school system, children start first grade the fall of the year they turn seven years old; second grade the fall of the year they turn eight; and lower elementary school ends in third grade, during the spring term of the year the children turn ten. Starting from the fall of the year the child turns seven, school attendance is compulsory (Skollagen 2010: 800, 7 Ch. 10 §). Preschool class, in Sweden is called *Förskoleklass* and is usually abbreviated to *F-klass*, though this year is optional (August-June) (Skollagen 2010: 800, 9 Ch. 3 §); it starts the year the child turns six (Skollagen 2010: 800, 9 Ch. 5 §).

2.2 Methods of incorporating children’s literature
A study conducted by Biemiller and Boote (2006) includes a total of 112 pupils attending kindergarten to second-grade in Toronto; half of the 112 pupils were reported to have English as a second language. The study aimed to show vocabulary benefits tied to the incorporation of children’s literature. The results of the study showed significant vocabulary gains when the teacher explained word meanings, and revealed noticeable benefits from rereading a book multiple times. The books in Biemiller and Boote’s (2006) study were either read aloud two or
four times and both pre- and posttests were conducted to assess the pupils’ vocabulary gains. The participating kindergartners scored 6% higher on the posttest when a book was read four times than if it was read two times. In addition, the first graders also presented gains when they scored 7% higher. However, the second graders scored 5% lower on the posttest if a book was read four times (Biemiller & Boote, 2006, p. 49), suggesting that older pupils require less repetition to acquire vocabulary. Therefore, the study concludes that repeated reading is mostly beneficial in preschool and kindergarten.

Lundberg’s (2007) licentiate dissertation focuses on developing and changing English education in the lower elementary grades in Sweden. Teacher participants in her study split their time between theory and practice 50-50 during a 20 week period. Lundberg (2007, p. 96) agrees that repeated reading is beneficial in early education and highlights that the same book should be read multiple times. Moreover, one of the participating teachers in Lundberg’s (2007) dissertation explains: “we reread the books multiple times, the children fill in, imitate and read after me. Repetition is important for language learning” (Lundberg, 2007, p. 97). In addition, many teachers in Lundberg’s (2007) study used repetition and noticed that it encouraged both “desire and commitment to learn along with joy” (Lundberg, 2007, p. 94).

Greene-Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) also recommend repeated reading and in their study, involving 117 first graders and 129 third graders, two storybooks were reread three times. The study does not include ESL learners, but since it focuses on how different reading methods can affect children’s learning it was assessed to be relevant for this study. Like Biemiller and Boote’s (2006) study, pre- and posttests were conducted to assess which method promoted the most vocabulary gains. The different reading styles assessed were (1) interactional reading, (2) performance reading and (3) just-reading. The interactional and performance reading styles used the same scripted questions. The performance reading began with a discussion of target words before reading and the book was then read aloud by the teacher, before finishing the exercise with the scripted questions and guided discussions. The interactional reading style used the same scripted questions as the performance based style, but used the questions along with discussions before, during and after the reading. The just-reading style involved reading aloud without comments or questions, and finished with the pupils silently writing or drawing (Greene-Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 468). Greene-Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002, p. 471) explain that even though all reading styles revealed vocabulary gains based on pre- and posttest scores, the interactional reading style showed the highest gains and the just-reading style the lowest.

Another way of working with children’s literature is by integrating it with other subjects (Lundberg, 2007, p. 103). Lundberg (2007, p. 103) mentions that a book can first be read in Swedish with the English version being read afterwards; this is a method that encourages “language guessing games” (author’s own translation). Moreover, it is stated that “cross-curricular work using English picture books can facilitate the achievement of the curriculum and syllabus goals” (author’s own translation) (Lundberg, 2007, p.104). One of the participating teachers in Lundberg’s (2007) study agrees and mentions that “cross-curricular work covers many aspects that support the pupils’ learning” (author’s own translation) (Lundberg, 2007, p. 104). Lundberg (2007) provides a practical example: when working with flowers and birds in natural science lessons, the English subject should work with the same areas teaching names and features of flowers and birds (Lundberg, 2007, p. 104).

2.3 Benefits of incorporating children’s literature
Incorporating children’s literature in the lower elementary ESL classroom has shown multiple benefits. One of the most agreed on benefits of the use of children’s literature is vocabulary
gains (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Norato Céron, 2014; Greene-Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002). Biemiller and Boote (2006, p. 46) emphasize that explaining words in stories is a more effective method than only reading stories. Furthermore, in Biemiller and Boote’s (2006) study, books were either read two or four times, with a total of 48 word meanings explained. The first time a book was read it was without interruptions and explanations, and therefore, when a book was read two times the pupils only received one word-explanation session, compared to three word-explanation sessions when a book was reread four times. The study started with a pretest of the chosen words, which showed that 25% of all the words were known. However, the posttest revealed a significant gain, where 42% of the words were known (Biemiller & Boote, 2006, p. 49). In addition, a 10% vocabulary gain was reported when words were instructed together with repeated reading (Biemiller & Boote, 2006, p. 49).

Greene-Brabham and Lynch-Brown’s (2002) study also showed significant vocabulary gains from reading aloud: “reading-aloud styles had [a] statistically significant effect on measures of vocabulary acquisition for both books” (p. 470). As mentioned, the interactional reading style produced a higher vocabulary gain than both the performance and the just-reading styles. However, the study of Greene-Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) reveals vocabulary gains tied to children’s literature when learning English as a first language only, unlike Biemiller and Boote (2006), which also includes English as a second language learners.

The results of a study conducted by Norato Céron (2014) also showed significant vocabulary gains tied to the use of children’s literature in the lower elementary EFL classroom. Even though Norato Céron’s (2014) study involves EFL learners, and not ESL learners as Swedish pupils are considered in this thesis, it has been assessed to be relevant since it involves English learners of the right age. In her study, 50% of the participating pupils learned and memorized new words (Norato Céron, 2014, p. 94). However, her study also revealed motivational benefits along with development of critical thinking. When asked if they liked being read to in English, 11 out of 15 pupils said they did, and 10 pupils stated that they paid more attention to the story when being read to (Norato Céron, 2014, p. 95). Moreover, the participants of the study also learned how to use pictures to predict future events of the story, which ultimately lead to knowledge of the different parts of a story, and which developed their critical thinking (Norato Céron, 2014, pp. 95-97).

