

Leveraging Research for Literature Instruction: Insights for Developing Readers in L2 English

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Abstract

This thought piece tackles the question of how L2 English teachers can foster engaged and competent readers of literature. Highlighting the importance of using knowledge accumulated through research in teacher education and school teaching, it introduces a model of literary competences designed for secondary English instruction (Diehr and Surkamp 2015) as a robust tool for English teacher education in Sweden. The piece illustrates that the development of literary competences in L2 English classrooms is consistent with the goals stipulated in the Swedish curricula and syllabi for English, and it argues for the model's usefulness for helping future secondary teachers plan and enact meaningful literature instruction. The thought piece thus contributes to promoting a teaching practice that is research-based and relevant to the pupils' lives. As such, it helps meet key needs in English teaching today.

Keywords: L2 English; literature instruction; literary competences; teacher education

Introduction

Literature instruction in English as a second, foreign or additional language (L2) is expected to contribute to a wide range of goals, many of which respond to recent changes in schools and in society at large. For example, reading and working with literary texts in L2 English provides meaningful content for classroom interaction and may thereby help motivate pupils in their English lessons (Bland 2022). This matter seems increasingly pressing given recent reports that many pupils are disengaged in their English lessons despite being highly motivated to learn the language and often using it outside the classroom (Henry 2019; Schurz and Sundqvist 2022). The teaching of literature offers opportunities for pupils to encounter authentic texts with rich and varied language use and

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abundant and challenging cultural content (Hall 2015), which may complement pupils' extramural exposure to English and be personally, educationally and socially relevant. Similarly, given the past few decades' decreasing leisure-time reading and declining reading abilities among adolescents (Vinterek et al. 2020), literature instruction is a means to stimulate young people's reading habits and improve their reading competences, thus contributing to the key educational goal of literacy (Fazzi 2023).

Others have emphasised the potential of literature instruction to foster pupils' general education and personal growth, often referring to the benefits of aesthetic education and the transformative potential of engaging deeply with literary texts in L2 English classrooms. Literature instruction may nurture pupils' intercultural competences, such as their awareness of cultural diversity and their ability to empathise with and tolerate the perspectives of others (Hoff 2019; Lütge 2013; Thyberg 2022). It may promote pupils' awareness of global issues, both acute and chronic, for example, armed conflicts, climate change, human rights, displacement and the interconnectedness of global economies (Janachowska-Budych 2022; Rimmereide and Wennberg 2024; Schwanke 2022), and develop their ability to reflect on ethical, political and existential questions (Lyngstad 2021). For some, the purposes of literature instruction in L2 English also include enabling pupils to understand and respond to global challenges, such as the ongoing climate crisis or social injustice, and developing the skills to effect positive change themselves (Ahlberg 2021; Ericson 2025).

Taken together, these hopes for L2 English literature instruction draw on the potential of literary texts to engage the minds and feelings of readers, to connect readers with the world and to represent complex matters in nuanced ways. They also reflect changing perspectives on the role of the English subject, including the view that language education cannot be reduced to functional communicative abilities as it involves language development alongside general education and personal growth. Yet, these expectations of literature instruction raise the question of what L2 English teachers need to teach to help their pupils become engaged and astute readers of literature, who can reap the benefits of literature's transformative potential and perhaps even take positive social action as a result. This question requires answers that ensure the close links between teaching and research to meet the stipulations of the Swedish Education

Act (SFS 2010:800) that school teaching should be based on research and best practices. My thought piece addresses the question by elucidating a research-based model for literary competences created for secondary L2 English teaching (Diehr and Surkamp 2015), which may help teachers plan and enact intentional and educationally meaningful literature instruction. In my view, Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model can help to improve literature teaching practices and support the ongoing process of strengthening the educational research-teaching nexus in schools, especially as regards the teaching of L2 English literature. It may also sharpen researcher and practitioner conversations about how to nurture literary reading in L2 English classrooms.

Research reveals that while secondary L2 English teachers across Europe recognise linguistic, cultural and educational contributions of literary texts and express high levels of support for using literature in their teaching, many rarely do so (Bloemert, Jansen and van de Grift 2016; Calafato and Paran 2019; Luukka 2019; Lyngstad 2019). When they do, they often 'do not intentionally use literary texts for specific teaching points' (Duncan and Paran 2017: 3). Consequently, the contribution of the literary texts is frequently rendered incidental rather than targeted. In several countries, including Sweden, where national curricula are vague about the purposes of literature in L2 English teaching, teachers have reported challenges in determining how to use literary texts in their classrooms (e.g., Bloemert 2019; Wolcott 2023). The Swedish curriculum and syllabus for English stipulate that pupils should be given opportunities to engage with literary texts across compulsory and upper secondary education (Skolverket 2021, 2024a), as well as 'proper space to broaden their [literary] repertoires' (Skolverket 2024b: 16, my translation; see also Skolverket 2022). The syllabi for English largely allow teachers to decide what texts to use, as well as why and how to teach them (Dodou 2021). The most recent syllabi continue to include literary texts in the 'communication content' for secondary English teaching while offering few concrete links between that content and the overarching goals for English (Skolverket 2021, 2024a). As a point of comparison, the Council of Europe's (2020) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, which underpins the English syllabus in Sweden, includes the following three scales pertinent to the role of literature in L2 English classrooms: 'reading as a leisure activity', 'expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)' and 'analysis and criticism of

