Reading on Equal Terms?


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Abstract

This degree project has three aims. First, it will investigate students’ attitudes towards reading novels in English and how their motivation for reading differs whether they attend vocational or university-preparatory programs. In order to investigate this, a total of 73 students were asked to participate in the implementation of a questionnaire.

Second, this degree project sets out to study if there are differences in how four teachers approach reading novels in English and third, it will study how these four teachers motivate their students in their studies. This part of the investigation was conducted by performing qualitative interviews with each of the teacher informants.

The theoretical framework of this degree project has its basis in the theories regarding cultural capital by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

The results show that there are clear divisive lines between the attitudes and the motivation of students depending on which program they attend and that these divisions can be attributed in part to students’ social background. The results also indicate that teachers are aware of these differences and approach reading novels in the classroom accordingly.

Keywords: cultural capital, Bourdieu, motivation, literature, English, social background, upper secondary school
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1. INTRODUCTION

*I don’t normally read anything but magazines, unless we’re forced to when we’re in school*

Student, 18, in the vehicle and transport program

Not many English lessons evoke such varied reactions from students as the ones in which the students are asked to read novels. While some students enjoy reading novels, others do not and are verbal about their distaste. Compared with students who attend university-preparatory programs, the attitudes in general among students in vocational programs seem to be more negative towards theoretical subjects than towards the practical subjects which are specific to their programs. Students of English 5 in preparatory programs generally seem to enjoy reading more, regardless of language. In addition, these students are more likely to choose more challenging novels for which they are required to reflect upon a particular aspect.

If the previous statements are accurate, can we find theoretical reasons for the differences in attitudes towards reading between students of vocational and preparatory programs? Furthermore, if the theoretical reasons do exist, can we study them by conducting in-depth interviews with a group of teachers and performing an exploratory questionnaire with a group of students and thereby come to some sort of conclusion regarding the discrepancies?

Investigating students’ social background in order to gain an understanding of the differences in students’ cultural capital and habitus should, in theory, provide this study with empirical material to draw conclusions as to the theoretical reasons for these differences. There should also be a basis to claim whether it is fair to say that students in theoretical programs such as the natural sciences program and the social sciences program are more open to reading only because these students attend theoretical programs. Is it equally fair to claim that students who attend practical programs, where they learn a trade such as in the vehicle

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1 Quote reads in Swedish: *Brukar inte läsa nåt annat än tidningar, om vi inte blir påtvingade av skolan.* Quote taken from the questionnaire that I implemented in a vocational program in November, 2012
and transportation program and the industrial program are less inclined to study theoretical subjects?

In her doctoral thesis *Lika chanser i gymnasiet? En studie om betyg, nationella prov och social reproduktion* from 2006, Helena Korp studied the differences in how English A\(^2\) is taught depending on whether the students attend vocational or preparatory programs in Swedish upper secondary schools. She found that in vocational programs a great deal of time is spent on practicing vocabulary and spelling, and that much of the grammar is repetition from lower secondary school. She also found that teachers in vocational programs use easier materials because in their opinion, their students’ knowledge of the language is “poor”. Furthermore, Korp found that the teaching of English (as well as mathematics) in vocational programs is concentrated to the aims for the lower grades, which consequently means that the students of vocational programs are less likely to be given the opportunity to achieve the highest grade. She also points out the difficulties of using national standardized tests as a fair means of measuring what students of vocational and preparatory programs learn.

Discussing how teachers select which novels to read in class is important as some teachers prefer that the entire class all read the same novel while others let the students choose freely. One way of motivating students to read novels in English is to select novels whose contents fall within the subject area of the student’s own chosen program, as stated in the core content in the syllabus for English 5 (Skolverket, 2011). Jeremy Harmer suggests in *The Practice of English Language Teaching* that teachers ought to allow students to choose texts based on their interests and hereby the students will become more motivated to read novels (285). Gillian Lazar points out in *Literature and Language Teaching: a Guide for Teachers and Trainers* the importance for teachers to acknowledge that students interpret what they read through their own experience and that some aspects of the novels’ historical and cultural

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\(^2\) English 5 was formerly known as English A. The new name has been used in the Swedish syllabus for English in upper secondary school since the fall of 2011.
contexts need to be explained (52). While it is easy to agree with both Harmer and Lazar, from a time-management point of view, having to explain various cultural aspects or historical events as backdrops to each individual student would take too long and too much effort on the part of the teacher. Furthermore, students would have to wait an extraordinary long time and would become de-motivated.

Gunilla Molloy states in *Att läsa skönlitteratur med tonåringar*, that one of the goals of reading literature is that students will learn more about democratic values and the conflicts that may arise from them (42). Moreover, she continues, if students are given the opportunity to see their own experiences or those of others placed in a wider context in the form of a novel, their ability to understand the experiences of others may increase (Molloy 42). The syllabus for English 5 states that students should receive knowledge about culture, values of democracy and personal development through literature (Skolverket, 2011).

Molloy also points out that the literature must also be accessible in addition to satisfying the criteria determined by the core content, the teacher and the individual student (170). The study of literature in school is also dependent on what resources are available to the school. Not all schools have a school library where novels in English are readily available, and it is important that teachers are aware of what novels are appropriate in terms of level and genre when they purchase novels to build libraries (Harmer 284).

Students in lower secondary education do not usually read novels in English in school. This is a practice which is more commonly introduced in upper secondary education, where the level of knowledge of English is quite advanced and for this reason I chose to do this investigation in an upper secondary school. The student body in this school is relatively uniform. Statistics for this particular school show that out of 1,427 students in total, 52 attend the upper secondary school for individuals with learning disabilities. Another 25 students
attend the so-called Language introduction program\(^3\), where students who do not yet have the required skills in the Swedish language attend until their language skills improve so that they can attend a national program. In addition, the municipality in which the school in this study is located does not have more than one upper secondary school.

1.1 Definition of terms

The terms literature, literary works and novels are used synonymously throughout this degree project. I commence every interview with the teacher informants by asking “What is literature?” only to ensure that all of us share a common ground in its definition. All teacher informants in this investigation agree that literature is synonymous with novels or extracts of literary works.

Two additional terms which need defining are **curriculum** and **syllabus**. For the purposes of this study the translations of the terms in Swedish as defined by the Swedish National Agency for Education will be used. It states that *läroplan* is the Swedish equivalent of curriculum and it is defined as an administrative law\(^4\) in which the fundamental values, aims and guidelines for how to work within the school system are described. **Syllabus**, on the other hand is defined as the goals of what the students should know after having finished a course. Its equivalent in Swedish is *kursplan*.

In the discussions regarding students’ social class or social background I use Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of *class* because of its wider definition than that of Marxist theory which states that class is to be based on monetary assets. Bourdieu, on the other hand adds the dimensions of cultural and social capital to the economic capital. These terms are discussed further and more in depth in chapter 2.1 **Theoretical background**

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\(^3\) Language introduction program – commonly referred to as ”Språkintro”.

\(^4\) The term administrative law is American English while the corresponding term in British English is delegated or subordinate legislation. The term in Swedish is f"orordning.
1.2 Previous research

Research indicates that there is a strong correlation between the socio-economic status and the educational level of the parents and the level of achievement of their children. Bo Lundahl, for example, states in *Engelsk Språkidaktik* that the success of students in school and the educational background of their parents are closely linked (24). In his dissertation of 1988 *Utbildning, social reproduktion och social skiktning*, Jan O. Jonsson argues that the educational level of parents is by far the most important indicator of a student’s cultural background (71). Sverker Härd and Anna Ekström of the Swedish National Agency for Education raise the issue of the inequality of education in the Swedish school system in their op ed piece in *Svenska Dagbladet* on May 4, 2012 where they state:

> The significance of students’ social background continues to be great and there are indications that its implication has in fact increased in recent years. It is evident schools have been unable to compensate sufficiently for the student's social background.

Svärd and Ekström argue that although Swedish schools have become more segregated because of socio-economic factors as well as of students’ ethnic backgrounds, the main reason for this inequality in the educational system is that students who are highly committed to their studies all attend schools where the student body is made up by other highly motivated students.