2.4 Teacher attitudes

Lundberg’s (2007, p. 86) licentiate dissertation reveals that many teachers experience a shortage of time for lesson planning, and therefore they prioritize other areas above planning English lessons. One teacher mentions that “it is difficult to manage to plan multiple lessons so we usually use the workbook” (author’s own translation) (Lundberg, 2007 p. 86). Another teacher reveals that it is easier to do what has always been done, hence using the workbook, even though the workbook is considered to be both boring and old-fashioned. The study also indicated that teachers who feel insecure when using English felt a desire to incorporate the traditional text and workbooks with predetermined focus words and phrases (Lundberg, 2007, p. 11). However, after trying different work methods, many of the participating teachers experienced more motivated pupils and a more joyful learning environment. Consequently, one teacher states that “it has been difficult with all the extra planning but it was worth it seeing the pupils’ engagement” (Lundberg, 2007, p. 130).

Ultimately, even though most teachers in Lundberg’s (2007) study revealed that they do what has always been done, they also expressed a desire to have a variety of teaching materials. Four teachers experienced that a variety of lessons and teaching materials kept pupils motivated. In addition, a fifth teacher mentioned the power of interest among pupils when stating that “it is
easy for children to learn something connected to their interest. I have also noticed how difficult things can be if children’s interests are not sparked” (author’s own translation) (Lundberg, 2007, p. 124).

In another study of teacher attitudes, Hsiu-Chih (2008) interviewed ten ESL teachers in Taiwan, who in general had positive attitudes towards the use of children’s literature. One of the teachers states that the stories motivate pupils to learn English, since a good story always attracts children’s curiosity (Hsiu-Chih, 2008, p. 49). In the study, the participants reveal that they experience the traditional workbooks as dull, since they mostly contain rules and grammar. Moreover, the participants in the study identified pictures in books as one of the most important aspects for learning a language. Pictures can help children understand in which contexts new words can be used, and can aid comprehension if the language is not fully understood. However, it is pointed out that children might interpret pictures differently, creating variations in comprehension (Hsiu-Chih, 2008, p. 52). Therefore, the teachers play a crucial role.

3. Theoretical Perspectives
This section will explain the theoretical perspectives used for this study.

3.1 Krashen’s input theory
Krashen’s (1982) input hypothesis maintains that learning occurs when what is learnt, the input, is one level above the current knowledge level of the learner. Krashen (1982) refers to the current knowledge level as (i) and the level where learning occurs (i+1). The input hypothesis claims that “a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to move from stage i to stage i + 1 is that the acquirer understand input that contains (i + 1), where "understand" means that the acquirer is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message”(Krashen, 1982, p. 21). In other words, we only acquire further language that is just above or beyond our current knowledge.

Krashen (1982, p. 10) also distinguished between learning and acquiring a language, and states that children acquire while adults learn languages. Acquiring a language is equated with “picking up a language” and the feeling of a language sounding either right or wrong, often without consciously knowing the reasons why it feels right or wrong (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Language learning however, refers to the conscious and formal learning of language with a focus on grammar and rules.

To further explain the input hypothesis, Krashen (1982, p. 22) clarifies “caretaker-speech”, which refers to how children acquire language from their parents through various language modifications. Parents often make modifications to their use of language to aid comprehension when talking to young children. In addition, another characteristic of caretaker-speech is the choice of topics. Usually the topics of discussion are based on the immediate surroundings and objects that children can visualize and identify, which is referred to as the “here and now”-principle (Krashen, 1982, p. 23). The principals of caretaker-speech can be adapted for English language learners when language simplifications are made. When learning a new language, building a foundation of previous knowledge, common things, helps. Therefore, adapting the language together with the topic of what is learnt applies to school-aged children.

The characteristics of caretaker-speech offers language learners non-language based help through its modifications and incorporation of the “here and now”-principle. The aim of using caretaker-speech is to be understandable and therefore it incorporates resources to reach this aim. In addition, comprehension is made easier if the topics of discussion can be visualized, for instance if one is looking at a car, or a picture of one, while talking or reading about one.
3.2 Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding

Vygotsky (1978, p. 85) states that learning should correspond with the child’s developmental level and therefore at least two developmental levels have to be determined. One of these levels are the actual development which is described as “the level of development of a child's mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). It is stated that tests almost always reveal the actual development level. Another important level mentioned by Vygotsky (1978) is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which he refers to as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Described differently, it means that the Zone of Proximal Development is the gap between what children can do independently and what they can achieve with the help of more knowledgeable peers or adults.

Moreover, the term “scaffolding” is associated with Vygotsky’s (1978) thoughts and was first used by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976). Scaffolding builds on the idea of a more capable person, an adult or a peer, assisting a child so that they achieve a task they could not have accomplished without help. Scaffolding means that the adult or peer controls the parts of the task the child cannot master, yet letting the child complete the parts that he/she is competent in (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90).

By way of illustration, Pinter (2006, p. 11) provides an example of how scaffolding can occur when a young boy is trying to count. The boy is capable of counting to 15 or 16 without any mistakes but he gets confused and mixes the numbers up after that. If assisted by an adult or sibling the boy might be able to count up to 50, but unassisted he would not continue further than 16. Pinter (2006, p. 11) provides examples of scaffolding that could help the boy: the adult or the peer could say the correct number, show the correct number of fingers or provide the first sound of the number. All these techniques could help the boy in the Zone of Proximal Development through scaffolding.

3.3 Summary

The above-mentioned theories are relevant to this thesis because all of them can be used to help young language learners acquire language. Both Vygotsky (1978) and Wood et al. (1976) claim that children can learn further through assistance of a more capable peer or adult, an expert, than they could on their own. In addition, Krashen (1982) claims that learning only occurs if the input ($i+1$) is one level above the learner’s current knowledge level ($i$). In summary, all three theories can be included in English language learning: an ($i+1$) children’s book can be used in the classroom together with a teacher who is motivated to help and scaffold the pupils when facing difficulties.

