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Reading and the Profession: On the Literary Education of English School Teachers

Abstract

The article addresses the question of how English departments best can teach literature and literary reading to future upper secondary school teachers of English. It approaches the question in terms of the literary scholar's contribution to the professional education and practice of school teachers in Sweden. The article combines metacognitive analyses of disciplinary ways of thinking with profession theory to reflect on the literary content knowledge upper secondary school teachers need for their teaching practice. It outlines key differences between the understanding of what reading literature entails in academia and in upper secondary education, respectively, and it points out that current academic practices for teaching literature rely on a narrow understanding of what school teachers need to know about literature and literary reading to exercise their professional judgement concerning literature in the language classroom. Advocating a change in our academic teaching practices, the article proposes that literary debates over reading also be incorporated and that the principles and procedures underpinning professional modes of reading literature be explicitly articulated. This means verbalising underlying theoretical assumptions about the value of literature and of reading it and explicating interpretative conventions and tools, alongside the skills involved in literary reading. Such a teaching practice, the article posits, is not merely key to developing school teachers' content knowledge regarding literature and reading. It is also a prerequisite for the development of their pedagogical reasoning when it comes to the uses of literature and to the affordances and limitations of literary reading in the school classroom.

Keywords: literary reading, teacher education, metacognition, professional practice, disciplinary thinking, content knowledge, upper secondary school

Läsning och professionen: Om litteraturutbildningen för skollärare i engelska

Sammanfattning

Artikeln tar sig an frågan om hur akademiska engelskämnen bäst kan undervisa litteratur och litteraturläsning för gymnasielärarstudenter i engelska. Den närmar sig frågan i termer av litteraturvetarens bidrag till gymnasielärares professionsutbildning och -utövande i Sverige. Artikeln kombinerar metakognitiva analyser av ämnesspecifika tankesätt med professionsteori för att resonera kring de ämneskunskaper som framtida gymnasielärare behöver för sin lärargärning. Artikeln belyser viktiga skillnader i förståelsen av vad litteraturläsning innebär inom akademien respektive i gymnasieskolan, och den granskar kritiskt förhärskande akademiska praktiker för litteraturstudier inom ämnet. Den påpekar att rådande praktiker bygger på en snäv syn av de ämneskunskaper gymnasielärare behöver och föreslår ett förnyat fokus på ämneskunskaperna som krävs för att gymnasielärare ska kunna utöva sitt professionella omdöme om den engelskspråkiga litteraturens plats i språkundervisningen. Artikeln förordar att akademiska litteraturstudier också inlemmar litteraturvetenskapliga samtal om litteraturläsning i utbildningen och explicit formulerar de principer och tillvägagångssätt som ligger till grund för professionella sätt att läsa litteratur. Det innebär att verbalisera teoriernas underliggande antaganden om litteraturens och litteraturläsningens värde och även ämnesområdets principer och verktyg för texttolkning samt färdigheterna som krävs för litteraturläsning. En sådan undervisningspraktik skulle bidra till en stadigare grund för gymnasielärares ämneskunskaper. Den är också en förutsättning för att lärarstudenter ska utveckla sitt pedagogiska tänkande vad gäller litteraturens och litteraturläsningens möjligheter och begränsningar i gymnasieskolans engelskundervisning.

Nyckelord: litteraturläsning, ämneslärarutbildning, metakognition, professionsutövning, ämnesspecifika tankesätt, ämneskunskap, gymnasieskola

Introduction

In Sweden the study of literature forms an integral part of the higher education that students receive when training to become upper secondary school teachers of English. This is the case both because the academic subject defines the study of literature as one of its disciplines and because the school curriculum prescribes the teaching of literature in the school subject. The present article reflects on the question of how English departments best can teach literature and literary reading to students training to become upper secondary school teachers

of English. I am interested in this question in relation to the shape of literary studies in teacher education in Sweden and to the value ascribed to the study of English literature within the same. Current academic teaching practices tend to instruct students on how to make sense of literary works and on how to use literature in language teaching, and they privilege teaching students how to read literature from a cultural perspective. I want to suggest that such practices are based on a narrow understanding of what school teachers need to know in order to exercise their pedagogical reasoning about when, why, and how to use English literature in the language classroom.

