Let's Talk about Sex…uality, Consent and Relationships

Teachers' Views on and Approaches towards Teaching Sexuality, Consent and Relationships in the English Classroom

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Term: Spring 2023

Course: ÄENM02

Individual Research Project (30 hp)

English Teacher Education

Abstract

In recent years, it has been reported that sex education in Swedish schools has been lacking, and, thus, in 2022, new guidelines for sex education were implemented (sexuality consent and relationships, SCaR). This change meant that sex education is part of all curricula and that the responsibility to teach it rests on teachers of all subjects. With the theory of language as reproducing and changing values as a background, this study aimed to investigate teachers of English's views and approaches towards the increased responsibility to teach SCaR in the English classroom. Semi-structured interviews were used to study six EFL teachers and the data was analysed with the support of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The interviews showed that the participants worked differently with SCaR, from pre-planned lessons to catching students' questions in the moment to managing offensive language. The teachers emphasised that SCaR comes naturally to English and while all teachers found it important to teach SCaR, not all teachers were comfortable doing it. In conclusion, SCaR is relatively easy to integrate with the English syllabus, while not as easy to teach in practice. Furthermore, more materials, time, and support for all teachers is needed to implement the new guidelines entirely.

Keywords: Sex education; *sexualitet, samtycke och relationer*; EFL; teacher opinions; critical discourse analysis

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1 Introduction

Sex education is a topic permeated by strong opinions, with both those for and those against its inclusion in the classroom. The US and Sweden currently constitute a striking example of this debate. In the US, proposals to limit sex education is a polemical issue, as seen in the debate surrounding the so called 'Don't say gay' law limiting teachers from speaking about sexuality and gender in the classroom (Burga, 2023). Concurrently, in Sweden, sex education is being pushed to the fore rather than restricted.

Sex education has a long-standing history in Sweden with the country being the first in the world to make sex education compulsory in 1955 (Norwald, 2022, p. 11). Throughout the years, the guidelines have changed from focusing on biology, preventing sexual deviance, and promoting the nuclear family to supporting adolescents becoming norm critical and building their own values and identities. In September 2020, the work towards new guidelines was made public, when the Swedish Government announced that all teacher training programmes must educate teacher students on teaching sex education (Jonasdotter Nilsson, 2020). Two years later, the new guidelines were implemented, along with emphasis on sex education being taught in *all* subjects by *all* teachers.

The decision to develop sex education was based on an investigation by the Swedish School Inspectorate in 2017 (Öhman, 2021). The investigation revealed several shortcomings, such as insecure and uneducated teachers and students being dissatisfied with the topics that were taught (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2017a). Additionally, Midwife Katarina Svensson Flood received much attention when sharing her experiences meeting teenagers who had endured 'rough sex' due to perceived expectations, causing mental and physical distress (Olsson, 2020). Svensson Flood further noted that insufficient sex education in schools has led teenagers to turn to pornography as a source of information (as cited in Erlandsson, 2020). A revision of sex education was thus a pressing matter.

When the new guidelines were published, it was also stated that the name would change from *sex and cohabitation* to *sexuality, consent, and relationships* (referred to as SCaR from hereon) to highlight the changes in content. A great part of SCaR is the integration in all subjects, which Skolverket (2023) argues is key to demonstrating the many different perspectives on sex and relationships. Accordingly, the responsibility rests on *all* teachers to provide discussions from the perspective of their subject, to form a comprehensive picture together (Skolverket, 2022a).

However, teachers of certain subjects may find this integration easier than others. Mathematics has been referred to as particularly challenging, while the syllabi for religious studies and natural science explicitly address these topics (Skolverket, 2022d; Skolverket, 2022e). English language education also stands out, being one of few subjects that are not mentioned in a guide with subject-specific examples published by Skolverket (2022a), without apparent reason. There are, however, many arguments for teaching sex education in language education. Within the theoretical approach of discourse analysis, language is considered a tool to transfer ideology and values. Thus, language education can be an opportunity to teach SCaR, which aims to teach about values. Additionally, in Skolverket's guide, teaching SCaR in *Swedish* language education is argued to bring many opportunities, for example through reading and discussing texts, which could be applied to English language education as well, both being language-based subjects.