creative texts (including literature)'. Despite alluding to the value of engagement with literary texts in the overarching curricula for compulsory and upper secondary schools (Skolverket 2021, 2024c), the Swedish National Agency for Education has yet to articulate such purposes for literature in its national syllabi for English. These curricular documents require teachers to have a strong sense of literature's contributions and a developed ability to make professional judgements about how to teach literary texts to meet multiple educational goals, ranging from literacy to aesthetic and citizenship education.

Research has highlighted that teacher education is a key factor for whether and how L2 English teachers incorporate literature in their teaching (Bobkina, Domínguez Romero, and Sastre-Merino 2021; Greene 2017; Torrano-Guillamón, Cascales-Martínez, and Carillo-García 2019), making it imperative to ensure that teacher education courses adequately prepare future teachers to use literary texts in their English classrooms. A crucial task for teacher education is to help future English teachers realise how they can approach literature instruction to methodically develop their pupils' willingness and ability to read literary texts, as well as to understand, appreciate and respond to them. Current teacher education practices often fall short of this goal, as teacher educators of English in Sweden tend to focus on research that illuminates how to teach specific English-language literary texts, advocating for the use of distinctive textual approaches or classroom activities (Dodou and Svensson, under review). Beyond helping future teachers recognise how to teach selected literary texts, teacher education courses must also promote a more comprehensive understanding of what pupils should learn and how future L2 English teachers can help their pupils become engaged and competent readers of literature.

In this thought piece, I tackle the question of how to facilitate such professional judgements by discussing a research-based model of literary competences devised for secondary L2 English teaching (Diehr and Surkamp 2015). Originally presented in German, the model conceptualises core pupil competences that L2 English teachers can foster in relation to literary texts, making visible implementable goals for teaching literature. In the following sections, I present Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model and discuss its relevance in the Swedish setting as a tool for supporting L2 English teachers in planning and enacting literature instruction. I aim to introduce their model to a readership that may not be well-versed in

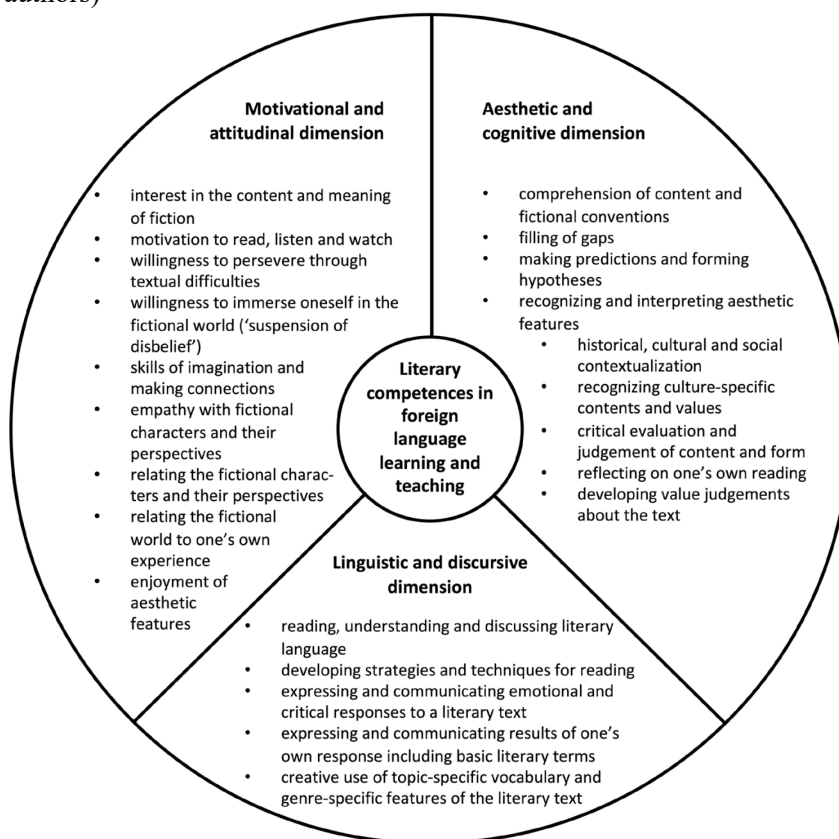
German and thus to mediate knowledge accumulated through research bearing on the education of teachers and on research-based school teaching. Beyond explaining the core tenets of the model, my aim is to show its compatibility with the stipulations of the national steering documents for secondary English teaching and, thus, its relevance for English teacher education in Sweden. In addition, I argue that the model is highly appropriate for professional development initiatives targeting in-service L2 English teachers who may need support in what and how to teach literature. Such professional development initiatives can be embedded in systematic efforts to improve teaching practice in schools when combined with time to reflect on the way of thinking about literature instruction proposed by the model, as well as the means to implement such thinking. Despite these areas for potential expansion, I focus on the model's relevance to L2 English teacher education.