4. Methodology

This section will explain the methods and materials used for gathering data in order to achieve the aim and answer the research questions. It also explains the ethical aspects taken into consideration in this study.

4.1 Design

This study aims to explore how teachers from eight elementary schools, in a small municipality in Sweden, work with children’s literature in the lower elementary ESL classroom. This study also aims to explore these teachers’ attitudes towards the incorporation of children’s literature in the ESL classroom, in these schools. To be able to reach all teachers meeting the selection
criteria (see section 4.3) in the municipality, the chosen method was an Internet-based survey; the service provided by Google Forms\(^1\) was used for this study.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 257) describe how surveys are especially useful when gathering information on attitudes and opinions. McKay (2006, pp. 35-36) agrees with Cohen et al. (2011) that surveys are useful when seeking more insight on opinions, but she cautions that participants might provide unreliable answers due to misinterpretation of the questions. However, to prevent misunderstandings, the survey questions in this study were provided in Swedish, a measure suggested by McKay (2006, p. 39).

In addition, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 276) explain that Internet surveys are inexpensive to administer and that many online templates also collate and present the results, features that save time. The authors further contend that:

> Though email surveys tend to attract greater response than web-based surveys, web-based surveys have the potential to reach greater numbers of participants, so web-based surveys are advisable; emails can be used as an addition, to contact participants to advise them to go to a particular website.  
> (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 276)

The survey in this study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. Larsen (2009, p. 22) defines quantitative data as hard data subject to measurement. The quantitative data is such that it can be measured and presented with numbers. Qualitative data (Larsen, 2009, p. 22), usually referred to as soft data, aims to gain deeper knowledge, hence it cannot generally be presented with numbers. To receive quantitative data some close-ended questions have been used; for these questions different answer alternatives were provided (Eliasson, 2013, p. 37). Eliasson (2013, p. 37) states that the answers are easy to sort, analyze and present in numbers. Moreover, Dörnyei (2010) mentions that “the major advantage of close-ended questions is that their coding and tabulation is straightforward and leaves no room for rater subjectivity” (Dörnyei, 2010, p. 35). Dörnyei (2010, p. 35) continues by stating that these questions are suitable for quantitative methods since they can be coded numerically. However, when including questions with answer alternatives attached, some answers preferred by the participants might not have been included. Therefore, open-ended questions have been included to receive further understanding of teachers’ methods when and attitudes to using children’s literature. Open-ended questions require the participants to fill in the answer on their own. McKay (2006, p. 37) mentions that open-ended questions are good when wanting detailed information and Dörnyei (2010, p. 47) adds that they are especially useful when not knowing the possible range or variety of the answers.

### 4.2 Piloting the study

McKay (2006, p. 41) states that “the value of a survey is increased by piloting the instrument, that is, giving the survey to a group of teachers or learners who are similar to the group that will be surveyed”. To test the survey a closed Facebook group, containing 1861 members, for English teachers in the Swedish grades F-3 was used. A brief description of the study was posted along with a link to the actual survey. Cohen et al. (2011, pp. 84-85) explain that a pilot study will uncover potential problems; Dörnyei (2010, p. 63) confirms their thoughts when

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\(^1\) Google Forms is a service provided by Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) where a user can create a survey and distribute it through email or other social media channels. To create a survey a personal account is needed, however to answer the survey an account is not needed.
explaining that a pilot study can reveal if the survey tests what it is constructed to do before the actual survey. In addition, it is pointed out that by piloting a study the quality of it highly increases (Dörnyei, 2010, p. 65).

4.2.1 Design of the pilot study
The pilot study survey contained the same questions used in Appendix 1. However, the pilot study contained two additional questions that were specifically tailored to evaluate the design and wording of questions. The following two additional questions were used in the pilot study:

- How many minutes did it take for you to answer the survey?
- Do you have any additional comments or advice to make the survey better?

4.2.2 Results of the pilot study
Four teachers participated in the pilot study and all of them mentioned that they understood all the questions. The pilot group also revealed that it took approximately eight minutes to complete the survey.

One of the participants mentioned that one of the questions should be rephrased: it originally said “How do you teach English? Describe a normal English lesson”. The participant pointed out that no lesson is the same and asked what a normal lesson is. Therefore, the question has been revised to “How do you teach English? Describe your latest English lesson: what did you do and what/which material did you use?”. The revised version refers to the latest English lesson in order to prompt a recent example.

For the question regarding the usage of children’s literature, additional information was also added to the question: “How do you use children’s literature in your English education?” with answer alternatives “Read aloud (you read aloud to the children) / Silent reading (the pupils read on their own) / I do not use children’s literature / Other: __”. One of the pilot teachers checked the box for “Other” without writing what was done. Therefore, the following sentence was added: “if you check the “other”-box, please write in box how you use children’s literature”. The above-mentioned revisions were the only changes made between the pilot and the actual survey.

4.3 Selection of participants
The focus group for the main study was teachers that currently, or within the last four years, have taught English in the lower elementary grades F-3. The reason for the selection of teachers of English within the last four years has been made to get an up-to-date result and to get more participants. However, since the previous teacher education (changed in 2011) in Sweden certified teachers to teach grades 1-7, it is possible that teachers currently teaching grades 4-6 also taught English in the lower elementary grades recently. Therefore, the choice to include both current teachers and teachers with experience within the past four years, teaching English in grades F-3, has been made. All the participating teachers have to:

1. Work at one of the eight elementary schools in the chosen municipality, and
2. Currently, or within the last four years, teach/have taught English in grades F-3, and
3. Work with children’s literature with their pupils.

First, an email informing all principals at the chosen schools was sent out asking for permission to carry out the survey and asking for email information to all lower elementary school teachers. Six principals at eight schools received the email, one provided email addresses for the teachers but the rest wanted to forward the survey link to their teachers themselves. Therefore, the total number of teachers who received the link is unknown.
As mentioned above, teachers at eight schools received an email, either from the researcher or from their principal, with a link to the survey. The link was active for 13 days and after seven days a reminder was sent out to the teachers. After being active for 13 days the link was deactivated, with 14 respondents from seven schools having completed the survey. Figure 1 below shows the teacher representatives from each school.