Due to the recency of the implementation of SCaR, little research has been made about including it in different subjects. It is, thus, of interest to investigate the implications of including SCaR in language education, more specifically, in English. Through semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers and with the support of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study provides a view into teachers of English's opinions on and approaches towards teaching SCaR in English. Based on the framework of CDA, the change in guidelines

for sex education is analysed as an attempt to change the discourse regarding sex education and teachers' responsibilities. The emphasis on language as reproducing and distributing norms and values within CDA also provides an interesting approach to the effects of language teaching. Additionally, this study brings to light the ways in which teachers include SCaR in the English classroom and the obstacles that they meet, which can inspire other EFL teachers and bring light to what is needed to improve and support the sex education that Swedish adolescents receive.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

With the background presented above, the aim of this study is to investigate a number of EFL teachers' views on and approaches towards the increased responsibility to teach *sexuality, consent, and relationships* in the English classroom.

The aim has been investigated through the following research questions:

- What do the participating Swedish EFL teachers report are their approaches towards teaching *sexuality, consent, and relationships* in the English classroom?
- What are these teachers' views on the possibility and responsibility to integrate *sexuality, consent, and relationships* in the English classroom?

2 Background

Below, sex education in Swedish school, both historically and the current guidelines, as well as the possible connections to the syllabus for English is elaborated on. Subsequently, the theoretical framework of discourse theory is presented. Lastly, research about integrating sex education in the EFL classroom and teachers' views on teaching SCaR is discussed. In this study, the term *sex education* is used to refer to it in a general sense, since there is an abundance of terms that encompass different approaches, methods, and opinions regarding sex education.

2.1 Sex Education

2.1.1 Sex Education Through the Years

In 1955, Sweden was the first country in the world to make sex education compulsory (Norwald, 2022, p. 11), but up until the late 1970s, the guidelines were characterised by a fear of awakening adolescents' sexual curiosity too early. The first teacher's guide to sex education, published in 1942, mainly focused on reproduction and promoted abstinence, eugenics, and the dangers of sexual deviance (Centerwall, 2005a, p. 31). Sex education was also a means to promote certain morals among the Swedish people, which, today, Norwald (2022) argues, has been exchanged for the promotion of source criticism (p. 13). This change appeared gradually and with the guidelines from 1977, the goal was rather to support students in their sexual development and sense of responsibility (Centerwall, 2005b, p. 41). Sex education was then referred to as *cohabitation education,* as an attempt to widen the perspective and acknowledging that sex not only occurs within marriage, while still emphasising that it should be part of heteronormative romantic relationships (Skolverket, 2013, p. 10; Centerwall, 2005b, p. 41). Teachers were asked to be objective and comprehensive in their teaching, rather than moralistic as was the case earlier. They were, however, asked to promote equality, democracy, and human dignity, which can be considered an attempt to create collective morals (p. 41).

Following the implementation of the curriculum of 1994, sex education was revised again. It was then referred to as *sex and cohabitation* and the scope was significantly increased (Norwald, 2022, p. 14). The reinstatement of the term *sex* reflects the focus on teenagers' sexuality and safe sex, while themes such as sexual desire, pleasure, relationships and being in love also were central (Centerwall, 2005b, p. 45). The support material highlighted teachers as guides for students to develop their own ethics while being educated about sexual risk (Norwald, 2022, p. 14). Subsequently, following the change of curriculum in 2011, new guidelines and comprehensive support materials were released. The focus was on teaching a bigger perspective covering sexuality, relationships, and equality, as well as norms, identity, and discrimination, and trying to reduce the common misinterpretation of sex education only teaching about contraception and STIs (Skolverket, 2013, p. 17). Topics such as gender, sexuality and equality were also added to the syllabi for several subjects and the support material provided examples on how to teach *sex and cohabitation* in each subject (p. 12).