What it takes to become a competent reader of literature: Diehr and Surkamp's model of literary competences

Fundamental to Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model of literary competences is the conceptualisation of literary reading in L2 English as involving more than linguistic decoding and the comprehension of the main messages of a text. In their view, the reading of L2 English literary texts involves knowledge, abilities and dispositions that enable the appreciation of literature and that put into play its transformative potential. This view of literary reading is consistent with literature education research in L2 English (Bland 2022; Bredella 1996; Lazar 1993; Lütge 2013) as well as in the teaching of L1s (Blau 2014; Langer 2011; Rosenblatt 1978; Torell 2002). The view rests on a broad range of literary theories on the properties of literary texts, their relation to their socio-historical contexts and readers' engagement with them. Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model delineates the distinct competences that impact pupils' literary reception processes and thereby their understanding and enjoyment of literature in L2 English as well as their recognition of its relevance for their own lives. A central ambition with the model is to help practitioners methodically develop the knowledge, abilities and attitudes that will enable pupils' reception of literary texts. Crucially, these competences are not relevant solely for literary reading; rather, they can contribute to meeting key L2 English education goals.

Building on previous research in L2 English literature education (e.g., Bredella 2012; Burwitz-Melzer 2007; Hallet 2007), Diehr and Surkamp (2015) described the reception of L2 literature as involving six competence areas grouped into three interconnected dimensions. These comprise: a) the *motivational and attitudinal* dimension, which concerns pupils' willingness and ability to engage with literary texts; b) the *aesthetic and cognitive* dimension, which regards pupils' literary sense-making; and c) the *linguistic and discursive* dimension, which involves pupils' communicative abilities relating to literary texts (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Model of literary competences. (English version by Diehr and Surkamp, in Diehr [in prep.]. Figure reproduced with permission of the authors)



Motivational and attitudinal competences include pupils' motivation to read, listen to or watch literary texts, their interest in the content of the texts (e.g., in their characters and represented worlds) and their openness to the available meanings of the texts. This competence dimension recognises the importance of pupils' desire to read texts in L2 English, even long-form texts in their entirety, and of their maintaining that desire, even when they are faced with barriers to understanding. The difficulties may be a result of literary language in an L2, which requires a readiness to engage with unknown words or unconventional language use, or a result of cultural differences that require the ability to empathise with ways of living and seeing the world that are foreign to pupils. The model regards pupils' perseverance through textual difficulties and their tolerance for frustration as key dispositional qualities that should be fostered in teaching. It also indicates the need to develop pupils' readiness to engage with perspectives from cultures other than their own and to relate those perspectives to their own lived experiences. The *motivational-attitudinal* dimension further emphasises that literary texts are underpinned by representational rules and open to multiple meanings. As such, the ability to suspend disbelief regarding the rules of the represented world is crucial, as is the recognition that literary texts are characterised by semantic plurality. Likewise, literary reading requires pupils' readiness to use their imaginative capacity to visualise the represented world, as well as to relate it to their own experience. By extension, teaching that nurtures these competences can positively affect pupils' inclination to engage with literary texts.

Aesthetic and cognitive competences focus on pupils' understanding of literary texts, largely relating to their awareness of literary conventions. Acknowledging that much is implied or left unspoken in literary texts, this competence dimension highlights that pupils need to be able to use their knowledge of the world and their experiences to fill textual gaps and to make predictions and inferences when reading. This includes the ability to use cognitive categories (schemata or scripts) from everyday life to understand characters, actions and events. At the same time, the model stresses the ability to revise hypotheses formed during reading when faced with new information. Moreover, *aesthetic and cognitive* competences recognise that the understanding and appreciation of literary texts also rest on the ability to balance emotional participation in the fictional world with literary awareness, that is, knowledge about the constructed nature of the

represented world. The latter includes an awareness of how literary texts engage the senses and how they create meaning through content and form. It also involves the ability to decode the functions and effects of literary conventions and features. The balance between participation in and scrutiny of textual worlds impacts the ability to make judgements about literary texts. Furthermore, this literary competence dimension recognises that literary sense-making in an L2 requires an awareness of historical events and social phenomena, as well as of values, beliefs and behaviours that are depicted in the literary texts but may be foreign to the pupils. This means that literary reading and sense-making are closely tied to pupils' intercultural competences and their capacity for contextualised reading. As Diehr and Surkamp (2015) clarify, the latter can be facilitated by reading, listening to or watching companion texts about cultural content, which teachers should make room for in their classrooms. Additionally, this dimension points out that pupils need to possess the capacity to engage critically and reflexively in their reading processes and in the meaning of literary texts to benefit from the personal and intercultural potential of those texts.