![Figure 1: Number of participating teachers from each school](image)

All of the 14 participants claim to be qualified teachers, but only six of them state that they are qualified to teach English. However, 13 of the teachers currently teach English (this year), while one taught English three years ago. Table 2 shows in which grade the participants currently teach English. Some of the teachers teach English in multiple grades, therefore the total is more than 14 when adding the numbers in the column “Number of teachers” together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently teaching English in:</th>
<th>Number of teachers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F-klass</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 4-6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Analysis
Mckay (2010, p. 57) writes that content analysis can begin once all the gathered data has been collected. She also states that computer programs can be helpful when analyzing. For this study, Google Forms was used and one of its features is that the program automatically sorts the answers as soon as the participant clicks “send”. The program either sorts the answers in a summary where tables and diagrams are presented, or the answers are presented in an Excel spreadsheet. Since some answers were easier to analyze and view in graph form and others in the form of a spreadsheet, both methods were used when analyzing the collected data. When using the Excel spreadsheet, the researcher color-coded the answers according to opinions, methods, school and the present teaching grade of the respondents.
The above-presented method for analysis was conducted in order to compare and link the responses together. In addition, the analyzed data was also compared and linked to the theoretical approaches of this thesis. Table 5 (p. 15) presents a brief summary of which parts of the data have been contrasted to which theory. Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 (pp. 16-19) will further discuss that aspect.

4.5 Reliability and validity

To ensure that the study is of high quality and has good credibility, the researcher has to consider the terms reliability and validity (Eliasson, 2013, p. 14; Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg & Wengström, 2013, pp. 103-105).

Reliability is equal to dependability, meaning that the study can be repeated with the same outcome and result. Eliasson (2013, p. 15) gives the example that a 2-kilo milk carton placed on a scale should always show 2-kilos on the scale. If the scale always shows that the carton weighs 2 kilos, then it has a high reliability. However, if the scale shows that the carton weighs 2 kilos once and 1 kilo the next time, then the reliability is low. Eliasson (2013, p. 16) states that the higher the reliability, the better the conditions are for high validity. Validity is about whether or not the study measured what it aimed to measure (Eriksson Barajas et al., 2013, p. 105; Eliasson, 2013, p. 16). Eliasson (2013, p. 16) explains that a scale is a good tool to measure weight, but, if you want to measure height, a measuring tape or a ruler is a better tool.

Cohen et al. (2011, p. 209) explain that questionnaires tend to be more reliable than for instance interviews. Their reasons for this assessment include a greater level of honesty from the participants, due to the anonymity of the questionnaire, and that it saves time, when compared with carrying out interviews, for example. However, the disadvantages can include low return percentage and misunderstandings. Another possible problem with the reliability of Internet surveys, in particular, is that the respondents might feel obliged to answer every question, even though they feel they are inappropriate (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289); however, this study includes options such as “do not know/ no opinion” in order to address this issue. Another measure to ensure reliability is to pilot the study (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 289) - see Section 4.2 Piloting the study.

4.6 Ethical aspects

The following guidelines from the Swedish Research Council (2011, p. 7-14) have been taken into consideration and followed in this study. The present author has made the following translations from Swedish to English.

Information – the participant(s) have to be informed about their role in the project along with the conditions for participation. The participant(s) should also be aware that their participation is optional and that they have the right to refrain at any time.

Consent – the researcher always has to get the consent of the participant(s). If the participant(s) are minors the consent of parents or legal guardians is needed.

Confidentiality – all information regarding participant(s) has to be stored in a safe way, so that no one outside of the project can access the information.

Usage – the gathered data cannot be used for anything other than further research in the same area.
A letter of consent (see Appendix 2) including information regarding the study was sent to all participants together with a link to the survey. The letter included information about the study and their participation. It was also clearly stated that the participants were free to discontinue their contribution. The participants were also informed that no names were to be published and that all the data from the survey will be destroyed. The letter of consent also stated that the participants agreed to the conditions of the study when clicking send in the survey.

5. Results
This section will present the results from the survey in both tables and text.

5.1 Background information
Out of the 14 participants, two claim not to have any experience teaching English in grades F-3. These teachers were therefore asked not to answer any further questions. In addition, two teachers claim to “never” use children’s literature in their English teaching. One teacher gave the explanation that the school has not prioritized English and therefore no age-appropriate literature is available for the lower elementary school grades.

5.2 Teaching methods – how do the teachers use children’s literature?
12 teachers were asked how frequently they use children’s literature in their classrooms. The answers were provided in a likert-scale ranging from “always”, “often”, “seldom” to “never”. In addition, the option of “no opinion/do not know” was provided. Figure 2 provides an overview of the teachers’ answers in regards to how often they use children’s literature.

![Figure 2: How often teachers use children’s literature in classrooms](image)

Since two teachers were not eligible to discuss children’s literature, ten teachers in total answered the questions relating to children’s literature. An additional question served to study how teachers use children’s literature. The question had two different close-ended answer options: “read aloud (you read to the pupils)”, “silent reading (the pupils read on their own)”; as well as an open-ended option, “other: ____”. If they chose “other”, the teachers were asked to explain what method they employ. In total, eight teachers answered that they read aloud to their pupils and two checked the “other” box. Out of the two qualitative answers, one teacher explained that they act out stories, while the other teacher’s explanation was related to pupils’ silent and independent reading. However, the teacher who explained that his/her pupils read independently currently teaches grade 6, but had experience teaching grades F-3. This teacher’s
response in having the pupils read silently is connected to sixth grade students. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers teaching grades F-3 say that they read aloud to their pupils. Table 2 explains which methods the teachers use while reading aloud.

Table 2: Methods for reading aloud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Do not know/no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I translate every word</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I translate chosen words</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read the entire book at once</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read the same book multiple times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My pupils and I discuss the pictures</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pupils get to ask questions when I read</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask questions when reading</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented above, only nine responses were provided for each question, this is because one teacher answered that his/her pupils read on their own when using children’s literature during their lessons. Therefore, that teacher did not answer the questions regarding methods when reading aloud. However, this teacher answered the rest of the questions. Since all teachers answered that they use children’s literature, to some extent in their classrooms, one of the questions aimed to assess how they choose the literature. Table 3 below presents how the teachers commonly choose the literature.