There have thus been significant developments throughout the years of compulsory sex education. The change in topics and the role of the teachers reflect the views on sex and relationships and on adolescents, for example the development from preventative teaching and promoting certain morals, to a more liberated approach where students are guided towards finding their own values and becoming responsible adults. However, the idea that teachers of several different subjects should teach sex education has always been present. In 1956, it was argued that teachers, with their pedagogical expertise and relationships with the students, are most suitable to teach it and that this allows the topics to merge naturally with each subject (Skolverket, 2013, p. 14). This approach has stayed in the following guidelines (Centerwall, 2005b, pp. 42, 44; Skolverket, 2013, pp. 12, 14). The subject-integration is, thus, not a new aspect but, the previously mentioned obligation for teacher training programmes to educate teachers about teaching sex education indicates that it has been overlooked. Moreover, the

addition of sex education in the curriculum puts more pressure and responsibility on all teachers to include it.

2.1.2 Sex Education Today

In 2019, when the change in guidelines was first announced, Skolverket (2019) emphasised that sex education must be suited to today's society to ensure quality and equal education. Shortly after, it was announced that all teacher training programmes must include education about teaching sex education (Jonasdotter Nilsson, 2020). The revision of the guidelines was mainly due to an inquiry on the implementation of sex education by the Swedish School Inspectorate in 2017, revealing several inadequacies (Öhman, 2021). The investigation showed that many teachers considered themselves insecure and not sufficiently educated about these topics and that this affected sex education negatively (The Swedish School Inspectorate, 2017, p. 7). Additionally, Swedish teenagers generally considered school as one of the key sources of information about sexual health, however 44% of respondents thought they received insufficient information at school to take care of their sexual health (The Swedish School Inspectorate, 2017, p. 7). Similar circumstances were found by the Public Health Agency (2017b, pp. 80, 230). Both investigations also showed that adolescents found they received sufficient education about reproduction and contraception, but not about norms and values surrounding gender, relationships, equality, and LGBT (The Swedish School Inspectorate, 2017, p. 7; The Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2017b, p. 80). These issues are similar to the arguments for the change of sex education in 2011 mentioned above, i.e., that sex education should not only be focused on contraception and STIs. This indicates that the 2011 guidelines were insufficient to achieve these goals.

2.1.3 The Guidelines for SCaR

In 2021, the new guidelines for sex education were announced. The guidelines were to be included in the curriculum, which the previous ones were not, and the name would change from *sex and cohabitation* to *sexuality, consent, and relationships* (SCaR) (Wallström, 2021a). The change of name reflects the changed focus from the biological implications of *sex* to the more social implications of sexuality. The change from *cohabitation* to *relationships* indicate move from the family to adolescents' individual relationships. *Consent* is also given a significant amount of space after not having been included in previous guidelines at all. The aim was for students to learn about sexual and reproductive health and rights to strengthen their abilities to make responsible decisions about their own bodies, sexuality, and reproduction, and respect others', as well as for a reduction in STIs, sexual assault, and homophobia (Skolverket, 2023).

