# Implementation of English literature in Chilean secondary education and its limitations: an analysis of the national curriculum and curricular prioritization from the teacher's perspective

Tesis para optar al título de Licenciado/a en Educación con mención en Inglés y Pedagogía en Inglés

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**Abstract**

This research explores the role of English literature in Chilean secondary education, and the extent to which English teachers feel prepared to integrate it as a pedagogical tool, even though it is encouraged by the national curriculum. Considering Chile's educational context, including long-standing educational inequalities, teacher's poor working conditions, and a national curriculum which is highly focused on standardized outcomes, literature is often undervalued and displaced. At the same time, while literature is left as a secondary source of knowledge, research highlights literature's potential to encourage authentic language exposure, cultural awareness and critical thinking, revealing a significant gap between its theory and actual implementation. Following a mix-method approach, an online questionnaire was shared to 28 in-service secondary English teachers across public and semi private schools. The survey included four sections, starting from the participant's background to their opportunities and barriers when using literature as a pedagogical tool. The results showed that, despite most teachers having knowledge of academic literature, they do not feel prepared to use literature as a pedagogical tool. Additionally, there is a huge structural inequality that shapes teacher's limited use of literature in EFL classrooms. This inequality comes from historical systemic constraints such as the market-driven educational system that deepens inequalities between different educational institutions, the national curriculum which is still focused solely on standardized results, among other factors that limit teachers' autonomy and their ability to implement literature as a pedagogical tool. These findings do not close the discussion but invite future researchers to study this topic more in-depth, exploring ways in which literature can be re-integrated into EFL classrooms with the support of the national curriculum.

**Keywords:** Literature in EFL, Pedagogical strategies in EFL, National curriculum, Curricular marginalization, Teachers' perspectives.

## Resumen

Esta investigación explora el rol de la literatura en inglés en la educación secundaria chilena y el nivel en el que los y las profesoras de inglés se sienten preparados para integrarse como una herramienta pedagógica cuando está altamente promovido por el currículum nacional. Considerando el contexto educacional chileno, que incluye desigualdades educativas históricas, condiciones laborales deficientes para los y las profesoras y un currículum nacional que está altamente enfocado en resultados estandarizados, la literatura suele ser infravalorada y desplazada. Al mismo tiempo, mientras la literatura es vista como una fuente secundaria de conocimiento, los estudios destacan el potencial que esta tiene para potenciar una exposición auténtica al lenguaje, la conciencia cultural y el pensamiento crítico, lo que demuestra una clara diferencia entre la teoría y su implementación real. Siguiendo un enfoque metodológico mixto, se aplicó un cuestionario en línea a 28 profesores y profesoras de inglés en ejercicio de educación secundaria tanto de establecimientos públicos como particulares subvencionados. El cuestionario incluyó cuatro secciones, desde antecedentes básicos de los y las participantes hasta las oportunidades y barreras con las que se enfrentan al usar la literatura como una herramienta pedagógica. Los resultados mostraron que, a pesar de que la mayoría de los y las profesoras poseen conocimiento en literatura académica, no se sienten preparados para usar esta como herramienta pedagógica. Adicionalmente, hay una gran desigualdad estructural que limita el uso de la literatura en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta desigualdad estructural viene de restricciones sistemáticas históricas, tales como un sistema educativo mercantil el cual profundiza las desigualdades educativas entre diferentes instituciones, el currículum nacional que todavía está enfocado en resultados estandarizados, entre otros factores que limitan la autonomía y la habilidad de los profesores de implementar la literatura como una herramienta pedagógica. Estos hallazgos no cierran la discusión, sino que invitan a futuros y futuras investigadoras a profundizar en este tema, explorando formas de reinsertar la literatura en las aulas con el respaldo del currículum nacional.



**Palabras clave:** Literatura en ILE, Estrategias pedagógicas en ILE, Currículum nacional, Marginalización curricular, Perspectivas de docentes.

## Introduction

Literature has been around for about three thousand years (as far as this is known today) and, over time, it has become an essential part of society as a means of expression, cultural memory, critical analysis, and reflection. Through literary texts, people have explored and perpetuated their culture, values, and identity, demonstrating that its function goes beyond delivering linguistic rules (as the acquisition of grammar), as it is a way of constructing meaning and sense for writers and readers. Literature fulfills a function where, rather than being limited to structural aspects of language, it allows one to engage with a reflective message when reading and writing.

In educational contexts, literature plays an important role since it offers opportunities to experience language in meaningful, emotional, and authentic ways to students. Besides exposing readers to grammatical structures and the acquisition of vocabulary, it also leads them to engage with language in contexts, encouraging interpretation and critical thinking.

In the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), literature increases language acquisition as it exposes students to relevant input and authentic use of the language. Through stories, poetry, plays, and novels, students can go through English in ways that are experiential rather than isolated structures. For example, exploring authors such as Arundhati Roy, Ernest Hemingway, Wole Soyinka, William Shakespeare, and Sappho during undergraduate literature lessons not only required interpreting the texts and engaging in collaborative discussions with peers, but also demanded an emotional involvement that brought learners closer to literature. With *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, different group seminars were carried out promoting collaborative analysis, while Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants* encouraged class discussions examining subtle narrative techniques. Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* led students to write critical essays analyzing the novel's themes. In studying Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the historical and cultural context was used to adapt the language into a modern form, promoting a deeper understanding of the text. Finally, with Sappho's *If Not, Winter*, her poems were interpreted through group micro-teachings full of creative and

playful activities. These experiences demonstrated that language must be taught in a meaningful way, going beyond mechanical or grammatical exercises and inviting students to gain a deeper understanding of literature.

However, when examining literacy practices and classroom realities in the Chilean context, it becomes evident that this meaningful aspect is often not prioritized. Literature, despite its presence in the national curriculum guidelines, is often excluded or entirely absent in pedagogical practices, mostly because Chilean schools tend to focus on grammar-based lessons when designing their programs, despite the national curriculum demanding the use of the communicative approach to provide students with a real use of the language.

This discrepancy led to questions regarding why literature remains limited in Chilean EFL classrooms. While reviewing existing literature on this topic, most studies focused primarily on students and their lack of motivation when it comes to learning a new language or engaging with reading. Instead of continuing to research students' learning, the spotlight changed towards teachers and their point of view about literature. Questions such as how teachers' preparation and perception might influence their practices, if they knew the use of literary texts as a tool regarding language acquisition, and to what extent their training programs shaped their views on its pedagogical value were raised.

Focusing on teachers seemed important since they are the ones who design, create, and implement the learning experiences. There was a need in understanding what teachers truly think about literature and specifically literature in EFL, to determine if their how familiar they were with its use in the classroom, to explore whether their teacher education had provided them with tools to incorporate literature as a learning strategy, to identify the barriers they face when developing an English lesson, and to approach teachers' voices. This research is developed by considering the real experiences of in-service teachers from different contexts and age groups, with the aim of broadening the perspective of the role of literature in EFL classrooms.

It was expected that by engaging directly with teachers from diverse realities, the study would allow for a deeper understanding of the role that literature does, or does not, have in English language teaching in Chile, offering a broader view than that provided by studies focused exclusively on students. Before collecting data, there was a hypothesis that initial teacher training might directly influence teachers' appreciation and use of literature. Differences were expected between graduates from different institutions, particularly a greater presence of literature in the classroom among teachers trained in universities with a strong emphasis on critical and literary thinking. This expectation shaped the interest in examining how professional training influences beliefs, pedagogical confidence, and actual teaching practices.

This study aims to contribute to the necessary perspective of placing teachers at the center of the discussion of English language teaching and the use of literature in the classrooms. Reading their experiences, challenges, and beliefs allows a deeper understanding of why literature continues to occupy a more marginal place in classrooms and what conditions could promote its integration. The findings of the survey carried out aim to add to the dialogue on a more comprehensive, humane, and meaningful approach to EFL in the Chilean context, where literature is recognized as a fundamental pedagogical resource.

## Problem Statement

English has become a lingua franca due to the necessity for most countries to adopt a common language to communicate worldwide. However, sharing a language was not the only reason for this global preference. Events such as the historical expansion of the British Empire and the later economic, scientific, and technological dominance of the United States contributed to giving English symbolic power and international prestige, consolidating its role as the preferred global lingua franca (Schmitz, 2014). Byrd (2013) complements this idea by giving the following statement: "The sharing of knowledge and technology and the linking of countries' economies (globalization) has resulted in the development of a common language."

In Chile, globalization gained particular importance because of the political and economic disruptions of the 1970s. During President Salvador Allende's presidency, Chile was dealing with both severe overinflation and economic instability. As a result, many citizens welcomed the idea of a new economic plan. This plan, led by the Chicago Boys –a group of Chilean economists trained at the University of Chicago under neoliberal economist Milton Friedman– was openly embraced by Pinochet's regime and sought to radically restructure Chile's economic system and alter the country's historical course (Edwards, 2010).

Arising from an American-founded academic exchange program during the Cold War, the Chicago Boys returned to Chile, standing up for a free-market model as a response to socialist policies (Valdés, 1995). After they assumed power, radical neoliberal reforms were implemented, including state enterprises' privatization, trade liberalization, and labor market flexibilization (Silva, 1991). Such modifications to policies defined a path for growth and assisted the Chilean economy in order to stabilize the following years. Nevertheless, they also aggravated income inequality and reduced public investment in social services. Until this day, such outcomes remain at the heart of debates over Chile's economic legacy (Edwards, 2010; Valdés, 1995).

Regarding the economic liberalization of the 1970s, Chile's integration into the global economy throughout the 1990s and early 2000s continued. Through this period, significant educational reforms, whose intention was to improve the Chilean education quality and equity, were witnessed, including a stronger emphasis on English language teaching (Matear, 2008). In this context, as part of broader curriculum reforms introduced in the late 1990s, English was incorporated as a compulsory subject from fifth grade onward in public schools, reflecting a national strategy to prepare students for participation in global contexts (Gómez & Walker, 2020).

In order to support this shift, MINEDUC (Ministerio de Educación) announced and launched the English Open Doors Program (Programa Inglés Abre Puertas) in 2004 (Ministerio de Educación, 2022). Through the use of standardized tests, professional formation for EFL teachers, and the foreign language assistant volunteers' recruitment, this program was designed to improve students' English competence. In addition, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) offered defined learning objectives and evaluation standards.

In Chile's case, aligning with international standards and improving the global competitiveness of workers were the main objectives behind adopting the benchmark. Additionally, those policies signaled that an increased awareness of the role of English as an instrumental asset was present, resulting in fostering economic development, global connectivity, and social advancement. However, as this program reflects an exclusively instrumental approach to English learning, it leads to a central challenge: Centering on competitiveness and promoting standardized outcomes rather than teaching contextualized and meaningful learning to students.

During the time in which the economy was being restructured, Chile's subsequent integration into the international market heightened the demand for the Chilean population to acquire English language skills. While the English language built up its status as a lingua franca, local policymakers began to implement some strategies to improve national proficiency. A notable milestone of that was the release of the *"Estrategia Nacional de*

*Inglés 2014-2030"* –or English National Strategy– (Ministerio Secretaría General de la Presidencia; Ministerio de Educación; Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo, 2014), document in which it explicitly recognized English as a critical tool for competitiveness, innovation, and social mobility, demonstrating its importance in the current society. The document emphasizes the need to strengthen English education across all levels to meet the demands of globalization and ensure Chile's active participation in the global economy.

Regardless of Chile's national efforts to enhance English proficiency–highlighted by initiatives such as Estrategia Nacional de Inglés 2014-2030, which positions English as vital for participating in the global economy and for improving people's access to better educational and job opportunities–classroom practices and strategies often remain stuck in traditional, grammar-focused instruction. Indeed, this approach is prone to marginalize the integration of literature, a world-knowing tool recognized for its capacity to enrich language learning through the acquisition of vocabulary, cultural exposure, and mostly, critical thinking development (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015a; Márquez & Chaves-Yuste, 2024).

Research follows that even though EFL teachers acknowledge the benefits of incorporating literature into the classroom, several barriers obstruct the implementation of this. Some barriers are teachers' limited education regarding literary pedagogy, perceived student language proficiency constraints, and curricular limitations (Tuncer & Kızıldağ, 2014). Definitely, such barriers contribute to a clash between policy objectives and classroom realities, maintaining a persistent tension in the Chilean educational scenario.

The incorporation of literature in foreign language teaching is an immersive experience for students, as they can interact with the language in an authentic and culturally meaningful way, this is possible through multiple texts. In this regard, Gómez Rodríguez (2015b) rightly points out that literary texts are much more than just words printed on a page: they enrich learning abundantly. On top of that, these types of texts foster a relevant social ability, that is, to empathize with people from different cultures. In addition to that, they could help develop critical thinking, both elements of which are fundamental skills in the globalized world we live in. Moreover, Chaves-Yuste (2023) argues that literature places learners in

contact with authentic and meaningful uses of language, promoting engagement and interpretation beyond decontextualized grammatical practice, which is an element that often characterizes traditional EFL instruction. To follow up on this idea, Pastor Villalba (2024) argues that literary texts can motivate students to learn a foreign language; this happens when learners engage with well-known or meaningful works in their original language. In doing so, students could capture the subtle nuances that are often lost in translation. Altogether, these perspectives agree with the fact that by integrating literature in the classroom, language skills are not only improved, but also nurtured along with meaningful learning by establishing a connection between language and both cultural and emotional input.

Literature is a vitally important pedagogical resource in teaching English as a foreign language, as it gives us the possibility to foster students' language skills, critical thinking and cultural awareness. Nevertheless, since the 1960s, the use of literary texts in the classroom has been in decline, being replaced by approaches focused on communicative competences and applied linguistics (Rostagno, 2017). In addition, Bobkina and Stefanova (2016) explain that literature was often excluded from language teaching syllabi or marginalized due to the increasing emphasis on communicative methodologies, a fact that highlights how methodological shifts have contributed to the diminished role of literature in language education.

The underutilization of English literature in the Chilean secondary education context is an issue that must be addressed in order to understand the pedagogical limitations in current teaching. There are several interrelated factors that contribute to the neglect of English literature inside the classroom: the National curriculum, curricular priorities, and both teachers' role and identity, which, as will be seen below, have been identified and agreed upon in this study as central to the analysis of this phenomenon.

Although the curriculum of the Chilean Ministry of Education promotes the development of reading comprehension and exposure to the literary genres, it is focused on communicative competences (MINEDUC, 2015). Among these factors, the institutional pressure to meet

measurable and standardized objectives, focusing on test-oriented methods, reduces the space for more holistic approaches (Yilorm, 2016). Moreover, it is also influenced by the fact that teachers perceive that students have a low level of English, since there are studies that reveal that the vast majority do not reach satisfactory levels of proficiency in the language (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017). This discourages the use of materials that may be considered more demanding or require further analysis or development.

Furthermore, both the role and the teacher's identity and pedagogical decisions also have a direct influence on whether literature is used or marginalized as a pedagogical tool or strategy. Vargas (2021) mentions that there is a significant number of teachers who give priority to strategies oriented to immediate performance, leaving aside approaches that use literature as a formative tool. Additionally, this situation is considerably aggravated in contexts where, according to Yilorm (2016), public policies reduce the margin of pedagogical freedom and are accentuated in vulnerable school communities.

In light of the foregoing, the purpose of this research is to analyze whether what is outlined in the national curriculum is effectively applied in the classroom, exploring the various reasons that underlie its exclusion. Ultimately, our objective is to make visible a pedagogical gap that affects not only the teaching of English but also the comprehensive educational formation of high school students in Chile who study this language.

## Objectives

### General Objective

To analyze the limited use of literature in the teaching of English in Chilean secondary education, considering the following factors: curriculum, curricular prioritization, and pedagogical decisions made by teachers that influence this absence.

### Specific Objectives

1. To examine the national curriculum and curricular prioritization to determine whether any pedagogical value is assigned to the use of literature as a strategy in EFL teaching.

2. To identify the perceptions and practices of English teachers regarding the use of literature in Chilean secondary education.

3. To assess whether the national curriculum guidelines align with pedagogical decisions regarding the use of literature as a strategy of teaching English in secondary education.

4. To critically reflect on the implications of the marginalization of English literature in current pedagogical practices regarding language learning in a Chilean secondary education context.

## Research Justification

Undeniably, English literature is being underused in the teaching of English as a foreign language in the Chilean context. This poses a significant pedagogical issue that deserves attention and critical analysis. To put it in perspective: it was previously mentioned that literature is a valuable tool, capable not only of aiding linguistic development, but also of fostering critical thinking, multi-cultural awareness, and of boosting personal interest in learning more about the target language. If so, it is not fair not to implement literature in the classroom, since it is such a powerful tool for approaching the English language and culture. This is why it is so necessary to know about teachers' perspectives on why literature is not used enough.

According to Paran (2008), effective usage of literature–when it comes to learning another language–provides a richer and more motivating experience through emotional and cultural understanding. Although the Chilean national curriculum includes literature as a suggested strategy to apply in various classes (MINEDUC, 2015), its implementation in classrooms remains limited, demonstrating that there are curricular and pedagogical issues that need to be analyzed. For instance, some studies suggest that one issue is the lack of specification when an objective is given to teachers. It creates a significant gap between what should be reviewed and what should not, which decision ends up depending completely on the teacher’s subjective decision. Another suggested reason is the lack of preparation for pre-service teachers. As different institutions shape the formation of pre-service teachers –each institution with its own standards and beliefs–, teachers join the workforce who only focus on a competitive and result-looking approach and style of teaching (Tabali & Monasterio, 2024; MINEDUC, 2015). As a result, in most cases, students are deprived of opportunities to engage and interact with literature in the English subject, which drastically limits their exposure to authentic language, the development of interpretation, critical thinking skills, and cultural narratives. In fact, reading literary texts encourages the development of students as critical readers and as conscious, reflective individuals committed to their environment (Rostagno, 2017).

This research arises from the need to understand why literature is not effectively integrated into the English classroom. First of all, it is essential to analyze the national curriculum and its curricular prioritization strategies implemented in recent years to determine whether literature has a significant presence. This analysis will allow us to contextualize this problem in a precise manner.

Secondly, it is essential to analyze English teachers' perceptions and practices in order to identify their personal beliefs, preferences, professional background, and whether there are contextual constraints that may influence the decision to include–or not–the use of literary texts in their classes. The collection of this data will provide a more detailed view of the main problem: the marginalization of literature inside the Chilean classroom. Literature acts as a grounding point for students in the language; this bond can be obtained through stories, poems, and theatrical performances, introducing them to deep expressions and emotions that they would not experience in a classroom with traditional methods. Furthermore, literature challenges students, who must reflect, infer, and interpret a range of situations, which helps cultivate critical skills through discussions with other students, who may have entirely different points of view regarding the works being presented.

Moreover, this study will assess the comparison or, alternatively, the lack of correspondence between the objectives stated in the national curriculum and actual classroom practices. Consequently, by identifying these differences, valuable information related to existing challenges in the educational system and possible areas for improvement will be provided.

Finally, a critical reflection will be carried out on all that is lost by excluding literature from pedagogical processes, and a discussion will be held on how to incorporate it to fill current educational gaps. Thus, it is clear that the objective of the research is not only to document a phenomenon that has been occurring for years, but also to promote a more holistic and humanistic approach in Chilean secondary education.

# Frameworks

## Contextual Framework

English language learning in Chile has evolved under the influence of various global policies and national circumstances, undergoing a series of gradual changes over time. To understand the current conditions that affect the use of literature in English classes in secondary education, it is necessary to analyze and contextualize the following topics: the educational public policies in Chile that have molded the Chilean educational system to what it is today, the English Language Education in Chile, and finally, the relationship between the Chilean population and reading.

### 1. Characterization of the Chilean Education System

#### *1.1 Structural Reforms and Educational Inequalities*

To begin discussing the public policies in Chile regarding English Education, it is necessary to examine the general aspects of the educational system in the country. Profound cultural and economic inequalities have historically characterized education in Chile.

During the 1980s, in the context of the military dictatorship (1973-1990), a significant reform occurred in the educational sector, with the main effect of this reform being to shift establishments from the state to municipalities. In other words, it transfers the responsibilities from the state to local governments. This not only led to the decentralization of education but also promoted the expansion of private educational institutions through state subsidies and low requirements for establishing new institutions (Bellei, 2015, p. 24). The implemented measures with this reform were consolidated in the Constitutional Organic Law on Education (LOCE) in 1990, which regulated secondary and basic education, establishing freedom of education and encouraging different agents, public and private, to administer education (*Ley Orgánica Constitucional De Enseñanza (N° 18.962)*, 1990). However, during the last years of dictatorship and the first years of transition to democracy, the student movement in Chile gained strength. It began to articulate itself not only in higher education but, this time, in secondary schools, where students took a leading role. This movement gained momentum in 2006 with the so-called “Revolución Pingüina” (Penguin

Revolution), which followed several significant mobilizations, such as the “mochilazo” in 2001 and the university students' mobilizations in 2005.

These instances of social mobilization and dialogue prompted a public debate on the LOCE law, with criticism centering on the subsidy and municipalization system, which deepened inequality by promoting competition between schools and failing to reflect the values and demands of the student movement. In response to this criticism, the government of Michelle Bachelet introduced reforms to replace the LOCE and reached an agreement with the political opposition. As a result, the LOCE was repealed and replaced by the General Education Law (Ley General de Educación, LGE) in 2009, which, despite the reform, maintained the market-oriented structure as one of the main pillars of Chile’s educational system.

The market-oriented reforms implemented during the 1980s entrenched a highly stratified school system in which public, subsidized, and private institutions compete for enrollment. Over the following decades, this structure consolidated a model in which access to quality education in Chile largely depends on families' socio-economic status and the type of school they can afford. As a result, Chile currently exhibits one of the highest rates of educational inequality among OECD countries, reflected in a Gini index of 0.503 (OECD average: 0.31) (Good Neighbors Chile, 2024), illustrating how limited redistributive policies have perpetuated educational opportunity gaps. Furthermore, an analysis of school enrollment between 1999 and 2018 confirms that socio-economic segregation remains extremely high: throughout this period, the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils stayed above 0.35 and has not improved despite successive waves of reforms (Gutiérrez & Carrasco, 2021).