This study will investigate if there are differences in how teachers in vocational programs approach literature in comparison to the teachers in preparatory programs. Gillian Lazar brings up three approaches to literature in the classroom in general: a) the language-
based approach, where a novel is analyzed from a linguistic point-of-view, b) the approach of literature as content, in which novels are analyzed from their historical, political, social perspective, and finally c) the approach of literature for personal enrichment, which encourages students to draw from their backgrounds when novels are chosen according to personal interests (27-39). The advantages of using literature in the classroom are plentiful, according to Lazar, and she says:

> Literature is a useful tool for encouraging students to draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions. It helps students to become more actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in learning English, and hence aids acquisition. (24)

The guidelines for the core content of the English 5 syllabus presented by the Swedish National Agency for Education do not specify that any specific type of literature should be read by students of English 5; it merely says “Literature and other fiction”, giving each teacher, or each school’s English department, freedom to decide how best to make sure that students develop the “[u]nderstanding of spoken and written English, and also the ability to interpret content” (Skolverket, 2011).

### 1.3 Aims

It is the contention of the present study that the same dividing lines in terms of socio-economic background and parents’ educational background that Svärd and Ekström have found in their article regarding the entire Swedish school system are visible in a micro system such as the school in this study. However, the aspect of ethnicity is not relevant in this degree project because of the homogenous nature of the make-up of the student body.

The main aim of this degree project is three-fold. First, I intend to investigate the differences in the attitudes towards reading novels that students in vocational programs have compared with those students who attend preparatory programs. Second, this degree project
will present how students in four different programs in an upper secondary school in northern Sweden approach reading literature in English and it will show how four teachers of English 5 go about introducing literature to their students in their respective programs. Third, I will try to determine which approaches the four teacher informants use in terms of motivating their students towards reading and working with novels in English.

1.4 Questions

This study intends to answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to investigate the differences in students’ attitudes towards studying English literature on the basis on their social background as far as cultural capital is concerned?
- Do teachers’ attitudes and previous experiences regarding their students have an impact on how they work with literature in the classrooms?
- Is the selection of which fiction to study based on the students’ social background, and who decides which books to read in class?
- How do teachers try to motivate students to study literature?

1.5 Delimitations

This study will focus solely on the attitudes of students and teachers with regards to literature in the classroom, and whether it is possible to discern the differences in how students that attend vocational programs view literature from those students who attend preparatory programs empirically. This study will not investigate whether the same differences exist, if they do indeed exist, in other areas of learning English, such as attitudes towards the study of grammar, writing or listening comprehension, to name a few. It would have been rewarding to have been able to add the aspect of gender to this degree project to see if the results can be viewed across gender lines as well as the vocational and preparatory programs. However that will be left for another scientific study to investigate more closely.
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to aptly discuss the aim of this study we must first try to agree upon what factors comprise a student’s social background, or class. In classical Marxist theory, a person’s class is defined by his or her value in terms of money; if you have a lot of money you, by definition belong to a higher social class than those who have less or no money. For the purposes of this investigation I will use the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on capital as the theoretical base of social background or social class – a clear widening of the definition of social class which focuses on various types of metaphorical capital that an individual is said to have, in addition to actual monetary capital that Marx used in his definition of the term. Gytz Olesen and Moller Pedersen state in Pedagogik i ett sociologiskt perspektiv that in Bourdieu’s theory the capitals that make up a person’s social class are economic capital – which is represented by wealth and material possessions; social capital is networking, “knowing the right people”; and cultural capital is symbolic possessions – books, art, dispositions, titles and diplomas (148). Gyts Olesen and Moller Pedersen cite Donald Broady’s use of the term symbolic capitals which he defines as “that which by social groups is recognized as valuable and is given value” (147). Bourdieu not only speaks of cultural capital per se, but also about cultural competence, which is basically a set of rules that govern “how” we are to behave and think correctly in a certain type of society (Jonsson 70). Jan O. Jonsson has investigated the biased recruitment in the educational system and he is certain of the importance of cultural capital in reference to successful studies and choice of education (69). He too agrees that the educational gap between different social groups has shifted from having been explained in monetary terms to terms relating to cultural capital (Jonsson 69).

Helena Korp says that the social, economic and cultural dimensions of metaphorical capitals make up a person’s habitus, another central term in Bourdieu’s theories (32). Habitus,

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6 The quote from Gytz Olesen reads in Swedish: “… det som av sociala grupper käns igen som värdefullt och tillskrivs värde”.

according to Bourdieu in *Kultur och kritik: anföranden* can be viewed as one of these aforementioned capitals but since it is embodied it is also something that is innate (148-150). Bourdieu’s habitus, according to Månsson in *Moderna samhällsteorier: traditioner, riktningar, teoretiker*, is a set of dispositions that a person has and these have been formed by the structural elements in society; school and family (404). Bourdieu himself also theorizes that habitus is found where there are relatively homogenous living conditions which are based in social class and that these are easily seen in a group of individuals living under common conditions and that they have developed common established practices (244). Bourdieu refers to this as *class habitus*.

Mikael Palme’s dissertation *Cultural Capital. Symbolic Assets in the Swedish Education System 1988 – 2008*, is a collection of five articles that all focus on the social structure of the Swedish school system. Donald Broady, who is considered one of the foremost experts in the field of educational sociology and has written a dissertation on Pierre Bourdieu, has in fact, participated in some of Palme’s studies. Not all of the studies are relevant to this degree project, but three of them are.

The first of these studies was conducted in a prosperous suburb of Stockholm where Palme analyzed the tensions between the cultural and economic capital of upper secondary school students of upper middle class families. His third study is relevant because the basis for his analysis is a statistical register of all students for the school year 88/89 where information on parents and households is classified into 32 groups depending on social backgrounds. Palme’s fourth study points to a new definition of cultural capital as a combination of general knowledge of culture and knowledge of natural sciences.

In order to fulfill one of the aims of this degree project, the question of whether it is possible to discern differences in students’ attitudes towards reading literature because of their social background, this study will focus on the concept of cultural capital in relation to
education. Palme suggests that this particular term, cultural capital, could be defined as a person’s inherited dispositions, convictions and approaches. He continues by saying that cultural capital plays a defining role in recruiting students to so called elite programs (Palme 45). Palme defines students who possess low levels of cultural capital, or educational capital as he calls it, as students who do not read newspapers at home, do not watch newscasts, who are not willing to read and write about things outside of their sphere of interest. He states that these students have never read any type of novel of their own volition and they cannot depend on their parents for moral support (Palme 48).

In order to be able to discuss teachers’ ability to motivate their students coupled with how their expectations or previous experiences affect the attitudes towards reading novels in the classroom, we must briefly touch on the Rosenthal effect. Håkan Jenner writes about the Pygmalion effect as it is more commonly known, in Motivation och motivationsarbete: i skola och behandling and he describes it as the theory where an individual, in this case a student, or a group of students, will perform and achieve according to their teacher’s expectations. This self-fulfilling prophecy works so that students who are expected to perform well by their teacher will do so and conversely, the students who are expected to perform poorly will do just that (Jenner 65-86). The Pygmalion effect is relevant to this study because it is of interest to see if the teacher informants’ expectations of their students vary due to if the students attend preparatory or vocational programs.
3. METHOD

In this section information will be presented regarding the participants of this investigation, how they were contacted and which methods have been used to fulfill the aims of this study and how the data has been processed. The disposition of this chapter has been divided into the following sub-categories: The informants, Methods of investigation, Reliability and validity, Processing and analysis and Ethical considerations.

3.1 The informants

The informants are four teachers of English 5 and four of the classes that they teach this school year. Half the classes and teachers study or work in preparatory programs and the other half in vocational programs. The reason for conducting this study in an upper secondary school is two-fold. First, the level of skill in the upper secondary courses allows for more in-depth reading of literature as opposed to lower secondary courses, and therefore it is logical to implement the study where it is likely to produce more material to analyze.