Table 3: How teachers choose children’s literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Do not know/no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I choose literature based on my pupils’ interests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I choose literature after advice from librarians</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I choose literature according to work areas in other subjects</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I choose literature with pictures that explain and supplement the text</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented above, choosing literature according to the pupils’ interests appear to be common since seven teachers state that they always or often base their literature chose according to it. However, using the help of librarians is not usual since only three participants claim that they often do it, while the rest, five, state that they seldom or never use librarians as help when choosing literature. One teacher mentioned that choosing literature according to work areas in other subjects always occurs, while four state that they always do that. In contrast, four teachers seldom or never choose literature according to work areas in other subjects. Finally, seven teachers mention that they always or often choose literature with pictures that explain and supplement the text.
In addition to the statements presented in the table, the open-ended question “other comments regarding your choice of literature” was answered by five of the teachers. Choosing literature according to difficulty level, generally as easy as possible, was a response provided by two of the teachers. However, two of the teachers also mentioned that the schools only have little or no children’s literature at all, which limits their choice. In this case these teachers used the Internet or occasionally a librarian to find children’s literature sources. In addition, one teacher answered that they always try to find books relating to work areas in other subjects. Finally, seven teachers also mention that they choose books with pictures that explain and supplement the text.

5.3 Attitudes – what are the teachers’ opinions about children’s literature?

To investigate the teachers’ attitudes towards children’s literature, statements with answers in a likert-scale ranging between “fully agree”, “partly agree”, “and do no agree “to” do not know” were used along with open-ended questions. Table 4 presents what the teachers think about the use of children’s literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fully agree</th>
<th>Partly agree</th>
<th>Do not agree</th>
<th>Do not know/ no opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable when reading aloud in English to my pupils</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable when talking in English to my pupils</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that it is easy to find literature to use</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that the supply of children’s literature in English is good</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable using children’s literature in my English lessons</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want more information about how to use children literature in my English teaching</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 6, most teachers feel comfortable both reading aloud in and speaking English in front of their pupils. However, most of them claim that it is difficult to find literature to use and that the supply of authentic texts is generally not good. Moreover, seven out of ten teachers make it clear that they want more information about how to incorporate children’s literature in their classroom.

The teachers were asked about the potential benefits they have noticed when using children’s literature. To sum up their answers, they can be divided into four categories:

- **Form**: One of the teachers mentions that when reading a book the language is not forced, rather it is natural, and it is provided in a context. Moreover, four of the teachers
mention the natural language as a benefit in comparison to the “forced language” used in the traditional textbooks.

- **Communication**: A more communicative classroom appears as one of the major benefits of using children’s literature in five of the teachers’ answers. Specifically, one teacher explained that “pictures contribute to discussion”.

- **Motivation and joy**: Another prominent benefit identified by the teachers is that the pupils get motivated and that they enjoy literature. A reason for that is provided by one teacher who explained that “the pupils can choose [literature] according to their interests”.

- **Vocabulary**: The teachers also mention the benefits relating to vocabulary gains associated with the use of children’s literature. One teacher stated that “children’s literature is a fun way of learning words and phrases”. In addition, the value of pictures when learning vocabulary is also mentioned, because, as two teachers confirmed, the pictures can help explain the words and the context they are used in.

In contrast to asking purely about benefits, the teachers were also asked about what potential challenges and difficulties they have met with when using children’s literature. The following bullet points sum up their thoughts:

- **Time consuming**: It takes a great deal of time to both plan and find relevant material when using authentic texts. Four teachers mention that “it is difficult to find time for it [incorporating children’s literature]”.

- **Limited supply of authentic texts**: The supply of children’s literature in English is limited and has to improve. The teachers say that the schools and the library have limited resources.

- **Low priority**: The municipality has not prioritized English, both in terms of in-service training for the teachers and in the provision of time for lesson planning. Therefore many teachers lack the inspiration to try new teaching methods like using children’s literature. One teacher adds that the low priority of the subject is reflected in the limited supply of texts.

- **Difficulty level**: It is difficult to find the right level of literature since all pupils are on different knowledge levels.

To summarize this section, the teachers were asked for any further comments regarding the use of children’s literature, which generated in the following three responses:

- They lack both time and material to use this teaching method;
- This is a method that needs to improve in all grades;
- This method is too difficult to use in the lower elementary school grades.

**5.4 Content analysis**

When analyzing the collected data, connections can be made to the theoretical approach used in the study. The table below summarizes the main findings in relation to the theories. The following connections will be further discussed in sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2.
Table 5: Content analysis through theoretical perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing help when reading books of i+1 level</td>
<td>Help pupils understand a book beyond current knowledge level</td>
<td>Scaffolding to aid comprehension of books beyond what the pupil understand on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing books with familiar topics and based on pupils interests</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Discussions among peers and adults</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable mastering tasks as an expert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling comfortable mastering tasks as a more knowledgeable adult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Discussion

This section will discuss the main findings of the study and connect them to previous research and the theoretical approaches adopted in this thesis. In addition, the inevitable limitations of the survey will be reviewed.

6.1 Main findings

The aims of this empirical study were to examine how Swedish elementary teachers’ incorporate children’s literature in the ESL classroom, as well as exploring their attitudes to this teaching method. To fulfill these aims, the following research questions were chosen:

- How do teachers from sample schools in a Swedish municipality work with children’s literature in the ESL classroom?
- What are these teachers’ attitudes and/or beliefs towards incorporating children’s literature in the ESL classroom?

An Internet survey was created and distributed to teachers at eight schools through emails from their principals, or in one case from the researcher. The email contained a link to the survey, which was open for 13 days. In addition to first email, a second was sent out reminding the teachers to participate. However, since most of the principals wanted to forward the emails from the researcher to the teachers, the total amount of teachers receiving the survey link is unknown. When the link was closed down, 14 respondents from seven schools had participated.

As seen in Figure 2, 9 out of 12 teachers seldom use children’s literature in their classroom. A reason for the infrequent use of children’s literature could be the lack of material in schools and the low priority given to the English subject by the municipality, answers that were provided to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey. Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 will discuss the methods and attitudes provided by the respondents.