### *1.2 Curriculum development and implementation*

In terms of curriculum, as mentioned, the Chilean system is currently regulated by the LGE, which empowers the National Education Council (CNED) to approve curriculum changes. The design and technical reviews are carried out by the Curriculum and Evaluation Unit (UCE) of the Ministry of Education, which translates the LGE into a set of progressive,

competency-based Bases Curriculares (Curricular Bases) that specify learning objectives, skills, and attitudes for each subject and grade (MINEDUC, 2012). The 2012 edition, covering grades 1-6 and followed in 2015-16 by new Bases for grades 7-10, shifted the focus from prescribed content to what students are expected to be able to do with knowledge, i.e., the development of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. These skills are described as central purposes, along with democratic citizenship and personal well-being. Teachers are also urged to 'develop a disposition towards curiosity, reflection and autonomy' in each discipline, not only to 'cover' content (MINEDUC, 2012).

Thus, the National Curriculum Framework recommends that pedagogical work should focus on students' activities, characteristics, and prior knowledge and develop customized pedagogical approaches for different learning speeds and learning preferences (Assaél et al., 2018). However, its implementation has been limited by high-stakes external tests; consequently, the Chilean education system continues to prioritize content delivery and standardized test preparation, such as SIMCE or PAES. Several studies demonstrate that the pressure to achieve excellent evaluation outcomes has led teachers to reduce curriculum content, resulting in standardized teaching approaches that hinder educational innovation and negatively affect teaching quality. The high level of the prescribed curriculum, along with standardized testing requirements, leads to uniform teaching approaches that prevent teachers from creating individualized learning plans for students with diverse learning styles and learning speeds (Assaél et al., 2018). International bodies reach similar conclusions: the OECD's Education in Chile review warns that schools face 'curriculum overload' and lack sufficient time for deeper learning and formative assessment (OECD, 2017).

The pandemic period strengthened this educational approach. In 2020, the Chilean Ministry of Education adopted Curricular Prioritization as a strategic approach to address academic difficulties that emerged from school closures, reduced school weeks, and virtual learning. The educational priority identified a core subset of learning objectives and asked schools to postpone or integrate less essential content until 2023, aiming to reduce academic tasks while focusing on fundamental learning targets, thereby minimizing the adverse effects of classroom disruptions and knowledge gaps (MINEDUC, 2020). These measures revealed a

tendency toward a technocratic, efficiency-driven approach to curricular decisions, prioritizing measurable, standardized content over an interdisciplinary, culturally meaningful focus, such as the use of literature in English language learning.

## 2. English Language Teaching in Chile

The teaching of English in Chile dates back more than a century, but its institutionalisation and systematic expansion are more recent phenomena. Reviewing and understanding this evolution is key to analysing current practices and the tensions that arise from them, especially when seeking to investigate cultural and critical strategies such as the use of literature.

### *2.1 Early appearances of English*

The first formal instances of English-language teaching in Chile date back to the 19th century, when the country sought to integrate into the circuits of international trade, scientific knowledge, and diplomatic relations. In this sense, the Instituto Nacional, one of the earliest secondary public schools, was the first to incorporate English into its curriculum, alongside French, motivated by the belief that English was a language of wisdom, revered for its connection to philosophy and profound thinking (Barahona & Ibaceta Quijanes, 2024).

However, the incorporation of English into the national education system came later and was limited by the institutional development of the Chilean state. After the first attempt to organise education in 1823, it was not until the Constitution of 1833 that education was established as a state role. It was from this moment that a process of educational institutionalisation began, marking the start of a more centralised, hierarchical, and regulated school system, with the subsequent effect of incorporating English as an official subject (Barahona & Ibaceta Quijanes, 2024).

A key point in the teaching of English was in 1889 with the creation of the Instituto Pedagógico de la Universidad de Chile, an institution established to train teachers

specialized in various disciplines, including English. It was here that Dr. Rodolfo Lenz was hired as a foreign language teacher, and four years later, in 1893, he designed the first formal English curriculum for secondary education in Chile. This curriculum included reading contemporary authors, formal writing, and oral activities, as Lenz suggests that language teaching should focus on the actual use of the language. Additionally, he criticized the traditional grammatical method and promoted communicative practice from an early stage (Barahona & Ibaceta Quijanes, 2024).

Despite progress in this area, English did not achieve a prominent place in the curriculum during the 20th century. During these years, French remained the most valued foreign language, especially among the elite, because government and diplomacy in Santiago required its use. English, on the other hand, was taught in some state schools as a second language. Still, its coverage was limited, and its presence depended mainly on the availability and training of teachers, with its teaching focused primarily on the north of the country, where British companies controlled the mines (Farias et al., 2017).

It was during the second half of the 20th century that English, as a school subject, experienced its most significant expansion. This expansion was underpinned by the rise of the United States' economic and cultural power after the Second World War.

In the 1960s, different reforms slowed down the progress of English in Chile. Firstly, the creation of the Academic Aptitude Test (PAA) excludes foreign languages as a fundamental part of the curriculum. In addition, a decree passed in 1981 by the Pinochet dictatorship excluded language pedagogy as a university profession.

On the other hand, various factors contributed to the devaluation of foreign language teaching, including the privatization of schools and an educational policy that relegated foreign languages to optional status in the national curriculum (Farias et al., 2017).

### *2.2 Institutionalization of English Language Teaching*

Against this educational backdrop, English has gained an increasingly significant role in policy discourse in recent decades and has been promoted as a vital tool in education, a cornerstone for workforce entry, academic mobility, and participation in a globalized world. This vision was institutionalized in 2004 when the Ministry of Education established the English Opens Doors Programme (PIAP), aimed at enhancing the language proficiency levels of Chilean students through international standards and teacher support (MINEDUC, 2004).

Nevertheless, despite various efforts to promote the teaching of English, it is still marked by an instrumentalist approach, where the focus is more on an economic rather than a critical, cultural, or aesthetic dimension (Barahona & Ibaceta Quijanes, 2024). In this way, the teaching of English has been based on the learning of basic skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, to the detriment of more holistic approaches that incorporate the cultural, aesthetic, and critical dimensions of language. As Glass (2008) points out, language policies in Chile have promoted a vision of English centered on its economic value, leading to a teaching approach that prioritizes efficiency and productivity over cultural and critical understanding of the language. English teaching has thus become standardized, focusing on memorization and repetition.

### *2.3 Historical trajectory of the English teachers*

The first plans for teaching English, created at the Pedagogical Institute of the University of Chile at the end of the 19th century, aimed to train humanist teachers. The inheritance of the model introduced by Rodolfo Lenz in 1889 in the curriculum emphasised the reading of modern authors, conversation about literature, and formal writing, and reserved a relevant space for literary criticism. During the first half of the 20th century, this tradition was extended to the new pedagogical institutes established in Concepción, Valparaíso, and Santiago, where subjects such as English and North American literature occupied up to a third of the curriculum (Orrego Ramirez et al., 2022).

The break came with the 1981 reform and municipalisation. A New Public Management (NPM) approach was adopted, in which the school was conceived as a production unit competing for enrollment and results, and the teacher as a 'manager' of measurable indicators. A review of studies on teacher work reveals that the NPM introduced standardization of practices, labor flexibilization, and performance incentives that progressively displaced humanistic approaches to initial training (Oyarzun & Cornejo, 2020). At the same time, teacher identity was strained by the logic of accountability: interviews with municipal teachers reveal the 'technification' of the role, defined by the need to demonstrate effectiveness in high-impact tests rather than by disciplinary or aesthetic deepening (Carrasco Aguilar et al., 2019).

In the particular case of English teachers, the transformation is evident. A historical study locates three phases: (a) 1960-1973, when literature was at the core of the curriculum; (b) 1973-1990, with shortened programmes oriented towards the audio-oral method; and (c) 1990-2019, a stage in which the curriculum favoured applied linguistics and assessment tools, reducing literary courses to 5-10% of credits (Orrego Ramirez et al., 2022). The creation of the English Opens Doors Programme only consolidated the instrumental approach: the institutional emphasis shifted to functional communication and preparation for the standardised certifications promoted by the programme itself.

### *2.4 Persistent gaps and instrumentalist approach*

Nowadays, one of the biggest challenges facing English language teaching in the country is the gap between the curricular objectives and the reality in schools. Although the learning objectives set high standards for learning, results show that a significant proportion of students leaving school have a basic or insufficient level of English. According to the results of MINEDUC's Diagnóstico Integral de Aprendizajes (2021), 65% of 10th-grade students achieved an initial or inadequate level of reading comprehension in English, indicating a significant gap between what was expected and what was actually achieved.

In addition, a study by the Agency for the Quality of Education, which evaluated eleventh-grade students, found that 68% were at the beginner level (A1), indicating that

most had not yet achieved a basic level of language proficiency. This situation is exacerbated by the gap between the most affluent and the most vulnerable sectors. The results by socio-economic group showed that in the higher socio-economic group, 85% of the students reached the basic and intermediate levels. In contrast, in the lower socio-economic group, only 9% reached the same level (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017).

Various factors may contribute to the existing gaps in language teaching, including the availability of necessary materials, the initial training of English teachers, the number of hours devoted to the language, and structural differences between public, subsidized, and private schools. According to the British Council report (2015), a clear relationship exists between the socio-economic status of the school and students' English performance, reflecting structural inequalities in the Chilean educational system.

Finally, addressing these issues requires a greater commitment to educational equity. Structural inequalities between different types of schools and regions, such as disparities in infrastructure, access to digital tools, and class sizes, persistently limit the potential for effective English language teaching. As the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2020) notes, education systems in Latin America need to undertake reforms that promote inclusive, contextually relevant, and learner-centered approaches to address inequality and enhance outcomes.

## 3. Reading and Literature in Chilean Culture

To understand the literature on English language teaching, it is necessary to examine the relationship that people in Chile have with reading, as well as how reading and literature are inscribed in their cultural imaginary, public policies, and everyday life.

The relationship with reading tendencies has historically been weak, primarily shaped by a more practical view rather than a valuation of reading practice as a culturally and personally meaningful experience.

According to the most recent PISA 2022 results, students in Chile scored an average of 448 points in reading literacy, which, while above the average for Latin American countries, is still below the OECD average (476). In this study, only 66% of students reached the minimum acceptable level in reading literacy, indicating that one-third of students have severe difficulties understanding texts beyond the literal level (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2023).

This lack of reading comprehension skills is not an isolated phenomenon in the school context. In 2023, the OECD's PIAAC study assessed the reading comprehension skills of people aged 16 to 65. This study ranked Chile last among the 31 countries, with an average of 218 points, significantly below the OECD average (260). Additionally, the study found that approximately 44% of the adults tested demonstrated low functional reading literacy, characterized by difficulties in extracting information, making simple inferences, and interpreting data in everyday contexts (OECD, 2023).

These results reflect a structural issue in Chile, where reading is primarily associated with formal contexts or preparation for evaluations, rather than a daily and enjoyable practice. Although Ipsos studies show that 70% of Chileans say that they are very or fairly interested in reading, while 27% have little interest in reading, and only 3% are not interested at all, it is not possible to determine whether this interest is for pleasure or whether reading is done out of necessity, whether for work, studies, or other obligations. On the other hand, the study shows that a high percentage of the population claims not to read due to a lack of interest or time, reaching 62% (Ipsos, 2022). However, these results are strongly related to the socio-economic levels of ABC1 and, to a lesser extent, C2, who read the most and are most interested in reading (Ipsos, 2022, p. 14). In this way, existing public policies on promoting reading do not effectively reach the most vulnerable sectors or integrate them into schools as part of students' comprehensive education.

From the perspective of access to reading, according to Erlij (2010), higher-income households have more than six times as many books as low-income households, making it difficult to establish a reading habit from childhood.

However, it is not only about access to books but also about the support provided to children. Experts warn that as children grow up, they become influenced by what they find around them. And much of what the family has already acquired, whether in reading, social relations, sports, or dancing, conditions what their tastes and inclinations will be. It also suggests that individuals with a reading background have an advantage over those without (Zafra, 2022). Studies, such as those by Paakkari et al. (2024), identify thirteen domestic factors that enhance critical reading skills, including caregivers' positive attitudes toward reading and the availability of spaces for discussing different views. The authors in the text highlight that such practices not only favour literal comprehension but also foster the development of analytical thinking and higher cognitive skills. Thus, access to books alone, without accompaniment, does not guarantee the development of critical thinking or higher cognitive skills.

Faced with the existing inequality, the state has attempted to address this issue through public policies. Between 2015 and 2020, the National Policy on Reading and Books was promoted. This policy initiated an inter-ministerial roadmap that promoted various programs, including Dialogues in Movement and the development of Regional Reading Plans, thereby placing the promotion of reading on the educational and cultural agenda (Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, 2015). On this basis, the Policy 2022-2027 is now being developed, with its participatory process highlighting digital literacy, decentralization of resources, and the incorporation of intercultural perspectives as strategic axes.

On the other hand, the place of literature in schools is increasingly marginalised. Within the language and literature curriculum, literature is treated as a means of addressing specific skills and competencies that are expected to be developed, such as comprehension, handwriting, and others. Furthermore, to prepare for various national standardised tests,

rather than as a form of expression, reflection, or emotional exploration. This instrumentalisation is also a reflection of what happens in English language teaching, where the cultural and humanistic dimensions of language are often neglected in favour of grammatical accuracy and content-oriented grading.

## Closure

Following the review carried out in this contextual framework, it is possible to understand the relationship between political, historical, and socio-cultural factors that underlie the low presence of literature as a pedagogical strategy in the teaching of English in Chile, particularly in secondary education, in an integrated manner. Firstly, the current school system was born, grew, and continues to develop under reforms driven by mercantile logic, which, since the 1980s, together with municipalisation, has established logics of competition and expected results, in a sort of accountability. This not only perpetuates inequality in terms of results, but also in terms of access to different educational institutions and, therefore, to varying types of education. The distinct structural mismatches are reflected in school segregation rates that have remained higher than in other OECD countries, despite waves of curricular reforms.

Secondly, the curricular dimension shows an implicit tension between discourse and practice. Although the Bases Curriculares promote competency-based learning and teacher autonomy, the reality remains the constant pressure of external tests and 'curricular overload', which the OECD identifies as an obstacle to pedagogical innovation and deepening. This scenario results in methodologies centered on conditions that are not conducive to literary exploration, critical reflection, or the aesthetic formation that literature in both Spanish and English can offer.

On the other hand, the institutionalisation of English language teaching has reinforced an instrumental view of the language, based on labour capital and the economic returns it can offer. For this purpose, coverage of grammatical and standardised content is privileged over the aesthetic or critical domain. However, the results show that more than 60% of students in secondary education do not reach the initial levels of English reading comprehension.

This suggests that current strategies do not achieve the objectives set by the curriculum itself, which further encourages the need to explore new, more inclusive alternatives. In this way, the gap does not only pertain to the mention of literature in the national curriculum, but also to a historical configuration of the teaching profession, which responds to the logic of the policies mentioned earlier, focusing on what can be quantified and on the reading practices of a society characterized by deep fractures in cultural capital.

In sum, closing the dislocation between curriculum, language policy, and cultural practices implies recognising that English language teaching cannot be limited to functional skills and short-term indicators. The integration of English language literature from a critical and contextualised perspective presents itself not only as a relevant pedagogical alternative but also as an imperative of educational justice for a system that aspires to overcome the inequalities it itself reproduces. In this way, this work, by examining the causes and proposing guidelines for action, aims to provide evidence and academic reflection that enlightens public policy decisions, teaching practices, and experiences, and ultimately, the learning experience of Chilean students.

## Conceptual framework

In order to understand this investigation, it is necessary to explore the concepts that inform the limited use of literature in Chilean secondary education. This theoretical framework presents concepts such as the role of literature in English as a foreign language (EFL), pedagogical strategies, national curriculum, curricular prioritization, curricular marginalization, and the teacher's role and their professional identity. These concepts will guide us in understanding how both curriculum design and teachers' decisions and practices contribute to the underuse of literature as an essential strategy for teaching English in Chilean education.

### 1. Literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL)

Literature can be defined in different ways, depending on the approach taken, whether linguistic, cultural, aesthetic, or pedagogical.

According to Meyer (1997) literature is best defined not by strict boundaries, but by a cluster of features such as artistic intent, aesthetic function, and stylistic complexity. Ventura, quoted in Chaves-Yuste (2023), argues that the greatest cultural and linguistic manifestation of a language is, undoubtedly, literature. In this way, literature for Ventura is a cultural expression that conveys ideologies, lifestyle, and a vision of the world. According to Meyer (1997), literature is a prototypical construction that transmits values, emotions, imagination, and shared meanings, and it should be not limited to its traditional form, such as written form, but should also include oral stories, poetry and play-acting.

From a pedagogical standpoint, literature is considered a valuable resource to teach English in a significant way, promoting the development of linguistic skills, critical thoughts, and even emotional skills. Lazar (1993) and (Thi My Van, 2008) indicate that literature texts offer a rich source of language input and can be used to develop students' abilities to interpret meaningful context and reflect on the human condition. Additional literature introduces learners to a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and diverse prose styles. For (Abraham N. et al., 2022), literature has the potential to connect students into diverse

experiences and ways of thinking such as social issues and cultural context that are often absent from the national curriculum.

According to the authors literature is not just a linguistic manifestation but also a cultural, aesthetic and pedagogical tool that offers learners access to a new language in a form most humanized. The richness of the literature is its ability to help the learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to transcend the limitations of the language barrier through emotions, worldviews, and social realities.

In the Chilean context, the implementation of literature is limited by the pedagogical ideals and curricular policies, in this way the EFL classroom is focused on functional, communicative language skills and standardized assessments. This situation makes it necessary to examine deeply on the pedagogical strategies used in EFL classrooms.

## 2. Pedagogical Strategies in EFL

### *2.1 Pedagogical strategies.*

When pedagogy is discussed in any field, one of the fundamental parts of it is the pedagogical strategies to be used with students when developing a class. These allow us to identify "what to use for learning and how to use it" (Hardan, 2013, p. 1713), during the teaching process. However, some authors point out that there are more aspects to consider when talking about strategies.

As cited in the book by Díaz Barriga and Hernández (2002), teaching strategies are "procedures that the teaching agent uses in a reflexive and flexible way to promote the achievement of significant learning in students" (Mayer, 1984; Shuell, 1988; West, Farmer & Wolff, 1991, as cited in Díaz Barriga & Hernández, 2002, p. 141).

According to Usmanova (2024), teaching methods, as the strategies and techniques employed by educators, play a pivotal role in facilitating learning and fostering effective

educational outcomes. The selection of an appropriate teaching method depends on a range of factors, including the subject matter, the age and level of learners, the learning objectives, and the available resources (p. 527).

According to Killen and O'toole (2022) “strategies that foster intellectual qualities, learning-friendly environments, and meaningful connections to learners' lives are more likely to be effective than those that do not” (p. 15).

Following the view that the most effective strategies are those that actively engage students in their cognitive process, Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2014) argue that “teaching strategies that actively engage students in the learning process through scientific investigations are more likely to increase conceptual understanding than are strategies that rely on more passive techniques” (p. 28).

Although there are different views in these definitions, most of them have a common point; the strategies facilitate learning and promote it through meaningful experiences for students. Factors such as reflection, work context, engagement, as well as contextualized teacher decisions, seem to be key to achieving an effective strategy. Thus, considering that teaching strategies are organized and intentional decisions of the teachers, it is relevant to see how they have been classified by different authors, according to different perspectives.

Nevertheless, when it comes to understanding a little more about the classification of teaching strategies, it turns out that the world is gigantic and it also depends on the author and their ideas and beliefs about learning. In the same book by Díaz Barriga and Hernández (2002) mentioned above, strategies are grouped into the beginning, development and closing of a class. However, according to Brown (2014) research in second language acquisition, has proposed multiple classifications of learning strategies, including direct, indirect, memorization, cognitive, metacognition, social, affective, input/output, among others (p.125).

### *2.2 Relationship between teaching strategies and methods in English as a foreign language (EFL).*

Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out the difference between technique, method, and approach. At first, they seem similar to each other, but apparently one is related to the other. According to Anthony (1963, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014) an approach is a set of fundamental assumptions about the teaching and learning of a language that describes the nature of the content to be taught. A method is a general plan for organizing and presenting material, based on that approach, and finally, a technique is the concrete action performed in the classroom to meet an immediate objective, always consistent with the method and approach (p. 19). So it can be said that strategies are more flexible models intended to guide the implementation of a class.

### *2.3 Strategies in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).*

In EFL teaching, there are a variety of methods and approaches that address different needs, learner diversity, contexts, and communicative objectives. Therefore, strategies must be adapted to the context and characteristics of the students. These strategies can be focused on working on specific aspects of a language such as listening comprehension, a more grammatical emphasis, or vocabulary acquisition, which can also be called methodologies since they establish specific teaching techniques as described by Richard & Rodgers (2001) "The method concept in teaching - the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning" (p. 1). On the other hand, the approaches focus on teaching strategies based on the nature of language that guides the selection of methods and strategies, without actually setting out concrete actions. "Your approach includes a number of basic principles of learning and teaching on which you can rely for designing and evaluating classroom lessons" (Brown, 2000, p. 40). Based on this, approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Instruction, Content-Based Instruction, among others, have emerged, which use language in meaningful contexts as a means of learning rather than as a goal.

In a communicative framework, as in the approaches, learning is developed through the integration of four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking "to develop students'

communicative competence and their ability to use English to gain access to social, vocational, educational, or professional opportunities" as was mentioned by Pardede in 2020 (p. 72). It is held that in everyday life, the focus is not on a single isolated skill because people are constantly receiving linguistic input. In this way, the learner's overall competence or output in the foreign language can be enhanced.

### *2.4 The role of strategies in the incorporation of literature*

Having defined that strategy is a tool guided, planned and intended by the teacher who leads the teaching to establish meaningful connections between students and the content, it can be established that literature can function as a didactic strategy in the teaching of English as a foreign language, as long as it is integrated through appropriate methodological approaches.

Gillian Lazar (1993) states that literature should be used with students because it, among many reasons, is motivating, works with authentic (real-life) content and material, helps to understand other cultures, broadens students' linguistic awareness, and encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings (pp. 14-15). Therefore, its integration into the lessons, in addition to contributing to their content, also affects a more critical and conscious formation. However, the choice of this is not an arbitrary one; on the contrary, it must be adapted and placed in the work context. In this line, the same author maintains: "If the materials are carefully chosen, students will feel that what they do in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives" (p. 15).

Within the communicative approach, Brown (2000) points out the following: "rather than designing a curriculum to teach the many aspects of one skill, say, reading, curriculum designers are taking more of a whole language approach whereby reading is treated as one of two or more interrelated skills" (p. 232) which provides a value to literature aligned, in the case of Chile, with the CLT approach established by MINEDUC, which makes it possible to understand that literature, as a strategy, naturally acquires a comprehensive communicative approach to skills.