Second, in the upper secondary school it is possible to avoid the extra administrative task of collecting parental consent forms for each participating student which allowed for me to allocate my time to more pressing aspects of the study. The programs that have participated in this study have been chosen through a process by first writing down every one of the programs offered in the selected upper secondary school high school, and then de-selecting the programs where I have or have had a previous working relationship with the teachers of English 5. The final step in this process – choosing two vocational programs and two preparatory programs – was made with the teachers in mind. I chose four of the programs that these four teachers were in charge of. Therefore, the preparatory programs that will be the focus of this study are the natural science program and the social science program, and the two vocational programs chosen are the industrial technology program and the vehicle and transport program.
3.2 Method of investigation

In order to answer the questions asked initially, both qualitative interviews and a quantitative questionnaire were preferred as method. Investigating teacher attitudes and preconceptions towards their students and their background is a question of trying to determine and analyze the informants’ subjective attitudes and how they interpret their immediate reality. Also, in order to find out these attitudes and interpretations I found it necessary to focus on each teacher individually and therefore a qualitative interview became the preferred method. A quantitative method of investigation in order to study teachers’ attitudes would have been beneficial if there was a large base of teacher informants, but this would have increased the risk of misinterpretations and misunderstandings of their replies. Conny Svenning says that the advantages of using personal interviews over questionnaires are that you are pick up on small nuances in languages or in body language if you make use of questionnaires which you would not reflect on in a questionnaire (120). Moreover, the absence of these little markers can make it difficult to understand the informant’s intention with their statements. Certain criticism towards interviews and questionnaires will be addressed in the chapters 3.2.1 The questionnaire and 3.2.2 The interviews.

This study has no general interest in each individual student, but in the student body as a group. Therefore the information sought is best attained through a quantitative questionnaire in which high-structured questions as well as low structured questions are used.

3.2.1 Quantitative questionnaires

In order to examine the role literature plays in the lives of 73 students in four different upper secondary school programs I have asked the students to participate in a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of both questions that had a high level of structuring, i.e. questions with fixed options, also called closed questions, as well as questions that have a low level of structuring, where the questions are open. This allows informants to expand on their responses
beyond “yes” and “no”. An example of a closed question is: “Do you enjoy reading novels?” and an example of an open question is: “How does reading novels make you feel?” The advantage of combining high and low structured questions is that the use of the questionnaire increases, because not only does it help to motivate the person taking the questionnaire if the questions are of a varying kind, but it also helps the researcher if by any chance the alternatives to the questions are not relevant and not to the point (Patel and Davidson 77-79). The fact that this particular study benefits from a questionnaire is obvious when we consider its aim to find and draw conclusions regarding the cultural capital of these students. To randomly choose 2 – 4 students from each program would make the selection too small and it would not be possible to attain the results needed to draw valid conclusions. Also, the time-consuming task of interviewing and transcribing these interviews is too high in comparison to anything that might be learnt from them.

A class not participating in this investigation was asked to answer the questionnaire in an early stage of this degree project in order to better discover questions that would not work in the actual implementation of the questionnaire. This pilot study, for lack of a better term, brought forth a change in how one of the questions was formulated to make it easier to understand.

There are things to consider when open questions are included in a questionnaire since there is a risk of receiving answers that are not relevant to the investigation. Presenting these answers might deflect focus from that which is the aim of the study. To present them in a reformulated way carries with it an ethical dilemma which might be hard to overcome, and not presenting them at all might mean that important information might be lost. When presenting the results of the questionnaire in this investigation, I chose to sort out the irrelevant answers and present only those that I deemed had value for this degree project, even though I realize that this might leave the results of this study open for criticism.
The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section is meant to give answers to questions regarding the students’ backgrounds regarding their attitudes towards reading novels in English and how they work with novels in the classroom. Section two is made up of two short questions about how students’ view their teacher’s attitudes towards reading novels and the final section deals with students’ social background. There are a total of 15 questions in the questionnaire, not including the evaluation. (See appendix 1 – questionnaire).

When I visited the classes the students were told that their participation in the study was completely voluntary but I added that there would be two boxes of ginger bread cookies for each of the classes before Christmas. Need I say that all students agreed to participate in the questionnaire?

3.2.2 The interviews

As far as finding out the teachers’ attitudes and their previous experiences I came to the conclusion that a qualitative interview would be the best method to ensure that their values and attitudes would emerge and that I would be able to obtain relevant information. The purpose of a qualitative interview is primarily to find out how the informants view certain phenomena in their immediate surroundings (Patel and Davidson 82). The informant can rather freely answer questions of a low structured nature and the qualitative method allows the person conducting the interview to pose questions in the order that is best for the moment, and it also allows for follow-up questions if a response is less than clear.

There is however, certain criticism towards conducting interviews to obtain reliable facts. Patel and Davidson state that the demands are high on the person conducting an interview to know and mimic the informants’ use of language, gestures, and body language in order to be relatable to the informant and to be more at ease in this situation (75). If the interviewees feel at ease in the somewhat awkward interview situation it helps to feel that
there is someone sympathetic conducting the interview. It is also important that the informants feel that the person interviewing them is well acquainted with the issues regarding, in this case, the different ways of approaching literature in the classroom.

However, Conny Svenning suggests that the person conducting the interviews might affect the informants because the interview itself is a social situation where relations are easily developed. He calls this the “interviewer’s effect” (Svenning 120). He states that there is a risk of the interviewer’s body language and subtle facial expressions influencing the informants in a particular direction, since they will be seeking the interviewer’s approval, in order to “help” the investigation along. A third problem is the risk of the informant answering one question incoherently, allowing for the interviewer to interpret these fragments subconsciously and through a different set of values and therefore adding other meaning than was originally intended (Svenning 121). In spite of this criticism, or with it in mind, it is my firm belief that the combination question – answer – follow-up question – clarification has given me enough relevant and accurate information regarding teachers’ attitudes to be able to satisfy one of the aims of this degree project. The information obtained from a qualitative interview with the teacher informants widely supersedes the information I would have been able to obtain by using any of the quantitative methods available.

Before the interviews with the informants began, much thought went into the creation of an interview guide. This guide was influenced by Gillian Lazar and her teacher trainer resource guide on how to incorporate literature in the classroom. (See appendix 3 – Interview guide). The importance of feeling well-prepared when going into the interview was essential and having a well thought out interview guide on my lap during the meeting made me feel secure and at ease in my role as the interviewer.

I conducted the interviews with the teacher informants in the span of one week. The interviews with each of the informants lasted about 30-40 minutes. To ensure that no
important information be missed, I asked the teachers’ permission to use a device to record the interviews, and they all agreed initially, the first informant had changed her mind and would not consent to the recording. When I met the second informant I was faced with the same dilemma of having to change my method. The advantages of recording the interviews would have allowed me to focus entirely on the informants’ replies and thus giving them a sense of me being involved and interested in their answers, not only in a professional manner but also in a personable way. Since these two informants I had scheduled to interview first changed their minds about allowing me to record the interview, I decided to not record the other two informants either. I believe that I managed to record their statements and opinions satisfactorily by hand despite not having audio of the interviews to go back to. The interviews did not, like I had planned, take on the appearance of a conversation where we both would be equal parts, but rather that of a traditional interview where I would ask a question and the informant would answer while I took notes and occasionally asking the informant to revisit some statement previously made in order to clarify a particular statement. Since the informants all work nearby I felt that I would have the possibility to make a phone call to any of them to ensure that I had understood their statements correctly. I also let each of the informants read a clean copy of their statement in order to ensure that my recollection of what each individual informant had stated during the interviews was completely in accordance with the intent of the interviewee.

It would have been counterproductive insisting that the recording device would be used as per our previous agreement and in retrospect, not having to transcribe each of the interviews saved a great deal of time. The interviews were held in Swedish and they were later translated into English because of the risk of misinterpretation and the risk of receiving the wrong answers. All informants are native speakers of Swedish and therefore, speaking English would have made the situation less than natural. For me and for the sake of this
investigation it was essential that the teacher informants felt that there would be no hindrance
to having a pleasant conversation with me.

The informants are four teachers who have all been working within the Swedish school system between five and twelve years. The teacher informants will for the remainder of this degree project be referred to as Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), Teacher 3 (T3) and Teacher 4 (T4).

3.3 Reliability, validity and falling-off

Validity and reliability, according to Patel and Davidson, are not only knowing that we study that which we intend to study but also knowing that we study it in a reliable way (102). These two terms are related and both must be considered in order to fulfill the aims of the study.