Figure 1

The three dimensions of sexuality, consent, and relationships

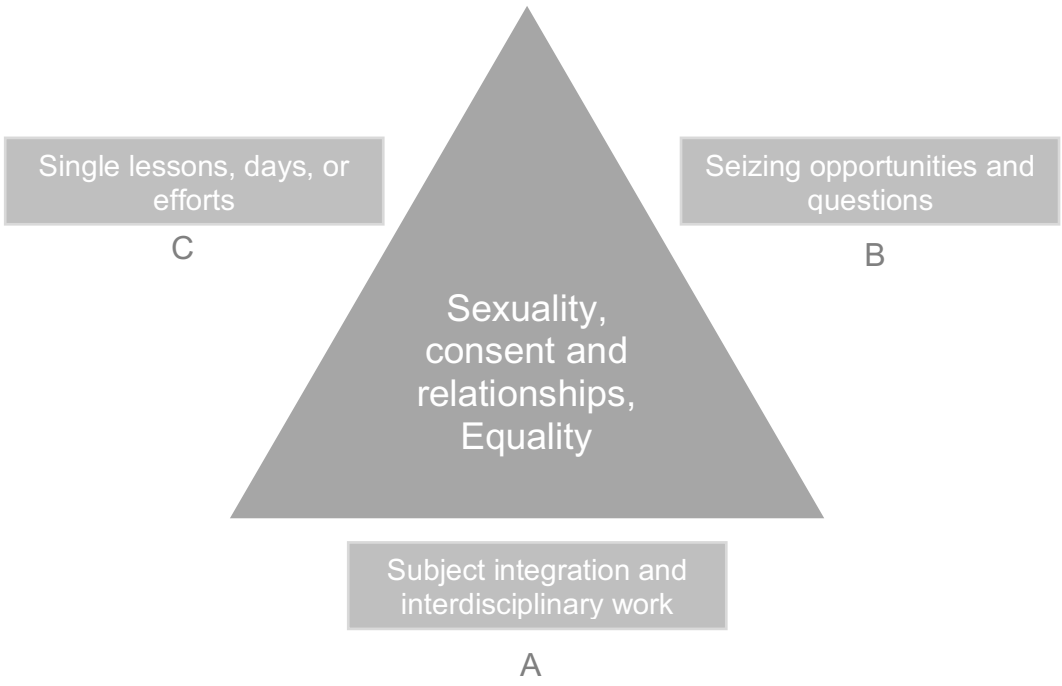

Figure 1. Based on Skolverket's (2022a) illustration of the three-dimensional approach of Sexuality, consent, and relationships. (The translation is mine)

SCaR consists of three parts, as seen in Figure 1 above. The most fundamental part is the subject-integration that all teachers should contribute to (A) (Skolverket, 2023). Skolverket argues that teaching about the topics of SCaR in multiple subjects can provide a comprehensive representation of how sexuality and relationships permeate all aspects of society, beyond biology. This means that all teachers have the responsibility to teach SCaR from the perspective of their subject and create a holistic view together. (B) refers to taking advantage of moments where students show interest in a topic or when problematic incidents arise. Lastly, (C) refers to entire days or lessons dedicated to certain topics related to SCaR where the entire school or groups of students are taught about and discuss these.

The description of what topics should be included in SCaR is located within the fundamental values in the curriculum. It is stated that:

> Each school has the responsibility to ensure that students repeatedly are taught matters related to sexuality, consent, and relationships in their education. Their education should thereby promote the health and well-being of all students and strengthen their ability to make conscious and independent choices. Each school must contribute to students developing an understanding of their own and others' rights and express the importance of sexuality and relationships being consensual. In the education, power structures linked to gender and honour-related violence and oppression must also be examined critically. The students must also be given the opportunity to develop a critical approach towards how relationships and sexuality is presented in different media and contexts, including pornography. (Skolverket, 2022b, p. 2, my translation)

In summary, it is now emphasised more heavily that sex and relationships should be taught, as is the importance of teaching these topics *repeatedly* and from several perspectives. The topics are mainly connected to sexuality, consent, and relationships. Students' health and ability to

care for themselves, as well as an understanding of their own and others' rights should also be developed. Students' ability to view depictions in media critically is also stressed. Both consent and honour-related violence and oppression have been given great space, topics that have not appeared explicitly before.

2.1.4 Connections to the Syllabus for English

When integrating SCaR in the English classroom, one must consider where it fits within the syllabus for English. Firstly, part of the overarching purpose of English in Upper Secondary School is that all students are given "the opportunity to develop an understanding of the living conditions, social issues and cultural conditions in different contexts and areas where English is used" (Skolverket, 2022c, p. 1). This allows for discussions about sexuality, consent, and relationships in these parts of the world. As presented below, the two main aspects are the *contents* and the *media* for communication.