Briefly, literature offers extremely valuable means for the acquisition of a language, that go even beyond the classroom by providing a cultural approach. Although there are several strategies to work with literature in the classroom, its effectiveness lies in the selection and adequate application that responds to the needs of the educational context. Both Lazar and Brown point out the importance of working with language from a comprehensive perspective, which gives this resource a didactic potential. Teachers, from their identity, are responsible for deciding, planning, and adapting strategies in order to benefit from literature in teaching and learning.

Literature is the ideal tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to better understand their own points of view and values, as well as those of others. Students can develop language skills by focusing on point of view and perspectives through reading short stories and completing related writing assignments. As Rostagno argues, literature texts can foster students' critical thinking and their awareness of social and cultural context (2017. p.130), and according to Chaves-Yuste (2023), when teaching EFL, students should be exposed to real life use of the language, and authentic materials, such as the use of novels, offer a unique opportunity to learn the language in context, while also improving student's' cultural competence.

The use of Literature in the EFL classroom is not just an artistic or cultural element, but a pedagogical resource where students can acquire authentic, meaningful and contextual experience to learn a second language. Despite this, its implementation in Chile is limited, which makes it important to question how curricular decisions and teachers' practices influence its marginalization in the classrooms.

## 3. Teachers' role and identity

### *3.1 Teacher role.*

During the XXIst century, teachers' role inside the classrooms has been constantly switching from dispensers of knowledge, in an environment that was mostly teacher-centered, to a multifaceted role which includes seeing teachers as facilitators of learning, guiding and motivating their students in areas regarding academics and

socioemotional development. Amin (2016) explores the changes and challenges experienced by teachers in a digital and knowledge (modern) society. As traditional teaching methods have been replaced by more creative and flexible approaches, today's teachers are required to act as facilitators providing tools for students that support them in critically assessing the quality and reliability of the information they receive, while also serving as open-minded and independent professionals who collaborate, mediate, and promote scaffold learning.

Archana, S & KUMBAKONAM, USHA. (2016) proposes five different roles for English teachers inside the classroom.

1. Teacher as a learner: As teaching and learning are an ongoing process, teachers must take into consideration students' points of view and necessities when planning their classes to help students get a better understanding of the given information.

2. Teacher as a facilitator: Teachers must build an environment that boosts students' academic and personal development while also guiding them to be self-directed learners.

3. Teacher as an assessor: Assessing is a key tool for teachers to understand to what extent students are learning and provide them with various types of feedback. It can also help teachers to better plan and adjust future lessons/contents.

4. Teacher as a manager: Teachers have to plan their classes in advance, creating a balance between content and interpersonal skills throughout diverse methods that support practical learning.

5. Teacher as an evaluator: True and fair evaluations should be carried out by teachers, giving students the opportunity to make mistakes and seeing them as valuable learning opportunities.

The roles proposed by the authors are just some of many responsibilities that teachers have to adopt inside the classroom, nonetheless they serve to portray the difficulties and demands of the teaching profession, where teachers are not only expected to pass the knowledge on to their students, and where the complexity of those quite unexpected roles increases or decreases depending on every school context.

As for Chile, the concept of a more multifaceted role that teachers have been acquiring becomes increasingly relevant due to the educational challenges present in the country, including inequality in access to education, cultural diversities inside the classrooms, administrative overload, and the incorporation of new technologies which call for professionals that are prepared to constantly adapt their role.

### *3.2 Teacher identity*

Teacher identity (TI) is a complex and evolving concept that has been gaining further attention due to emerging new approaches/methodologies such as problem-based learning, where the main focus goes from teacher-centered to student-centered language experiences, which has caused a significant change on what was expected from teachers and how the profession was seen from outsiders' perspectives: "for longtime language teachers were seen as technicians who needed merely to "apply" the right methodology in order for the learners to acquire the target language." (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, Johnston, 2005).

In Chile, Salinas & Ayala (2018) carried out a study with the goal of exploring the process of teacher identity construction by two English as a foreign language students during their practicum. The authors concluded that teacher identity is highly determined by teachers' self-image as students, their experiences during practicum, and the sociocultural environment in which they gravitated, which in turns suggests that TI is not a spontaneous or individual process for future teachers, since it is molded in connection with other teachers, student-teacher relationships, school context, and challenges inside the classroom.

Teachers' experience during their professional formation is a fundamental factor when constructing their TI, making their initial motivations for entering a teaching profession an additional factor to understanding the concept of TI in Chile. In a paper by Barahona (2014), in which pre-service English teachers from the country are interviewed, we read the following: “They were interested in learning the language above all. Few who enrolled in the program were interested in being educators”, and “Only a few of the preservice teachers expressed their interest towards teaching, and not necessarily associated with English.”. These findings disclose a quite common response among students, which may later affect their practicum experiences, the view they have on themselves as teachers, and the career itself. Nonetheless, it still provides an important insight into how TI is constructed by language teachers in the country. Understanding how student-teachers (or pre-service teachers) and teachers from their IT and professional role is essential to comprehend how they make pedagogical decisions inside their classrooms. The multifaceted role that teachers play helps them to make decisions when facing daily challenges regarding methodology and the student-teacher relationship. As TI is a concept shaped by teachers’ personal experiences as students and during their practicums, it influences pedagogical decision-making and adds a personal dimension to each class.

## 4. Critical dimensions of the Curriculum

### *4.1 National Curriculum and Hidden Curriculum*

When speaking of curriculum, we refer to the educational project and/or program to which a nation or institution adheres. The National Curriculum in Chile is the official framework that establishes what students are expected to learn throughout their schooling. This curriculum includes Learning Objectives (LOs), content, skills, and attitudes, divided by subject and educational level (MINEDUC, 2015). The Ministry of Education aims to establish and reach consensus on the principles that guide pedagogical and academic practices in the school system through the Bases Curriculares (Curricular Bases) and the Study Programs it proposes (2016). The Bases describe the learning objectives, their sequence and assessment criteria, ‘providing schools with a tool to develop relevant and up-to-date knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (MINEDUC, 2012). In early childhood, there are

the Bases Curriculares de Educación Parvularia, followed by those from 1st to 6th grade, which correspond to primary education. The Curricular Bases then apply from 7th grade to 10th grade, and finally, from 11th to 12th grade. Therefore, analyzing the National Curriculum is crucial to understanding which content, such as English literature, is emphasized, marginalized, or omitted in practice.

The official curriculum documents not only define what is to be taught but also reflect the educational priorities and values that promote the Chilean education system. In this way, current pedagogical theory agrees that the curriculum is much more than a neutral list of contents. From Critical Curriculum Theory, Michael Apple warns that all curricular selection is a political decision: by institutionalising a selection of available social knowledge, specific values, languages, and worldviews are legitimised and others are excluded (Apple, 1999). With other authors such as Henry Giroux, it is possible to broaden this vision with the new concept of the hidden curriculum, which is understood as the set of norms, expectations, and dispositions that the school transmits implicitly (punctuality, competitiveness, obedience) and which sometimes contradict the official discourse on equity and comprehensive education promoted.

According to Avilés and Zorondo-Barros (2022), some authors identify two currents: one of these currents sees the positive aspect of the hidden curriculum, interpreting it as a ‘fact of school life’. This is understood as the role of schools in training students to navigate relational dynamics that resemble or replicate those found in the global system. The second line corresponds to the opposite, denouncing the hidden curriculum as yet another mechanism used by the system to reproduce the tremendous social and cultural differences inherent to an unequal social structure. It is understood, then, that the curriculum is one more factor that favours inequalities, where power relations are strengthened, leading to more asymmetrical structures and strict regulations.

On the other hand, according to Muller (2022), Basil Bernstein introduces the concept of ‘powerful knowledge,’ grouping it under one concept that encompasses the knowledge that grants privileged access to written culture and civic participation. It is when the curriculum

reduces the arts or literature to optional spaces or utilitarian examples that it leaves this ‘powerful knowledge’ out of the reach of historically marginalised groups, reproducing the unequal distribution of cultural capital.

Then, the hidden curriculum manifests itself in norms, routines, and priorities that the school communicates without explicitly stating them. In the context of English, this translates into the internalization of an implicit message: language is worth, above all, for its economic utility — travel, employability, certifications — and not for its aesthetic or critical potential. Thus, even when the Foundations include literary objectives, everyday practice reinforces the functional dimension of language, leaving the extensive reading and cultural reflection offered by literature in the background.

Additionally, the textbooks circulating in EFL tend to reinforce this orientation. A meta-analysis of the hidden curriculum in ELT texts reveals that the units often privilege consumer, tourism, or business situations. At the same time, the literature is reduced to ‘extracts’ that serve primarily to illustrate vocabulary or grammar, rather than promoting aesthetic reading or critical debate (Sayedayn, 2019). Thus, students internalise that English is used to book a hotel or make a presentation. Still, it is not associated with artistic exploration, intercultural empathy, or the social questioning that literature can trigger.

### *4.2 Curriculum prioritization and Curricular marginalization*

In this context, we can also introduce the concept of curricular marginalisation, i.e., when content does not disappear but remains on the margins. This refers to the content being addressed in a fragmentary way, offered only in optional projects or ‘skipped’ when time is short. Literary English exemplifies this phenomenon: narrative or poetic texts are often reduced to short extracts to teach vocabulary or grammar, without playing a comprehensive formative role. This displacement occurs because the most easily accessible learning—comprehension of instructions and use of functional structures—are at the centre of the agenda. At the same time, objectives that demand close reading, critical analysis, and aesthetic appreciation are considered dispensable. In Bernstein's terms, the school refuses to

give all students access to the ‘powerful knowledge’ that underlies literature, thus reproducing the cultural capital gaps inherent in Chilean society.

On the other hand, the Curricular Prioritisation (Decree 276/2020), introduced during the pandemic, established a temporal hierarchy of learning: P1, essential, and P2, for deepening. In English, most literary reading objectives were classified as P2, while functional text comprehension strategies and diagnostic test preparation were classified as P1 (MINEDUC, 2020). Ministerial reports on implementation show that more than half of the schools worked exclusively on P1 during 2020-2022, relegating P2 to an uncertain future (MINEDUC, 2022).

From a critical perspective, Prioritization acts as an accelerator of marginalization: it reveals what knowledge is considered “essential” for the system in times of crisis, and confirms that literary expertise is not among them. The implicit message reinforces a utilitarian reading of language, depriving students, especially those without access to books at home, of systematic exposure to authentic vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, and diverse cultural worlds.

Taken together, the description of the formal curriculum, the revelation of its hidden layer, the analysis of marginalization, and the observation of Curricular Prioritization show how political decisions, assessment devices, and management logics construct a scenario where English language literature transitions from being an educational resource to becoming an extracurricular luxury. This point within the conceptual framework justifies the need to critically interrogate these hierarchies and explore strategies that re-establish literature as a cultural right and an engine of deep learning in Chilean secondary education.

## Theoretical framework

### 1. The pedagogical Value of Literature in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

In the field of pedagogy, literature has been used in different ways, for example, emphasizing repetition and memorization. However, with the emergence of communication and humanistic approaches, literary resources were reconsidered to foster students' linguistic development, personal and cultural growth. (Lazar, 1993). In accordance with Singh (2024) this approach responds to the need for students to better understand different contexts, symbols and forms of communication. This approach by including the use of literature implied an important change in the way language is taught, making it more complete and meaningful. In this process, literature not only acts as a linguistic resource, but also fosters understanding of the world through other cultures and oneself.

From this perspective, literature is not only a complement but a resource to explore language, embracing its symbolic, emotional, and social complexity. According to Duff and Maley (1990) literature provides access to the authentic form of language, this refers to the use of language in real contexts for communicative purposes, not in a classroom context, which is artificial and simplified. From this perspective, literary texts expose students to an expressive use of language, in addition to expanding their vocabulary and grammatical structures. Additionally, Bobkina and Stefanova (2016) emphasize that–when approached from a critical pedagogy– literature can motivate students to question the power structures present in the discourse and to reflect on their social context. Along the same lines, Kodama (2012) argues that literature fosters the exponential development of advanced discursive skills and strengthens communicative competence in real contexts, as students interpret from their own experiences and points of view. In consideration of this, the potential of the classroom is expanded, as it goes beyond mechanical repetition and connects learning with the subjectivity of the student.

The presence of literature in pedagogical spaces implies a different way of relating to learning compared to other educational methods focused on obtaining measurable results, since it privileges interpretation, dialogue, and subjectivity. In this sense, Paran (2008) argues that the use of literature in the language classroom provides an inspiring and richer

learning experience, establishing a connection between students' learning and the emotional and cultural dimension of language that often is not found in functional texts. Saarikoski (2020) reinforces Paran's idea by pointing out that literature allows personal connection to the language, facilitating a more lasting and deeper learning. Such an experience transcends mere linguistic competence, this way of learning nurtures empathy and cultural insight, elements that are essential in this globalized and diverse world.

In retrospect, this axis focuses on analyzing how literature has been theoretically valued in the field of English language teaching and what rationale supports its inclusion as an essential pedagogical resource. Recognizing this value is fundamental to understanding why its exclusion from the classroom is not due to a lack of theoretical justification, but to external factors affecting the conditions for pedagogical practice, such as curricular prioritization, teacher identity, institutional requirements or teacher motivation. Such elements will be addressed in the next sections of the theoretical framework.

## 2. English Curriculum and Literature in the Chilean Classroom A Tension Between Theory and Practice

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Chile is organized around the *"Bases Curriculares"* and the *"Priorización Curricular"*, official documents that determine the essential educational objectives. That being the case, according to the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the curricular bases define the learning objectives as the central elements that establish *"los conocimientos, las habilidades y las actitudes que las alumnas y los alumnos deben aprender para satisfacer los Objetivos Generales para el nivel de Educación Media indicados en la ley"* (MINEDUC, 2015).

(**loosely translated** as *"the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students must learn in order to satisfy the General Objectives for the Secondary Education level indicated by law"*)

The updated version of the Curricular Prioritization specifically states that the subject English "*tiene como propósito que los y las estudiantes progresen en las competencias para*

*comunicarse en este idioma, mediante el desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas de comprensión y producción de textos orales y escritos"* (MINEDUC, 2023).

(**Loosely translated** as "*Its purpose is that students progress in the competences to communicate in this language, through the development of linguistic skills of comprehension and production of oral and written texts."*)

The curricular prioritization is organized so that students can acquire knowledge in a progressive manner. In the initial levels, receptive skills are strengthened, followed by written production and, finally, oral production (MINEDUC, 2023).

As mentioned previously in the referential framework, when contrasting these documents, a tension arises regarding the specific role of literature in education. Although the curricular bases explicitly mention literary genres such as stories, poems and songs as relevant contents (MINEDUC, 2015), the current curricular prioritization emphasizes mainly functional communicative objectives, which could relegate or significantly limit the sustained inclusion of literary texts in the classroom. This inclusion, when it occurs, is generally fragmented and highly dependent on the interpretation and individual pedagogical decision of each teacher. This generates a discrepancy between what is officially proposed by the curriculum and what is actually implemented in teaching practice.

## 3. Teachers' motivation: a fundamental element to understanding pedagogical practices

Motivation is a concept broadly studied in many different areas; psychological, sociological, philosophical, are only a few of the aspects under which motivation has been studied throughout the years. This concept is described as the reasons that push someone to act, say or do something. However, there is no common definition for such a wide concept. Some describe it as *"what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action"* (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Choosing a place to work in, what to eat for lunch, or what to wear for a date, are all examples of decisions we make that are motivated by external or internal factors, which is explained by Ryan & Deci (2000) as intrinsic motivation: the one that comes from things being inherently interesting and extrinsic motivation: the one that comes because of the outcome of doing something.

Therefore, motivation is a common shared experience lived by every single human being in diverse aspects of their lives that not only influences what we do but also how we do it and even how much effort we put into it.

As such, motivation in an educational aspect works both for students as well as teachers, being a fundamental key for learning and teaching. For students, motivation is one of the most important factors that influence their overall learning journey, as explained by Dörney & Ushioda (2011) *"motivation is a key factor in determining the success of language learning. Learners who are more highly motivated will learn more and more quickly"*. Nonetheless, for teachers it is equally essential as it can influence their work performance, pedagogical choices, and even their own mental health.

Teachers' motivation is crucial to understand many pedagogical decisions teachers make throughout their career. From their decision to become a teacher, to which methodology they might use to implement their classes, everything is linked to what motivates them. In the specific case of English teachers, this motivation could be directly related to their willingness to go beyond the traditional way of teaching a second language.

According to The Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation, described as *"comprehensive theory that seeks to describe human motivation and its determinants and outcomes from a multilevel perspective"* (Lalande & Vallerand, 2014), teachers' motivation could be divided into the profession itself, the system they have to work under, and the specific tasks they have. That way, teachers could be motivated by their career and their dreams to teach but unmotivated by the system.

In the Chilean Educational context, there is a mixed variety of factors that can influence both positively or negatively the teachers' motivation. The educational system itself is a big factor that influences how motivated teachers are in their classes. As in Chile there is a disparity between public and private education, which makes it hard to apply the curriculum equally in all the schools, it is hard for teachers to stay motivated and integrate different methodologies in their classes. Nonetheless, motivation does not act on its own. Teachers'

identity, agency, and purpose are all factors that correlate with each other and affect how teachers act in front of a classroom.

## 4. Teachers' identity and role: Pedagogical decisions

Moving on into the topic of teacher identity, it plays a crucial role in determining the implementation of literature in EFL classrooms, particularly in both socioculturally inequitable and diverse contexts as occur in Chile. Just as Riffo-Salgado (2024) shares, preservice teachers (PSTs) often encounter difficulties during their practicum that require integrating institutional expectations–such as English-only instruction or political neutrality–with the complex realities of underprivileged students. This type of pressure exposes how teacher identity is being constantly shaped by practice. This same author (2024) complements the idea with the following quote: *"This dilemma conflicted PSTs' language identity between what they were expected to do, wanted to, and what they could actually do in the classroom"*.

Paulo Freire 's pedagogical vision delves into this understanding by framing education as an ethical and political art. According to Freire, *"la práctica educativa es un acto político deliberado y depende de la visión de mundo que tenga cada docente"* (**loosely translated** as *"educational practice is a deliberate political act and depends on each teacher's worldview"*) (García-Retana, 2016), stating that educators must be critically aware of the social purpose of their practice. In view of this, the decision to implement literature in EFL teaching ends up becoming a form of resistance to the technical, detached instruction. Instead, it affirms the teacher's role as a humanizing and interactive presence.

In addition, Freire reminds us that *"quien enseña aprende al enseñar y quien aprende enseña al aprender"* (**loosely translated** as *"those who teach learn by teaching, and those who learn teach by learning."*), focusing on the classroom as a space of mutual transformation, an idea that literature promotes through the cultivation of empathy, reflection, and communication. This thanks to the many instances of discussion that emerge after reading sessions, where students connect with diverse perspectives, reflect on their own experiences, and improve their dialogue-based skills.

Similarly, Arancibia-Herrera et al. (2024) notes that Chilean teachers interpret and adapt educational public policy in contextual, individualized manner. They demonstrate agency through curriculum negotiation. Additionally, Quirke et al.'s (2023) contribution leads us to consider that the already mentioned negotiation is influenced by reform dynamics. Besides, these authors noted when curriculum reforms are imposed as top-down, they often challenge teachers' professional identities while simultaneously providing open opportunities for improvisation and alignment with deeply held pedagogical beliefs.

Ultimately, the information aforementioned led us to the assumption that literature in the EFL classroom is not just a tool for language acquisition but a medium through which educators express their identity, engage with context, and foster a more inclusive and critically aware education.

## 5. Barriers and Challenges in Integrating Literature into English Language Teaching

The integration of literature into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching presents several obstacles and challenges that are crucial for understanding its boundaries within the educational system. Although there is extensive research supporting the significance of literature in language development, the integration process presents certain struggles. These problems span across areas such as teacher training, socio-cultural contexts, institutional inequalities regarding structural resources; and both teachers' and students' beliefs and attitudes.

### *5.1 Inequality and Curriculum gaps*

A primary barrier to the incorporation of literature in TEFL is the inequality in educational resources and the teacher's preparation caliber, particularly in varied environments like Chile. Toledo and Gonzáles (2016) highlight considerable differences in English curriculum proposals between private and public schools in Chile, pointing out how inequality–regarding resource accessibility– directly affects the effectiveness of language education. For instance, public schools, particularly in

underprivileged areas, often lack appropriate materials to work with and teacher personnel with previous training to apply literature in the class, both elements being completely necessary to incorporate literature into their classrooms. As a result, these differences are a significant obstacle for literature integration, as teachers in less-resourced schools struggle with limited access to literary texts and professional support.

### *5.2 Insufficient teacher training*

The absence of adequate pre-service training becomes a considerable challenge. Durmaz (2022) emphasizes the importance of teachers' pedagogical content expertise, particularly in the integration of literature into disciplines such as mathematics. However, many EFL teachers, particularly those in pre-service training, feel that they are not sufficiently prepared to integrate literature into language teaching usefully. Therefore, the lack of confidence that teachers have in applying literary texts in the classroom leads to a superficial implementation of this approach, worsening its powerful pedagogical purpose.

The current lack of methodological preparation highlights an urgent need to reform. To counter this, pre-service teacher education curricula must be context-aware, ensuring that future educators can take the full potential of literature in their teaching practice.

### *5.3 Structural barriers and Sudden changes in the teaching context*

Another aspect that must be considered is the use of literature in online teaching. In this regard, Awajan (2022) discusses how the structural challenges that were brought into the educational context due to the COVID-19 pandemic, intensified even more the existing difficulties in integrating literature. Inevitably, the sudden transition to online education revealed notable gaps in certain areas such as teacher preparedness and students' quality learning resources accessibility.

While online learning gives an opportunity for flexibility, it also amplifies the difficulties of engaging students with literary material. The absence of digital tools and resources, combined with teachers' limited training on how to use these tools successfully for literature-based lessons, creates a significant barrier to the integration of literature in EFL classrooms.

### *5.4 Teachers' beliefs and Attitudes toward literature*

Both beliefs and attitudes of teachers regarding the value of literature are crucial elements in the integration process. Because of this, Barzani et al. (2021) came to the following conclusion: although numerous teachers acknowledge the benefits of literature in language teaching, they often face hesitation due to concerns over the complexity of literary texts, cultural relevance, and the appropriateness of such texts for their students' needs.

These concerns arise from the perceived marginalization of literature to language learning objectives, due to the urgency of teachers to prioritize grammar and communicative skills. Consequently, teachers may avoid integrating literature or engage with it just superficially, failing to take full advantage of this tool to develop language skills and cultural awareness.