As far as the reliability of a questionnaire is concerned it is important that the questions are easy to comprehend and there cannot be any misconceptions as to what is the goal of the questionnaire and that the questions are to the point and easily understood. The questionnaire used in this degree project has therefore been sent to a few of my fellow students at Linneaus University and to two of my former colleagues for their input regarding the questions before its implementation. A few changes have been made after suggestions on how to remove any possibility for informants to misinterpret its purpose, and a few spelling errors and numeral mistakes have also been corrected. The pilot test that was performed in a non-participating class also resulted in a change in the order of the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was handed out in person to four classes that made up a total of 73 students, where all students were present at its implementation. The decision to deliver and implement the survey personally stemmed from the argument that a high frequency of responses increases reliability (Patel and Davidson 105). I therefore felt it was imperative to introduce myself and my degree project in an effort to cultivate a relationship between myself and the informants thus increasing the likelihood that the informants participate in the
questionnaire and minimizing the falling-off. Furthermore, in consideration of the teacher informants’ workload, I felt I could eliminate the possibility of the questionnaires being returned to me in an untimely fashion. Each of the four teachers has answered all of the questions in their respective interviews.

3.4 Data processing and analysis

The processing began with the compilation of the questionnaire in diagrams and my notes from interviews with the teacher informants were clarified and sent back to them for their approval before I presented the results in this paper. Conny Svenning says that there are primarily two mistakes that can happen during the analysis of the results. These are analytical fallacies which arise from misinterpretation of the collected materials and theoretical fallacies which mean that the material has been inadequately linked to the theories (Svenning 164). All four teachers have agreed to my interpretations of their statements, and I am confident that the standard for theoretical accuracy has been met.

Before I set out to carry out this investigation I had a pre-understanding of how it is to work with literature in schools. This is an asset when it comes to understanding and interpreting the collected material according to Svenning (159). Patel and Davidson write that hermeneutics is a tenet for interpretations within several different sciences that study the preconditions for human existence. It emphasizes that a human life can be interpreted according to how people express themselves in writing as well as in speaking (28 - 30). As the tenet of hermeneutics is largely based on an individual’s interpretation, this investigation’s method is both a quantitative questionnaire in order to have enough empirical material to analyze. The purpose of all analysis, according to Svenning, is to find patterns and for every time researchers go over the qualitative material they have collected, they will revisit and reinterpret the material (161). However, Svenning suggests that there are dangers with analyzing qualitative interviews, and he points to a syndrome he refers to as the “State’s
witness syndrome⁷ which means that the researcher views the informants as witnesses of reality and by doing so, leaves the analysis to the reader (163). It is essential that all qualitative analysis has a theoretical backdrop and it is the responsibility of the person conducting the study to ensure that this is the case (Svenning 163).

The questionnaires and the interviews are all based on the perceptions of the students and the teachers. These two materials together provide one or more answers to the aims of this investigation.

Patel and Davidson write that phenomenography is an approach to study learning (32). The theory is that individuals’ actions and reasoning are the starting point of their perceptions. Supporters of hermeneutics criticize phenomenography for not taking into account the pre-understanding of the individual, and say that the resulting analysis will not be profound enough (Patel and Davidson 32-33). Since this investigation has used two methods of investigation to obtain reliable answers to its questions, knowledge about hermeneutics and phenomenography is needed in order to see the big picture.

⁷ Word in Swedish is kronvittnessyndrom.
4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Patel and Davidson describe the four general principles set forth by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) that each scientist should take heed to when conducting studies: *The principle of information, the principle of consent, the principle of confidentiality and the principle of usage* (62 – 64).

4.1 The principle of information

As it is important to disclose the aims of this investigation the participants of this study, in this case the teachers as well as the students have been fully informed what the purpose of the questionnaires and the interviews was.

4.2 The principle of consent

The teachers and the students that have been selected to participate in this study have had the right to decline participating of their own volition. They have been made aware of this through written and oral information. Since this study has been conducted in an upper secondary school high school where each participant has been over the age of 16, no parental consent has been necessary to collect. This is in complete adherence with §18 of the law regarding the ethical review of research\(^8\) (SFS 2003:460).

4.3 The principle of confidentiality

All participants in this study have been guaranteed anonymity and therefore, each of the participants in this study has been de-coded. The teachers are called Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), and so forth, and there are no markers at all on the questionnaire to identify the informants other than what program they attend. Patel and Davidson write that it is important that the informants have this information before they start participating in the investigation, and it does not make a difference if the informants take part in an interview or in a questionnaire (64).

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\(^8\) English translation of *lagen om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor* in Swedish.
4.4 The principle of usage

This principle means that information regarding individual persons can only be used for scientific purposes. This guideline, like the others, has been followed throughout the implementation of this investigation.
5. RESULTS

In the following sections, I will give an account of what I have learned from the questionnaire and from the interviews and I will refer to some of the statements made by these informants. By statements I mean what the informants have written or said in the questionnaires or in the interviews.

5.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into three parts, where the first section had to do with literature in the classroom, the second section with how students understand the teacher’s attitudes towards reading books, and finally the third part had to do with the students’ own social backgrounds regarding the educational levels of parents/guardians and how many books there are in the students’ household. What follows is a compilation of the results of these sections.

5.1.1 Section A: Literature in the classroom

**Question: Do you like to read novels in English?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked the follow-up question *Why* or *Why not* some students in preparatory programs gave these reasons:

“I think you should read books in the original language”, “you learn a lot”, “because it’s a challenge”, “the original language is the best”, “it’s a good way to learn English”, “I am aware that I get a greater vocabulary and it is like an added bonus”, “I like it – if the books are good”. A few students pointed out that reading novels in English is “educational”.

Some negative answers from students in the same programs were: “Because it’s boring, and it’s much more relaxing to watch movies”, “I hate books. Boring and hard work”, “more
often, it’s more fun to watch the movie”, “hard and overly advanced words, Swedish books are good enough”.

Some of the students in vocational programs gave the following reasons to why they did not like to read books in English: “I think that the understanding of words is tricky”, “hate to read”, “hard to understand, takes longer time than Swedish books”, “because English is [expletive] boring”, “it’s no fun”, “not interesting”, “I am more interested in fact-based articles”, “you have to think about translating the whole time”.

Question: *Why do you think you have to read novels in English in school?*

One student from a vocational program answered this question with a counter question: “Do you have to?” The majority of students however, including those who were negative to reading books in English all agree that reading novels in English is good for building their vocabulary. Some students in preparatory programs mention how they learn idiomatic expressions and others mention that you learn language at the same time as you learn about culture or “things in different societies”. One student points out that it is good to get used to reading in English “for her future’s sake”.

*Question: Who decides that students have to read novels in English in school?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,7%</td>
<td>17,3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City Council</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,8%</td>
<td>4,3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNEA*</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>87,5%</td>
<td>78,2%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72**</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Swedish National Agency for Education  
** One student did not reply to this question

Comment: The vast majority of students respond that it is the Swedish National Agency for Education that has decided that students have to read novels in school.

---

9 The student used the term *överavancerad* in Swedish, a not so common word.
Question: Do you think that you learn something by reading novels in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment: Most students (90%) agree that you learn something from reading novels in English. Even among the students in vocational programs, where the number of students who do not like to read novels in English, this percentage is high. 86% say that you learn something compared with 14% who say that you do not.

Question: If you have answered in the affirmative, what do you think that you learn by reading novels in English?

Four students in preparatory programs answered “English”. Other students replied “how the language is built”, “you get a better language and a better understanding of how to use it”, “new words and how to describe things. How you learn new ways to use words you already know”, “grammar and how words are spelled”, “it gives you subconscious knowledge that you store. That is good”, “it builds my vocabulary which makes it easier to speak to others”.

The majority of the students agree that you learn from reading in English. Some students stated: “I learn what I read about”, “English in general”, “understanding and a better vocabulary”, “words and expressions”, “you improve your language”, “speaking, writing and so on”, “words”, “reading”, “new words and how to formulate sentences”, “you understand English better”.

Linnaeus University
School of Language and Literature

27 (61)
Question: Who makes the selection of which novel/novels to read in class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26,1%</td>
<td>47,8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher tells me what to choose</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,7%</td>
<td>8,7%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always choose</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I choose and sometimes the teacher chooses</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71,2%</td>
<td>43,5%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment: More than half of the students in vocational programs (57%) feel that they have little or no say in what books to read in English compared with the 16% of students in preparatory programs who experience the same.