6.1.1 Methods

Reading aloud to their pupils appears to be the most common method when using children’s literature in the lower elementary ESL classroom. Eight out 10 respondents claim to read aloud, while one respondent (currently teaching grade 6) lets their pupils read silently on their own.
and one respondent states that they use drama in their teaching. Reading aloud is relatable to the input theory (Krashen, 1982) as well as the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) and scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976). The books read by the teachers can be at the input level $i+1$, a level beyond what the pupils could master on their own. And yet with scaffolding the teacher can help pupils to reach the $i+1$ level.

However, choosing literature to use appears to be a challenge for most of the respondents. Moreover, two of the respondents claim that their schools have a very limited supply of children’s literature. Therefore, they feel restricted in incorporating it. In addition, two teachers state that the difficulty level often dictates what literature they choose: they generally select literature with simple language. However, that is a problem when trying to incorporate the input theory (Krashen, 1982), which claims that learning occurs if the input is a little beyond what the learner already knows, since the knowledge level, $(i)$, is not the same for every pupil. Therefore, choosing books that provide $i+1$ input for everyone is extremely difficult in practice. Ultimately, choosing literature that is too easy for pupils, based on the response that the respondents try to find literature containing as simple language as possible, does not nurture language learning according to Krashen (1982).

Furthermore, even though some schools lack children’s literature resources, some methods for selecting literature were provided. Seven out of 10 say that they “always” or “often” choose literature relating to their pupils’ interests; one answered “seldom”. Selecting topics of interest and familiarity for pupils is, as mentioned in the introduction, stated in the core content for English (Skolverket, 2011b, p. 3). As a measure to aid comprehension, familiar and interesting topics are features of caretaker-speech (Krashen, 1982, pp. 22-23). When receiving non-language based help, through familiar contexts or visual stimuli, learning becomes easier, according to Krashen (1982). Moreover, visual help also appears to be important to the respondents, since seven of them say that they “always” or “often” choose literature with pictures that explain and supplement the text. In contrast, surprisingly only half of the teachers claim to “always” or “often” choose books according to work areas in other subjects. Lundberg (2007, p. 104) highlights the benefits of cross-curricular work and states that “cross-curricular work covers many aspects that support pupils’ learning” (Lundberg, 2007, p. 104).

Another teaching method that most teachers, seven out of nine, claim to “always” or “often” use, is reading a book multiple times. Two teachers explained that this is common practice, while five stated that they reread books regularly. In this context, one teacher stood out because they stated that books are “seldom” reread in their classroom; this teacher also explained that they rarely use children’s literature since he/she is teaching lower elementary school. In addition, this teacher also stated that children’s literature is too advanced and difficult for lower elementary school pupils. Nonetheless, the majority of teachers often reread books multiple times, a method that has been shown to promote vocabulary gains (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Greene-Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002). In addition, rereading can be comparable to the repetition mentioned by Lundberg (2007). Lundberg (2007) found benefits of repetition in language learning and she states that repetition encourages both “desire and commitment to learn along with joy” (Lundberg, 2007, p. 94). Rereading books can also be seen as a form of scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976), since it gradually helps pupils understand and notice more of the language. When reading a book multiple times, different content becomes clear each time and the reader learns new things each time. Therefore, rereading can be used as a form of scaffolding, in order to help pupils fully understand a text. However, even though Biemiller and Boote (2006, p. 49) suggest that older pupils require less repetition to acquire vocabulary, no apparent difference between the results of the teachers of different grades was found in this
study. For example, two teachers, one currently teaching English in grades 4-6 and the other teaching the *F-klass*, both answered that they always reread books. Therefore, no apparent difference between grade levels was found.

Another relevant method is related to translation; Lundberg (2007, p. 103) explains that a book can first be read in Swedish with its English version being read afterwards, in order to provide a translation of every word although translations are not always word for word. In contrast, teachers in studies by Biemiller and Boote (2006) and Greene-Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) advocate explaining selected word meanings of chosen target words, during each of their reading sessions. The difference between translating everything and translating selected words or terms also appears in this study, since four teachers state that they “always” or “often” translate every word, while four say that they “seldom” or “never” do it. However, the limited translation of selected target words appears to be a more common occurrence, since three respondents say that they “always” translate chosen words, and five teachers claim that they “often” do. Therefore, the teachers in this study commonly translate chosen words, rather than translating every word. Consequently, teachers have to assess their pupils’ knowledge level and what they are capable of understanding when reading children’s literature, before deciding how and what to translate. As previously mentioned, all pupils have different knowledge levels and therefore require different methods of help and degrees of scaffolding. According to Krashen (1982), learning only occurs if what is learnt is one level above the learner’s current level of knowledge. Therefore if a book is *i*+*l* to some pupils, but three or four levels, *i*+3 or *i*+4, above other pupils’ knowledge levels, the pupils might need different amounts of translation. Ultimately, the question of how much scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976) is needed to learn is determined by the teachers, and it is possible that some pupils need a translation of every word, while others need only a translation of a few words.

An additional teaching method used when using children’s literature, and which emerged from this study, is incorporating discussions. Nine teachers say that they “always” or “often” discuss the pictures with their pupils, and eight say that they “always” or “often” ask their pupils questions, and let the pupils ask questions during the reading sessions. Accordingly, interactional reading that includes discussions before, during, and after the reading, has shown significant vocabulary gains compared to just reading (Greene-Brabham & Lynch-Brown, 2002, pp. 468-471). The interactional approach is in alignment with the theoretical perspective of this study, which builds on the idea of help from capable people (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976), either a peer of an adult, to master tasks. During discussions the peer or expert can support learners and help them develop further.

### 6.1.2 Attitudes

All but one respondent “fully agree” that they feel comfortable reading aloud to their pupils. The participants also feel comfortable speaking English with their pupils – six respondents fully agree to feel comfortable speaking English with their pupils and four partly agree. Indeed, feeling comfortable is an important factor in relation to the role of a capable adult/peer, as mentioned by Vygotsky (1978) and Wood et al. (1976). Insecurity might reflect on how the help is provided and how often, which can ultimately affect how much pupils learn and develop. Nonetheless, even though most teachers feel comfortable reading aloud, they state that it is difficult to find literature to use. Seven out of 10 claim that they “do not agree” with the statement that it is easy to find literature to use. In addition, four claim that the supply of literature is poor at their schools. Since reading aloud is not seen as a problem for the teachers, using children’s literature should not be a problem, but it is limited by the difficulties in finding good literature. Moreover, even though the majority of the participants say that they “partly
agree” to feeling comfortable about how to use children’s literature, the same number, seven, say that they want more information on how to use it.