To answer the question of how to teach English literature and literary reading, then, I focus on the domain knowledge of school teachers and, particularly, on the literary scholar's role in teacher education. In doing so, I consider what implications metacognitive research on disciplinary ways of thinking can have for our understanding of what teaching literature might entail. I draw mainly on scholarship of teaching and learning which aims to develop best pedagogical practice in higher education and takes a metacognitive perspective on discipline specific expertise and on profession theory that seeks to shed light on school teachers' knowledge base. I approach the academic teaching of English literature as the encounter between two professional identities, of the academic literary scholar and of the school teacher of English, an encounter that takes place at the intersection between two subject identities and their respective institutional contexts: the academic subject of English literature and the school subject of English. I do so mainly for two reasons: to highlight key assumptions underpinning the approaches to literature in each profession and to propose an alternative understanding of the literary scholar's potential contribution to the domain knowledge of English teachers. I propose an academic practice of teaching which incorporates literary debates over reading and explicitly articulates the principles and procedures underpinning professional modes of reading literature. As I will argue, such a teaching practice is a prerequisite for the development of teacher students' professional judgement when it comes to the uses of literature and to literary reading in the school classroom.

Metacognition and reading

In the context of education and learning, metacognition usually denotes the individual's awareness and regulation of her own thinking (Papaleontiou-Louca, 2014). Metacognitive skills include the ability to plan, monitor, evaluate and, when need be, change one's problem-solving strategies (Fadel, Bialik, & Trilling, 2015, pp. 147–149). Although in relation to education it also involves a dimension of "learning how to learn", metacognition as it is used here concerns the internalisation of ways of thinking and, to some extent, the transference and application of skills beyond the immediate context in which they are learnt – to

contexts within, across, or beyond disciplines (Fadel et al., 2015, pp. 145–146). In recent years, the field of scholarship of teaching and learning has attended to metacognitive analyses of trained thought-patterns in academic disciplines. It has sought to identify the intellectual practices of experts and to investigate how those can be taught. Such scholarship stresses that intellectual development “requires linking domain knowledge and processes of inquiry” (Donald, 2002, p. xii) and holds that teachers should make intellectual practices and analytical procedures that inform the discipline transparent to students (Kreber, 2009; Middendorf & Pace, 2004). This involves articulating knowledge of “how information is created, shared, and evaluated” and of the “nature of the conceptual ‘lenses’ employed by disciplinary experts and the implications of these epistemological tools” (Shanahan, Shanahan, & Misischia, 2011, p. 396).

Because my concern here is the value of the academic study of English literature for the professional practice of school teachers, my approach to the question of metacognition and teaching centres on what Lee Shulman (1987) has called teachers’ content knowledge. Unlike much research that focuses on reading and teacher education and that takes metacognition into account, I do not approach the topic from a literacy perspective. In literacy research, metacognition is often addressed as a premise for reading comprehension and as an element in strategies that enhance learners’ effective reading skills (Persson, 2016, pp. 102–110; Alatalo, 2016; Samuels & Farstrup, 2011). Instead, I rely on scholarship of teaching and learning to address the importance of making teacher students aware of the scholarly rules and procedures of literary reading for their professional practice. In what follows, I present a way of teaching literature and literary reading which draws on these metacognitive analyses of the disciplines and argue that this approach would not only significantly contribute to school teachers’ professional judgement, but also do so in ways that our current modes of teaching do not. As a first step in arguing for such an approach, I want to begin with the observation that the reading of literature is not the same activity in academia and in the upper secondary school. This observation, banal as it may seem, nonetheless has significant ramifications for how we teach literature to students training to be school teachers of English. Below, I outline key differences as a starting point for thinking about how academic teachers can approach the task of teaching literature to aspiring school teachers.

Reading is reading?

Over the past several decades, literary scholars have described literary reading as distinct from other modes of reading. John Guillory (2000), for example, draws a sharp line between reading practices within and outside the academy, and emphasises that professional reading differs from lay reading. Professional reading, he writes, is “governed by conventions of interpretation and protocols