Part of the contents for communication of all courses are "current events, social and cultural phenomena and conditions, as well as values in different contexts and areas where English is used, also in comparison to students' own experiences and knowledge" (Skolverket, 2022c, p. 2), with the addition of social issues and political and historical conditions in English 6 and 7, and ethical and existential topics for English 7 (pp. 5, 8). Furthermore, in English 5, current and familiar topics connected to social and work life and students' education should be included (p. 2). In English 6, these topics should be both concrete and abstract, and in English 7 theoretical and complex. Contents should also include opinions and experiences, as well as ethical matters in all three courses, with the addition of existential issues for English 6 and 7 (pp. 2, 5, 8). In English 5, relationships are also explicitly mentioned, however not in English 6 and 7 (p. 2). In summary, these are all areas that can be connected to SCaR. The most obvious is English 5, where the topic of *relationships* is included, while other topics also allow discussions of topics

such as power structures related to gender, consent, and honour-related oppression, but also any other subject connected to sexuality, relationships, and norms in areas where English is spoken. Since English is spoken all over the world, many different perspectives can be taught. Additionally, incorporating students' own experiences and knowledge allows for the inclusion of issues in their proximity, rather than exclusively issues in other parts of the world. Here, however, also lies a risk of overstepping students' boundaries.

Skolverket (2022a) mentions different narratives and texts as possible means to include SCaR in the Swedish classroom. As stated in the syllabus for English, students should engage with different media of written and spoken English (Skolverket, 2022c, p. 1). Thus, different narratives and texts could be used to include SCaR in English. These could be used to help students develop "a critical approach towards how relationships and sexuality is presented in different media and contexts" as is part of the guidelines for SCaR (Skolverket, 2022b, p. 2). Additionally, these media can provide content for discussion surrounding the topics that are included in the guidelines for SCaR.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study is discourse theory. Within discourse theory, the focus is on how ideas that generally are considered truths in reality are neither true nor false, but rather part of reigning discourse, and, subsequently, on how these "truths" are created and distributed (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014, p. 272). The concept of discourse denotes a certain way of interpreting, describing, and, in turn, communicating certain perceptions of the world (Brinkkjær & Høyen, 2020, p. 159). Subsequently, it is through language that we understand the world and our perceptions are thus conveyed through different ways of speaking and by putting certain things into words and omitting others (Brinkkjær & Høyen, p. 154).

The type of discourse analysis used in this study is Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA developed as part of second-generation discourse theory and is closely linked to linguistics, sociology, and Marxist theory (Eilard & Dahl, 2021, pp. 16, 24). Within second-generation discourse theory, language is not analysed exclusively, but focus is rather on language in its contexts. Within CDA, text is a social process and a compromise between different interests and is thus an ideological tool that expresses how power is distributed and represented in society (Eilard & Dahl, p. 24). Fairclough (1995), thus, considers CDA critical in the sense that it aims to make visible connections between properties of texts and social processes (p. 97). Furthermore, CDA is aimed to highlight how cultural, social, and ideological norms, inequalities and injustices are reproduced or changed over time through language (Eilard & Dahl, 2021, pp. 16, 24).