Linguistic and discursive competences relate to receptive and productive activities that deepen pupils' understanding of literary texts. This dimension recognises that the reception of literary texts in L2 English is intimately linked to pupils' language proficiency and can foster pupils' language development. Its listed competences include the ability to understand the content of literary texts and to use reading strategies, such as inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context or using annotations and aids (e.g., dictionaries). The *linguistic and discursive* competence dimension acknowledges that the reading of literary texts can promote pupils' language skills, including vocabulary, grammar structures and idiomatic language use. By engaging thoughtfully with literary language and reflecting on its appropriateness in different settings, literature instruction can develop pupils' English language awareness and their own writing skills. The latter includes awareness of aesthetic forms of language use, such as narrative, dialogic and poetic-metaphoric features in literary texts. In part, the *linguistic and discursive* dimension highlights the function that communication about literature has in pupils' literary sense-making. It stresses the importance of communication about literary texts for pupils' deeper understanding of them through text talks, imaginative or analytical writing or transpositions of literary texts into

another media form. It also recognises the relevance of pupils developing their abilities to express themselves emotionally or critically about a literary text and about their reading experiences and interpretative conclusions, as well as using discipline-specific concepts when doing so.

Diehr and Surkamp (2015) explicitly describe the three dimensions as being of equal value and visualise their model in a circle to emphasise the non-hierarchical relation between the three competence dimensions. Their model thereby rejects the assumption that pupils must first develop mastery of the English language before they can work with literary texts. Rather, it maintains that the development of literary competences in L2 English is relevant for pupils across all stages of the education system: from primary through upper secondary school. Diehr and Surkamp (2015) stress that literary competences develop gradually and that upper secondary schooling alone cannot fulfill curricular goals regarding pupils' ability to engage critically and reflexively with literary texts. Emphasising the interconnectedness of the various stages of the education system, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) point out that teachers in primary and secondary schools must engage pupils in age- and needs-appropriate learning activities to build up pupils' literary competences.

Moreover, the non-hierarchical nature of the model does not privilege cognitive approaches to literature. Instead, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) emphasise that personal dispositions and affective abilities, alongside cognitive abilities, impact the processes of literary reception. They also note the interdependence of the three competence dimensions, acknowledging that reading motivation is a prerequisite for developing aesthetic and cognitive as well as linguistic and discursive competences; conversely, cognitive and linguistic competences can contribute to increased reading motivation. They further underscore that literature instruction should attend to all competence dimensions to support pupils' literary reading. To do so, they insist that English instruction should include a wide range of literary forms and learning activities, which can motivate pupils to read and work with literary texts, meet diverse pupil needs and interests and offer pupils multiple ways of engaging with literature. In particular, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) foreground the potential of various creative response activities, such as acting out scenes from literary texts, expanding on a literary text by adding a scene and adapting a text into a film. When carefully planned in relation to selected

competence goals, such activities have the dual potential of contributing to pupils' language development and literary sense-making.

The curricular relevance of the model in Swedish L2 English classrooms

For Diehr and Surkamp (2015), fostering pupils' literary competences, while intrinsically valuable, is also inseparable from the overarching goals of L2 English education. Its relevance for modern L2 English teaching relies in part on the recognition that the competences that can be developed when working with literary texts are not only useful for literary reading, but can also contribute towards meeting key L2 English education goals of language development, general education and personal growth. As Diehr and Surkamp (2015) point out, instruction that nurtures literary competences supports pupils' language learning, as such instruction invites a range of reception and production activities and calls attention to the language of literature. Beyond functional communicative competences, the model's multifaceted engagement with the literature contributes to broader educational goals, including pupils' intercultural awareness and capacity for perspectivism, as well as their skills in cooperation. It also allows pupils to be recipients and producers of cultural artefacts that grant them access to manifold ways of life and interpretations of reality.

Importantly, for the purposes of this thought piece, the literary competences detailed in the model harmonise with overarching goals outlined in the current Swedish curricula and with subject-specific goals formulated in the syllabi for English at the lower and upper secondary levels (Skolverket 2021, 2024a). For example, the capacity to empathise with the conditions and viewpoints of fictional characters, included in the model's *attitudinal and motivational* dimension, aligns with the Swedish curricular goal of promoting pupils' 'understanding of other people and the ability to empathise' (Skolverket 2021: 5; see also 2024c). Likewise, the *aesthetic and cognitive* dimension appears in several points of the curricula. For example, the ability to recognise culture-specific content and values and the capacity for historical, cultural and social contextualisation align with the English syllabus aims for both lower and upper secondary school of deepening pupils' 'understanding of different living, cultural and social conditions in areas and contexts in which English is used' (Skolverket 2021: 43; see also 2024a), and so help to foster pupils' 'intercultural awareness' (Skolverket 2024b: 8, my

translation). Further, the understanding of literary conventions and the ability to fill in textual gaps, make predictions and interpret literary features align with English syllabus stipulations about developing pupils' ability to understand and interpret texts (Skolverket 2021, 2024a).