of research”; “it stands back from the experience of pleasure in reading, not in order to cancel out this pleasure, but in order necessarily to be wary of it” so that the experience of reading will give “rise to a certain sustained reflection”, and it is connected via peer review, publication, and teaching to “communal scenes” (2000, pp. 31–32). In so describing literary reading, Guillory summarises a prolonged discussion over those intellectual suppositions and practices that characterise the discipline’s approach to literature. A major figure in this discussion is Jonathan Culler (1975/1997), who theorised the competencies involved in literary sense-making. Culler showed that literary reading is not a natural activity, nor a logical consequence of understanding the language of, say, a poem, in the sense of being able to provide “a rough translation into another language” (p. 114). What Culler called “competent reading”, rather, involves both an extensive literary repertoire, which enables familiarity with conventions typical of literary genres, and considerable experience of the conventions of reading: the agreed-upon interpretative principles that render a reading plausible and justifiable before an interpretative community (1975/1997, pp. 114–116). The idea that the academic study of literature fosters new ways of reading is central to a spectrum of approaches, be they linguistic (like Culler’s), rhetorical, ethical, politicised, reader-oriented or pedagogical. When scholars describe literary readers as “skilled” (Fish, 1980), “crafty” (Scholes, 2001), or “sophisticated” (Miller, 2002), they are motivated by the academic impetus to define the nature and value of literature as well as of disciplinary ways of reading.

Subscribing to this view, English departments in Sweden teach students the interpretative procedures that characterise literary reading. Even if literary studies, in accordance with the constitution of the language subject, also aim to develop students’ general knowledge about culture and their language awareness, the principal goal is to develop students’ ability to make sense of literary texts by using the tools of literary criticism (Dodou, 2017). I return to this below; suffice it here to say that in the limited space afforded to literary studies in the academic English language subject, we wish to foster literary reading which is perceptive, nuanced, and critical.

In the school context, by contrast, the rationale for reading literature is linked in part to debates over young peoples’ reading habits and how those correlate to literacy skills, including foreign language skills, and access to forms of power (Krashen, 2004; Tornberg, 2009, pp. 112–114). In part, it is linked to experience- or cultural-oriented approaches to reading literature which emphasise literature’s potential to help pupils make sense of the world and their place in it (Thorson, 2002, p. 31; Lundahl, 2009). In the Swedish upper secondary school curriculum, as Bo Lundahl (2009, p. 331) notes, the uses of English literature are largely delimited by the language learning goals of the English school subject. The Swedish National Agency for Education, *Skolverket*, describes the goals for the subject as follows:

Teaching of English should aim at helping students to develop knowledge of language and the surrounding world so that they have the ability, desire and confidence to use English in different situations and for different purposes. Students should be given the opportunity, through the use of language in functional and meaningful contexts, to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills cover both reception, which means understanding spoken language and texts, and production and interaction, which means expressing oneself and interacting with others in speech and writing, as well as adapting their language to different situations, purposes and recipients. (*English*, 2012, p. 1).

The English curriculum stipulates literature as part of the core content of the subject (*English*, 2012, p. 3–11). In all three years of upper secondary school, pupils are expected to encounter literary works, “contemporary and older”, and discuss “[t]hemes, ideas, form and content” in relation to those (*English*, 2012, p. 7). It is worth noting that the English curriculum has little to say specifically about the uses of literature. Yet, the goals formulated in the Swedish *Curriculum for the upper secondary school* (2013, pp. 8–9) regarding the use of fiction “as a source of knowledge, insight and pleasure”, as a vehicle for reflecting on the “Western cultural heritage” and on “global relationships” are widely presumed to apply to the study of literature in the English subject (Lundahl, 2009, pp. 326–327). This includes using literature to address culture, understood mainly as “living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used”, and as values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms (*English*, 2012, p. 2). It also includes using literature for developing pupils’ reading comprehension and interpretation skills, as well as their “critical language awareness, i.e., developing the ability to pose their own exploratory and critical questions about form, purpose, context, perspective, and content regarding what they listen to or read” (*Om ämnet engelska*, 2011, pp. 7–8, my translation). Importantly, literature features in the context of a broader textual repertoire that encompasses myths and computer games, and also “job applications, cooking recipes, blogs, interviews in news broadcasts, romantic comedies, scholarly reports and animated series” (*Om ämnet engelska*, 2011, p. 10, my translation). The rationale for reading literature is, in other words, embedded in overarching curricular goals linked to reading in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) upon which the Swedish language curriculum is based (*Om ämnet engelska*, 2011, p. 1) as well as to OECD’s definition of reading literacy (Lundahl, 2009, p. 172). Even as literary reading practices are far from discouraged in the English curriculum, the main aims of reading (literature) in the subject are to foster what literacy research calls proficient, “efficient”, and “experienced” readers (Wallace qtd. in Lundahl, 2009, p. 189).