### *5.5 Challenges in selecting appropriate material*

A persistent challenge identified in the literature is the difficulty in selecting suitable literary texts for EFL students and classrooms. Following the line of reasoning established by McKay (1982) and McRae (1991), Vázquez García (2012) emphasizes that the quality and accessibility of the selected literary texts are crucial for successful learning in EFL classrooms. Indeed, it is common for teachers to struggle with finding readings that can be suitable for their students, in terms of being linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant. The same author comments that numerous teachers lack the resources or time to find and adapt literary materials that would adequately facilitate language acquisition (2012). As a result, the

incorporation of literature is usually superficial, prioritizing short stories or easy-to-read books without exploring in detail, wasting its meaningful potential.

### *5.6 Structural inequality as a key barrier to teachers' practice*

While previously discussed curriculum-based disparities highlight how inequality influences access to literature in EFL settings, it is also important to investigate how systemic inequality impacts teachers' ability to execute literature-based practices. For that reason, Torrico-Ávila et al. (2021) demonstrated that in under-resourced public schools, teachers face bigger class sizes, limited teaching hours, and a lack of institutional support, all of which constrain their pedagogical choices. In these contexts, the integration of literature is often deprioritized, not only because teachers devalue it, but because basic conditions make its implementation impractical or unsustainable. Thus, structural inequality not only affects students' learning opportunities but it also undermines teachers' professional agency and capacity to perform literature-driven instruction in a complex way.

### *5.7 The hidden curriculum and indirect devaluation*

Hidden curriculum is one of the many curricula that exists inside the school context. It has a relation to teachers' critical thinking because this curriculum is the one that tends to state opinions or facts in a subtle way, this thanks to certain behaviours, comments, beliefs, etc. Covacevich (2014) in her research supports the previous statement with the following example: *"Incluso en asignaturas como historia y ciencias sociales, los personajes masculinos dominaban las escenas políticas o científicas, perpetuando estereotipos que, aunque no están explícitos en el currículo formal, se transmiten a través del currículo oculto."*

(**Loosely translated** as "*Even in subjects such as History and Social science, male characters dominated/ruled political or scientific scenes, perpetuating stereotypes which, even if they are not explicit in formal curricula, they circulate through the hidden curriculum".*)

As a consequence, this curriculum has the possibility of shaping every teacher's perspective inside the classroom. Due to the fact that they must follow unwritten rules set by either school or external factors.

Furthermore, Nunan (1989, as cited in Peng, 2015) emphasizes that the hidden curriculum is transmitted to learners through disparities or mismatches between what is said and what is done. Teachers are often unconscious of the covert messages they transmit, verbally and non-verbally and these messages usually reveal teachers' attitudes towards many different aspects of the teaching-learning process. This perspective aligns with Jackson's (1990) observation which mentions that the elements which make a school unique are not just the physical tools of education or the official dialogues that take place there, but also some subtle behaviours, routines and expectations that shape daily life in the classroom. Despite being frequently overlooked, these elements are crucial in the transfer of values and norms to students.

Based on the above, Jackson (1990) explains that school life is not only defined by the contents taught or the educational tools used, but also by a series of less visible dynamics that shape students' daily lives. Among these, the constant social evaluation to which they are exposed stands out, which implies that students must adapt to both academic demands and implicit social expectations, which reinforces classroom norms and values.

In this vein, Peng (2015) expands on the types of knowledge transmitted unintentionally in classrooms:

> *"Teachers convey "socially-approved knowledge" unconsciously or without intending it while he/she is teaching what is required by the official curriculum. Here, socially-approved knowledge could indicate social-moral habits, attitudes, informal school rules, and beliefs, etc. For example, we often find that teachers teach obedience, conscientiousness, regularity, punctuality, gender identity, and even political awareness. These personal characteristics, attitudes, and social behavior are taught indirectly in school*

*because the school timetable does not have lessons called 'obedience' or 'conformity'!"*

This extract allows the reader to understand how the hidden curriculum reinforces social behaviors and values even when they are not an explicit part of the formal curriculum. Through this implicit transmission, a hierarchy of knowledge is also configured within the classroom, in which certain contents acquire greater legitimacy than others. In this context, when areas are not worked on constantly, the message implied to the students is simple: The module is not relevant. Thus, the hidden curriculum has a direct impact on how students value such content.

A complex environment where literature is frequently marginalized becomes apparent when structural inequalities, insufficient teacher preparation, and implicit mechanisms of the hidden curriculum are combined. Although literature's pedagogical value has been recognized in theory, in practice, literary texts are devalued and frequently presented as optional rather than necessary. Therefore, in order to bring back the transformative potential of language learning, this framework provides the necessary perspective to understand that the lack of literature in Chilean EFL classrooms is not just a logistical failure but rather the outcome of intersecting pedagogical, institutional, and symbolic factors that need to be critically addressed.

## Referential Framework

In this section of the investigation, we explore the factors that contribute to the limited use of literature as a strategy to teach EFL in the Chilean context of secondary education.To understand this, it is necessary to analyze the National English curriculum, including its bases, prioritization policies and the perspective of English teachers on the ground, vis a vis recent national research on the implementation of English. Because ultimately it is the teacher who makes the principal decisions in the classroom.

### 1. How important is English in the Chilean National curriculum?

The importance of English in the Chilean curriculum is focused on this subject's ability to develop communicative abilities such as listening comprehension, reading, oral and written expression. For the curriculum the learning of the English language constitutes a fundamental area to evolve in the dynamic of globalization. According to the Ministry of education (MINEDUC, 2015) the ability to communicate in this language makes it easier to engage in the dynamics of globalization, face its challenges, and benefit from its contributions. Also learning another language provides a linguistic and cognitive development on students' ability to understand other cultures and to access a wide range of knowledge, especially through the use of technology and digital media.

However, despite this emphasis on communication and cultural understanding, the integration of literature as a pedagogical strategy remains marginal. While some objectives refer to reading literary texts, literature is not positioned as a central tool for language learning, which limits its potential to promote deeper reflection, critical thinking, and richer language exposure in the English classrooms.

This apparent contradiction between the curriculum's broader goals and the marginal use of literature becomes more evident when analyzing the learning objectives (Objetivos de aprendizaje) and the classroom resources suggested for 7th to 12th grade. The following

section presents a detailed examination of these documents to identify whether, and how, literature is effectively integrated in the English curriculum.

## 2. Do the English Curriculum Bases encourage the use of literature in the teaching of English?

English has been recognized as a fundamental component for secondary education in the Chilean educational framework, emphasizing on students being able to effectively communicate in the target language and the development of the four skills. According to "Bases Curriculares" for 7th grade to 10th grade, students should achieve a B1 level, focusing on being able to maintain conversations, gain general information from texts, and express their ideas and opinions both orally and in writing (MINEDUC, 2015). As for 11th and 12th grade students, they should maintain a B1 level while also comprehending key and relevant information that they encounter and express themselves clearly and purposefully (MINEDUC, 2024). With regard to literature, there is no explicit emphasis for schools to include it in their programs, as the main focus is on the development of communicative skills, and literature is only mentioned through references to general reading. From 7th to 12th grade reading comprehension is promoted with the expectation that students will be able to comprehend and produce oral and written texts within both non-literary (such as descriptions, articles, procedures, catalogs, advertisements, emails, dialogs, web pages, biographies, reviews, news, speeches) and literary texts (such as songs, poems, comics, short stories, novels, adapted plays, short myths and legends), while also identifying purpose, main ideas, details, logical reactions, relevant vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions.

By examining the Curriculum documents available on the official website of the National Curriculum, one can identify a section titled Recursos (Resources), which provides suggested activities aligned with specific Units and their respective Learning Objectives. These resources are to guide the implementation of classroom practices, mainly by promoting activities focused on the development of communicative skills. Nevertheless, starting from 7th grade to 10th grade, it is possible to find certain activities that suggest working with literary texts.

Although literature is not emphasized as a central strategy, these activities reveal that its use, while limited, supports the comprehension of narratives and the development of writing skills without necessarily focusing on explicit grammatical structures (MINEDUC, 2015). It also implicitly suggests that literature has the potential to enrich the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) by encouraging reflection, analysis in writing as an engagement with language oriented communicative competences. As Rostagno argues, literature texts can foster students' critical thinking and their awareness of social and cultural context (2017. p.130).

In addition to the suggested classroom resources, the analysis of Learning Objectives (OAs) from 7th to 12th grade reveals the limited importance of literature texts in the formal curriculum:

**7th grade:**

IN07 OA 11: Demostrar comprensión de textos literarios ( como canciones o poemas, tiras cómicas, cuentos breves y simples y novelas adaptadas) al identificar:

El tema como idea general, personajes y sus acciones, entorno (tiempo y lugar), trama (inicio, desarrollo y final).

Palabras y frases claves, expresiones de uso frecuente, vocabulario temático.

This objective recognizes explicitly the importance of the use of literary texts in the development of reading comprehension, although it focuses on brief and adapted texts (MINEDUC, 2015, p.230). It also suggests, in the resources section, Inglés 7° básico, Unidad 4, OA 11 and 13, Actividad 1, an activity that show us how little it uses literature to its advantage, or as an EFL strategy (MINEDUC, n.d)

**8th grade:**

IN08 OA 11: Demostrar comprensión de textos literarios (como canciones o poemas, tiras cómicas, cuentos breves y simples y novelas adaptadas) al identificar:

El tema como idea general, personajes, sus acciones y características, entorno (tiempo, lugar), trama (inicio, desarrollo, final), problema-solución.

Palabras y frases clave, expresiones de uso frecuente y vocabulario temático.

This being the same objective that is used for 7th grade, it continues to promote comprehension of literary texts with a focus on key elements such as theme, characters and plot. The continuity of this objective in 8th grade reinforces the importance of literature in the development of reading comprehension skills. Also, as in the previous analysis, in the resources section the MINEDUC (n.d) suggests two activities, and in both the use of literature texts is limited.

**9th and 10th grade:**

IN1M OA 11 e IN2M OA 11: Demostrar comprensión de textos literarios (como canciones o poemas, tiras cómicas, cuentos breves y simples y novelas adaptadas) al identificar:

El tema como idea general, personajes, sus acciones y características, entorno (tiempo, lugar), trama (inicio, desarrollo, final), problema-solución.

Palabras y frases clave, expresiones de uso frecuente y vocabulario temático.

These objectives maintain the same focus as in previous levels, emphasizing reading comprehension in literary texts and the identification of their structural and thematic elements. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the consistent inclusion of literature in the learning objectives (OAs), which suggests their perceived value in the English learning process. This consistency is also reflected in the number of activities suggested in the Recursos section. In 9th grade there are seventeen activities suggested that include links to websites with a variety of short stories and poems available for online reading. Similarly, in 10th grade, nineteen activities are proposed, many of which provide access to literary texts intended to support language development through reading.

**11th grade:**

FG-INGL-3M-OAC-01: Comprender información central de textos orales y escritos en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes, con el fin de conocer las maneras en que otras culturas abordan dichos contextos.

FG-INGL-3M-OAC-02: Producir textos orales y escritos breves y claros en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes, con el fin de expresar una postura personal crítica que respeta otras posturas.

FG-INGL-3M-OAC-03: Utilizar su conocimiento del inglés en la comprensión y producción de textos orales y escritos breves y claros, con el fin de construir una postura personal crítica en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes.

FG-INGL-3M-OAC-04: Producir y comprender con fluidez textos orales y escritos breves y claros en situaciones comunicativas que involucren otras visiones de mundo y la propia, con el fin de interactuar y tomar conciencia de su propia identidad.

A review of the learning objectives (OAs) of the curriculum shows that these objectives focus on the comprehension and production of texts related to the students' interest and

contexts, without explicitly mentioning literature. Although literary texts that address cultural or personal topics could be included, their use is not specifically encouraged.

Nevertheless, in the document of the Ministry of Education entitled "Idioma Extranjero: inglés cultural-literario. Programa de Estudio. Tercer o Cuarto año medio. (s.f.)", proposes activities that include the reading of adapted literary texts, such as stories and poems, with the objective of developing reading comprehension and critical analysis skills.

**12th grade:**

FG-INGL-4M-OAC-01: Comprender información relevante para un propósito específico en textos orales y escritos en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes, con el fin de conocer las maneras en que otras culturas abordan dichos contextos.

FG-INGL-4M-OAC-02: Producir textos orales y escritos claros en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes, con el fin de expresar una postura personal crítica que respeta otras posturas.

FG-INGL-4M-OAC-03: Utilizar su conocimiento del inglés en la comprensión y producción de textos orales y escritos claros, con el fin de construir una postura personal crítica en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes.

FG-INGL-4M-OAC-04: Producir y comprender con fluidez textos orales y escritos claros en situaciones comunicativas que involucren otras visiones de mundo y la propia, con el fin de interactuar y tomar conciencia de su propia identidad.

As in 11th grade, these objectives do not directly mention the use of literature as a strategy. The focus is on texts that reflect the interests and contexts of the students, which could

include literary texts if the teacher considers it pertinent, but it is not an explicit orientation by the curriculum.

The aforecited document of the Ministry of Education is also suggested as a resource of activities which suggest that students formulate interpretations of works that address the same theme or problem.

Throughout the educational levels from 7th to 12th grade, it can be observed that the Chilean National English Curriculum includes literature in a progressive yet limited manner. From 7th grade to 10th grade, the learning objectives promote communicative skills, specifically reading comprehension, and within the suggested resources, there are activities involving narrative texts, short stories, and poems. This reflects an implicit presence of literature as a pedagogical tool.

However, in the upper levels (11th and 12th grade), the focus shifts toward general topics of students' interests and analytical skills, with no explicit mention of literature texts. Although some activities in the Ministry' s official resources include literary abstracts, these are not framed as a central strategy, nor are they systematically integrated with the curricular objectives. This highlights a relative marginalization of literature in English language teaching.

The analysis suggests that although literature is not entirely excluded from the curriculum, its implementation depends mainly on teachers' interpretation and pedagogical disposition, which supports the idea that the limited use of literature is influential for both the curricular design and the role and professional identity of the teacher. Therefore, it is essential to explore how these two factors impact the insufficient and inconsistent use of literature as a strategy to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in Chilean classrooms.

## 3. What changed for literature after the curricular prioritization update?

As a result of the COVID-19 health crisis in 2020, the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) decided to implement a curricular prioritization, meaning, a prioritization of essential objectives corresponding to each subject, because "la suspensión prolongada de clases presenciales generó efectos de largo plazo en múltiples dimensiones del sistema educativo" (MINEDUC, 2023, p. 1), which suggests an inequality of general conditions in the educational system, so therefore, this ministerial document proposes to focus on certain objectives of the curriculum in order to balance those learning processes that were not so successful during the pandemic.

Specifically in the English course, the teaching of literature was affected and moved to the background, where the prioritization of other linguistic skills is shown. For 5th and 6th grade, this document mentions in its first pages that these courses start with an emphasis on reading comprehension, however, there are only four prioritized objectives in both courses that mention the use of texts (OA 1, OA 8, OA 9, and OA 14), and only two of these allow the opportunity to explicitly use literature as a strategy (OA1 and OA 14), the latter being focused on writing literature and not on reading comprehension.

The following is a detailed analysis of the prioritized objectives regarding the use of literature in the classroom.

### 5th and 6th grade

1. OA1 (pages 6 and 9)

Escuchar y demostrar comprensión de información explícita en textos adaptados y auténticos simples, tanto no literarios (textos expositivos, diálogos) como literarios (rimas, canciones, cuentos), que estén enunciados en forma clara, tengan repetición de palabras y apoyo visual y gestual, y estén relacionados con las funciones del año y con los siguientes temas:

• temas de la vida cotidiana: la escuela, la casa, la familia, la ropa, la comida, el clima

• temas del contexto inmediato de los estudiantes como experiencias personales e información de interés relativa a eventos y aspectos de su entorno y de nuestro país • temas de otras asignaturas, como alimentación equilibrada y variada (Ciencias Naturales), descripción de lugares y clima (Geografía)

• temas de actualidad e interés global como cultura de otros países, cuidado del medio ambiente y avances tecnológicos (redes sociales, medios de comunicación).

This objective, while providing the opportunity to include literary texts as a resource, is formulated in a way that makes their use optional, given that the objective also allows for non-literary texts, as long as the content is included. However, the use of literature continues to have a more functional focus within the language rather than as an instrument of cultural knowledge or topics for reflection.

2. OA8 (page 7) 5to

Reaccionar a los textos leídos, expresando preferencias o haciendo conexiones con experiencias personales, en forma oral, escrita o mediante ilustraciones.

OA8 (page 10) 6to

Reaccionar a los textos leídos, expresando opiniones y sentimientos o haciendo conexiones con experiencias personales, en forma oral o escrita.

In both 5th and 6th grade, objective number 8 does not refer to the use of literature as such, in fact, it focuses more on reading comprehension, although it does not specify the

type of texts. Eventually, it can be used within the literary range since it gives more freedom, but not mentioning whether they are literary, informative texts, etc., leaves the content to the teacher's criteria, which can lead to a practical exclusion of literature if it is not promoted.

3. OA9 (page 7) 5to

Usar las siguientes estrategias para apoyar la comprensión de los textos leídos, tanto en formato digital como impreso:

• prelectura: hacer predicciones, basándose en conocimientos previos y elementos visuales

• lectura: usar organizadores, como títulos, subtítulos, ilustraciones e imágenes

• poslectura: organizar información en diagramas, releer

OA9 (page 10) 6to

Usar las siguientes estrategias para apoyar la comprensión de los textos leídos, tanto en formato digital como impreso:

• prelectura: hacer predicciones basándose en conocimientos previos, elementos visuales y contextuales

• lectura: usar organizadores, como títulos, subtítulos, ilustraciones, imágenes y notas

• poslectura: organizar información en diagramas, releer, usar el texto leído como modelo para la expresión escrita

Similarly to objective 8, this one, when talking about reading strategies, could eventually be used by a teacher with a literary text, but since it is not specified, this is not necessarily something the teacher will think of. The focus of these objectives is for students to engage in a process of metacognition in order for students to develop an understanding of what they read. However, as in the previous case, this ambiguity allows that in practical contexts, teachers prefer to give priority to the use of functional rather than literary texts, once again leaving this instrument out.

4. OA 14 (page 8) 5to

Completar y escribir, de acuerdo a un modelo y con apoyo de lenguaje visual, textos no literarios (como postales, mini libros, listas de compras) textos literarios (como rimas, tiras cómicas) con el propósito de compartir información en torno a los temas del año.

OA 14 (page 11) 6to

Escribir, de acuerdo a un modelo y con apoyo de lenguaje visual, textos no literarios (como email, postal, agenda, invitación) y textos literarios (como cuentos, rimas, tiras cómicas) con el propósito de compartir información en torno a los temas del año.

This objective in both years provides a significant opportunity to include literary production, as it explicitly mentions stories, rhymes, and comic books. It invites students to create and play with language in a more authentic way by applying content (grammatical, lexical, etc.) in a more situated context.

**7th grade**

The following objectives fulfill similar conditions to the previous ones. There are only four that give, in one way or another, the opportunity to include literature:

1. OA1 (page 14)

Demostrar comprensión de ideas generales e información explícita en textos orales adaptados y auténticos simples, literarios y no literarios, en diversos formatos audiovisuales (como exposiciones orales, conversaciones, descripciones, instrucciones, procedimientos, narraciones, rimas, juegos de palabras, canciones), acerca de temas variados (experiencias personales, temas de otras asignaturas, del contexto inmediato, de actualidad e interés global o de otras culturas) y que contienen las funciones del año.

2. OA7 (page 14)

Reaccionar a los textos leídos o escuchados por medio de exposiciones orales o en discusiones y conversaciones grupales en las que:

• hacen conexiones con otras asignaturas, la lengua materna y su cultura, la vida cotidiana, experiencias personales y otras culturas con apoyo del docente, por ejemplo: I learned/read about… in/when…

• expresan opiniones, sentimientos y los justifican de manera simple, por ejemplo: I like skating because it's fun; I 'm/feel happy/angry/afraid; I think that…; for example…

• resumen y sintetizan información con apoyo

• generan preguntas con apoyo, por ejemplo: why do/does…; Do/does/did he/she…

3. OA12 (page 15)

Identificar y usar estrategias para apoyar la comprensión de los textos leídos:

• pre lectura: leer con un propósito, hacer predicciones, usar conocimientos previos

• lectura: hacer lectura rápida y lectura focalizada, visualizar, identificar elementos organizacionales del texto (título, subtítulo, imágenes)

• post lectura: confirmar predicciones, usar organizadores gráficos, releer, recontar con apoyo, preguntar para confirmar información

4. OA 14 (page 16)

Escribir una variedad de textos breves, como cuentos, correos electrónicos, folletos, rimas, descripciones, utilizando los pasos del proceso de escritura (organizar ideas, redactar, revisar, editar, publicar), con ayuda del docente, de acuerdo a un modelo y a un criterio de evaluación, recurriendo a herramientas como el procesador de textos y diccionario en línea.

OA1 explicitly mentions literary formats such as narratives, rhymes and puns within oral texts, but approaches them from a logic of general comprehension of explicit ideas, without a deep or analytical literary treatment. OA7 complements this comprehension with an emphasis on the oral expression of opinions, emotions, and personal connections to texts, both read and listened to. While this response can be applied to literary texts, literature is not explicitly mentioned. AO12 focuses on the teaching of reading strategies; the same case as in 5th and 6th grade. Finally, AO14, very similar to the other courses, stands out for promoting literary creation and production. Once again, literature is present, but in a scattered manner.

**8th grade**

1. OA1 (page 17)

Demostrar comprensión de ideas generales e información explícita en textos orales adaptados y auténticos simples, literarios y no literarios, en diversos formatos audiovisuales (como exposiciones orales, conversaciones, entrevistas, descripciones, instrucciones, procedimientos, anécdotas, narraciones, rimas, juegos de palabras y canciones), acerca de temas variados (experiencias personales, temas de otras asignaturas, del contexto inmediato, de actualidad e interés global o de otras culturas) y que contienen las funciones del año.