Thus, language education can reproduce or change values, since students learn and use certain language, which connects to how SCaR asks teachers to foster certain values in students. Teaching values and making adolescents responsible, democratic citizens has been emphasized in all curricula since the 1940s (Tholander, 2005, p. 7). Today, the fundamental values of Swedish school, which SCaR is part of, comprise a great part of the curriculum and are expected to be taught by all teachers (Skolverket, 2022b, pp. 8-9). Accordingly, Carleheden (2002) argues that teaching never has been about only sharing information, but also transferring current values and norms to the students, thus being a political socialization (p. 43). What is considered fundamental values and which norms should be taught to the younger generation is, thus, dependent on the currently reigning ideology, as is also visible in the development of sex education through the years. As mentioned, Norwald (2022) argues that, in earlier years, sex education was a medium to endorse certain morals, while it, today, focuses on promoting students building their own. However, asking teachers to mediate something considered fundamental values, still makes SCaR an act of transferring certain values. Thus, today, there

is a contradiction within the approach to values in the curriculum. In terms of discourse theory, Skolverket present a view that there is a spectra of values, since students should be allowed find and create their own. However, simultaneously, they seemingly consider certain values as correct or objective, and should be taught to all students, while some values are not accepted.

Since SCaR is aimed to teach values, the ability to reproduce and change norms and values through language, further argues for teaching SCaR in language education. However, a dilemma arises when using language to transfer certain values. Aiming to transfer values implicitly through language, implies that certain values are covertly imparted in the students, in turn, not allowing them to reflect on which values they agree with and want to embrace, which has to be taken into account.

Figure 2

Fairclough's illustration of the three-dimensional approach to discourse

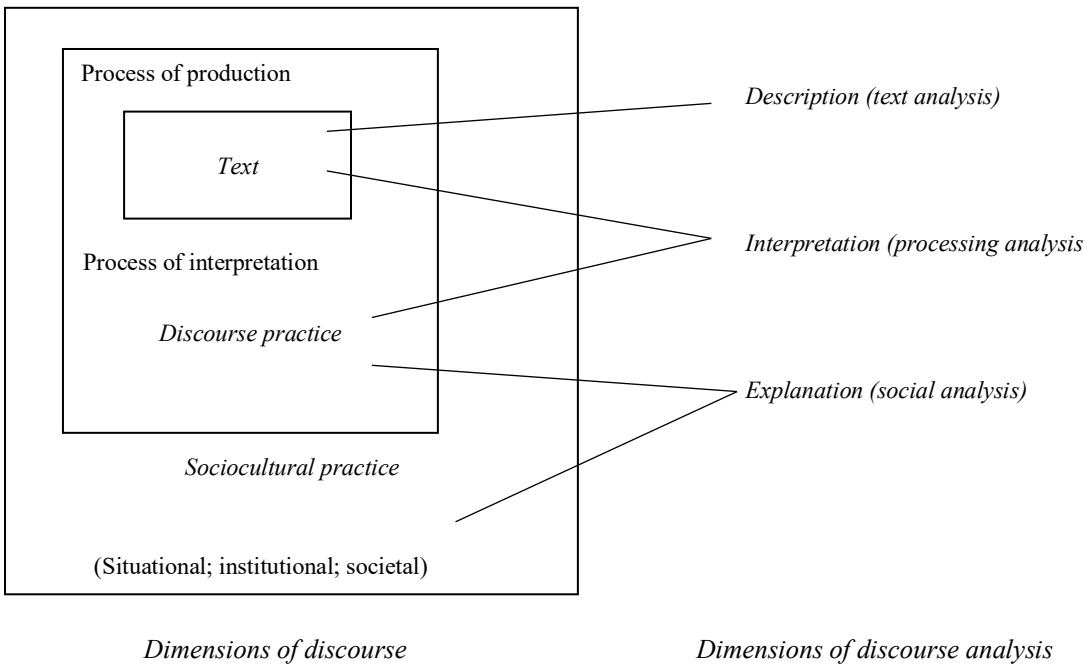

Figure 2. Based on Fairclough's illustration on the three-dimensional approach to discourse within Critical Discourse Analysis (1995, p. 98). The left-hand side of the illustration displays how discourse is simultaneously text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice (p. 97). The right-hand side displays the method of discourse analysis, including description, interpretation, and explanation of the relationships between the different levels.