Question: How do you work with novels in English?

Comment: This was a question where students could tick several answers. Out of the forty-three students that replied that they read their books in the classroom, 22, or 51% are students in preparatory programs. 49% attend vocational programs. In regards to reading at home, preparatory students make up 86% of this column and vocational students the remaining 14%.
Students in vocational programs are more often allowed to watch movies instead of reading the actual paper copy of the book.

5.1.2 Section B – Teacher’s attitude

Section B deals with whether the teacher’s attitude towards the studying of literature in English is noticeable or not to the students, and how they notice this.

*Question: Do you believe that your teacher thinks that it is fun to read books?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment: A majority of students in both vocational and preparatory programs agree that their teacher thinks it is fun to read. Only 7 students in total do not agree with the majority.

The follow-up question: *How can you tell that your teacher thinks it is fun to read?* was answered by nearly all students in the preparatory programs while most students in the vocational programs did not provide an answer. A few of the seven students who did not think that the teacher liked to read novels answered the question. An assortment of the answers provided by the students has been divided according to students’ type of program.

Students of preparatory programs answered: “She talks about books all the time”, “I just assume”, “She gives me good suggestions and shows commitment to a certain extent”, “she talks about books that are good”, “they talk about why it’s important to read”, “because she has said that her only interest is to read books sort of”, “she knows a lot about many writers”.

Students of vocational programs answered: “Because she has mentioned it”, “she talks about books that she has read”, “they sit and read at the same time we do”, “they seem to have read all the books they hand out”, “you can tell she knows what she’s doing”, “I don’t know, I just assume she likes it. She’s that type”, “if she didn’t like reading books, she wouldn’t have become a teacher. Teachers like to read”.

29 (61)
5.1.3 Section C – Social background

The final section of the questionnaire has to do with the students’ social background; the educational level of their parents, or their legal guardians. There is also a question that asks the students to estimate how many books there are in their households.

**Question: What is the level of education of your parents/legal guardians?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary school</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144*</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Calculating that each student has two parents/legal guardians makes the total number at the bottom of the diagram 146 (73 students x 2). However, two students stated that they only have one legal guardian reduce the total number to 144.

Comment: The students that answered “Don’t know” were asked to clarify what their parents’ or legal guardians’ current occupation is. Student 1 answered: “Police officer”. Student 2 answered: “Owner of a bus company”. Student 3 answered: “Chief Executive Officer at X”\(^{10}\). Student 4 answered that both parents are police officers. Student 5 answered: “Registered nurse and truck driver”. Student 6 answered: “Carpet layer and sick-listed pre-school teacher”.

**Question: How many books would you estimate that there are in your household?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Books</th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>Voc. stud. in %</th>
<th>Prep. stud in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 100</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 300</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 – 500</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 500</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72*</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One student did not answer this question. The same student stated in the evaluation of this questionnaire that the question “was odd”.

\(^{10}\) The name of the company has been removed to ensure the student’s anonymity.
Comment: 62% of the students in preparatory programs come from households that have more than three hundred books, compared with students from vocational programs where 100% of the students come from homes with less than 300 books.

5.1.4 The evaluation

All students who participated in taking the questionnaire were asked to fill out an evaluation as well. Out of 73 students, 2 elected not to fill it out. The results of the evaluation are presented in this section:

Question: What did you think of the length of this questionnaire?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too short</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too long</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate length</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling-off</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>≈100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: What did you think about the questions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All programs</th>
<th>In %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to understand</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to understand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling-off</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>≈100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment: More than 90% of the students who participated in this questionnaire feel that the length of the questionnaire was adequate and that the questions asked were easy to understand.

In the follow-up question “If any of the questions were difficult, which one or which ones?” one of the students replied that the question where they were asked about the number of books in their household was “odd” and another said that it was difficult to understand why they were asked this question. A third student stated that they did not completely
understand the question about how students can tell if their teachers like to read books in English.

5.2 The interviews

What follows is a compilation of the teacher informants’ statements based on the interviews. Teacher informants 1 and 2 both work solely in vocational programs, while teacher informants 3 and 4 both work in preparatory programs. From now on the teacher informants will be referred to as T1, T2, T3 and T4.

Question: What is literature to you?

T1: Many things but foremost novels of course, but to me it also means course materials such as manuals our students need for their vocational training. Most of them can be found in English. I would not consider movies a traditional form of literature, but I think it is important to use this medium especially to raise students’ interests in reading. It might be a good idea to watch the movie first, if there is one.

T2: Novels and extracts from literary works. Our students also work with manuals they need in their training. I treat movies as if they are the same as novels sometimes because IT/media plays a huge part in our students’ lives nowadays. To watch movies is also a good way to entice students who might never have read a book before in school or at home.

T3: Literature is a source for inspiration in teaching English and I would gladly trade all course books for novels if I had the financial resources to do so. Literature is everything and it can be used in all aspects of teaching English in accordance with the syllabus.

T4: Literature to me is texts of different genres, novels and short stories. I have never thought about using film as literature, but I guess it can be used like that. I have always considered literature to be “the written word” and therefore movies are no substitute for reading but only a complement.
Question: How is the division of time regarding writing, reading and speaking when you plan a course?

T1: My students get to read and write a lot. Usually they do not have a large vocabulary when they come to upper secondary school so we have to start building that. Spelling skills vary from year to year in English 5.

T2: These students in my vocational program are weak when it comes to writing and I place the greatest focus on that. If the students fail any part of the National standardized test, it is the writing section. They normally pass the reading and listening sections, because in real life they are fed these skills through media every day.

T3: My intention is always to have these parts equally divided, but I give more and more time in my planning to speaking and less to writing due to my work load. At the same time, I want my students to be aware that speaking is just as important, if not more, as the other skills and I have handed out a matrix with the grade criteria to them.

T4: In my planning I always try to divide the lessons equally between these skills but I place more focus on writing and reading and give the least focus on listening. I often work thematically and try to balance presentations evenly between written and oral. I try to vary the lesson plans and work all skills into the area of study.

Question: What are the advantages of reading novels in English 5?

T1: It is a great way to learn vocabulary. Hopefully we can help students find texts that they find appealing in accordance with their interests. It is easy to connect the syllabus to reading novels, and there really is nothing that would prevent us from reading novels throughout the course. There are no limitations to how novels can be used when we work thematically.

T2: The students get to learn vocabulary.

T3: The advantages are to get used to a language and to get fluency in how to go through literary texts. It is a great way to extend the vocabulary. It is a source for discussions and if
you let the students discuss from their points-of-view it is easy to keep the lesson at the right level of difficulty. The subject matter of the novel may enthuse the students and all of a sudden, reading is fun.

T4: Students learn so much from reading novels. It could be anything from how language is built, vocabulary, how to achieve fluency and how they can use the language correctly. The more a student reads, the more they enrich their own language and ideas. Students reach insights about culture, language and it gives rise to reflections on moral values and different living conditions in the world. Students learn how language works in real life and not just how to repeat grammatical rules over and over and over again.

Question: Are there any disadvantages to reading novels in English 5?

T1: There are no disadvantages to reading novels. They are connected to the real world.

T2: We do have a large group of students who have never read any novels regardless of language. Many students tell me that the book I placed in their hands is the first one they have ever finished reading.

T3: Many of the students should read but they do not. This is especially obvious in book circles where group members do not do the work. It is unfortunate because group discussions or book circles are an excellent way of working with novels. A great disadvantage is also the difficulty of finding appropriate books for everybody.

T4: Some students have a resistance towards reading and this might be because a lack of interest, maybe, or they dislike or because they are not used to reading. These students take shortcuts in their reading and seem very unwilling to spend the extra amount of time it takes to read novels at home. These students feel that reading takes too much time.
Question: How do you examine novels?

T1: Written analysis of the novels that the students have read. They have to reflect and discuss the contents. I also give them questions on the text which they have to answer in writing or orally. I also try to connect thematically external stuff to the novels that the students read.