2. OA7 (page 17)

Reaccionar a textos leídos o escuchados por medio de exposiciones orales o en discusiones y conversaciones grupales en las que:

• hacen conexiones con otras asignaturas, la lengua materna y su cultura, la vida cotidiana, experiencias personales y otras culturas con apoyo, por ejemplo: I know (about) this because…; I remember that…

3. OA12 (page 19)

Identificar y usar estrategias para apoyar la comprensión de los textos leídos:

• pre lectura: leer con un propósito, hacer predicciones, usar conocimientos previos

• lectura: hacer lectura rápida y lectura focalizada, visualizar, identificar elementos organizacionales del texto (título, subtítulo, imágenes)

• post lectura: confirmar predicciones, usar organizadores gráficos, releer, recontar con apoyo, preguntar para confirmar información

4. OA14 (page 19)

Escribir una variedad de textos breves, como cuentos, correos electrónicos, folletos, rimas, descripciones, biografías, instrucciones y resúmenes utilizando los pasos del proceso de escritura (organizar ideas, redactar, revisar, editar, publicar), ocasionalmente con apoyo, de acuerdo a un modelo y a un criterio de evaluación, recurriendo a herramientas como el procesador de textos y diccionario en línea.

In the case of 8th grade, these objectives keep prioritizing a communicative and functional approach to English, with specific mention of literary genres, but without a systematic and deep treatment of literature as a formative component. Their implementation depends, to a great extent, on the pedagogical decisions of teachers and the institutional context.

**9th and 10th grade (1ro medio y 2do medio)**

1. OA1 (pages 21 and 25)

Demostrar comprensión de ideas generales e información explícita en textos orales adaptados y auténticos simples, literarios y no literarios, en diversos formatos audiovisuales (como exposiciones orales, conversaciones, descripciones, instrucciones y procedimientos, avisos publicitarios, entrevistas, noticieros, anécdotas, narraciones, canciones), acerca de temas variados (experiencias personales, temas de otras asignaturas, del contexto inmediato, de actualidad e interés global o de otras culturas) y que contienen las funciones del año.

2. OA7 (pages 22 and 26)

Reaccionar a textos leídos o escuchados por medio de exposiciones orales o en discusiones y conversaciones grupales en las que:

• hacen conexiones con otras asignaturas, la lengua materna y su cultura, la vida cotidiana, experiencias personales y otras culturas, (se despliegan funciones del lenguaje y uso gramatical)

3. OA12 (pages 23 and 27)

Seleccionar y usar estrategias para apoyar la comprensión de los textos leídos:

• pre lectura: leer con un propósito, hacer predicciones, usar conocimientos previos

• lectura: hacer lectura rápida y lectura focalizada, hacer inferencias, releer, identificar elementos organizacionales del texto (título, subtítulo, diagramas)

• post lectura: confirmar predicciones, usar organizadores gráficos, releer, recontar, resumir, preguntar para confirmar información

4. OA14 (page 23) 1ro medio

Escribir una variedad de textos, como cuentos, correos electrónicos, folletos, rimas, descripciones, biografías, instrucciones, artículos, cartas, resúmenes y diario personal (journal), utilizando los pasos del proceso de escritura (organizar ideas, redactar, revisar, editar, publicar), ocasionalmente con apoyo de acuerdo a un criterio de evaluación, recurriendo a herramientas como el procesador de textos y diccionario en línea.

5. OA 14 (page 27) 2do medio

Escribir una variedad de textos, como cuentos, correos electrónicos, artículos, folletos, rimas, descripciones, biografías, instrucciones, cartas, resúmenes, diario personal (journal) y poemas o canciones utilizando los pasos del proceso de escritura (organizar ideas, redactar, revisar, editar, publicar), generalmente en forma independiente de acuerdo a un criterio de evaluación, recurriendo a herramientas como el procesador de textos y diccionario en línea.

In the case of these grades, a step towards the literary aspect is observed, where poetic genres and written production are included. However, in a similar way to the previous years, resources such as critical reading or analysis are still left to the pedagogical decision of the teacher.

**11th and 12th grades (3ro medio y 4to medio)**

In both years, something very particular happens, and that is that neither of the prioritized objectives covers literature. There is an opportunity to use written texts, but there is no emphasis on literature as such. The objectives are focused on the development of more reflective, intercultural and critical communication skills.

3ro medio

1. OA1 (page 29)

Comprender información central de textos orales y escritos en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes, con el fin de conocer las maneras en que otras culturas abordan dichos contextos.

2. OA3

Utilizar su conocimiento del inglés en la comprensión y producción de textos orales y escritos breves y claros, con el fin de construir una postura personal crítica en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes.

3. OA4

Producir y comprender con fluidez textos orales y escritos breves y claros en situaciones comunicativas que involucren otras visiones de mundo y la propia, con el fin de interactuar y tomar conciencia de su propia identidad.

**4to medio**

1. OA1 (page 30)

Comprender información relevante para un propósito específico en textos orales y escritos en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes, con el fin de conocer las maneras en que otras culturas abordan dichos contextos.

2. OA3

Utilizar su conocimiento del inglés en la comprensión y producción de textos orales y escritos claros, con el fin de construir una postura personal crítica en contextos relacionados con sus intereses e inquietudes.

3. OA4

Producir y comprender con fluidez textos orales y escritos claros en situaciones comunicativas que involucren otras visiones de mundo y la propia, con el fin de interactuar y tomar conciencia de su propia identidad.

It is interesting that, in the final years of school, which is the time in which students have more linguistic tools in the language, literature still does not figure explicitly in the curriculum, which maintains a fully functional approach to the language.

## 4. Are there studies that examine the use or lack of literature in English classes in Chile?

### *4.1 The importance of literature in teaching English.*

Incorporating literature as an educational tool can offer multiple benefits for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) within the classroom, as (Romero, 2018) stated "Literature not only improves linguistic competence, it also stimulates students' critical and creative thinking and increases their knowledge of the cultures of the target language."

When it comes to the development of the four skills –listening, speaking, reading, and writing– teachers can utilize literature in different ways to enhance students' exposure and use of the target language to achieve a successful development of the four skills. Literature can serve as the foundation for a reading program to increase vocabulary acquisition and the understanding of grammatical forms (Strong, 1996, as cited in Alasadi, 2010). Audio recordings of literary texts can be helpful for the development of listening skills, exposing students to different dialects that can be found in the Anglo-speaking world (Strong, 1996, as cited in Alasadi, 2010). For speaking skills, literature can also help students expand their sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence while dialogues in literary texts portraying real life situations can provide students examples of when and how language is used depending on different social contexts (McKay, 2001, as cited in Alasadi, 2010). As for strengthening students' writing abilities, they can write essays based on their interpretations and personal reflections on the texts, promoting their writing skills as well as their aesthetic engagement with the literature they are reading (McKay, 2001, as cited in Alasadi, 2010).

While reinforcing the value of literature inside the EFL classroom McKay (2001, as cited in Gómez, 2015) mention how literature helps English learners to understand the importance of meeting specific communicative goals and provides them with support to develop the

four language skills as with literary texts students can read, speak, listen and write about diverse topics, conflicts and actions performed inside the texts. The debate about the incorporation of literature in education has always been present, especially after the change from grammar translation (GTM) to communicative language teaching (CLT) which affected the role of literature inside the classrooms. Nonetheless, literature continuously offers students opportunities to enhance their language skills, linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and critical thinking.

### *4.2 Chilean context: National investigations regarding literature.*

After exploring what global authors have to say about the incorporation of literature in the teaching of English, it is important to read through national studies, as they can add to the topic by offering valuable information regarding opportunities and challenges faced by local institutions and teachers while providing meaningful insights concerning the actual incorporation of literature inside the EFL classrooms in Chile.

In the article "El rol de la literatura en la enseñanza del Inglés como segundo idioma" ("The role of literature in teaching English as a second language"), (Rostagno, 2004) analyzes the displacement of literature in English language teaching worldwide and in Chile. The author explains how since the 1960s there has been a progressive switch towards a more communicative approach inside the classrooms. Some of the arguments that support this switch believe that literature, due to its complexity, hinders students' development in the language and does not provide any actual benefit for their necessities. Nonetheless, the author mentions Carter & Long's (1991) three theoretical-pedagogical focuses (as cited in Rostagno, 2004), which portray the importance of literature when teaching English; the model of personal growth (the use of literary texts for self-knowledge and the formation of students), the linguistic model (the use of literary texts to expose students to unique and authentic linguistic features inside the language and teach them how to use it) and the cultural model (the use of literary texts as gateways for students to understand different ideas and traditions that shape societies all around the world). Eytel concludes that these three theoretical-pedagogical focuses could be implemented in other courses (such as

language) to increase the interest of students in literature and reinforce the benefits it can bring inside the EFL classroom.

Whitener, 2019, explores the factors that could have been influencing current Chilean English teachers (from primary to secondary education) at implementing literature in their classes. Eleven teachers enrolled in a master's degree in teaching EFL at a Chilean university, regarding the inclusion of literature in their English classes, participated in the study by responding to questionnaires and interviews. The responses from the teachers showcase that only those who receive explicit instructions on how to teach literature, or had mentors during their professional formation, had incorporated literature in their classes. Nonetheless, more than half of the teachers believed that literature was important and practical, although only four of them actually used it in their teaching. After completing a module of literature teaching, all eleven teachers showed interest in starting to include literature in their classes. The study concluded that teachers' beliefs and actions are strongly influenced by their experiences as students themselves and that practical instruction can be of great importance for future teachers.

The following study, de la Barra & Carbone, 2020, aims to reduce EFL inequality in Chile by implementing cooperative learning (CL) and content-based instruction (CBI) through literature while increasing students' academic and personal performance. A total of thirty-five students from two different vulnerable schools were involved in the study. One of the schools was from San José del Maipo with 91% of vulnerability and the other from central Santiago with 62% of vulnerability, and in both, students only received three hours per week of English classes that mostly used the grammar translation method. A set of units were designed including a variety of texts including fables, poems, and short stories that went from easy to very difficult, which allowed teachers to collect data from lesson observations, pre and post language tests, and surveys. Results showed that although students' linguistic proficiency did not increase significantly, there was an improvement in their cooperative learning skills and personal growth, which was one of the goals for this study. The authors concluded CL and CBI can actually help reduce inequality in EFL and education in general by enhancing students' cooperation, responsibility, and empathy.

However, there is still some work to do at incorporating new methodologies inside the classroom as both teachers and students need more time and training to fully adapt and understand the benefits.

As for the last study, Romero, 2018, its main objective is to find out the actual role of literature in eight English pedagogy programs in Santiago, Chile. Three anonymous surveys were made; for 7 program directors, 7 literature teachers, and 84 third year students. The questions inside the surveys revolve around the role of literature inside the classroom and curriculum, its benefits for the linguistic and intercultural development of students, and methods used by teachers to implement literature in the classroom. Results show that 45% of students feel discontent at the few literature courses in their university programs and believe that more optional courses should be available. Responses from teachers' surveys manifest similar ideas, as with the small number of literature courses it is difficult for them to entirely cover all the components of literature and for students to understand and appreciate literature for its aesthetic and academic value. As for program directors, all of them manifest satisfaction with the amount of literature implemented in their programs, countering the views from literature teachers and students, nonetheless, program directors point to the "authorities" –without clarifying whether it is government or university authorities– as one of the reasons for the lack of literature courses.

Throughout previous studies it can be seen that there is an actual concern for the role of literature inside schools and universities. Although the number of studies that focus directly on literature are limited, there are still professional questions as to why literature is being left behind inside the EFL classrooms despite its benefits. Chilean English teachers seem to recognize the impact the lack of literature courses had in their professional formation as they faced difficulties imparting literature courses for their students, while English pedagogy students feel discomfort at the small amount of literature courses in their program. There is no definitive reason as to why literature is being left aside, although program directors blame authorities for it. There is not much information or studies, however, that approach this topic.

**Methodological approach**

The methodological approach of this study is mixed, taking into account characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative research with the aim of obtaining a broad and comprehensive view of teachers' decisions and experiences in relation to the use of literature in the classroom.

According to Creswell (2015), quantitative research involves identifying variables, using close-ended instruments, and obtaining data that can be analyzed statistically (Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research). Therefore, the survey will include close-ended questions with “yes” or “no” options or scales that will allow us to identify patterns and trends objectively.

However, numbers alone do not tell the whole story. As Creswell (2015) explains, qualitative research consists of asking open-ended questions to obtain participants' opinions in their own words (Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research). For this reason, the questionnaire will also include open-ended questions so that teachers can freely and in detail share their perceptions and experiences regarding literature in teaching.

The choice of a mixed approach is not accidental, but rather responds to the idea that quantitative data show us the general trend, while qualitative data help us understand the “why” behind those trends. In Creswell’s opinion (2015) the use of both approaches allows us to provide a deeper understanding of research problems than using either approach alone (Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research).

In this way, the survey, which will be conducted in Google Forms format, will collect numerical and narrative data, allowing us to understand different motives, beliefs, and contexts. This information will enable us to arrive at a more realistic and complete picture of the role that literature plays in English language teaching.

## 1. Design research

A research design is the framework used to conduct a research study. It involves outlining the overall approach and methods that will be used to collect and analyze data in order to answer research questions or test hypotheses (Singh,2023).

The current investigation assumes a research design of an exploratory, descriptive and non experimental nature. According to Singh (2022) the official definition says that exploratory research is the initial investigation of a hypothetical or theoretical idea of the phenomena you observe. As Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2014) state, exploratory studies are used when the aim consists in examining a little-studied and novel theme. In this study, the exploratory approach allows us to investigate the current theme concerning the lack of information in the Chilean context: the marginalization of literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in secondary education. This approach will provide preliminary insights and a set of features about the research problem.

Singh (2023) says that descriptive research design is applied when the goal is to identify and characterize variables, frequencies and trends. Therefore, this research will adopt a descriptive component to gather all the information related to the perceptions of teachers who do not frequently use literature in EFL.

Lastly, Price et al (n.d.) explains that non-experimental research is research that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable. Rather than manipulating an independent variable, researchers conducting non-experimental research simply measure variables as they naturally occur (in the lab or real world), this justifies that in this research it is not necessary to manipulate the variables. Rather they will be observed as they present themselves in their natural context to answer the research question.

Overall, this design allows for a deeper understanding of the pedagogical practices and the curricular factors influencing the inclusion or exclusion of literature in the English classrooms. It also provides a basis for future educational research.

Although our study uses an exploratory descriptive and non experimental approach, there are other possible approaches that were not selected. For example, the experimental design that analyzes the relationship between cause-efect (Creswell, 2015), and it does not fit our investigation because we do not need to intervene in the context. Correlational design is focused on measuring the degree of relationship between two or more variables (Hernández, Fernández y Baptista, 2014). However, in this study the target is not to establish statistical correlations, but rather to describe and understand an educational phenomenon that has been little-studied in Chile. So too, the case-study, as Creswell (2014) says, which delves into a particular case, is ruled out because we are looking for generalizable information.

## 2. Instruments

In order to meet the study's objectives, such as describing teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the use of literature in EFL and its (mis)alignment with the National Curriculum and Curriculum Prioritisation, a self-administered online survey will be used via Google Forms. This choice is supported by three motives. First, its epistemological suitability: surveys are ideal when seeking to characterise trends and opinions among a broad professional population. As Creswell (2009) summarises, ‘a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population’, which allows for the examination of patterns and variations between subgroups (type of establishment, years of experience, etc.). Second, its logistical efficiency in geographically dispersed contexts such as the Chilean school system: methodological literature shows that online surveys allow for the collection of large samples quickly and at low cost; in fact, ‘online surveys have several advantages,’ including ease of application on free platforms such as Google Forms (Andrade, 2020). Finally, the consistency with a mixed design that combines measurement and explanation. In Fink's terms (2009), surveys are used to describe, compare, or explain [...] knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behaviours, which aligns the technique with our descriptive-explanatory purposes.

In terms of question design, a core of dichotomous close-ended items (Yes/No) will be combined with open-ended questions that allow for the development of ideas. This mix is supported by both measurement criteria and questionnaire theory. Closed questions make it

easier to estimate comparable frequencies and reduce cognitive load, and are especially useful when operationalising pedagogical decisions (e.g., ‘Do you include literary texts at least once a month?’). As Krosnick & Presser (2010) point out, ‘the inclusion of response options can be an advantage of closed questions’ because it provides specificity and improves comparability between respondents. Along with this, to understand why certain decisions are made (barriers, beliefs, institutional conditions), it is essential to make room for the teachers' arguments: in this sense, open-ended questions will allow for answers ‘in their own terms’ and capture nuances that a predefined list would not. In the same line, Bryman (2012) points out that the advantage of open-ended questions is that they ‘allow respondents to answer in their own words,’ even if this requires additional coding and synthesis work on the part of the research team. The combination of both formats, therefore, balances comparability and interpretative depth, consistent with a mixed approach that reveals both magnitudes and meanings.

## 3. Ethical Considerations

This research is guided by the long-standing principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. These aforementioned principles require transparent procedures, minimization of risk, and the equitable treatment of participants throughout all phases of instrument design and data collection (World Medical Association, 2013). Prior to fieldwork, institutional ethics approval will be obtained, and all procedures will adhere with the corresponding data-protection regulations and organizational policies.

Regarding informed consent, it will be required to obtain informed consent from participants prior to conducting any survey or interview. Consent materials will clearly state the study’s purpose, the nature of the instruments (questionnaire and semi-structured interview), the kinds of questions to be asked, the anticipated time commitment, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any moment without penalty, and how data will be stored, used, and reported (Creswell, 2015). In accordance with Creswell’s guidance, the study will avoid any deceptive practices and pay close attention to local norms and professional cultures when phrasing questions and conducting interactions (Creswell, 2015).

Instruments will be designed and administered in a way that protects participants' dignity and privacy. In addition, survey and interview questions will be non-discriminatory, non-misleading, and no more intrusive than necessary to address the research questions; participants may also have the option to skip any item they prefer not to answer (American Educational Research Association, 2011); In this research, any question that does not fit with the participant –due to any internal or external reason– will not be asked. After participation, a brief debriefing note outlining how data will contribute to the study will be given. Therefore, an item wording will be reviewed to minimize any potential harm, bias or discomfort (AERA, 2011)

In terms of confidentiality, all relevant information collected will be protected through pseudonymization and secure data management. Moreover, identifiers will be stored separately from response data; de-identified codes will be used for analysis; and access will be restricted only to the research team on sight, password-protected storage. The focus of reporting will be on aggregate results; any potentially recognizable content must be explicitly requested for permission, and illustrative quotations (if used) will be de-identified. (WMA, 2013; AERA, 2011) According to WMA (2013), any incentives will be modest and structured to avoid undue influence.

To conclude, the study implements ethical principles by combining clear consent, careful instrument design, rapport-sensitive mixed-methods administration, and strong confidentiality safeguards. All of this while always aligning practices with generally accepted standards for educational research.

## Data Analysis

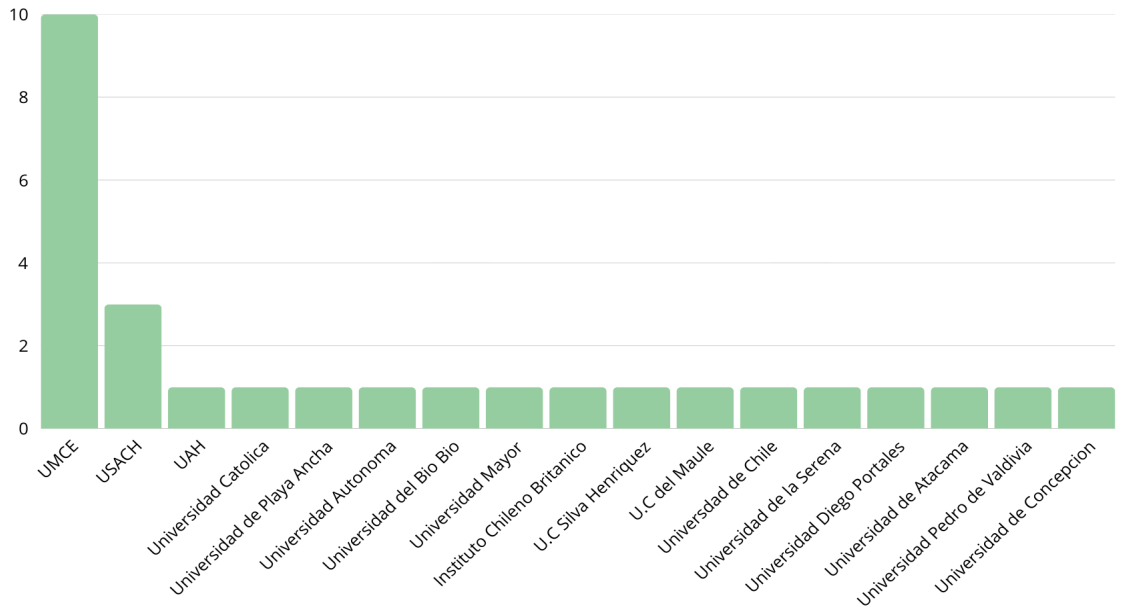
### Quantitative analysis

The following section presents the quantitative analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire administered to in-service English teachers. A descriptive statistical approach was used to analyze and describe the answer given by participants. The results are organized into thematic sections and illustrated through figures that reveal frequencies, patterns, tendencies and percentages.

### Section 1

**Figure 1**

*Undergraduate institutions of participating teachers*




In Figure 1, participants reported a diverse range of higher education institutions where they completed their undergraduate studies. The largest group (35.7%) studied at **Universidad**

**Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación**, representing over one-third of the sample. The second largest group (14.3%) attended the **Universidad de Santiago de Chile**, while smaller but meaningful proportions were distributed among institutions such as the **Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile**, **Universidad Alberto Hurtado**, **Universidad Autónoma de Chile**, and **Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez**. Each of these accounted for approximately 3.6% of the total responses. Other universities, including **Universidad Católica del Maule**, **Universidad Diego Portales**, **Universidad Mayor**, **Universidad de Atacama**, **Universidad de Concepción**, **Universidad de La Serena**, **Universidad de Playa Ancha**, and **Universidad del Bío-Bío**, were represented by single respondents, indicating a broad institutional diversity.

This distribution suggests that while most participants were trained in traditional pedagogical universities, particularly UMCE, the sample also includes graduates from both public and private institutions across different regions of Chile, contributing to a heterogeneous academic background within the group.