Fairclough's (1995) approach to discourse analysis is three-dimensional; discourse being a language text (spoken or written), discourse practice, and sociocultural practice simultaneously (p. 97), as is shown in Figure 2. The link between the text and the sociocultural practice is the discourse practice, which means that how a text is produced and interpreted, respectively, is determined by the sociocultural practice, being shaped by the discourse practice. Thus, the discourse practices that are present in the text production shape its content and influence the interpretation of it. Discourse is also embedded within the sociocultural practice on three levels: the immediate situation, the wider institution, and at a societal level. In the present study, these levels might be how teachers' views and approaches are affected by their individual work in the classroom, their work as part of steering documents and school culture, and at a societal level. This three-dimensional approach also shapes Fairclough's (1995) method for discourse analysis (p. 97), which guides the analysis of this study, as is described in the methods section.

Fairclough's CDA also incorporates *technologisation of discourse*, which is particularly relevant to this study. Technologisation of discourse is a process and mission of redesigning existing discursive practices and creating a new order of discourse in an institution (Fairclough, 1995, p. 102). This pressure for change, Fairclough (1995) argues, can lead to a scope of reactions from people within the existing discoursal practice; "they may comply, they may tactically appear to comply, they may refuse to be budged, or they may arrive at … compromises between existing practices and new techniques" (p. 102). In this study, analysing the change in guidelines as a *technologisation of discourse* allows for an analysis of the teachers' own discourse practice and their views on their responsibilities and sex education.

In summary, using Fairclough's CDA is suitable in this study for many reasons. Firstly, Bryman (2016) argues that paying attention to the linguistic aspects in social research highlights how people view the world (pp. 525-526), and Kvale & Brinkman (2014) argue that it achieves

richer interpretations (p. 264). Fairclough (1995) encourages the use of any form of language, not only written (p. 96) and since CDA focuses less on naturally occurring talk, interview data is suitable (Bryman, 2016, p. 532). Additionally, CDA is suitable for researching social and cultural change as it studies links between social processes and language texts (Fairclough, 1995) p. 96). This allows for a study of teachers' language and how it reflects their social practices and, in turn, the discourse practices that are present, in relation to an attempted change in discourse. As discussed, discourse theory also allows for an emphasis on the effects of language, and language education, as reproducing and changing values and ideology.

2.3 Previous Research

Below, previous research about conducting sex education in the EFL classroom as well as teachers' views on teaching SCaR is presented.

2.3.1 Sex Education in the EFL Classroom

The studies conducted on the integration of sex education are often related to content and language integrated learning, literature and the connections between language and identity. The contexts of these studies are rather different from the Swedish, both in terms of values surrounding sex and sexuality and in terms of English teaching. However, they provide interesting implications to consider in Swedish EFL classrooms.

Many studies about sex education and EFL teaching have been conducted in South America. Benegas & Lauze (2020) and Cossu & Brun (2021) have studied using CLIL to integrate sex education in EFL classrooms in an Argentinian context. CLIL is defined as a twofold approach where curriculum content is taught through an additional language with the goal of acquiring both content and language knowledge (Banegas & Lauze, 2020, p. 200). The students reported positive effects, such as learning and acquiring new items in both areas, as

well as a development of the relationships with their classmates (Benegas & Lauze, 2020, pp. 206-207; Cossu & Brun, 2021, p. 179). Benegas & Lauze (2020) also report that the authentic materials made students more motivated to speak English (p. 207). However, Benegas & Lauze and Banegas argue that teacher education and professional development programmes must be equipped with the information needed and institutional support to make informed decisions when planning lessons and choosing material, to ensure learning and cognitive thinking (2020, p. 180; 2021, p. 216). Similarly, in a study of EFL teacher students' journals during a course about teaching gender and sexuality, Khan (2019) demonstrates that found they developed abilities to "debunk stereotypes, foster empathy, and shape their self-identity as future teachers" (pp. 403). Additionally, courses of this nature, Khan argues, can educate teachers about how to include narratives and represent the 'other', which can lead to more inclusive classrooms (p 417). In summary, these studies suggest that it is possible to integrate sex education and EFL teaching and that it can be effective in developing students' knowledge in both. However, it requires teachers' being knowledgeable and prepared.