The discrepancies outlined here between fostering, on the one hand, “competent” readers of literature, and, on the other, “efficient” readers raise the question of what commonalities exist between them and how differing expec-

tations and goals of the academic and the school curricula can be brought together in the part of teacher education devoted to English literature. In what follows, I critique the view of content knowledge in current teaching practices and outline an alternative way of understanding the role of the literary scholar in teacher education.

How we teach literature today

It is generally acknowledged that the study of literature in academic language departments in Sweden has been a means for assisting language development and for familiarising students with a cultural tradition (Thorson & Ekholm, 2009). In recent years, attempts to define the value and function of literary studies in that context have asserted the pedagogical potential of literature as an instrument of self-awareness, (inter)cultural literacy, and political transformation, and they have stressed the potency of reflecting on the nature of literature and its uses of language (Möller, 2002; Olaussen, 2002; Castro, 2009; Sörman, 2015; Ullén, 2016). Our undergraduate teaching practices in the English subject on the whole subscribe to the cultural valuation of literary studies; literature is regularly read with an eye to how it thematises history, society, and the self (Dodou, 2017). This is unsurprising given the influence over the academic study of literature in Sweden of revisionist literary theories of the 1970s and 1980s, which sought the politicisation of literary studies, and theories that emphasise ethics (Persson, 2007). The dominance of these theoretical perspectives to literature also harmonises with educational policy which stresses ethos-building and tasks higher education with promoting social sustainability, by emphasising justice, equality, social welfare, and intercultural understanding (Swedish Higher Education Act, 2013: 1117 §5).

In relation to teacher education, the approach has the added appeal of being consistent with the stated aims of upper secondary education to “impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based” (*Curriculum for the upper secondary school*, 2013, p. 4). At the same time, the approach adheres to the stipulations of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and its promotion through language learning in schools of cultural understanding as part both of an economic project, related to European mobility and integration, and of a democratic project in which language learning contributes to “European stability and to the healthy functioning of democracy” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). The majority of current English syllabi at the 19 Swedish universities that offered upper secondary teacher education in English in 2017, emphasise the study of literary works from a cultural perspective, often with explicit references to the topics of equality, gender, multiculturalism, and migration. The academic study of literature, in this respect, becomes the vehicle through which a variety of

current educational goals would be reached. These include the shaping of teacher students' identities as global citizens (as per a range of arguments about the value of literature and the purposes of higher education), the students' acquisition of requisite knowledge for teaching the school subject (as per curricular stipulations concerning "culture"), and their readiness to instil in their pupils, via the study of literature, the "democratic foundations" called for in the very first paragraph of the *Curriculum* (2013).

Literature courses designed for teacher students, then, besides stressing the development of students' language skills, tend to focus on professional modes of reading that are also cultural. Some courses also teach literature pedagogy. In most universities, questions about literature and education feature only in some of the literature courses offered, and not at all levels of academic English studies; in others, such elements are confined to courses on language teaching and learning. Literature courses *with* such components vary in terms of how literature pedagogy is interpreted and integrated. Most of them foreground students' acquisition of "basic knowledge about how literature is used in the teaching of English" (Umeå universitet, 2011, my transl.) and their ability to "discuss questions relating to literature pedagogy" (Örebro universitet, 2016, my transl.). While the import of these formulations often remains vague, some syllabi identify specific aspects of literature use in the classroom. These include "the role of the narrative [sic!] in teaching English in upper secondary schools" (Högskolan i Gävle, 2017), "how literature can be used to assist the development of reading, listening and writing skills in second language learning" (Malmö Högskola, 2017, my transl.), "how intercultural aspects can be used in language teaching" (Göteborgs universitet, 2017, my transl.), and the ability to "reflect on how critical theory can be used in or give new perspectives to literature teaching" (Karlstads universitet, 2015, my transl.). In several cases, even when syllabi foreground the students' ability to "use literature in teaching", there is little in the syllabi to indicate that teacher students are invited to reflect on this matter in relation to teaching and learning scholarship. Notable exceptions are the departments at Jönköping University (2016a, 2016b) and Högskolan i Halmstad (2016, 2015a, 2015b), both of which include in their literature courses material on English language teaching and learning and, also, a range of material on teaching literature. Overall, higher education syllabi in the subject indicate that the focus in literature courses, nationally, is heavily placed on what literary works teacher students need to encounter in relation to *Curriculum* stipulations about "culture" and on teaching methods, frequently with a linguistic slant.