**Figure 2**

*Teachers year of graduation*

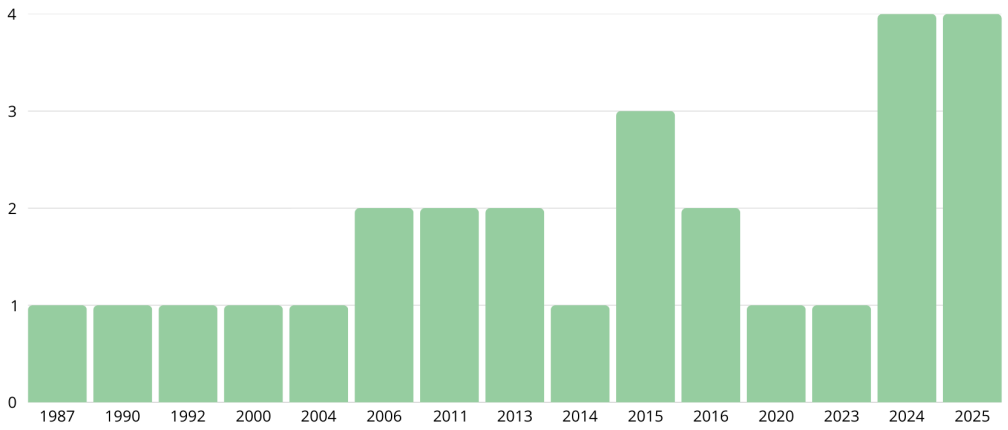
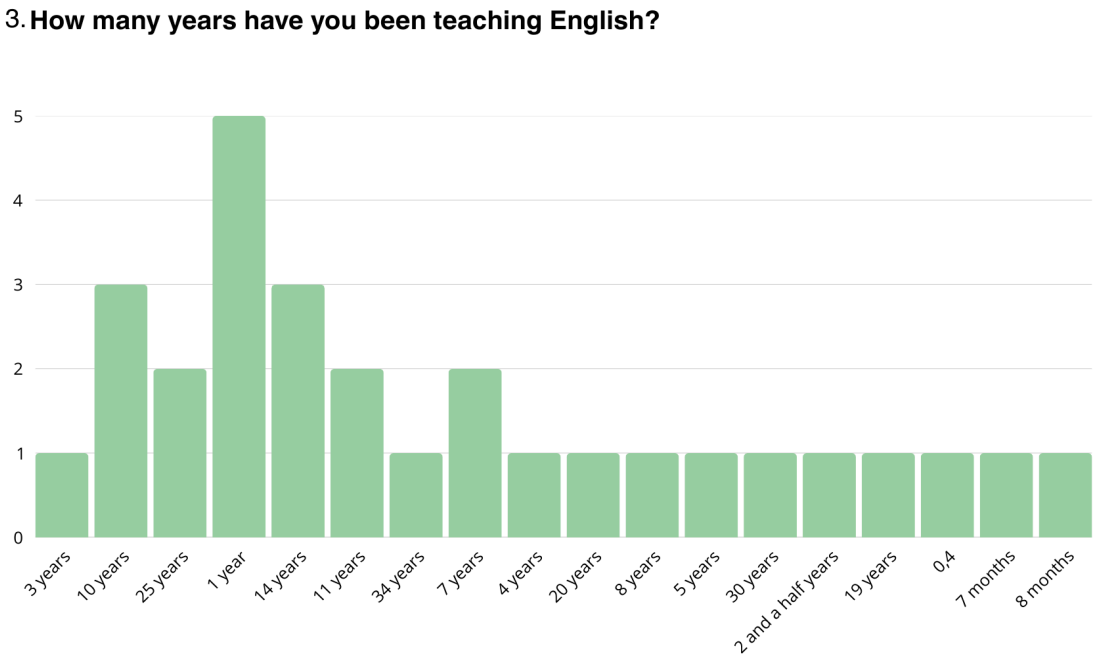


Figure 2 shows participants graduated across a wide range of years. The largest groups completed their studies in 2024 and 2025 (each 14.3%), followed by 2015 (10.7%). Smaller but consistent proportions (7.1%) correspond to graduates from 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2020, and 2023. Earlier years, such as 1987, 1990, 1992, 2000, 2004, and 2006, were represented by single respondents. This distribution shows a predominance of recent graduates, while still including participants with long-standing professional experience.

**Figure 3**

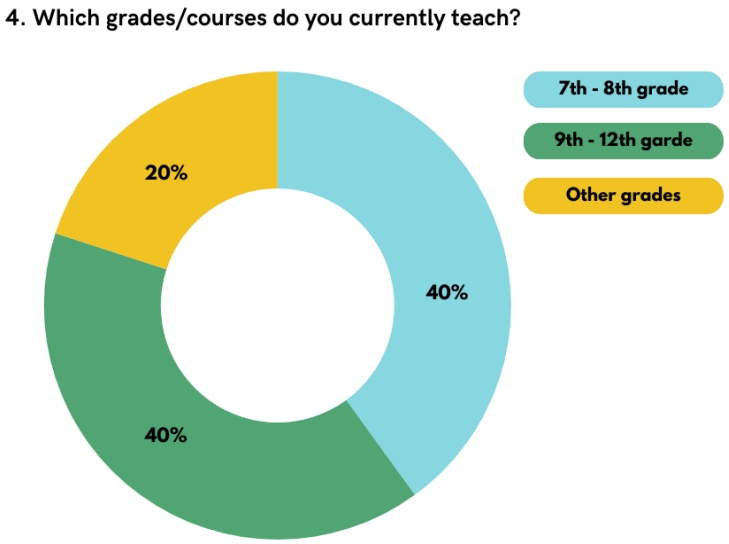
*Years of experience teaching English*




In Figure 3, participants reported a wide range of teaching experience in English language instruction. The largest group (17.9%) indicated having taught for one year, while smaller but similar proportions (10.7%) reported less than a year. Other responses were evenly distributed across categories, with 7.1% of participants indicating 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 19, 20, and 25 years of experience, respectively. Only two respondents (7.1%) reported having over 30 years of experience. This distribution suggests a diverse sample in terms of teaching experience, ranging from novice to highly experienced educators.

**Figure 4**

*Grades taught by teachers*




According to Figure 4, most participants reported teaching at the secondary education level, with 40% working in 9th to 12th grade and 40% in 7th to 8th grade. A smaller proportion (20%) indicated teaching in other educational contexts, including kindergarten, primary education (1st–6th grade), and higher education. However, these latter data will not be included in the analysis for this study, as they fall outside the defined scope of the research.

**Figure 5**

*Type of school where teachers work*

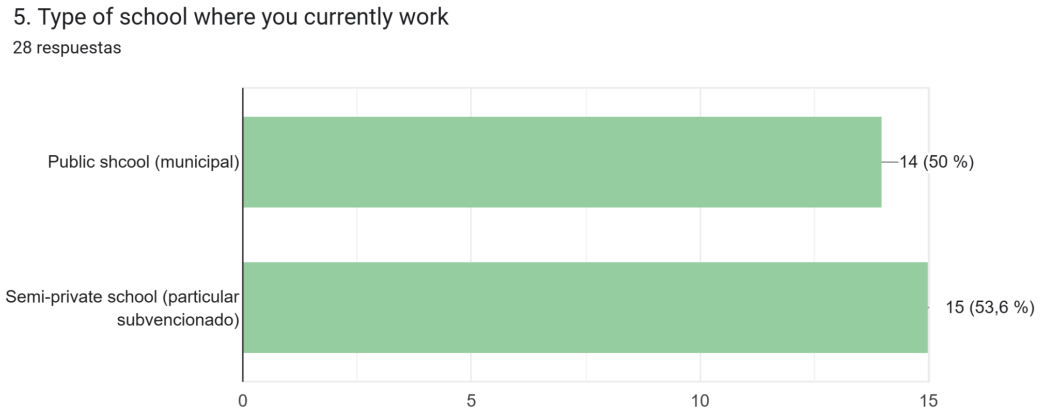



Figure 5 illustrates that half of the participants (50%) reported working in public schools, while 53.6% indicated that they currently teach in semi-private institutions. These findings suggest a relatively balanced distribution between public and semi-private educational contexts among the participants in this study.

## Section 2

### Figure 6

*Number of literature-based courses during undergraduate studies*

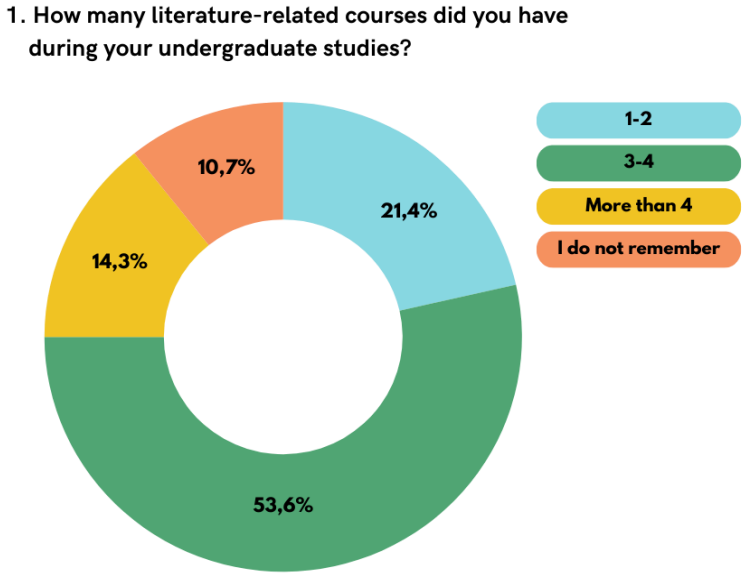
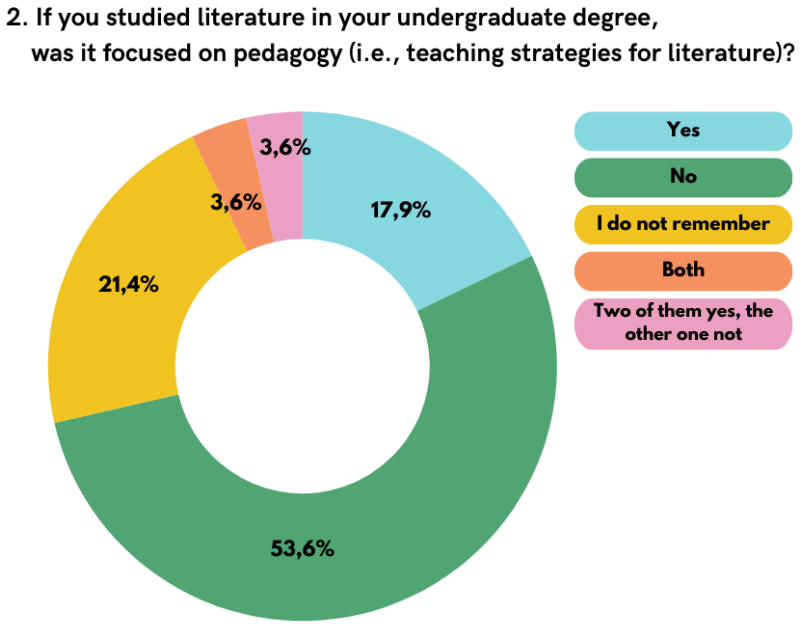


Figure 6 shows that the majority of participants (53.6%) indicated that they took 3 to 4 literature-related courses during their undergraduate studies. Meanwhile, 21.4% reported having 1 to 2 courses, and 14.3% had more than four. A smaller group (10.7%) stated that they did not remember the number of courses. Overall, the results reveal that most respondents had a moderate to extensive exposure to literature throughout their teacher training programs.

**Figure 7**

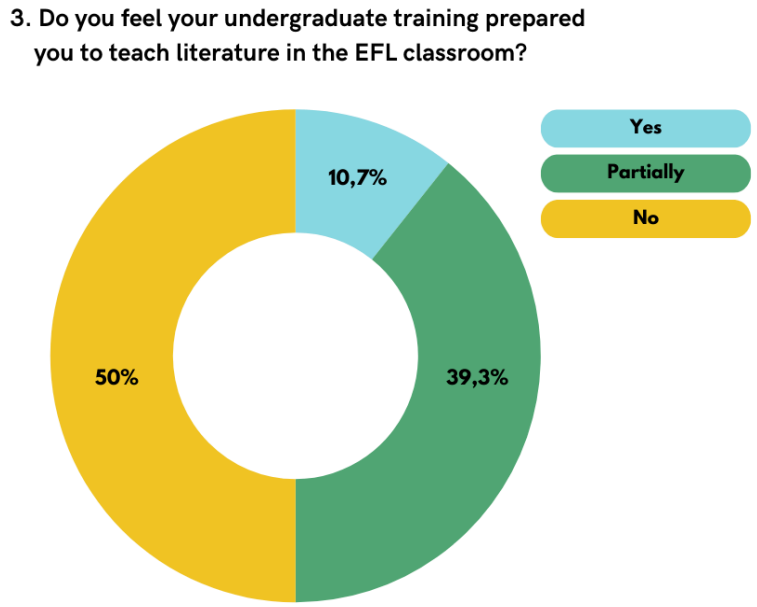
*Focus of undergraduate literature courses*




In Figure 7, 53.6% of participants reported that their undergraduate literature studies were **not** focused on pedagogy, while 17.9% indicated that they were. Additionally, 21.4% stated that they did not remember the specific focus of their coursework. A smaller percentage of respondents selected "Both" (3.6%) or "Two of them yes, the other one not" (3.6%), reflecting cases of mixed academic emphasis across different courses.

**Figure 8**

*Teacher's perceptions of their training to teach literature*

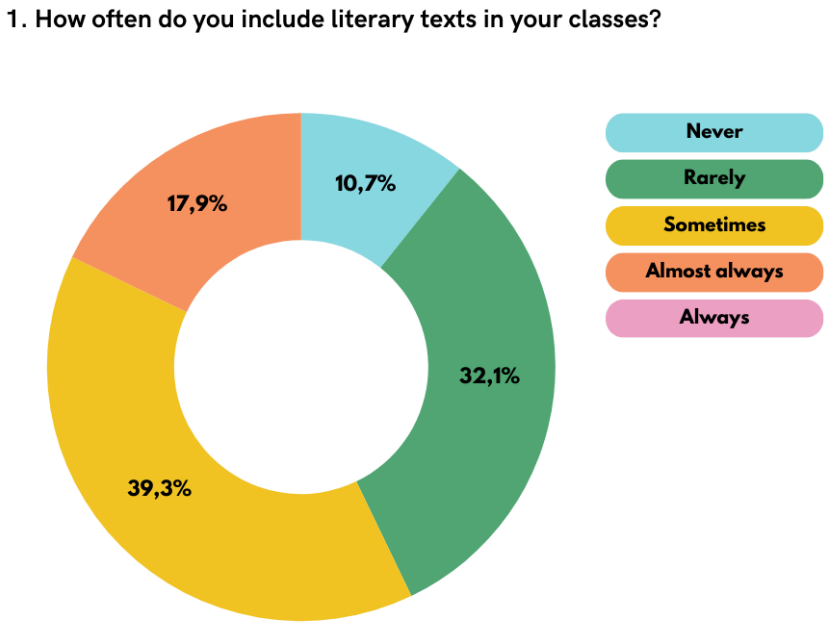



As shown in Figure 8, half of the participants (50%) reported that their undergraduate training did not prepare them to teach literature in the EFL classroom. Meanwhile, 39.3% stated that their preparation was only partial, and a smaller proportion (10.7%) considered that their training did provide adequate preparation for this purpose.

**Section 3**

**Figure 9**

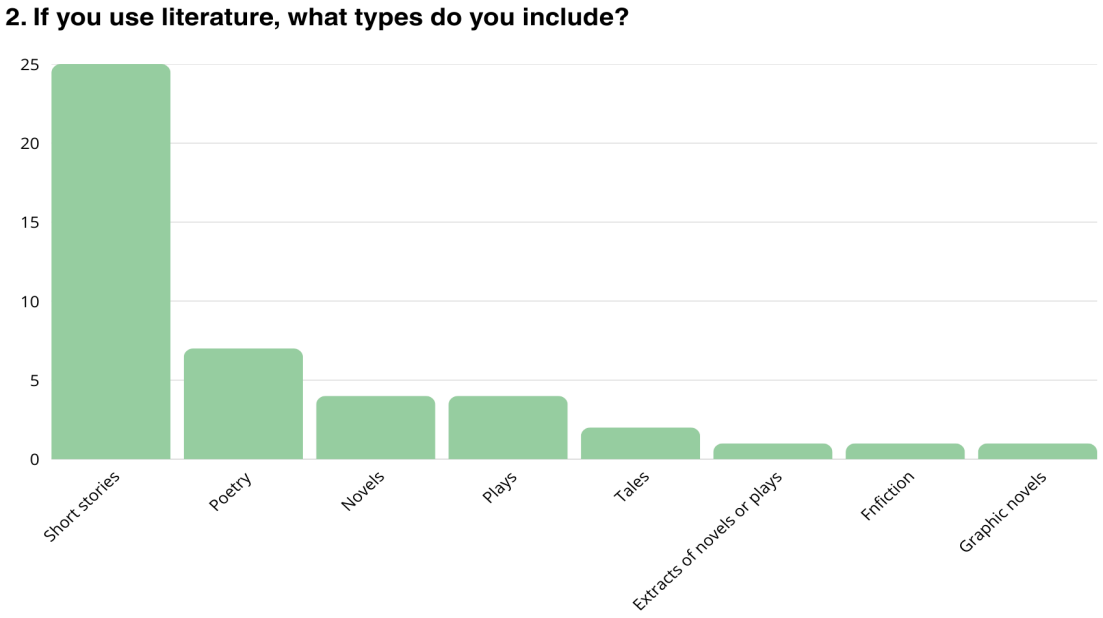
*Frequency of literary text use in English classes*




This question originally included five response options (never, rarely, sometimes, almost always, and always.) However, as shown in Figure 9, the answers were split between four options. The majority of participants (39.3%) stated that they use literature sometimes, followed closely by the ones that picked rarely (32.1%). A big gap follows with the teachers that almost always use literature (17.9%). Finally, a small percentage of participants (10.7%) expressed they never do so. This shows that, while the use of literature is present, it is still not a consistent practice among teachers.

**Figure 10**

*Types of literature use in EFL classes*




**55.56% short stories - 15.56% poetry - 8.89% novels - 8.89% plays - 4.44% tales - 2.22% extracts of novels - 2.22% fanfiction - 2.22% graphic novels**

As shown in Figure 10, the most commonly used type of literature among participants was short stories (55.6%), followed by poetry (15.6%). Smaller proportions reported using novels (8.9%), plays (8.9%), tales (4.4%), extracts of novels (2.2%), fanfiction (2.2%), and graphic novels (2.2%). Participants were allowed to select more than one option; therefore, the percentages reflect the proportion of participants who selected each category and do not sum to 100%. Participants were also allowed to provide other types of reading material; responses such as news articles, essays, or biographies, which do not fall under the definition of literature, were excluded from the percentages reported above.

**Figure 11**

*Main purpose to include literature in EFL classes*

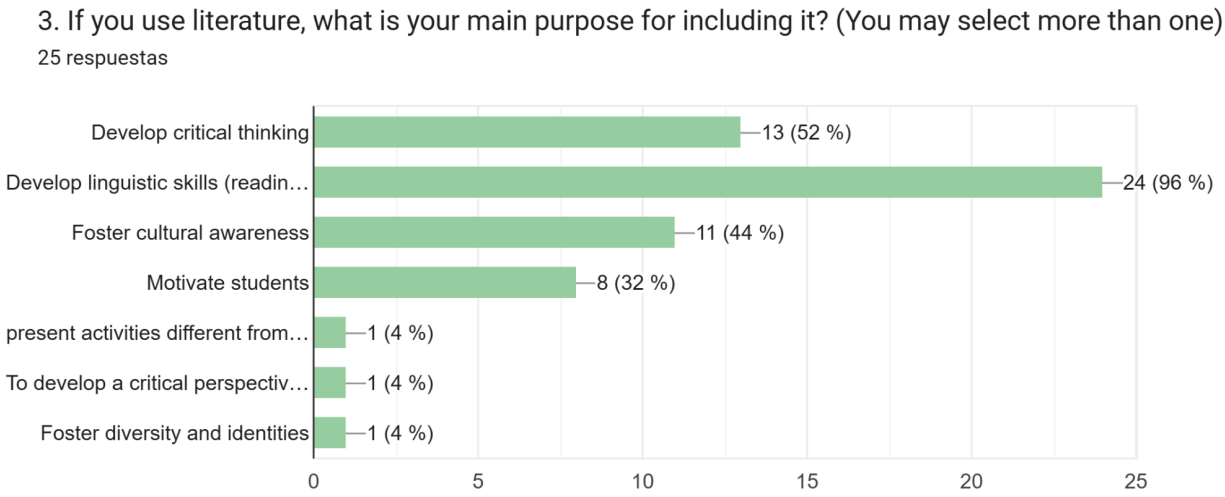
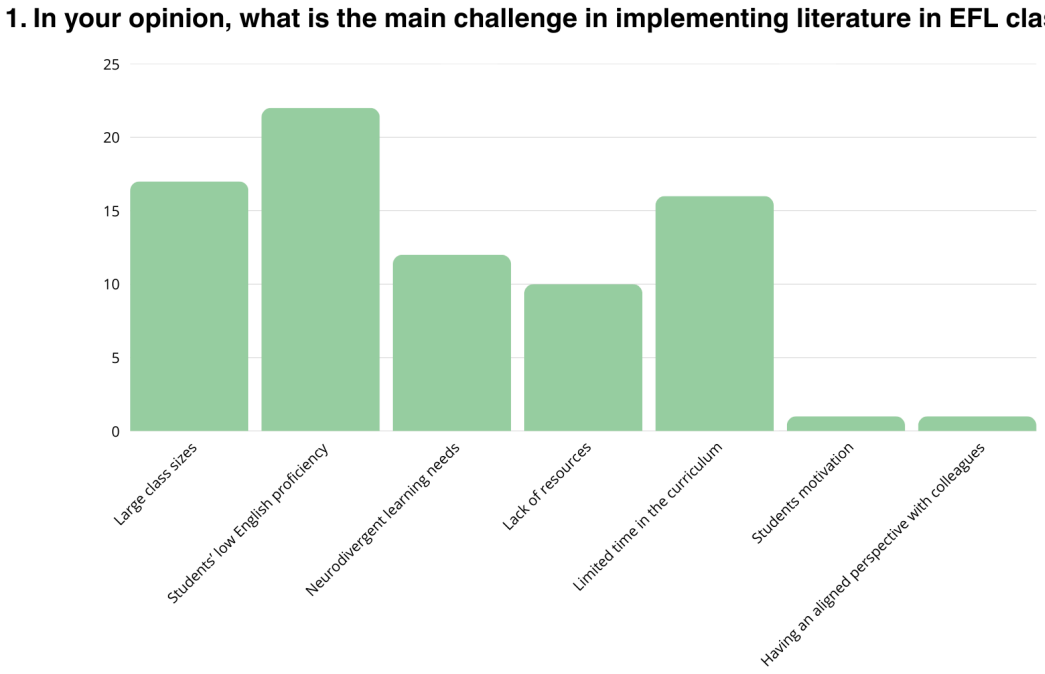



Figure 11 offered the choice of picking more than one option, which is why the results do not sum up to 100%, as the majority of participants (40.7% or 24 participants) stated that they use literature to develop their students' linguistic skills. Other frequent purposes include developing critical thinking (22% or 13 participants), fostering cultural awareness (18.6% or 11 participants), and motivating students (13.6% or 8 participants). Lastly, the three remaining options were each selected by only one participant (4%).