When asked what potential benefits they had encountered when using children’s literature, four respondents answered that the language is natural and not forced. The respondents generally experienced textbooks to be inflexible because of the predetermined lesson plans they contain. However, they commonly experienced that authentic texts invite pupils, and teachers, to have more open discussions, which in turn provide a better understanding of the language. Moreover, the language in authentic texts is also provided in a context, which appeared to be beneficial, according to the respondents, since it is key to learning. In addition, the Swedish National Agency for Education suggests that “literature and knowledge about history and living conditions in different societies and areas can give the pupils keys to knowing the language” (author’s own translation) (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 10).

A perceived benefit with pictures is that they foster communication. One respondent mentioned that “pictures contribute to discussions”. Similarly, the teachers in Hsiu-Chih’s (2008) and pupils in Norato Céron’s (2014) studies also claimed that pictures play a crucial role. However, it is pointed out that children might interpret pictures differently resulting in variations in comprehension (Hsiu-Chih, 2008, p. 52). In this sense, the teachers play an important role during discussions, in scaffolding, and helping pupils understand the literature. Ultimately, it seems that pictures are important when learning vocabulary, since they can help to explain unfamiliar words.

Motivation to learn and joy is another significant category presented by the respondents, and the teachers experience a change in pupils in both motivation and joy when using children’s literature. A reason for this could be as one teacher mentions that “the pupils can choose [literature] according to their interests”. Employing an interest is an important move to increase motivation; Lundberg (2007) states that “it is easy for children to learn something connected to their interest. I have also noticed how difficult things can be if children’s interests are not sparked” (author’s own translation) (Lundberg, 2007, p. 124). Interests can also support scaffolding by peers, for example if Anna likes cars and Eric enjoys flowers, they can both teach each other about their areas of interest when discussing books about these interests. Another benefit with using children’s literature, which appears in other areas of the survey, is vocabulary gains, although the five teachers who responded to this factor gave no further comments other than “aids vocabulary”.

Even though the teachers had experienced benefits when incorporating children’s literature in their ESL classrooms, they also described challenges. The challenges mostly surrounded points already mentioned: such as teachers having limited time to plan, they often have difficulties finding relevant material, and have found that there is often a limited supply of children’s literature in English. The teachers also point to the difficulties in finding the right level of literature, since all pupils are at different levels in their language ability. Surprisingly, one teacher also added, “this [children’s literature] is too difficult to use in the grades F-3”.

6.2 Limitations
There are several limitations that have to be taken into consideration when reading and discussing the results of this study. Firstly, the limited amount of respondents makes the results difficult to generalize, both in terms of the municipality and nationally, in Sweden. Secondly, an extended timeframe along with another methodology might have changed the outcome of the study. During the pilot study only four respondents participated, and even though slight
changes were made between the pilot and the final study, additional participants could have changed the outcome.

Thirdly, since the majority of the contacted principals wanted to forward the survey link to their teachers on their own, it is possible that not all the intended teachers received the link. However, since teachers from all schools but one participated, it appears likely that the link was sent out to most of the relevant teachers at each school. But, it is possible that teachers from the school that is not represented in the study did not receive the link. And yet, by having principals send the link, this might have influenced more teachers to participate, since principals usually send important messages through e-mail to their teachers.

In addition, the link to the survey could have been opened numerous times by the same person, since no login details were required to answer. Therefore, the same person could be providing multiple answers. However, after reading the responses it seems likely that this has not happened, unless someone has provided very different information regarding age, school and teaching grade when answering a second or third time.

Moreover, the choice to use an Internet survey could also have affected the outcome. If the study had used interviews or observations, other results might have been obtained. However, the survey method was chosen in an attempt to receive as many responses as possible in the municipality. Finally, some of questions might have been leading and thus affected the outcome. Examples of potential leading questions are the likert-scale questions, where statements were made and the respondents had to choose an answer according to what they saw as the best fit in relation to their opinions or work method. But, by conducting a pilot study this risk was reduced. Also, the respondents might also have misunderstood the questions and/or provided unreliable answers.

7. Conclusion
The majority of the respondents in this study claim to use children’s literature in their ESL classrooms. However, when asked how frequently they use children’s literature most of them answered “seldom”, even though many benefits of using it were given later. The benefits generally relate to communication, form, language motivation and vocabulary. Teachers indicate that a more communicative classroom is one of the benefits of using children’s literature; it is perceived that the pictures contribute to the discussions, and that the discussions come naturally when compared to using workbooks. Added motivation to learn is another prominent factor in incorporating children’s literature, as the respondents have noticed that when igniting an interest through books the pupils tend to enjoy literature and feel motivated to learn. The respondents also view children’s literature as a fun way of learning words and phrases.

However, the respondents also explained the challenges they face when using this teaching method. The following reasons for the limited use of children’s literature were found after analyzing the responses:

1. The supply of children’s literature in English is narrow both in schools and in the local library;
2. It is time consuming to plan lessons around and find relevant children’s literature;
3. Only six out of 14 teachers claim to be qualified to teach English, but all 14 do;
4. The municipality has not prioritized the subject of English;
5. The respondents are not completely confident with how to use children’s literature and they commonly wish for more information about how to use it.

Even though the teachers face these challenges they still use children’s literature. The most common method of incorporating it is by reading aloud to the pupils. Many of the teachers also ask questions when reading and encourage their pupils to do so as well. Translation also appears often when using children’s literature, and the majority of the teachers translate chosen target words into Swedish when reading. However, the teachers do not agree that all of the words should be translated into Swedish. Another common method is rereading the books, and seven out of nine teachers state that they “always” or “often” do this.