Pupils' abilities to interact with and about literary texts, the core elements of the *linguistic and discursive* dimension, similarly align with the Swedish syllabi for English. For example, the use of strategies for reading and understanding texts is in keeping with the main syllabus goal of developing pupils' all-round communicative abilities in English at secondary school, including their capacity to 'use different strategies to aid communication' (Skolverket 2021: 43; see also 2024a). Furthermore, pupils' capacity to express their views and the outcomes of their responses, aligns with the overarching curricular stipulation of encouraging pupils' personal opinions and their expression (Skolverket 2021). It also aligns with the specification in the syllabus for English that pupils develop 'the ability to express themselves and communicate in spoken and written English' (Skolverket 2021: 44). Similarly, the model's ambition to promote thoughtful engagement with literary language and reflection on its appropriateness in different settings recalls the clarification in the auxiliary material to the English syllabus that pupils should be given opportunities to 'recognise and reflect on' how language is used in authentic material and to use this language awareness to develop their own language use (Skolverket 2024b: 18, my translation).

As these examples suggest, multiple curricular and syllabus stipulations are compatible with the model's description of literary competences. Indeed, the development of these literary competences can support the mission of Swedish schools to 'promote the all-round personal development of pupils' (Skolverket 2024c: 7, my translation). This includes pupils' ability by the end of upper secondary education to access literature 'as a source of knowledge, self-awareness and enjoyment' and the ability to find 'stimulation in cultural experiences and to develop a sense of aesthetic value' (Skolverket 2024c: 6, my translations).

From theory to practice: The model as a tool for planning and enacting L2 English literature instruction

A core tenet of Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model is that competences should be developed methodically over time in L2 English classrooms by engaging with multiple literary forms and using a range of instructional

approaches and learning activities. Building on educational research (e.g., Hattie 2009; Klafki 1977), the model emphasises teachers' backward design, which begins with the teaching goals and uses those goals as the starting point for planning. The competence dimensions in the model provide basic orientations that need to be made concrete through selected approaches and using various learning activities. According to Diehr and Surkamp (2015), the learning activities may engage pupils' oral and written abilities, and they may involve complex problem-solving tasks, creative tasks, or pre-, during and post-reading activities. Crucially, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) emphasise that not all competences can or should be developed at the same time. Depending on their pupils' needs and their own professional judgements, teachers may begin with selected *motivational and attitudinal* competences in one group and with selected *aesthetic and cognitive* competences in another. However, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) recommend that literature instruction based on the model include multiple instructional focus points and the ambition to engage with the meanings of the selected literary text(s). Conversely, they advise against standalone learning activities that may exercise a single literary competence, such as an isolated reading comprehension task that checks pupils' basic comprehension of content, as this does not enable pupils' deeper engagement with literary texts.

When using the model to plan teaching, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) suggest that the literary competences listed be reformulated as learning objectives that describe what pupils should be able to do (in 'can do' statements). Learning objectives related to *motivational and attitudinal* competences in lower secondary L2 English teaching include pupils' ability to represent their emotions and associations with literary texts, to select texts based on their interests and to adopt a personal approach to a literary text. To develop *motivational and attitudinal* competences, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) recommend approaches that invite pupils to empathise with the characters, to engage in the world of the text and to discover parallels between the represented events and their own lived experiences. They explain how literary competences from the *motivational and attitudinal* dimension can be operationalised in teaching using as their example the ability to 'empathise with characters and their perspectives' (Diehr and Surkamp 2015: 33, my translation). To develop this competence, they point out that teaching should offer pupils opportunities to exercise perspectivism by assuming the viewpoint of one

or more characters. For example, the English teacher may ask the pupils to act out a scene from a play or to participate in a hot seating activity in which they answer questions about a character in a novel from the perspective of that character. Likewise, the teacher might invite the pupils to speculate about the age, gender and mood of the speaker in a poem or to create an inner monologue for a character in a silent scene from a film.

In the same vein, learning objectives based on *aesthetic and cognitive* competences might be formulated as follows: the pupils can understand the plot, characters, conflicts, themes and language of age- and language-appropriate literary texts, or they can fill in textual gaps, make hypotheses and amend them while reading. Other learning objectives include being able to recognise, name and interpret literary features (e.g., character constellations, suspense curve, temporal structure and narrative perspective) and being able to deduce selected aspects of historical or cultural context with the help of teaching materials and to use that knowledge to understand the text. To develop *aesthetic and cognitive* competences, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) recommend that teachers not limit themselves to textual analyses, which they imply is an overused mode of approaching literary texts in secondary schools. Instead, they should also include creative approaches to literary texts. They exemplify learning activities aligned with a creative approach in relation to the objective of furthering pupils' ability to 'recognise, name and interpret genre-specific literary features' (Diehr and Surkamp 2015: 33, my translation). They suggest that teachers could invite their pupils to identify the narrative perspective in a passage from a novel and describe its effect on the reader. Rather than doing so in a textual analysis task, the pupils might work with a narrative perspective via imaginative writing, for instance by rewriting or extending the novel's passage. Similarly, when working with drama, the teachers could ask the pupils to visually represent the constellation of characters in a play and to use analytical symbols to describe the characters. In poetry work, they could invite their pupils to document their responses to a poem by utilising a line-by-line response protocol, for instance, to process the poem's polyvalence. When working with film, they could ask their pupils to consider how camera angles and settings steer their understanding of selected scenes from a film.