**Section 4**

**Figure 12**

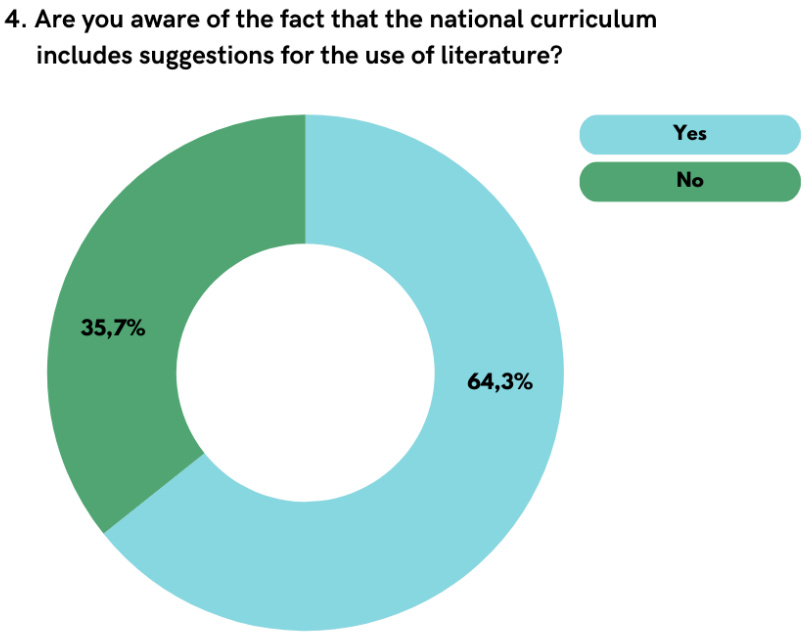
*Challenges when implementing literature in EFL classes*




Responses to Figure 12, which allowed participants to select more than one option and therefore do not sum up to 100%, indicate that the majority of participants (27.8% or 22 participants) stated that the main challenge in implementing literature is students' low English proficiency. The two other most frequently selected reasons were large class sizes (21.5% or 17 participants) and limited time in the curriculum (20.3% or 16 participants). Other reasons included neurodivergent learning needs (15.2% or 12 participants) and lack of resources (12.7% or 10 participants). Lastly, the two remaining reasons were students' motivation (3.6% or 1 participant) and differing learning goals among English teachers (3.6% or 1 participant).

**Figure 13**

*National curriculum suggestions awareness*




According to figure 13, the vast majority of the participants (64.3%) are aware of the fact that the national curriculum includes suggestions for the use of literature, while only a few (35.7%) are not aware of it. This indicates that although most teachers are familiar with the curricular guidelines, there is still an important gap.

## Qualitative analysis

To continue with the analysis, the following section focuses on the open-ended questions from the survey applied to teachers to provide a reliable account of how literature integration works as a tool or strategy in teaching English as a foreign language in Chilean classrooms.

The total number of open questions analyzed is twelve; they are drawn from various items in the survey, some of which are included in the closed questions, to explain the reasons for the answers.

In this sense, a Thematic analysis was conducted on the complete set of open-ended responses following Braun and Clarke's six-phase process: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis was informed by their later work on reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasises the active role of the researcher in theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

### Section 2: Literature in Teacher Training

***Question 2.1: If you studied literature in your undergraduate degree, was it focused on pedagogy? [i.e., teaching strategies for literature] If not, how was it focused?***

With that being said, the first open question comes from section two and it is related to the focus on literature in the undergraduate degree. In this matter, just eighteen of the twenty-eight participants answered that question. The majority of teachers describe their training in literature focused on analyzing theory, genres, literary movements, and authors. This kind of answer shows us the academic and humanistic focus where the target was to understand literature as an object of study and not as a pedagogical strategy.

In a second group, there is a focus concentrated on cultural, artistic, and value aspects of literature. Now, mainly literature is focused on a more humanistic and formative vision associated with cultural and personal development.

Finally, the last group, the minority, mentions experiences in which literature was focused on didactic use. These responses show an interest in connecting literature with English language teaching.

In summary, there is a clear absence of a pedagogical component, which suggests that their university training did not prepare teachers to integrate literature into English language teaching, leaving behind its communicative and educational potential in the EFL classroom. This also confirms the tendency of training Chilean teachers to focus on cultural content without a pedagogical perspective. This finding is key to understanding the disconnect between initial teacher training and current teaching practice, which could explain the limited incorporation of literature in the EFL classroom in the Chilean context.

**Table 1.**

*Focus of Literature studies in undergraduate English teacher education.*

| Focus | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Textual analysis and genres | 7 |
| History of literature and major authors | 4 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cultural and value-based learning | 3 |
| Critical thinking and reflection | 2 |
| Understanding and comprehension | 2 |
| Focus on teaching audience (children/teens) | 1 |
| Development of taste for literature | 1 |

**Section 3: Teaching Practices and Challenges**

***Question 4: Please mention any authors or titles you have used recently.***

The second open question comes from section three, where the participants are asked to mention any authors or titles used by them. These responses continue to fulfill a more cultural and aesthetic role than a linguistic or communicative one, reinforcing the traditional approach to teacher training (table 2).

A small group of teachers demonstrates a transformative and contextualized use of literature aligned with a more critical education, reflecting a more reflective pedagogical approach to developing critical thinking and social awareness.

**Table 2.**

*Literacy authors or titles recently used in the EFL classrooms*

| Category | Example authors or sources | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Classic authors | Shakespeare, Poe, Whitman, Andersen, Verne, Doyle | 8 |
| Contemporary/popular authors | JK Rowling, Mario Puzo, Isabel Allende | 3 |
| Children's literature | Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen, The Three Little Pigs | 3 |
| Textbooks and institutional materials | Make Your Mark, RazKids, MINEDUC textbook | 4 |
| Critical and sociocultural texts | David Crystal, bell hooks, BBC/CNN/The New York Times, critical articles | 3 |
| No use or can't remember | None / I don't remember | 4 |

***Question 5: If you use literature, do external factors, such as parents, administration or school values, affect the way you select and incorporate literature?***

In this open question they are asked whether, if they use literature, there are external factors that influence their decisions to select and incorporate literature (table 3).

The majority of teachers recognize that external factors influence their literary selection, especially institutional, religious, and ministerial policies, thereby limiting their teaching autonomy.

**Table 3.**

*External influences on the incorporation of literature in EFL teaching.*

| External factor | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Religious or moral restrictions | Christian schools or moral values limit text selection | 3 |
| School curriculum / Ministry guidelines | Curriculum or MINEDUC textbooks determine content | 5 |
| Parental influence | Parents question or object to certain texts | 2 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Textbook or institutional policy | Schools require use of official textbooks or Cambridge materials | 4 |
| Freedom of selection (no restriction) | Teachers report autonomy or freedom in text selection | 4 |

***Question 6: What is the role of literature in your current English program?***

The participants are asked about what literature is used for and teachers indicate that it is mainly used for linguistic purposes, especially to work on reading comprehension and vocabulary. Its presence in the curriculum is limited, constrained by students' level and the scope of the content. Only a few highlight its cultural and critical value , and to a lesser extent it is used as supplementary material (table 4).

**Table 4.**

*Teachers' perception of the role of literature in their current English program.*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Literature as a tool for language development | The majority of teachers view literature as a means to improve reading comprehension, | 10 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | vocabulary, and grammar, rather than as a field of study in itself. | |
| Literature fostering critical and cultural awareness | A smaller group of teachers connect literature with the promotion of critical thinking, identity, and cultural awareness. | 4 |
| Limited or marginal role in the curriculum | Several teachers mention that literature plays a minimal or non-existent role in their English programs due to curriculum overload, limited hours, and students' low English proficiency. | 5 |
| Literature as complementary material | Some teachers use literature only as supplementary material, often during assessments or as part of reading workshops. | 3 |
| Teacher reflections and challenges | A few teachers reflect critically on the conditions that prevent the meaningful integration of literature or question the very definition of "literature." | 3 |

***Question 7: What is students' general attitude towards literature in the classroom?***

The fifth open ended question from the third item and seventh question, asks how students react, and most teachers perceive a negative or resistant attitude, associated with boredom and comprehension difficulties. With appropriate strategies, some students show greater

participation or interest. A smaller group has positive attitudes, while other cases depend on the level or pedagogical approach applied (table 5).

**Table 5.**

*Students' responses to the use of literature in the classroom.*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Negative or resistant attitude | Students show boredom, disinterest, or rejection toward literature, often describing it as boring or difficult. | 9 |
| Limited comprehension and linguistic barriers | Negative attitudes arise from limited English proficiency and lack of reading comprehension skills. | 4 |
| Positive or engaged attitude | Some students display motivation and enjoyment, particularly when the texts or topics are appealing. | 5 |
| Conditional engagement (teacher influence) | Students' attitudes improve when teachers apply pre-, while-, and post-reading activities or choose suitable materials. | 6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Indifferent or uncertain attitude | Teachers perceive neutrality or uncertainty, or they have not implemented literature enough to evaluate attitudes. | 3 |

***Question 8: Do you think it is important to include literature in EFL classes? Why or why not?***

The focus of this question is to consider if literature should be taught in English, and there is a consensus that literature is important, because it contributes to students' linguistic, cultural, and critical development. However, its effective incorporation depends on the level of the course and the conditions of the school context, which makes its consistent use difficult despite its educational value (table 6).

**Table 6.**

*Rationales for including literature in EFL classes according to teachers.*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Literature as a tool for language development | Literature is valued for improving reading, vocabulary, grammar, and language skills. | 8 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Literature fostering critical thinking and creativity | Literature promotes critical thinking, analysis, and creativity. | 5 |
| Literature as a cultural and humanistic resource | Literature connects students to culture, diversity, and worldview. | 7 |
| Conditional importance (depends on context or level) | Importance depends on students' level, objectives, or institutional constraints. | 4 |
| Literature as authentic or real input | Provides exposure to authentic, real-world English beyond textbooks. | 2 |

***Question 9: Do you think teaching literature in language learning is a contribution? Of what kind? To what?***

The seventh open question that also comes from the third item–specifically from number nine–asks the teachers if teaching literature in the classroom is truly a contribution to learning, and if so, in which form or way (table 7).

**Table 7.**

*Contributions that literature could bring into the classroom according to teachers.*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Critical Thinking and Cognitive Development | Literature is viewed as a meaningful contribution to developing analytical and reflective abilities. Participants repeatedly link it to argumentation, interpretation, and forming critical perspectives about the world. | 11 |
| Linguistic Enrichment (Vocabulary, Grammar, Communication) | Many see literature as a linguistic resource that strengthens vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and communicative skills through authentic exposure to the language. | 9 |
| Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Understanding | Teaching literature is valued for broadening cultural horizons, exposing learners to different authors, histories, and worldviews, and fostering empathy and global awareness. | 8 |
| Motivation and Student Engagement | Several respondents emphasize that literature motivates students, stimulates curiosity, and makes language learning more enjoyable when | 6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | approached creatively. | |
| Emotional and Human Development | Literature contributes to emotional intelligence, sensitivity, and imagination, allowing students to connect learning with real human experiences. | 5 |
| Holistic Contribution to Education | Some recognize literature as a multifaceted educational tool that integrates intellectual, linguistic, and cultural dimensions; this helps to shape more complete learners. | 4 |
| Conditional/ Dependent Perspectives | A few note that its contribution depends on context: level of students, text complexity, or curriculum priorities. It may not always be feasible or effective in every EFL setting. | 3 |
| Neutral or Uncertain Views | A minority expressed uncertainty or lack of experience teaching literature, showing neutral attitudes toward its contribution. | 2 |

Most in-service teachers describe literature usage as a rich but multifaceted contribution to language learning, along with a particular emphasis on the linguistic, socio-cultural, and cognitive benefits. According to the answers given, literature is recognized as a tool for sharpening critical thinking, building empathy, and intercultural understanding. In addition,

to enhance vocabulary and grammar at some point. However, a small number of participants expressed contextual stipulations, suggesting that its inclusion depends mostly on students' proficiency, curricular flexibility and teaching objectives.

**Section 4: Opportunities and Barriers**

**Question 2:** ***What factors in your school context make it easier or harder to use literature in your classes?***

The eighth open question comes from the fourth item named *"Opportunities and Barriers"*. It consults teachers about what factors, besides teachers' capacities, could be helping or hindering literature usage inside the classroom (table 8).

**Table 8.**

*Relevant factors that aid or interfere with literature usage.*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Students' English Proficiency and Motivation | Teachers most frequently mention low English proficiency and lack of motivation as the main barriers. Students often struggle with comprehension, feel discouraged by long texts, or show little engagement with reading tasks. | 12 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time and Curriculum Constraints | Insufficient class hours and overloaded curricula limit opportunities to integrate literature meaningfully. Teachers report that grammatical and exam-focused content often takes priority over literary exploration. | 9 |
| Class Size and Learning Environment | Large classes, classroom noise, and lack of discipline make it difficult to conduct discussions or reflective activities. Managing 40–45 students is seen as incompatible with literary work. | 8 |
| Resources and Institutional Support | The availability of printed materials, access to technology, and institutional backing (e.g., school policies valuing English or high-proficiency contexts) significantly influence whether literature can be implemented effectively. | 6 |
| Contextual and Parental Factors | External conditions such as parental involvement, school culture, and broader community attitudes toward reading also affect how easily literature can be used in class. | 3 |

In this section, participants identified several contextual barriers regarding integrating literature in EFL instruction, including once again, students' low proficiency levels. In addition, motivation, behavioral issues, and restricted resources further complicate

implementation. Nevertheless, instructors understand the use of literature as both feasible and enriching in schools with supportive institutional culture. These findings emphasize the critical role of the school context in mediating pedagogical opportunities.

***Question 3: How familiar are you with the national curriculum for English?***

The ninth open question also comes from the fourth item. This question basically asks teachers about their familiarity with the national curriculum, regarding English as a subject (table 9).

**Table 9.**

*Teachers' familiarity with the national curriculum.*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| High Familiarity and Active Use | Most participants report being highly familiar with the national curriculum. They use it regularly for planning, aligning objectives, and designing classroom materials. Some even oversee curriculum design for multiple levels. | 10 |
| Moderate Familiarity (Guided or Partial Use) | Several teachers describe partial familiarity. They know the learning objectives (OAs) and use the curriculum as a reference but rely primarily on textbooks (e.g., Cambridge) or institutional | 8 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | materials for daily instruction. | |
| Low Familiarity or Dependence on Other Programs | A smaller group admits limited knowledge of the national curriculum, often because their schools follow alternative programs or international textbooks. Some acknowledge minimal engagement or uncertainty about its content. | 6 |
| Professional Development and Alignment Practices | A few participants mention updating their knowledge through courses or lesson planning requirements that include the curriculum. This indicates institutional emphasis on maintaining alignment with national standards. | 3 |

Most participants report a high–or moderate–level of familiarity regarding the national curriculum for the English subject, mainly using it as a planning instrument or point of reference. A smaller subset–who typically are employed in private or semi-private environments–shared that there is less direct interaction with national standards because they rely on international programs such as Cambridge. This uneven familiarity reveals a fragmented curricular landscape, in which institutional context and resources significantly influence alignment with the national framework.

***Question 4.1: If you are aware of the suggestions the curriculum includes, what do you think about them?***

The responses collected indicate that most teachers perceive the curriculum guidelines as over-demanding and poorly contextualized, revealing a design–reality gap: the curriculum assumes ideal conditions (small groups, continuous time, resources) that are rare, especially in public schools with limited time and large classes. The emphasis on standardized, measurable objectives displaces slower, qualitative aims (such as critical thinking and cultural appreciation), so literature is pushed to a marginal, "luxury" status. Teachers also note an Anglocentric bias and scarce Latin American content, which weakens cultural proximity and students' ability to connect texts with their lives. This weak contextualization reduces literature's potential for identity work and critical reflection. In sum, without protected time, progressive sequencing, and situated selection, the curricular suggestions remain ambitious but impractical, contradicting intercultural approaches to EFL.

**Table 10.**

*Conditions and Constraints for Implementing Literature in EFL*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Overload / Unrealistic expectations | Excessive objectives/tasks are often perceived as difficult or unrealistic in typical classroom settings. | 9 |
| Cultural (Mis)fit of corpus | US-centric recommendations; limited local/LatAm representation; weak cultural proximity. | 5 |
| Conditional feasibility via adaptation | Feasibility improves with local criteria, protected time, and progressive sequencing. | 3 |

*Note. Responses with "not aware/don't know" were excluded*

***Question 5: To what extent do you think the curriculum is aligned with real classroom contexts?***

A recurring pattern in the responses is the perception that the curriculum is out of touch with the actual teaching conditions. Teachers describe the curriculum as "designed for an ideal scenario," mismatched with conditions characterized by 99% vulnerability, limited time, large classes, increased neurodiversity, heterogeneous levels, and scarce resources. This gap between design and practice prioritizes basic coverage over literary and cultural development, tacitly conveying that literature is of secondary importance. Within these limitations, teachers' initiative becomes the main lever that translates policy into viable pedagogy, often under institutional vulnerability and at the cost of personal time. Micro-curricular decisions can still bridge the gap between design and reality, preserving humanizing objectives (empathy, cultural citizenship, critical reflection), especially when autonomy is combined with organizational support. Analytically, the explicit curriculum coexists with a hidden curriculum: without protected time, progressive sequencing, and culturally situated selection criteria, literature's presence becomes nominal rather than formative, signaling secondary status through routine and time allocation**.**

**Table 11.**

*Barriers and Conditions Affecting Curriculum Alignment*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Low / No alignment | Explicit statements of null/very low alignment ("zero", "not aligned", "very little", "not very much", "not connected"). | 12 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Idealized design | The curriculum assumes ideal conditions or sets expectations that are hard to sustain (“ideal scenario”, “expects a lot”, “too high”). | 3 |
| Time constraints | Too few weekly hours / overly large units that hinder depth and continuity. | 2 |
| Class size and Extracurricular load | Large groups and extra activities reduce practical alignment. | 1 |
| Heterogeneity & neurodiversity | Mixed proficiency, SEN/neurodiversity, or tasks pitched above students’ actual level; activities assume prior competence. | 8 |
| Resources and materials misfit | Lack/misalignment of materials; outdated or non-aligned textbooks; need resources to choose appropriate books. | 3 |
| Conditional alignment | Partial/conditional alignment if planned from the start, with teacher/school autonomy (“it depends”, “aligned if adapted”). | 5 |
| Regional alignment needed | Calls for regionalization and inclusion of Chilean authors/contexts. | 1 |
| Unknown/insufficient knowledge | Respondents state they don’t know/are unfamiliar with the curriculum. | 2 |

***Question 6: Do you think that your students consider literature as a secondary content or less relevant?***

Most responses indicate that students perceive literature as secondary, difficult, or of limited utility, especially when exposure is sporadic or topics feel distant. Reported reasons include weak reading habits, cultural distance from literary texts, and the perception that literature primarily serves as evaluative rather than communicative content. Where literary work is regular, purposeful, and culturally situated, with lexico-discoursal scaffolding, students revalue its role; effects depend on protected time, teacher preparation, and the status assigned in the official curriculum.

From an analytical point of view, this pattern reflects a curricular hierarchy: when literature is not coherently integrated into objectives, routines, and assessment, students tend to internalize its irrelevance, an effect of the hidden curriculum that reproduces marginalization. Conversely, in environments where literary works are integrated regularly and meaningfully, as authentic contributions that support unity and encourage communicative, creative, or reflective participation, students reevaluate their role. In general, the educational potential of literature for linguistic development and intercultural understanding is evident; however, its impact depends on protected time, teacher preparation, and the status it is assigned in the official curriculum.

**Table 12.**

*Emergent Themes on Literature's Status and Relevance*

| Category | Description | Frequency |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Perceived secondary status | Students are often seen as treating literature as secondary/low-utility, or as difficult, especially when exposure is sporadic or the topics seem distant. | 19 |
| Frequency–relevance effect | When literature is used regularly and purposefully, it is revalued and perceived as an important part of the class | 4 |
| Cultural relevance and scaffolding | Cultural proximity (plus lexico-discoursal scaffolding) helps connect texts to students' lives and raises engagement. | 5 |
| Unknown/Insufficient knowledge | Respondents state they don't know or are unsure. | 2 |

# Discussion

## Objectives discussion

The general objective of this study was to analyze the limited use of literature in the teaching of English in Chilean secondary education, considering the facts of the national curriculum, curricular prioritization, and the pedagogical decisions made by teachers. Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of official documents and the data gathered through questionnaires administered to teachers, it is possible to affirm that this objective was achieved. The data collected demonstrated that the absence of literature in EFL classrooms resulted from the combination of curricular policies and pedagogical elements, causing its marginalization in secondary classrooms.

The first specific objective was to examine the national curriculum and curricular prioritization to determine whether any pedagogical value is assigned to the use of literature as a strategy in EFL teaching. The results revealed that although literature is mentioned as a pedagogical strategy for language learning, it is suggested as an optional resource rather than a significant value. The curriculum provides limited resources that should be introduced in language learning, but the curricular policies, such as the OAs, leave it in the hands of teachers to make pedagogical decisions to incorporate them in the Chilean classrooms.

The second specific objective focused on identifying teachers' perceptions of English and their classroom practices regarding the use of literature in Chilean secondary education. The results show that teachers recognize the importance of using literature as a strategy to teach English in secondary classrooms, introducing cultural awareness, critical thinking, and linguistic development. However, most teachers recognized that they rarely use literature texts in their lessons. This contradiction between a positive perception and limited implementation is influenced by contextual barriers: time pressure to cover content, insufficient training in literature focused on pedagogy, and institutional expectations

targeting standardized tests. Also, these findings support the idea of the lack of teachers' training in literature focused on pedagogy skills and taking just an occasional resource.