7.1 Further research
Since this study only included a small area of Sweden, it would be interesting to expand the area of the study to see if the same results would be obtained in other municipalities in Sweden. Maybe some results depend on geographical location: do results vary depending on whether you teach in Northern Sweden or Southern Sweden, for example? It would be interesting to find out if this study could comprehensively reflect teaching children’s literature across Sweden. Also, since it was revealed that the municipality targeted in this study had not prioritized English as a subject, it could also be interesting to get results from a municipality where English is prioritized: What is done differently there? What methods and approaches for the incorporation of children’s literature are used? What differences and/or similarities appear?

Moreover, this study also excludes the pupils’ thoughts and opinions regarding the use of children’s literature. It would therefore be beneficial to compare the thoughts of pupils on children’s literature with the thoughts and opinions of the teachers, to establish connections or distinctions. To enlarge the study, it could also be helpful to include thoughts from both principals and municipality representatives to receive their perspectives.

Finally, the majority of the teachers expressed a desire to learn more about how to use children’s literature. Therefore, additional research regarding benefits and successful teaching methods would be of great practical value in lower elementary education in Sweden.
References


Google Forms. (www.google.com). A personal account is needed to use this service.


Appendix 1 – Questions used in the survey

Bakgrund
Ålder
Kön
Namn på skola

Har du lärarexamen? JA / NEJ
Har du behörighet att undervisa i engelska i årskurs F-3? JA / NEJ
Undervisar du i engelska detta läsår? JA / NEJ

Om nej, när undervisade du senast i engelska?
För 1 år sedan / För 2 år sedan / För 3 år sedan / För 4 år sedan / För mer än 4 år sedan (skickas till sidan tack för din medverkan)/ Undervisar i engelska detta läsår

Vilken årskurs undervisar du engelska i detta läsår?
Om du inte undervisar i engelska detta läsår, välj den årskurs du senast undervisade i.
F-klass / Åk 1 / Åk 2 / Åk 3 / Åk 4-6 / Åk 7-9 / Gymnasiet / Undervisar ej i engelska (skickas till sidan tack för din medverkan)

Har du erfarenhet av att undervisa i engelska i årskurs F-3? JA / NEJ (om nej, skickas till sidan tack för din medverkan)

I klassrummet
Hur undervisar du i engelska? Beskriv din senaste engelsklekton: vad gjorde ni och vilket/vilka material använde ni?

Vilka/vilket material använder du i din engelskundervisning?

Hur ofta använder du barnlitteratur i din engelskundervisning?
Alltid / Ofta / Ibland / Aldrig
Hur använder du barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen?
Om du väljer alternativet ”Annat” skriv gärna i rutan vad du gör.
Högläsning (du läser högt för eleverna)/ Tyst läsning (eleverna läser själva)/ Använder inte barnlitteratur (skickas till sidan tack för din medverkan)/ Annat:

Hur arbetar du med högläsning?
Hur bra stämmer dessa påståenden in på ditt arbetssätt.

Översätter varje ord Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Översätter utvalda ord Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Läser hela boken på en gång Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Läser samma bok flera gånger Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Diskuterar bilderna med eleverna Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Eleverna får ställa frågor under läsningen Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Jag ställer frågor under läsningen Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Hur väljer du barnlitteratur att använda?
Utgår från elevernas intressen Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Utifrån bibliotekarie:s råd Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Väljer litteratur som passar ihop med arbetsområden i andra ämnen Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt
Väljer litteratur med bilder som förklarar texten Alltid/ Ibländ/ Sällan/ Aldrig/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Övriga kommentarer angående hur jag väljer barnlitteratur:

Åsikter

Hur bra stämmer dessa påståenden in på dina åsikter.

Jag känner mig säker när jag ska läsa böcker på engelska inför mina elever Instämmer helt/ Instämmer delvis/ Instämmer inte alls/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Jag känner mig säker när jag ska tala engelska inför mina elever Instämmer helt/ Instämmer delvis/ Instämmer inte alls/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Jag tycker att det är lätt att hitta barnlitteratur på engelska Instämmer helt/ Instämmer delvis/ Instämmer inte alls/ Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Jag tycker att utbudet av barnlitteratur på engelska är bra
Instämmer helt / Instämmer delvis / Instämmer inte alls / Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Jag känner mig säker på hur jag kan använda barnlitteratur i min engelskundervisning
Instämmer helt / Instämmer delvis / Instämmer inte alls / Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Jag önskar mer information om hur jag kan använda barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen
Instämmer helt / Instämmer delvis / Instämmer inte alls / Vet ej/har ingen åsikt

Vilka fördelar har du upplevt med att använda barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen?
Vilka nackdelar har du upplevt med att använda barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen?
Övriga kommentarer om barnlitteratur i engelskundervisning

Appendix 2 – Letter of consent/information

Information om undersökning gällande användandet av barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen i årskurs F-3

Som en del av sista terminen på Grundlärarprogrammet med inriktning mot årskurserna F-3 vid Högskolan Dalarna har jag, Micaela Englund, valt att skriva mitt andra examensarbete om användandet av barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen.

Syftet med studien är att få ökad insikt i vad svenska lärare har för attityder till användandet av barnlitteratur i engelskundervisningen, samt vilka metoder för användandet av barnlitteratur dessa lärare nyttjar. Då mängden svensk forskning att tillgå inom detta område är begränsad, kommer studien förhoppningsvis att utgöra ett gott bidrag. Du tillfrågas härmed om deltagande i denna undersökning.


All insamlad information kommer att behandlas och presenteras enligt den Forskningsetiska nämndens regler. All insamlad material kommer att makuleras efter undersökningens slut. Deltagande personer kommer att vara anonyma och i de fall namn används kommer de att vara fingerade. Även skolans namn kommer att vara anonymt. Dessa åtgärder genomförs för att garantera din fulla anonymitet.

Det färdiga arbetet kommer att presenteras i form av en uppsats vid Högskolan Dalarna och uppsatsen kommer att finnas tillgänglig att ta del av i sin helhet.

Ditt deltagande i undersökningen är helt frivilligt. Du kan när som helst avbryta ditt deltagande utan närmare motivering.

Genom att fylla i enkäten väljer du att delta i undersökningen.

Tack för din tid!
Ytterligare uppgifter lämnas av nedanstående ansvariga.

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