Likewise, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) suggest formulating learning objectives involving *linguistic and discursive* competences as can do-statements. For example, pupils should be able to use necessary reading

strategies when engaging with literary texts and to communicate their responses to literary texts verbally and in different media forms; furthermore, those responses might be associations, emotions, reactions or arguments. The objectives also include pupils' ability to articulate their own analyses and interpretations of literary texts and the ability to produce their own texts in literary and non-literary forms, taking into account generic features in their creative transpositions. To develop *linguistic and discursive* competences, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) emphasise that features and uses of literary language need to be made explicit. They also recommend that pupils be given opportunities to use various forms of literary language as models for their own written production. Thereby, they foreground imaginative writing and other creative response activities as particularly important parts of teachers' methodological toolkits when it comes to both supporting pupils' understanding of literary texts and providing different ways for pupils to show their understanding.

Their example of how to operationalise *linguistic and discursive* competences focuses on pupils' ability to 'create their own texts (literary texts, images or films) in conjunction with a literary text' (Diehr and Surkamp 2015: 33, my translation). To align instruction with this learning objective, they suggest a teaching approach that includes receptive, productive and creative elements that highlight the nature and impact of aesthetic language features. Relevant learning activities include the following: teachers might ask their pupils to transpose brief character statements from one language register to another and describe the effect on the novel reader. They might invite their pupils to ascribe varying stage directions to a scene from a play—such as characters speaking loudly and quietly or speaking with and without eye contact—and subsequently act out the scene using those directions and discuss their impact. When working with poetry, teachers could ask their pupils to imitate the structural features of a poem in a new text or to compose an additional verse for the poem. In conjunction with a film, teachers could show their pupils a scene with the sound turned off and ask them to draft and act out a dialogue, which they then compare with the original.

These examples indicate how teachers might attach learning activities that integrate all three of the model's competence dimensions into a single literary text—be it a novel, a playscript, a poem or a film. Taken together, the activities attached to each literary form allow for a deeper understanding of how the literary text operates, what meaning potential it

may have and how it may affect the reader. In other words, the instruction would make room for pupils' multifaceted engagement with the literary text, even as it allows pupils to exercise and develop discrete literary competences. Notably, the examples listed aim at learning outcomes at the end of lower secondary school. However, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) clarify that primary and upper secondary school teachers can formulate comparable—if also age- and needs-appropriate—learning outcomes adapted for L2 English teaching in those respective stages of the education system.

The model's implications for assessment

So far, I have described how Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) literary competence model can serve as a heuristic for the content of teaching in relation to literature in L2 English education and as a basis for articulating concrete and educationally meaningful learning objectives, teaching approaches and learning activities for literature instruction. However, the model's ambition to support the methodical development of pupils' literary competences also has consequences for how teachers assess those competences. While Diehr and Surkamp (2015) state that teachers should assess pupils' needs and progress and provide guidance throughout the pupils' learning process, they emphasise that teachers should also test pupils' literary competences. As they point out, assessment, including testing, is crucial for gauging what the pupils understand and can do in relation to literary texts, and it provides information relevant to planning and enacting future teaching. They recommend that teachers provide multiple forms of assessment during a school year (or even during a term), including oral and written, creative and analytical. Together, these should take into account different pupil needs and preferences for performance measurement. In the Swedish curricular context, the testing of literary competences in L2 English might seem counterintuitive given that the nationally stipulated grading criteria for compulsory and upper secondary education almost exclusively focus on functional communicative abilities (Skolverket 2021, 2024a). However, many English teachers assign tasks to their pupils that engage their responses to literary texts and their understanding of them, and these include both what Diehr and Surkamp (2015) call competence tasks (*Kompetenzaufgaben*) that focus on the learning process and what they call assessment tasks (*Evaluationsaufgaben*) that focus on the products of learning. In the

following paragraphs, I account for the principles for assessment that accompany the literary competences model, both because assessment is a fundamental part of working with the model and because the principles are useful when designing and enacting literature instruction.