One problem with this dominant approach is that it offers a limited understanding of the content knowledge academic literary studies might impart. It is not merely that the value of studying literature is inadvertently described as hinging upon its potential to cover curricular ground by treating historical events, social phenomena, and cultural norms from different areas of the

English-speaking world or literary genres with bearing on the school context, and by providing an occasion for promoting language learning. The approach sustains the belief that, to the extent that literary works do more than this, their use inside and outside the foreign language classroom is to be understood in terms of their contribution to our understanding of ourselves and the world, and to their potential to provide moral, political, or social instruction. To judge from syllabi formulations, this approach to literature remains unproblematised. This means that in the course of their teacher education students may be taught that literature (and its teaching) has an ethos-building capacity, but they are not necessarily taught that this view comes with certain valuations of literature or, indeed, that it is contested. Similarly, they are taught modes of literary reading that are “suspicious” (Felski, 2015), without necessarily being explicitly taught what this mode of literary reading presupposes or, for that matter, other ways in which the knowledge contribution of literary scholarship can be understood. In this respect, the approach, as it emerges in syllabi, takes a naïve perspective on what content knowledge entails for the school teacher as a professional and, ultimately, on what literature pedagogy is. The approach privileges the question of what teacher students need to know about cultural perspectives on literature and about teaching methods in order to decide how to use literature in the classroom, over the question of what they need to know about the discipline of literary studies and about its modes of reading in order to decide *what* to teach in relation to English literature in the first place.

A similarly narrow perspective on the knowledge and abilities that school teachers need in order to exercise their profession can be found in those teacher students who request lists of reading tips appropriate for the classroom accompanied by methods for teaching them. A variant of this attitude is noticeable in those students who do not appear to see the use of academic literary studies for their profession and simply choose not to read the assigned works, preferring instead to watch film versions of them or to read *about* them in online sources in preparation for academic literature seminars. It is not uncommon to dismiss these habits and requests from students as signs of intellectual or professional immaturity, or as the unavoidable clash between higher education and vocational education. Yet, such approaches to academic literary studies are also the inevitable result of the kind of instruction that students are offered. Students lack models that might open questions they can ask about the value of literature outside and inside the English classroom and they lack access to scholarly discussions that might allow them to speculate about possible answers to those questions.

The issue I am raising here is not only our role as literary scholars in teacher education, but also our conception of our subject in relation to teacher education. The question of how we define the core and relevance of literary studies is complicated when it comes to training teachers. In part this is because, as Shulman (2005, p. 53) has noted: “Professional education is not education for under-

standing alone; it is preparation for accomplished and responsible practice in the service of others.” According to Shulman, “[p]rofessionals must learn abundant amounts of theory and vast bodies of knowledge. They must come to *understand* in order to act” (2005, p. 53, my emphasis). In what follows, I propose that we need to define that which teacher students must come to understand by way of literary studies in ways that are at once broader than the prevalent view and that involve more rigorous disciplinary training. Even as the two professional identities are distinct – in profession theory terms, they rely on different educational backgrounds, professional training, vocational experiences, and work cultures (Evetts, 2006, pp. 134–135) – the academic teacher of literature has significant knowledge to impart future school teachers. She is in a position to equip them with a view of literature and of (literary) reading that contributes to their discretionary decision-making about what is educationally worthwhile when it comes to teaching literature and reading in upper secondary school and given the particulars of the student body before them.

Teaching content knowledge

In a discussion about teacher professionalism, Ingrid Carlgren and Ference Marton (2002, pp. 216–232) argue that the separation within pedagogy of the questions of *what* the teacher helps pupils understand and develop and *how* she does, so has led to the absence of an identifiable professional object for school teachers. Addressing this view from the perspective of teaching literature in the subject of Swedish, Staffan Thorson (2002, p. 37) has advocated a renewed focus on the “what” question: what is to be taught, but also what does literary reading mean and what abilities are involved in reading a text as literature? Thorson (2002), I believe, is right in drawing attention to the question of what school teachers are to teach when it comes to literature. He reminds us that we need to bear in mind both what students in the academic subject need to know and what our students as future school teachers need to be able to teach their pupils about and by way of literature. In short, our teaching needs to take into account the professional identity of our students and to foster their professional judgement. At a time when school teachers’ professionalism is largely defined in terms of accountability and regulation, especially from a performance management perspective (Sachs, 2016; Englund & Solbrekke, 2015), it is arguably all the more important that, as academic teachers, we consider how we can help develop teacher students’ professional judgement. In stating this, I pay heed to profession theory that seeks to defend professional agency against discourses of professional accountability (Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall, & Cribb, 2009). I also draw on Shulman’s (1987, p. 9) theorisation of teacher knowledge, in which he asserts that we must teach students to become members of a scholarly

community and that we must do so in ways that contribute to skilled professional practice.