The third specific objective assesses whether the national curriculum guidelines align with pedagogical decisions on the use of literature as a strategy in English teaching in secondary education. Regarding this objective, the triangulated data show a low or, at best, conditional alignment between the curriculum and teaching decisions. In the qualitative analysis, teachers describe a design "for an ideal scenario", which presupposes small groups, stable resources, and prior levels of competence that are not sustained. Therefore, decisions tend to re-sequence, simplify, and privilege short formats to maintain pedagogical viability. This interpretation is reinforced by quantitative analysis: the use of literature is not systematic, it is concentrated in short texts and justified for instrumental purposes, with barriers such as low language proficiency, class size, limited time, and neurodiversity/SEN needs remaining in place.

As Torres (1998) argues, this pattern is consistent with the hidden curriculum: schedules, routines, materials, and assessment tools reorder the explicit curriculum, determining which content "counts" and which becomes expendable in everyday classroom life. When the design does not materialize in reserved and stable times for working on literature, progressive sequences, specific selection criteria, and relevant materials, the value attributed to literature is not implemented. More measurable short-term goals displace it. The teaching agency acts as a hinge that makes the design viable, but its effect is fragile and weakens when it relies on personal time and improvised devices; by contrast, curricular coherence is strengthened when pedagogical autonomy is exercised alongside stable institutional resources. In the same direction, recent work emphasizes that these routine devices are not neutral and must become explicit objects of collective reflection (time allocation, assessment formats, text selection), precisely to avoid the silent reproduction of cultural and distributional biases and to support fairer pedagogical relationships. This reinforces the idea that alignment depends less on individual dispositions and more on institutional guarantees for those conditions (Trujillo Vargas, Pérez-Robles, & Gómez del Amo, 2025).

Finally, the fourth specific objective is to critically reflect on the implications of marginalizing English literature in current pedagogical practices for language learning in Chilean secondary education. Marginalization not only reduces the frequency of literary reading, but it also teaches, through timing, routines, and evaluation, what is central and what is expendable. Qualitatively, most teachers report that students perceive literature as "secondary" or difficult when exposure is sporadic and texts are culturally distant. In contrast, when reading is regular, with interpretive purpose and lexical-discursive scaffolding, appreciation improves and participation increases. Quantitative analysis is consistent with this mechanism: short texts, more measurable linguistic objectives, and patterns of intermittency predominate, leaving less room for deeper processes.

This pattern aligns with the already mentioned hidden curriculum and the re-hierarchical curricular priorities in daily practice. Three mechanisms help explain the observed marginalization:

- Time and sequencing: Without protected blocks and progressive cycles, reading becomes an event rather than a practice.

- Assessment as control: When assessment rewards quick, standardized products, the classroom displaces interpretive tasks such as discussion and analysis.

- Selection of materials and classroom routines: Anglo-centric or poorly situated materials reinforce cultural distance, since the most vulnerable contexts receive the most fragmented version, and literature appears as an event rather than a practice, normalizing its marginalized status.

In short, marginalization is primarily institutional, since it does not depend on whether people "like" reading, but instead on how they organize themselves. Therefore, reversing it requires institutional commitment, not just recommending conditions of use, but

guaranteeing those conditions. In this way, Literature ceases to be something incidental and becomes a cornerstone of linguistic development, commitment, and intercultural education.

## Questionnaire findings

### 1. Background Information

This section of the research, focused primarily on the professional context and aimed at outlining who the participating teachers are, shows that although the sample is predominantly composed of graduates from UMCE, there are a total of 16 different institutions represented, both public and private. This diversity contributes to a varied perspective on the landscape of English language teaching in Chile, as it includes teachers educated within distinct pedagogical cultures. Such institutional breadth suggests that the responses would naturally be diverse, given that participants' formative experiences stem from different curricular contexts and educational priorities. However, as explored in later sections, certain patterns emerge that indicate some teacher perceptions extend beyond institutional differences.

Within this same teacher diversity, an important aspect to consider is the participants' year of graduation. The results show a range from 1987 to 2025, allowing the study to capture multiple historical views on English language teaching in the country. This spread makes it possible to observe experiences spanning from the national curriculum of the 1990s to its most recent updates in 2015. In the responses from other sections, it becomes evident that graduates from before 2000 (1987, 1990, 1992), with approximately 30 years of teaching experience, and those who graduated in early 2025, with roughly eight months of experience, display a surprising convergence in their perceptions. This alignment suggests that, beyond generational differences, curriculum changes, and different work contexts, some elements of English teaching appear to remain stable over time. It is noteworthy that such distant formative trajectories can produce insights that are remarkably similar

Although questions 4 and 5 were not central to the aims of this study as they do not directly respond to the core phenomenon under investigation, grades levels taught and school types still provide some contextual insights into the participants' professional environments. 90.4% of the respondents reported to be currently working in lower or upper secondary grades where the curriculum areas of the English instruction is most heavily emphasized in the Chilean system. With this information it can be suggested that most of all of the participants are likely to operate within instructional settings shaped by standardized curricula, high-stakes assessment, and greater institutional expectations. Additionally, there is a relatively balanced distribution between public and semi-private educational contexts among the participants which can reflect teachers' diverse structural and resource conditions. While these responses do not directly influence the variables of the research, knowing the participants' different contextual factors help to situate their experiences of Chilean English language teaching, highlighting systemic variations that may indirectly shape pedagogical practices and professional perceptions.

## 2. Literature in Teacher Training

Throughout the second section of the survey, which explored how prepared the participants are to use literature as a pedagogical tool for their EFL classes, a clear pattern was shown. While most participants reported having taken between three to four, some even more literature related courses during their university studies, these were not oriented towards implementing literature as a pedagogical tool. Literature was used as an academic tool for them, focusing on analyzing theory, genres, literary movements, and authors. However, they were not taught how to use literature as an academic tool for their future EFL classes.

This shows an interesting contradiction. Universities did use literature as a pedagogical tool for their students, future teachers, including cultural analyses, the artistic, and value aspects of literature, using a didactic strategy to learn. Ironically, the same experience that was used to enrich pre-service teachers' learning was not taught back to them. As a result, half of the participants stated that their university studies did not prepare them to use literature as a communicative and cultural tool for their own EFL classes.

As reviewed in both the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, teacher identity is built from a comprehensive context that encompasses multiple experiences; university education being included here. Higher education in teacher training does not only provide disciplinary knowledge, it also shapes how future teachers understand what it means to teach English. Therefore, the way literature is introduced during initial training, academically or pedagogically, directly influences how teachers later practice and use literature in their professional field. The absence of pedagogical modeling regarding how literature can be used for language teaching may limit teacher's confidence to implement it as a strategy. From this perspective, the decision to use, or not to use, literature in EFL classes cannot be understood as a merely methodological choice. Rather, it appears as an identity related decision that is developed throughout university training. This helps explain the contradictions of using literature as a pedagogical tool in the pre-service teachers' learning but not knowing how to use it later as in service teachers.

### 3. Teaching Practices and Challenges

The findings from this section confirm a disconnection between academic formation and pedagogical reality, due to a critical gap identified in the contextual framework regarding the evolution of teacher training. While the framework notes a rooted humanistic tradition in the early English teaching in Chile, the questionnaire results reveal that current teacher training maintains a strong focus on literary theory and history, but it lacks the proper methodological tools for classroom execution. Therefore, there is a validation of the theoretical concern, resulting that while the majority of teachers possess sufficient cultural knowledge–or ‘‘what’’ to teach–, they feel unprepared in the pedagogical field–or “how” to teach it–. This already mentioned disconnection explains why, despite teachers being aware of the pedagogical value of literature, teachers often struggle to integrate it in an effective way, proceeding to use traditional analysis rather than using it as a communicative strategy as CLT or other modern approaches suggests.

Moreover, English in Chile is operated by an “instrumentalist approach” focused on workforce entry and global connection rather than cultural enrichment; this assertion from the framework aligns perfectly with our results. The results of our applied instrument show

that when literature is used, it is mostly utilized for linguistic purposes, where it is mainly focused on acquiring new vocabulary and improving grammar skills rather than cultural enrichment or critical thinking. This correlates directly with the *English Opens Doors* policy and the well-known standardized testing culture (SIMCE, PAES), which prioritize measurable functional skills over the holistic development that literature offers. Essentially, literature is being used to service the functional curriculum instead of challenging or expanding it, confirming the theoretical framework's warning about the "technification" of the teaching role.

A detail that emerged in the qualitative analysis is a profound tension between the "idealized" National Curriculum and the reality of Chilean classrooms, echoing the socioeconomic stratification described in the contextual framework. Most teachers describe a curriculum designed for small, well-resourced groups of students that clashes with the usual reality of large class sizes, neurodiversity, and low English proficiency from students found in public and semi-private schools. This corroborates the contextual framework's discussion even further on how market-oriented reforms and municipalization have deepened inequality. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown "Curricular Prioritization" was the extent implemented, worsening even more the previous context; as our framework noted that literary objectives were relegated to a "secondary" status. Teachers' reports affirm that in the struggle to cover "essential" content under time constraints, literature is inevitably marginalized, not due to a lack of interest, but to a structural incompatibility.

This section ends with the concept of "Hidden Curriculum", which had been already discussed in the conceptual framework, and is strongly validated due to the answers given by the teachers. Participants report that students often view literature as "boring", "difficult", or "secondary". This attitude is not random; it reflects the implicit clues of a standardized assessment system, where assessing content related to literature is not as efficient as taking a "regular" test considering the academic schedule; this indirectly plays a role and the student internalizes it as irrelevant as a result of it. The discussion on how schools transmit their values and how they are prioritized is reviewed once again thanks to this section's preoccupation with the hidden curriculum. The idea is the following: by treating literature as a non-essential element rather than a necessity, the educational system

would constantly detonate student resistance, this being an element that teachers already face. Nevertheless, the findings also show that when teachers use a proper methodological approach and culturally relevant texts, student engagement shifts, proving that the resistance is structural instead of inherent.

## 4. Opportunities and Barriers

A triad of structural constraints hinder the effective implementation of literature in Chilean EFL classrooms: low students' proficiency, large class sizes, and limited time within the curriculum were the difficulties that the investigation identified. In addition to this, teachers report resource inequality between institutions, the most common situation being the inability to print materials, so in schools where there is a lack of resources, incorporating literature becomes significantly harder, turning a pedagogical choice into a logistical struggle. On the other hand, the process becomes smoother when students demonstrate higher proficiency and the school does not have resource trouble, but these cases are often the exception rather than the rule. This reality reflects the "market-oriented" model of the Chilean education system described in the frameworks, where disparities in resources and class sizes, often exceeding 40 students, physically and pedagogically restrict the space needed for literary exploration.

A complex relationship exists between teachers and the National Curriculum. While a majority of teachers declare themselves familiar with the curriculum and are aware that it includes suggestions for using literature, they simultaneously view these suggestions as ‘‘decontextualized’’ and ‘‘unrealistic.’’ The findings describe a curriculum that is "too rigid" and designed for an ideal scenario that ignores the constraints of real classrooms, such as having only 2-3 hours of English per week or managing diverse learning needs. This validates the tension identified in the theoretical framework: while the official documents (Bases Curriculares) promote literature, the actual conditions of schooling render these objectives nearly impossible to achieve, resulting in a clear design-reality gap, where curricular alignment is perceived as minimal or even nonexistent

Additionally, The study confirms that students view literature and its related activities as secondary, positioning them as subordinate to other aspects of the class. This finding is

directly related with what was mentioned earlier in the conceptual framework, because the system prioritizes standardized testing and functional communication, and since literature is often the first component cut due to time constraints, students internalize the message that literature is expendable or something like an accessory to the important content. This resistance is not necessarily a rejection of reading itself, but a reaction to a system that frames literature as a difficult, decontextualized task rather than a meaningful cultural experience.

To conclude with section 4, the research demonstrates that there is a tension in Teacher identity. Teachers are knowledgeable professionals who are forced to act as technicians executing a disconnected plan. They are not failing to understand the Chilean curriculum, but the findings actively highlight the lack of fit with their students' reality, demonstrating the critical capacity of teachers, who must constantly negotiate with the curriculum, often finding themselves caught between their humanistic training and the technocratic demands of the school system.

**Challenges and Limitations**

Throughout the development of this study, some challenges and limitations emerged that influenced the outcomes of the research. Despite the careful planning and a clearly defined methodological plan, certain limitations became apparent, influencing both the data collection and the analysis of the results. As they provide essential information and context for understanding, it is important to recognize these constraints, as they provide the reliability of the findings.

1) **Time-related limitations**

Time was a crucial factor, due to the research being conducted within a limited academic period, which reduced the possibility of meetings between the team. This caused delays in the last parts of the drafting, the construction of the instrument and the analysis of it. Therefore, after analyzing the data, it was determined that the utilization of an alternative

method/procedure to implement the instrument and a greater investment of time would have provided/yielded better results.

### 2) Instrument design

Two aspects that were not taken into consideration when creating the instrument were its distribution and its design. It was assumed that a Google Form would be easier to spread in order to reach a large number of teachers. Although distribution was indeed facilitated, it became difficult for the participants to complete the survey, as described in the limited field (survey sampling). Additionally, the format generated confusion for a few participants in a couple of specific questions, where more information should have been provided to guide their answers and gather more specific data.

### 3) Survey sampling

The sampling of the survey also presented several challenges. The first issue encountered was the lack of participation among the target population. Despite contacting a considerable amount of English teachers who are currently teaching second graders, only a few participated. Moreover, among those who did respond, some did not answer all the questions, while others did not meet the requirements but still answered the survey. This created logistical difficulties during the data-cleaning stage and further reduced the usable sample size. Additionally, teachers' limited availability and overwhelming workload became a significant barrier as they did not have enough time or energy due to lesson planning, administrative tasks or grading which reduced the number of participants and therefore answers to obtain a significant sample size and representative. These factors collectively highlight the complexities of recruiting participants in educational research and the need to consider contextual constraints when interpreting the findings.

## Conclusion

As we discussed previously, this study sought to analyze why English literature remains limited in EFL teaching in Chilean secondary education, examining the role of the national curriculum, curricular prioritization, and teachers' pedagogical decisions. The motivation for this study arose from the gap we observed between the disciplinary training in literature that many teachers receive and the real opportunities to implement it pedagogically in classrooms with restrictive time, material, and assessment requirements. Building on our practicum experience, across different placement schools where literature was seldom integrated into teaching units, we were not in a position, as pre-service teachers, to alter long-standing arrangements shaped by prescribed units, limited instructional time, and institutional adherence to curriculum guidelines. These observations led us to ask: Why does this happen? Is it driven by the national curriculum, by the post-COVID curricular prioritization, or by teachers' context-specific decisions? Accordingly, this research examines how national policy, prioritization measures, and teacher perspectives interact to condition the marginal use of literature as a pedagogical strategy in Chilean secondary EFL.

The results converge on three key ideas. First, there is a structural gap between curricular intent and the feasibility of everyday teaching: data reveal that curricular prioritization policies have reinforced a focus on basic communicative functions and test-aligned content, leaving little space for literature as a valuable resource for teaching English. In second place, teachers' responses emphasized that although they are aware of literature's value, they rarely have the conditions to use it effectively. This is due to the structure of the national curriculum, assessments, time constraints, and pressure to achieve measurable linguistic outcomes, which distance them from meaningful integration of literary texts. Additionally, the National curriculum analysis shows that literature is acknowledged as a pedagogical strategy for language learning. However, it is presented as an optional resource rather than a main component. Although the curriculum provides limited guidance on its use, curricular policies, such as the OAs, delegate the responsibility for introducing literature into English teaching to teachers' pedagogical decisions in Chilean classrooms. Third, it is confirmed that the marginalization observed is primarily an institutional problem rather than a matter

of individual “preferences”: the decision to integrate literature does not depend solely on the willingness of teachers, but on organizational guarantees that are rarely assured. Therefore, disciplinary expertise alone is insufficient when teachers work in an institution that restricts their pedagogical decisions or autonomy. It follows that improvement depends less on new prescriptions and more on observable organizational safeguards.

This pattern is best understood in light of the hidden curriculum: everyday arrangements reorder the priorities of the prescribed curriculum, sending clear signals about what “counts” in practice. Where there are no protected blocks of time, sequences, and criteria, literature becomes an episodic event. In contrast, when reading is integrated with cadence and purpose, cumulative effects on students' comprehension, motivation, and cultural construction can be observed. These dynamics are not neutral in distributional terms: where time and relevant materials are scarcest, literary experiences tend to be more fragmented. Ensuring protected time and culturally proximate texts thus operates as a redistributive measure that narrows opportunity gaps.

Our findings engage with the specialized literature and the theoretical framework's perspectives. Authors such as Lazar (1993), Duff and Maley (1990), Paran (2008), and Saarikoski (2019) highlight the linguistic, emotional, and cultural benefits of incorporating literature into EFL instruction. Teachers share this point of view but are unable to implement it sustainably. Thus, rather than contradicting the framework, the data clarify it: the barrier is not the pedagogical value of literature, but rather how time, assessment, and the selection of materials are organized in schools. In other words, the theory offers the “why” (educational value), and the evidence we have collected explains the “why not.”

Furthermore, the data show that the training received often includes extensive exposure to literature, primarily focused on literary culture, including historical periods, genres, movements, and canonical authors. However, this exposure is insufficient, as it is not accompanied by robust pedagogical strategies for integrating this literature into English-as-a-foreign-language teaching practice. Therefore, the uncertainty expressed by teachers suggests that incorporating literature into the practice of English as a foreign

language requires not only curricular space in training centers but also explicit methodological training to be applied in classrooms and transmitted to students. For us, this gap between disciplinary preparation and pedagogical application represents an important area for future researchers who wish to continue this research and find more evidence to clarify this pedagogical gap.

## Projections

First, it is fundamental to acknowledge that concepts such as literature, the national curriculum and curricular prioritization are complex. Additionally, our research and findings likely represent just the tip of the iceberg regarding the limited usage of literature inside the Chilean classroom. Nevertheless, this research establishes a foundation for future explorations. We encourage teachers and future researchers to consider our findings when implementing new pedagogical strategies when it comes to incorporating literature, while taking into account the authentic context of English classrooms in Chile; this will help determine if future results are consistent with ours or if they present variations.

Furthermore, future research could verify if these teacher experiences are similar to others in other contexts across the country. For example, an interesting investigation could be if the lack of time is genuinely due to the teacher's uncertainty about how to manage a space for literature in large classes (40 or more students). In fact, this would probably allow the design of literature-based lessons that are tailored to the skills of the entire class. Additionally, future studies could analyze whether these challenges are related to student performance or interest (classroom conditions), school resources, or other factors mentioned in the literature and findings. Undoubtedly, this line of research offers very promising opportunities.

Finally, we encourage the continuation of this topic through further interventions and data collection. Due to time constraints, we were unable to administer instruments to a broader range of teachers, which limited the scope of our work. This research does not close the theme, rather it inaugurates it. For this reason, we reiterate our invitation to continue this line of inquiry, and future research will be able to test, measure and question the conditions to determine the use or absence of literature.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Teacher questionnaire

### Research Questionnaire: The use of literature in EFL classrooms

Dear participant,

You are invited to take part in our research study conducted as part of our thesis project. As students of the English teaching program at Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación (UMCE), we aim to analyze the use of literature as a pedagogical strategy in the teaching of English as a foreign language and to identify different aspects of the use of literature across different classroom contexts in Santiago, Chile.

For this purpose, we have prepared a series of multiple choice and open ended questions so you can share your experiences and perspectives in greater detail.

Your participation is completely voluntary and before proceeding, please consider the following conditions:

- Answering this questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes.
- Some personal information (such as your name and email address) will be requested ONLY for registration purposes. This data will not be used in the research analysis.
- The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be focused on academic purposes within this thesis project.
- This study does not imply any physical, psychological or academic risk for participants.
- Your participation in this study will not entail direct personal benefits. However, the findings will contribute to the advancement of knowledge regarding teaching

practices and perceptions of literature use in Chilean classrooms, helping to identify key aspects of its implementation.

- You may withdraw from the study at any time if you consider it necessary.

By accepting and continuing with the questionnaire, you acknowledge that you have read the information and agree to participate voluntarily under these conditions

☐ I have read the information and agree to participate voluntarily under the conditions described.

**Section 1: Background Information**

1. Name of the higher education institution where you studied your undergraduate degree:

2. Year of graduation:

3. How many years have you been teaching English?

4. Which grades/courses do you currently teach? **(You may select more than one)**

☐ Lower secondary (7th–8th grade)
☐ Upper secondary (9th–12th grade)
☐ Technical-professional high school
☐ University / Higher education
☐ Otro: _____

5. Type of school where you currently work

☐ Public school (municipal)

☐ Semi-private school (particular subvencionado)

**Section 2: Literature in Teacher Training**

1. How many literature-related courses did you have during your undergraduate studies?

☐ None

☐ 1-2

☐ 3-4

☐ More than 4

☐ I do not remember

2. If you studied literature in your undergraduate degree, was it focused on pedagogy (i.e., teaching strategies for literature)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I do not remember

☐ Otro: _____

2.1 If not, how was it focused?

3. Do you feel your undergraduate training prepared you to teach literature in the EFL classroom?

☐ Yes

☐ Partially

☐ No

**Section 3: Teaching Practices and Challenges**

1. How often do you include literary texts in your classes?

☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Sometimes
☐ Almost always
☐ Always

2. If you use literature, what types do you include? (You may select more than one)

☐ Short stories
☐ Poetry
☐ Novels
☐ Plays
☐ Otro:_____

3. If you use literature, what is your main purpose for including it? (You may select more than one)

☐ Develop critical thinking
☐ Develop linguistic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
☐ Foster cultural awareness
☐ Motivate students
☐ Otro: _____

4. Please mention any authors or titles you have used recently

5. If you use literature, do external factors, such as parents, administration or school values, affect the way you select and incorporate literature?

6. What is the role of literature in your current English program?

7. What is students' general attitude towards literature in the classroom?

8. Do you think it is important to include literature in EFL classes? Why or why not?

9. Do you think teaching literature in language learning is a contribution? Of what kind? To what?

**Section 4: Opportunities and Barriers**

1. In your opinion, what is the main challenge in implementing literature in EFL classes? (You may select more than one)

- ☐ Large class sizes
- ☐ Students' low English proficiency
- ☐ Neurodivergent learning needs
- ☐ Lack of resources
- ☐ Limited time in the curriculum
- ☐ Otro: _____

2. What factors in your school context make it easier or harder to use literature in your classes?

3. How familiar are you with the national curriculum for English?

4. Are you aware of the fact that the national curriculum includes suggestions for the use of literature?

    4.1 If you are aware of the suggestions the curriculum includes, what do you think about them?

5. To what extent do you think the curriculum is aligned with real classroom contexts?

6. Do you think that your students consider literature as a secondary content or less relevant?