Diehr and Surkamp (2015) advocate for teachers to design balanced, coherent and consistent assessment tasks. In this context, balance refers to designing tasks that address competences from all three dimensions of literary competence. They explicitly caution against privileging *aesthetic and cognitive* competences, which dominate many classrooms, and they especially highlight *motivational and attitudinal* competences, which are often overlooked in teacher assessment. To highlight the latter competences, they recommend that teachers design assessment tasks that make room for pupils to express their personal responses and motivations. Such tasks might invite pupils to account for whether and how a literary text appeals to them, what relation they see between the text and their own lived experience, what constitutes a good read for young people of their age or how they handled challenges they encountered when reading the text.

Coherence refers to the alignment between the assessment and the targeted competence. To illustrate the importance of coherence, Diehr and Surkamp (2015) list a series of examples where alignment is missing. For instance, fragmented questions about details in a literary text cannot adequately assess pupils' understanding of that text, and multiple-choice tests are not well-suited for assessing pupils' emotional engagement and empathic capacity. Likewise, completely open tasks (e.g., 'write a text about a way out of Lara's problem') are not useful starting points for creative response activities, as they are difficult to relate to criteria meaningful for literary competences. Instead, they propose that pupils can show their ability to take on the perspective of a character by completing tasks such as writing a diary entry or an email from the character to a fictional friend where they express the unspoken motives for a character's behaviour and make explicit the character's hopes, fears and desires. A prerequisite is that the pupils are familiar with the genre of the target text. Another is that the teacher establishes and communicates appropriate assessment criteria. For this task, such criteria include plausibility, richness and connection to the literary text.

Finally, consistency concerns the links between learning activities (*Kompetenzaufgaben*) and assessment tasks (*Evaluationsaufgaben*),

which can enable pupils to use the abilities exercised in lessons in new tasks. The issue is ensuring that there is appropriate overlap between what pupils have done in their lessons and what they are asked to do when tested. For instance, if pupils are tested on a literary text that differs in genre and thematic orientation from what they have worked with previously and are assigned a task type that differs from what they have worked with before, the gap will be too large. Likewise, if pupils are asked to return to a passage from a text familiar to them and to focus on an already thoroughly examined aspect of the text based on a task that they have previously practiced, there is too much overlap between the learning activity and the assessment task. To create appropriate assessment tasks, teachers need to balance their level of difficulty with the evaluative focus of the assessment task.

As this suggests, Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model of literary competences promotes the development of literature instruction practices in L2 English that align learning goals, teaching approaches and learning activities with assessment. In this view, what allows for the focused and methodical development of pupils' literary competences is a combination of the following: a) the teachers' backward instructional design, b) their ongoing and criteria-based guidance in conjunction with competence tasks and c) their targeted and thoughtful design of assessment tasks that form a basis for future instruction.

Empowering teachers: Why this model should be taught in L2 English teacher education

To return to my initial assertion, teacher education programmes have a responsibility to support future English teachers to design and enact literature instruction that is intentional and educationally meaningful, given the nature and overarching goals of L2 English education. In addition, teacher education should equip future English teachers with a broad and research-based understanding of what it means to teach young people to become engaged and astute readers of literary texts in an L2 and to provide them with appropriate tools to do so. Such support is crucial for teachers to meet key needs in L2 English instruction, which may be in response to policy demands for research-based school teaching or to various societal developments. In conclusion, I point to three features of Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model that make it a particularly valuable tool for practitioners in teacher education and in schools. Teacher

educators should encourage their teacher students to reflect on these features and to utilise them when planning and enacting literature instruction.

First, the model demystifies the teaching of literary reading in an L2. It builds on a substantial body of literature education research to outline a conceptual framework for what to teach to help make pupils competent readers of literature who can understand and appreciate literary texts and reap the benefits of their transformative potential. By detailing the discrete competences involved in the reading of literary texts, the model makes visible core knowledge, abilities and attitudes that may affect pupils' reception of literary texts in an L2. By emphasising that these competences can be taught, it offers a basis for future L2 English teachers to identify concrete and relevant learning objectives for literature instruction, which can be operationalised through well-selected teaching approaches and learning activities. Its itemisation of competences helps student teachers learn to align their teaching of literary texts with age- and needs-appropriate learning objectives for L2 English literature instruction. Moreover, this itemising can promote an approach to literature instruction that actively fosters a spectrum of competences, encompassing pupils' willingness and ability to engage with literary texts, their capacity to make sense of the texts and their ability to interact with and about them. Crucially, it also enables future L2 English teachers to monitor what discrete competences they focus on across a term or a school year to ensure that they create opportunities for pupils to exercise and develop all three literary competence dimensions: *motivational and attitudinal*, *aesthetic and cognitive*, and *linguistic and discursive*.