One way of achieving this dual goal, I argue, is by approaching our task with a view to teaching disciplinary principles and procedures explicitly. This means providing for our students a meta-perspective of the discipline's core questions and exposing its trained thought patterns from the very first term of study. I base this argument both on scholarship of teaching and learning that adopts a meta-cognitive perspective on teaching literature and on literary theory for teaching literature. Specifically, I draw on Sherry Lee Linkon's (2011) explication of good teaching practice, where she refers to the expert-novice paradigm used in cognitive science to discern what constitutes quality performance. She stresses the importance of verbalising trained thought patterns of the discipline and of teaching students how the literary scholar's domain knowledge "is organised into categories and relationships that reflect disciplinary ideas and facilitate quick retrieval of appropriate knowledge for a given situation" (2011, pp. 4–5). I also draw on Gerald Graff's (1987/2007) theory of teaching literature, which argues vehemently for placing disciplinary debate at the heart of academic literary studies. For Graff, literary teaching ought to take as a starting point conflicting answers to central questions of the discipline to make visible the assumptions behind the what, the why, and the how we study literature at university. With Graff, I propose that students need to engage with differing theories about literature and reading, and that they would benefit from doing so from the moment they begin their studies. These theories, I assert, can serve as the basis for the explicit teaching of the conceptual categories and intellectual conventions and assumptions of the discipline. This teaching, in turn, can stimulate students' metacognitive skills, enabling them to monitor their approaches to reading, studying, and teaching literature.

Let us take as an example a first-term literature course dedicated to developing teacher students' understanding of literary reading. I take it here that the literature class focuses on content knowledge, whereas pedagogical content knowledge, i.e. an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues can be "organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8), is mainly addressed in courses on language and literature teaching and learning. In addition to interpretative exercises, which form the current norm for teaching literature, the students would read and in a series of classes discuss scholarly attempts to describe literary reading. Those might include attempts to differentiate between literary and other modes of reading – for instance J. Hillis Miller's (2002) distinction between "reading as *Schwärmerei*" and critical reading, or Robert Scholes' (2001) distinction between "fundamentalist reading" and literary reading. The students might encounter attempts to describe literary reading as a conventional activity – for example, Culler's (1975) explication of literary competence, or Stanley Fish's (1980) discussion of how interpretative conventions shape the understanding of

works within reading communities. They might, equally, come upon attempts to describe the relative merits of particular reading practices – such as Martha Nussbaum’s (1997) defence of literature for the ethical education of the individual, Ana Gonçalves Matos’ (2005) discussion of literary reading in a foreign language as a means of becoming intercultural, or Judith Langer’s (1995) already occasionally taught reader-oriented cum literacy approach to reading in the school classroom. Literary scholars might place these theories in a broader disciplinary, and perhaps also cultural and historical, context and invite students to consider what the arguments assume about the act of reading and about the social function of literature. They might explicate what these arguments reveal about the principles of interpretation and ask students to reflect on what knowledge is necessary – literary, cultural, linguistic, historical, epistemic – in order to understand a work. They might help their students identify the intellectual moves that create plausible and legitimate readings in the disciplinary community and engage in what Douglas Hacker and John Dunlosky (2003) call “metacognitive probing” by requesting that their students begin to monitor how they read. Or, they might link the scholarship to discussions about the purposes of education and the educational value of literature.

Depending on how theories about reading are taught, they can provide genealogies of thought about literature and reading or they can trace conflicting perspectives on the goals and value of literary reading. Theoretical arguments can serve to make explicit the disciplinary-specific interpretive strategies that experts use when reading literature and to identify the tools by which to become what Scholes (2001, pp. 217–223) calls a “crafty” reader: attentive to details in a text, but also to the act of reading itself and to our own projections onto texts. They can also function as examples through which to teach students how the discipline creates, validates, communicates, and evaluates knowledge. This has bearing on students’ recognition both of what counts as knowledge in the field of literary studies and of the knowledge contribution of the Humanities. Such a teaching practice tallies with Linkon’s (2011) theory that teaching disciplinary knowledge means imparting the strategic knowledge and thought patterns that experts possess and that novices are trying to learn. The value of the approach can be measured in terms of stimulating students’ intellectual curiosity and, to paraphrase Graff (2009, p. 74), of giving them a way into an intellectual world and a public conversation from which many are excluded. It can, likewise, be measured in terms of effective teaching: by verbalising the norms and procedures of our discipline, we can give students the tools by which to understand literary scholarship and the means to begin to practice its principles of inquiry in relation to other topics and areas in life (Kreber, 2009). These are not only key purposes of higher education, but also a requisite when introducing students to a scholarly community.