T2: It varies due to which group you have. I usually ask that they write a brief review of the novel where not all will analyze certain aspects, but all will have to find a message in the novel. Sometimes they discuss the novel in small groups where the basis of the discussion lies in questions that I have handed out beforehand.

T3: I try to use great variation when I examine the students on books. My classes are required to do two oral exams and two written exams when they have finished reading their novels. I ask them to read four novels in a school year. I usually work with book circles but also with something called “book trailers” which you can find information about on youtube.com. These are suitable for group work. I really hate book reviews and I hate compilations of things in the novels, which students know how to do from lower secondary school. I need them to learn how to analyze various aspects of the novels, and make PowerPoint-presentations to the rest of the class. In English 5 they do not have the skill to analyze novels yet, but we start developing it gently.

T4: In different ways. Sometimes I examine the novels orally, in small groups where the students have written their own questions and sometimes I ask them key questions to ensure that all have read the novel. I ask them to reflect on the literature. One book that I choose will be read by the entire class and it will be examined through a class discussion and a written analysis.

Question: What are your goals with having your students read novels?

T1: That they will develop. 

[11] Swedish text that has been translated reads: “att de ska utvecklas”.
T2: The dream would be that they would find pleasure in reading novels despite their negative attitudes. Also I wish that they will keep reading novels.

T3: I want my students to become better readers and find subject matter that touch them and their lives. I want them to be able to discuss what they read at their level. In short, I want them to burn for literature just like I do.

T4: My goal is to have my students get to know different types of English literature. I also want them to learn how to reflect about what they have read, and of course I want them to improve their language skills by reading and recognizing the structures in the English language.

*Question: Before the school year begins, what are your expectations of the work with reading novels in English?*

T1: I expect my students to learn how to analyze and look beneath the surface of what they read.

T2: I do not have any particular expectations. I just hope that some students will start to enjoy reading.

T3: I used to have high expectations, but I have learnt that the only expectations you should have are no expectations at all. For every year I notice that students are less and less used to reading novels. Hopefully, you can inspire them to accept the challenge of reading. Speaking of inspiration, I use the summer vacation to read up on new novels and browse the internet for new approaches to working with novels in the classroom.

T4: I have no special expectations apart from hoping to create an interest for reading English literature. However, I do realize that students are less used to reading novels and now I expect them to at least work with novels when I ask them to, and discuss when I ask them to.

*Question: What are your previous experiences of students’ attitudes towards reading novels in English?*
T1: When students in vocational programs come to us, most have never read a book even in Swedish. I know that I have my work cut out for me when it comes to teaching them all aspects of English 5, not just reading novels.

T2: I know that I have to gently ease into reading with these students because if I were to hand them a book and say that they have two months to hand in a paper on it, they would refuse. They would not do the work.

T3: Students saying: “Do we have to read?” Of course there are students who love to read but they do not make a lot of noise regarding their attitudes towards reading. It is fun, however, when some students who claim to “hate” reading novels exceed their own expectations and overcome their own attitudes.

T4: That some students feel that reading is “the best thing ever” but also, like I said, that some students have a great resistance towards reading and therefore they bring down the reading experience for the entire class. The challenge is to meet all students’ needs and expectations.

Question: How interested are your students in reading novels in English?

T1: You can clearly see which students who come from a home setting where they have been exposed to language stimuli. You can also see which students come from an environment where the members of the family talk to each other. Students who have little or no language skills are not interested in theoretical subjects at all.

T2: There is little to no interest in reading novels in English, since these students attend a vocational program where they get to work with their hands and they are usually not interested in or motivated for theoretical subjects.

T3: Not all students have read novels when they start in my English 5 class, but since they are in a preparatory program they are interested in achieving a good grade in English and this will motivate them for reading novels. In these programs there is high status in being good in English.
T4: It varies. Some students have never read a book before in lower secondary school. Some students love to read. Like I said, it varies.

*Question: How do you motivate your students to read novels in English?*

T1: It is important that the students become interested in the novel early on, and then it helps if I read one or two chapters aloud to them and when the plot starts getting exciting they will read for a while and then I take over again. They get to read in class since not all students come from an environment in which they can read.

T2: I usually start off the introduction to a novel by reading aloud one chapter and then letting the students read one chapter in class. Then I read to them again and we continue like that until we have finished the novel. We usually read a novel that has something to do with what we are working on at the moment, for example, when we work with a theme like “Crime and punishment” the entire class reads the Penguin reader of *The Client* by John Grisham.

T3: Finding novels with subjects that inspire them. I am always looking for stories that might interest the particular class or individual student, but I also use the school librarians who possess vast knowledge about books suitable for English learners.

T4: I let them choose novels more freely, in accordance with their interests. The problem with letting students pick their own books to read is that you never know if they have read it before.

*Question: How do you choose which novels to read? What are your priorities?*

T1: The challenge is to find something that the students will find interesting and that they will think is fun. We have purchased books that we hope will be appropriate and that will inspire further reading. Also, I try to find books that are close to their reality and to their interests.

T2: Those of us who teach in the vocational programs choose to buy enough copies of Penguin readers so that the entire class can read the same book. We read books together in class because students will not read at home.
T3: When it comes to having the entire class read the same novel, you are pretty much left with “what you can find”. Usually, if we work with a theme, I will divide the group according to what novels are available. I will grade the novels and form the groups according to level of difficulty. The goal, as I mentioned before, is to make the students enjoy reading and one of the ways to make that happen is to ensure that the novels are appropriate for them to read. It should be fun to read and it is no fun if you have a novel that is too difficult or are in a group where the members are not at your own skills level.

T4: You are basically stuck with what you can find and there are seldom enough books for an entire class to read the same time. You have to look to the group, and think about whom your target group is and at what level of difficulty these students find themselves. Since we often work thematically I have to find an appropriate novel with either a social aspect or moral values that we can discuss later.

Question: What do you do if you notice that there is a great difference among your students’ reading habits?

T1: We have full-length versions that I can hand out to a student who is too good for reading the short version of a novel.

T2: If a student is good at reading, he or she gets to read the full-length version of the novel.

T3: I will, as I mentioned previously, divide novels into groups ranging from easy to difficult. I try to steer away from letting students choose their own novels partly because it is a bit risky in terms of finding the right level of difficulty as well as the fact that you do not really know if the student has read the novel before. Helping students who are not motivated to read is difficult because no matter what you ask them regarding their interests and what type of novels they like to read, all they can answer is “I dunno”.

T4: It is difficult because you cannot please all students with the same novel. You have to find a common ground and hope for the best. You have to be ready to fight and lower your
ambitions. You have to refer students to the school library where they can receive expert advice from the librarian, but overall it is very hard to help those who are weak in English and those who are not motivated to read.

*Question* : Do you collaborate with any other teachers of English 5 when it comes to planning, implementation and evaluation?

T1: Not really, but you occasionally talk to someone else about your thoughts about different aspects of teaching. We do, however, sit together and correct the National standardized tests.

T2: I usually plan together with a colleague of mine and we share lesson plans. In my office there is another teacher in a vocational program with whom I reflect over my classes and my lessons. It feels good to vent with somebody. We often correct the national standardized tests together.

T3: Not often enough due to the fact that we cannot find time to meet. I do collaborate somewhat with one colleague, but mostly it is just when the English department meets once or twice per semester that we share lesson plans with each other.

T4: We talk occasionally, and you get tips from other colleagues, but that is about it.

*Question* : Do you feel that you have enough resources for a good structure that is suitable for all students in your class when it comes to reading novels in English?

T1: We always need more books, although we have a budget of our own here in our vocational programs now. Before, we used to have to share funds with the teachers in the preparatory programs and after they had purchased what they needed there was very rarely anything left for our students. Our students might not have been as prone to study as the students in the preparatory programs but they were treated very unfairly.

T2: Yes, we have enough money to purchase books.

T3: Resources in terms of money or in terms of myself? It depends, I suppose, on the size of the class, because I am not enough of a resource to my students if there are too many of them
that need help. In terms of money I would like to be able to purchase all the novels I need and
enough copies for everybody, but there are plenty of us who teach and who all want a piece of
the budgetary cake, so I guess I will have to listen to the other teachers too.

T4: We always need more resources to buy more books.
6. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, the results from the interviews and the questionnaire are the focus of discussion and analysis. The methods used will also be discussed.