Second, the model promotes literature-rich L2 English classrooms. Identifying the many competences that can be developed when working with literary texts encourages future L2 English teachers to use a range of literary forms to meet a variety of learning objectives. In line with L2 English literature education scholarship, the model invites student teachers to recognise that the tasks of L2 English teachers cannot be reduced to the advancement of pupils' functional communicative abilities and to see that their tasks include nurturing pupils' general education and personal growth. Moreover, it illustrates how literature instruction that attends to pupils' literary competences can contribute to all three of these overarching goals. Research reveals that these goals are key for the changing shape of L2 English in response to a changing world (e.g.,

Ahlberg 2021; Bland 2022), and they harmonise with the stipulations in the Swedish national curricula and syllabi for English (Skolverket 2021, 2024a, 2024c). Indeed, the model provides an occasion for examining these curricular documents, for instance, to gauge the compatibility between Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model and the national curricular documents or the Council of Europe's (2020) supranational policy on language education. In this context, a crucial aspect of the model is its highlighting of how deeply enmeshed literary reading is with such matters as linguistic and cultural awareness and with the capacity for perspectivism. By highlighting this relationship, the model can help student teachers recognise how literature instruction may boost pupils' literary competences, even as it meets broader educational goals for L2 English.

Third, the model supports future L2 English teachers' developing professional judgements regarding literature instruction. This support partly stems from how the model defines the role of English teachers in pupils' literary education. The model asserts that L2 English teachers should methodically build pupils' literary competences over time. In doing so, it invites them to regard their own literature instruction as part of a learning continuum that spans all parts of the education system, from primary through upper secondary school, and to consider how their own teaching can contribute to the gradual development of pupils' literary competences. In addition, the model encourages student teachers to consider the purposes of literature instruction. By positioning competences at the core of literature teaching, it requires that teachers not merely teach the text at hand, but that they also foster the knowledge, abilities and attitudes that will enable pupils to read *any* literary text. This conceptualisation of what literature instruction should seek to achieve promotes teaching practices that nurture pupils' willingness to engage with literature, as well as the knowledge and skills that can help them understand and appreciate it and, by extension, unlock literature's transformative potential.

The model also supports professional judgements via the principles of instructional design that it offers. Because it emphasises the importance of a backward design that aligns learning activities with teaching objectives in line with educational research, the model promotes literature teaching practices that are intentional and targeted. It also makes future teachers aware of the importance of keeping their teaching objectives in sight when

implementing their teaching. This includes designing learning activities that support targeted literary competences, providing ongoing guidance throughout those activities to focus and scaffold pupil competences and creating assessment tasks that shed light on the state of pupils' literary competences and help them plan what to teach next. Furthermore, by virtue of its holistic take on literary reading and teaching, the model prompts future L2 English teachers to enact varied and multifaceted literature instruction. By refusing to privilege cognitive approaches to literary texts, Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) non-hierarchical model legitimises teaching that involves pupils' emotional and ethical responses to literary texts. At the same time, by advocating for pupils' meaningful engagement with literature, the model reminds student teachers not to reduce their literature instruction to an exercise in vocabulary learning, reading comprehension or cultural illustration. It also encourages them to avoid standalone activities that target isolated competences and lead to a surface-level comprehension of the literary text. Instead, it helps to equip future teachers to plan and enact literature instruction that has multiple instructional focus points and engages with the meanings of literary texts and with pupils' interaction with them. Moreover, by emphasising that not all competences can or should be developed at the same time, the model encourages future teachers to use their professional discretion regarding when and how to target what competences.

A criticism that could be levelled against the model is that its focus on the reception of literary texts does not sufficiently foreground the social relevance of literature, including how literature instruction can have an impact on pupils' decision-making and social action (cf. Ahlberg 2021; Bland 2022). Because its focus is on pupils' understanding and appreciation of literary texts, the model mainly makes visible the individual benefits of pupils' competent reading of literature. While further clarification of how the model relates to conceptualisations of literature instruction that foreground its social benefits may be needed, the model's focus on personally and educationally meaningful engagement with literary texts is compatible with literature teaching that highlights literature's social relevance. After all, competences such as 'relating the fictional world to one's own experience' and 'historical, cultural and social contextualization' both have bearing on pupils' ability to recognise how literary representations can shed light on events, values and ideas relevant to the present moment, and they could be attached to teaching objectives

aimed at empowering pupils' decision-making. Another criticism could be that while it stresses various literary forms, the model does not include examples of multimodal texts such as comics, picture books and graphic novels, which research on literature education has acknowledged as particularly relevant for L2 instruction (e.g., Burwitz-Melzer 2014; Eisenmann and Summer 2020). Be that as it may, the principles for designing and implementing instruction presented in Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model are applicable to literary forms other than the ones exemplified.

Ultimately, Diehr and Surkamp's (2015) model does more than offer a research-based heuristic for what to teach to foster competent readers of literature in L2 English classrooms. It promotes a way of thinking that empowers future teachers to plan and implement literature instruction that is varied, engaging and meaningful and that contributes to pupils' literary and broader L2 English education. In addition, it offers conceptual and practical support across all stages of planning and implementation. It also provides an invaluable basis—and stimulus—for discussions about what the teaching of literature in L2 English should help pupils to learn today and beyond. As such, the model provides a useful and illuminating tool for equipping future L2 English teachers to teach literary texts in schools. For these reasons, I assert that it should be used in L2 English teacher education in Sweden.

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