The value of so defining our task for our students’ professional practice can be understood in relation to teacher knowledge. The first source of teachers’

knowledge base, in Shulman's view (1987, p. 8), is content knowledge. Teachers, he writes,

must understand the structures of a subject matter, the principles of conceptual organization, and the principles of inquiry that help answer two kinds of questions [...] What are the important ideas and skills in this domain? and [...] what are the rules and procedures of good scholarship or inquiry? (Shulman, 1987, p. 9)

Shulman's emphasis on scholarly principles, categories, and procedures resonates with scholarship of teaching and learning discussed above which stresses the teaching of disciplinary modes of thinking. For him, the subject specialist and the school teacher both need a depth of subject understanding. The main difference between them is that the school teacher's knowledge base lies at the intersection between content and pedagogy. For the teacher student, in other words, disciplinary comprehension is necessary in order to begin to forge wise pedagogical decisions about her school subject (Shulman, 1987, p. 18). "[F]lexible and multifaceted" comprehension, so Shulman (1987, p. 15) asserts, is the basis for developing the ability to transform content knowledge "into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students".

What would the proposed approach provide teacher students with, that current practices do not? It would add to the standard teaching of how to make sense of texts in literature courses the bigger picture of the discipline's questions and the explicit discussion of its epistemological assumptions and underlying interpretative conventions. If sustained throughout their education, the approach would add vigorous engagement with foundational, if also disparate, ideas about literature and reading and help students begin to problematise the various forms of value regularly ascribed to those. Thereby, it could enable students to hold cognisant discussions about the relative significance of literary studies for the individual, for society, and for upper secondary education. Because content knowledge thus conceived covers arguments about the value of literature and of reading (texts as) literature, it could enable students to better understand the premises of debates – both academic and public – about literature and reading. These include educational debates over reading and literature in upper secondary school, generally, and in language teaching, specifically. In this respect, the approach does not only hold the potential to provide students with conceptual tools to help them scrutinise educational purposes and goals attached to literature and to literary reading. It would make available to them a horizon against which to assess the formulations about literature and reading in, say, steering documents and in teaching materials for upper secondary education. For example, it can strengthen teacher students' ability to recognise commonalities and differences between, on the one hand, literary perspectives on reading and, on the other, literacy perspectives on reading, which frequently feature in academic teaching materials on English language teaching and learning in

Sweden. What is more, the proposed approach can help students consider the affordances and limitations of introducing literature and the principles of literary reading – with their emphasis on “slow” reading (Miller, 2002, pp. 122–123) – in the school classroom. By equipping them with an understanding of the assumptions and norms that underlie arguments about literature and about reading, the approach would provide a foundation for beginning to practice pedagogical reasoning, for instance about ways in which literature can serve educationally worthwhile ends in the upper secondary school language classroom. In this respect, the literary scholar might help aspiring teachers begin to see themselves as agents who can make situated and considered judgements about how to interpret the curriculum, about the educational value of teaching material, and, indeed, about what to teach in relation to literature.

To conclude, in the past several pages, I have sought to posit disciplinary literacy, if you will, as the common core for the professional knowledge of the academic teacher of literature and of the aspiring school teacher, as well as a key to domain knowledge and to professional practice. I have argued that upper secondary school teachers need to know more than how to make sense of texts and how to devise reading tasks, and that this requires a change in our academic teaching practices. For, school teachers, who in addition to knowing this, are also aware of the relative merits of different modes of reading, who understand assumptions underlying arguments about the affordances of literature, and who have a vocabulary for speaking about these matters, have a solid footing upon which to develop their ability to discern when, why, and how to use English literature in the language classroom. The metacognitive perspective on the discipline that I describe would not merely prepare a firm base for modelling how literature can be taught in the classroom. It would also contribute to the foundation of vocational students’ professional judgement as upper secondary school teachers of English.

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