6.1 Result discussion and analysis

Going over the results of the questionnaires and interviews and seeing how students and teachers view working with literature in English in school has captured my interest.

Nearly half (51%) of the students like reading novels in English and the other half do not. 68% of the students in preparatory programs like reading books whereas only 17% of the students in vocational programs do. Many of the students in the vocational programs who were negative towards reading novels in English pointed to the fact that the books were boring and uninteresting. This could stem from the fact that their teachers provide them with Penguin readers instead of challenging the students with more appropriate literature for young adults. Instructional manuals might not entice students’ motivation as much as The Hunger Games, Twilight or even a classic like The Hobbit. Jack Thomson states in his study from 1987 entitled Understanding Teenagers’ Reading that non-readers usually use the term “boring” because it is something that they have learnt in school (51). What he means by this is the students are told by their peers that reading is boring and that in order to fit in and not stand out, most non-reading students adapt the term “boring” without actually giving reading literature a chance. Much like, perhaps, the majority of the students in vocational programs. Charles Sarland has stated that students need to connect emotionally to a novel and find themselves in the novel in order to keep up their interest for reading (Molloy 50-51). However, a majority of all students (90%) see the value of reading novels in English, because these students agree that they learn while they read. Although nearly all students understand the value, not all see themselves as readers. These students might think that they will be
unsuccessful in their attempt at reading novels in English and therefore they might not even try.

Interestingly, preparatory students emphasize that they develop a deeper understanding of the way the English language is structured and that reading gives them a better preparedness to go out and speak English. Many of the students also point to the fact that they learn about how things are in the world while vocational students focus on the benefits of reading to building their vocabulary and not so much in the application of the language. T1 and T2 also mention vocabulary building as the top statement why reading books is advantageous in English 5, just like their students, whereas T3 and T4 focus on developing an understanding of how language is built and how to achieve fluency and enrichment in their language, just like their students. Could this mirror what the teachers answer when students ask why they have to read novels? This could be explained along the lines of teachers’ previous experiences and their expectations of their students. In vocational programs the aim of the teacher might be to help the majority of students achieve a passing grade and, although this was not spoken of at all in the interviews, they might just have their students read literature because it is a requirement in the governing documents.

A teacher in a preparatory program might aim to educate students about democracy and human rights through reading novels and have the grades be secondary. T4 mentions specifically that students gain insights about moral values and living conditions in other parts of the world and Gunilla Molloy argues that if literature would be used more often in school students would be more tolerant of others (318). This is important to consider since the Swedish fundamental values\textsuperscript{12} are central in the Swedish school law, SFS2010:800. Through reading novels, students can obtain a respect and understanding for other peoples living under different conditions in the world. Bo Lundahl lists why it is important to study narrative texts,

\textsuperscript{12} Svenska värdegrunden.
and he points out that they are particularly important as examples of intra-cultural learning, they are a source for how language works, and consequently they provide a good model for developing language. Furthermore, narrative texts allow students to experience and further develop their reading skills (404-405). It seems that the teachers and students in the preparatory programs focus more on these aspects of reading novels in English than what the students and teachers in vocational programs do.

As far as motivating students, all four teachers were in agreement that one effective method of doing so is to let students pick their own books. However, it seems like the teacher is more likely to choose the novel students are reading in class in vocational programs than in preparatory programs. 57% of the students in vocational programs compared to 16% of preparatory students feel that they have little or no say in which books they read in class. Both teachers in the vocational programs state that they read a few chapters to their students and then the students read a few. They continue in this way until the novel is finished. Both teachers suggest that this is a good way to get their students interested in what happens in the novel and by doing this it will motivate them to read by themselves. Students in vocational programs all read an abridged version of a novel, a so-called Penguin reader, while this is not the practice in preparatory programs at all, even though there are students in the preparatory programs who have never read novels before, regardless of language. According to the questionnaire, it seems that the teachers choose which book the vocational students read, even though both T1 and T2 both answered differently in their interviews. Both teachers in the preparatory programs mention that they employ the services of the school librarian when it comes to helping each student to find an appropriate novel to read.

All teachers are in agreement that if you want to motivate students to read, it is important that you raise their interest in the book at hand, or make sure that the students feel inspired when it comes to reading, whether they were allowed to pick their own book or
whether the teacher chose it for them. T3 said that students who attend preparatory programs are usually motivated to achieve high grades and will read novels for that reason. She also says that students who excel in English enjoy high status among their classmates. If we turn those arguments around we see that vocational students are motivated to learn a practical trade and subjects that are theoretical and not part of their vocational training are not motivated to read novels at all, making it more difficult for vocational program teachers of English 5 to approach reading literature than it is for the colleagues in preparatory programs.

On the question of status, the students that are skilled in their practical field enjoy higher status. The question of status is also closely related to social class and habitus according to Ulver-Sneistrup (32). The structures of status in vocational programs are quite different from those in preparatory programs, but they mirror how society regards class and status. Mikael Palme also presents a different structure of status in upper secondary school when he envisions the school in the shape of a triangle whose top holds students that achieve high grades and that are from high social background. At the base of the triangle we find the students with the lowest social standing and the lowest grade. Palme continues by saying that in terms of programs, the natural science program would be found at the top of this structure and the vehicle and transportation program would be found at the bottom (50).

With regard to what teachers do if they notice a great difference in students’ reading habits the results show a remarkable difference between the teachers in preparatory programs and the teachers in vocational programs. Both teachers in the vocational programs answered that if they have a student who is much better than the rest, i.e. the focus is on how low the class performs, he or she will get to read a full-length version of what the class is reading. The perspective of the teachers in the preparatory programs, on the other hand, is quite the opposite in that all students are good, but some are better than others. The reasons for this could be that the previous experiences of the teachers play a greater part than what they
admitted to in the interviews. The Pygmalion effect is obvious here insofar that the teachers in vocational programs do indeed have lower expectations of their students, due to their perceived social capital. Respectively, with regards to the teachers in the preparatory programs, the Pygmalion effect does not play as great a part, since for them, knowing that students are motivated to obtain high grades is enough to place focus on higher levels. A strong case can also be made for Helena Korp’s findings that teachers in vocational programs focus their lesson plans so that every student could obtain a passing grade whereas the teachers in preparatory programs have higher expectations on which grade their students will achieve. This was, however, not mentioned by any of the teacher informants in their interviews.

The previous experiences of T1 and T2 in the vocational programs have led them to realize that when new students come to them each year, most of them have never finished reading a novel. T3 and T4 notice the same things but not to the same extent as their colleagues. They also seem to be hopeful that all of their students will take on the challenges of reading novels in English, even those students that have a built-in resistance towards literature in English.

Most of the students who attend preparatory programs do not get time to read their novels in class unless they have time left at the end of a class. Most of their reading is done at home. The teachers in the vocational programs work quite differently with novels than those who teach in the preparatory programs. Nearly all students in vocational programs say, as do their teachers, that most of their reading is done in school. T2 states that if she were to hand out novels to her class with instructions that they would be examined two months later, her students would refuse. It is unclear if T2 has attempted this or if she merely assumes that her students would. T2’s low expectations of her students are visible if her statement is an assumption.
As mentioned previously, Gillian Lazar points to three differing ways of approaching literature in the classroom. It is fair to say that literature is used in vocational programs whereas it is studied in preparatory programs. Lazar states that when literature is studied it is the subject or the content of a language course while she contends that we use literature as only a source among other texts (14).

A majority of the students, 90% regardless of program, believe that their teacher thinks it is fun to read, if for no other reason than being a teacher, as one of the students stated. In the interviews all of the teachers seem to agree on the importance and the joy of reading novels and that the novels can be worked into every aspect of their teaching if they had the time and the resources to do so. It is important that the teachers have read the novels they ask the students to read, because this could somehow serve as a guarantee that the novel is in fact worthy of reading. Teachers should therefore strive to be well read regarding the books they choose for their students as it would raise the students’ motivation to read the novel.

With regard to the students’ social background, it is disconcerting that nine students do not know the level of education of their parents or legal guardians, especially since there are three police officers, a pre-school teacher and a registered nurse among these professionals. Knowing that these professions require a university degree ought to be general knowledge. As far as the results are concerned, it was no surprise that nearly 56% of the parents or legal guardians with students in preparatory program had studied at university, compared with the close to 18% of the parents or legal guardians of students in vocational programs.

Although I was expecting that there would be differences in cultural capital depending on whether the students attend preparatory programs or vocational programs, I was still surprised to see that the question regarding books in a student’s household gave such a
divisive gap in how the students answered. Early in the process of writing this degree project I had barely thought along the lines of social background and cultural capital when I found that one way of measuring social background is by investigating how many books a person has at home. The main theory is that if there are a lot of books in a household, those who live there would have more cultural capital than someone who has few books (see for example SOU 1993:85). I decided to add the question to the questionnaire just to see if the theory had merits. In my study, vocational program students replied that all of them (100%) came from homes where there are fewer than 300 books and 62% of the students in preparatory programs come from households where there are more than 300 books. Only one of the teachers, T1, touched upon the issue of social background when she stated that to her it is obvious which of the students that come from a home environment where the students have received stimulus in regards to language skills. Students who see their parents or legal guardians read novels at home are more likely to do so themselves.

6.2 Method discussion
Taking into account the implementation of the methods used in this investigation I am certain that the aims of this study have been met by using both a qualitative interview as well as a quantitative questionnaire. It was unfortunate that the interviews were planned to be executed during a period of heavy work load for the teachers, but still the interviews felt relaxed and stress free and they, most importantly, gave me valuable insight into the aims of my degree project. Since all teacher informants have been given the opportunity to view a clean copy of their interview, and they have approved my interpretation of their statements I conclude that the reliability is high. There were no trial interviews, but I am confident that my interview guide worked very well. The four teacher informants in this study are all women, but it is unlikely that the answers would have been different if there had been more equality in the
selection. Interestingly, in this school where there are close to 1,500 students, there is not one male teacher of English.

The pilot study of the questionnaire contributed to some changes in its readability and it seems that the mix of open and closed question was fortunate and the falling-off was kept at a minimum. This could be attributed to me being present during the implementation of the questionnaire and that I had created a personal connection with the students when I introduced myself and the background to this degree project.
CONCLUSIONS

This investigation set out to answer four questions. The first, in which I asked whether it was possible to study the differences in students’ attitudes towards reading novels in English novels on the basis on their social background, has been answered successfully. The results of the questionnaire show that there are differences that can be traced back to the students’ social background.

The second was to analyze the teachers’ attitudes and their previous experiences regarding their students, and if this has an impact on how they work with novels in the classroom. This question has been answered as well when I found that the experiences have been that students do not enjoy reading and that most students have never finished reading a novel. The attitudes that teachers have towards reading novels or the importance of novels in the classroom are positive throughout.

In order to find the answer to the third question, I set out to investigate if the selection of which novels to read is based on the students’ social background and who decides which books to read in class. I am confident that the statements made by the informants in the interviews and in the questionnaires have given me enough information to answer this question as well. Teachers do not consider social background when they select novels for their students to read. Teachers base their selection mainly on the subject of the theme on which they are working. One of the teacher informants stated that she makes her selection based on whatever novels are available to her.

Finally, the question of how teachers motivate students to read novels and how they work with novels in the classroom was answered by the teachers themselves in the interviews. They all agree that what is most important regarding motivating their students to reading novels is to make sure to raise student interest in the subject matter of the novel. Teachers do, however, use quite different approaches to introducing literature in the classrooms. This
depends primarily on whether the teachers work in vocational programs or in preparatory programs.

One big difference in how teachers in vocational programs differ from their colleagues in preparatory programs is how they view their classes. It seems from the interviews that vocational students more often are viewed as part of a group, a collective of likeminded people who are at the same level relating to theoretical subjects, whereas preparatory students are viewed more like individuals who are all capable of using English.

In conclusion, what has mainly drawn my attention concerning the motivation in students is that preparatory students are said to be motivated by achieving high grades, whereas vocational students are motivated by obtaining an education in order for them to start working after graduation. What would happen to the motivation of vocational students if achieving passing grade in the core theoretical subjects would be required to gain employment after finishing upper secondary school? It is a remarkable thought that certainly deserves more in-depth study to see if grades, which are considered a motivation for preparatory students could be equally motivating for vocational students.
LIST OF WORKS CITED


Enkätundersökning 2012
Del A – Frågor om litteratur i klassrummet

1. Tycker du om att läsa böcker/romaner på engelska?
   □ Ja □ Nej
   Varför?/Varför inte?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

2. Varför tror du att man måste läsa böcker på engelska i skolan?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

3. Vem är det som bestämmer att man ska läsa böcker på engelska i skolan?
   □ läraren och lärarens arbetslag
   □ kommunen
   □ skolverket

4. Tror du att man lär sig något när man läser böcker på engelska?
   □ ja
   □ nej

5. Om du svarat ja på fråga 5 – Vad tror du att du lär dig av att läsa böcker?
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
6. Vem väljer de böcker du läser på engelska i skolan?

- ☐ läraren väljer
- ☐ läraren säger åt mig vad jag ska välja
- ☐ jag väljer jämt
- ☐ ibland väljer jag och ibland väljer läraren


- ☐ läsa i klassrummet
- ☐ läsa hemma
- ☐ se film
- ☐ lyssna på ”hörböcker”
- ☐ lämna in skriftligt till läraren
- ☐ diskutera i grupper
- ☐ redovisa i helklass
- ☐ redovisa enskilt med läraren
- ☐ ingen redovisning alls
- ☐ annat ________________________________
  ________________________________

Del B – frågor om elevers uppfattning av lärarens attityd till litteraturundervisning

1. Tror du att er lärare tycker att det är roligt att läsa böcker?
- ☐ ja
- ☐ nej

2. Hur märker du som elev det?
  ________________________________
  ________________________________
  ________________________________

2
Del C – några avslutande frågor om vem du är och vilken bakgrund du har:

1. Hur gammal är du?
   _________________________________

2. Vilken utbildningsnivå har dina vårdnadshavare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vårdnadshavare 1</th>
<th>Vårdnadshavare 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ högstadiet</td>
<td>☐ högstadiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ gymnasiet</td>
<td>☐ gymnasiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ högskola/universitet</td>
<td>☐ högskola/universitet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ vet inte</td>
<td>☐ vet inte</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Om du svarat ”vet inte” på fråga 4, vad är dina vårdnadshavares nuvarande sysselsättning?
   _____________________________________________________________

4. Hur många böcker skulle du uppskatta finns i ditt hem?
   ☐ 0 – 100
   ☐ 100 - 300
   ☐ 300 – 500
   ☐ Mer än 500
Utvärdering av enkätundersökning 2012

1. Vad tyckte du om den här undersökningens längd?
   □ För kort.
   □ För lång.
   □ Lagom.

2. Vad tyckte du om frågorna?
   □ Enkla att förstå.
   □ Svåra att förstå.

   Om någon fråga var svår. Vilken eller vilka?

   ________________________________________________________________
Guide för intervjuer med informanter

År som lärare i engelska: ________________________________
Arbetar på yrkes- eller studieförberedande program: ____________

Vad är litteratur/skönlitteratur för dig?
Hur ser fördelningen ut mellan skriva, läsa, tala i ditt upplägg av Eng 5?
Fördelar med litteraturläsning i Eng 5?
Nackdelar?
Hur examinerar du romanläsning?
Vilket är ditt mål/dina mål med litteraturundervisningen?
Innan skolåret börjar, hur ser dina förväntningar på romanläsningsarbetet ut?
Vilka tidigare erfarenheter har du av elevers attityder till läsning på engelska?
Hur stort är intresset bland dina elever att läsa litteratur på engelska?
Kan du säga något om deras attityder till att läsa romaner på engelska?
Hur motiverar du dina elever till att läsa romaner?
På vilket/vilka sätt arbetar du med romanläsning?
Hur väljer du ut romaner? Hur prioriterar du?
Hur gör du när du märker att det är stor skillnad i läsvana bland dina elever?
Samarbetar du med andra lärare i engelska 5 när det gäller planering,
genomförande, utvärdering?
Känner du att du har nog resurser för ett bra upplägg som passar alla elever i din klass när det gäller att läsa romaner på engelska?