A commonly mentioned approach to incorporating sexuality and relationships in the EFL classroom is using literature and narratives. Krishnan, Lazim & Yusof (2011) argue for reading and analysing short stories to address issues concerning sexuality in a tactful manner, as their study in a Malaysian context showed an increase in knowledge and awareness in students (p. 87). Similarly, Ashcraft (2008) reports that literature related to sexuality was found particularly relevant and engaging by students in her studies, while it also benefitted students' literacy, academic development, and the development of their sexual identities (p. 637). Conversely, Khan (2019) highlights that the #metoo movement has influenced classroom discussions about issues such as gender and sexuality, putting celebrities at the centre. Therefore, Khan argues that such discussions should be accompanied by the lives of authentic and more relatable individuals (p. 409). In Japan, Ó'Móchain (2006) studied the use of authentic narratives to avoid

static stereotypes in LGBT-narratives. The narratives were used to elicit discussions about gender, sexuality, and language used to discuss these topics, which allowed students to produce and analyse language in a meaningful way while reflecting on social issues (Ó'Móchain, 2006, p. 62). Ó'Móchain found that the material had a stronger sense of relevance and impact when it was based on local LGBT and gender-related narratives, as opposed to fictional ones (p. 57). In summary, literature is considered useful to teach about sexuality and relationships, and to elicit students' engagement. However, fictional narratives should be accompanied by authentic and relatable ones.

One aspect of combining EFL and sex education that relates to discourse theory is the connection between gender, sexuality, and language education. Ashcraft and Khan explain that gender and sexuality are intrinsic parts of language through the way we speak about one another (2008, p. 636; 2019, p. 408). Part of this is that certain words uphold stereotypes about gender and sexuality (Williams, as cited in Khan, 2019, p. 409). Ashcraft (2008) argues that the pervasiveness of sexuality in the media and in adolescents' lives singlehandedly argues for incorporating it in language education (p. 636). Similarly, Simonsson (2020) argues that sexuality and gender is an essential aspect of human existence and since language education involves learning to express oneself about the world, it also encompasses issues of sexuality and gender (p. 21). Accordingly, learning a language reproduces certain norms, stereotypes, and ideology, depending on the type of language that is taught (p. 21), as is also argued within discourse theory.

Simonsson and Norwald argue that this is largely overlooked, risking reproducing stereotypical and normative notions of sexuality or rendering other sexualities as invisible or deviant, as they are not mentioned, and risks depriving LGBT-students of necessary education (2020, p. 22; 2022, p. 30). This, Norwald (2022) argues, is evidenced by LGBT students reporting inadequate sex education (p. 26). Norwald, thus, argues that it is crucial for teachers

to know how to present these topics, or it could negatively impact their self-perception and perception of others. With language both reproducing and distributing norms and values, teaching SCaR while teaching English entails distributing values both explicitly, through the content, and implicitly, through the language and terminology used and taught, possibly enhancing the education of SCaR when done correctly. However, since it risks reproducing harmful or excluding norms, it is particularly important to consider the language used and taught. As discussed previously, values should also be taught explicitly, since teaching values without discussing them with the students might deprive them from reflecting on and building their own values.

2.3.2 Teacher Views on Sex Education Today

Due to the recency of the implementation, mainly bachelor and master-level studies have been conducted on the revised guidelines for sex education in Sweden. Two studies have been conducted following the implementation, however, not in connection to English education specifically. Skoog (2023) has studied the perception and implementation of SCaR among primary school teachers, while Viklund and Norlin (2022) have studied this among teachers of religious studies in Upper Secondary School. Both studies report that the teachers already worked with the topics presented in SCaR daily, some even finding it redundant (Skoog, p. 22; Viklund and Norlin, p. 35). Contradictively, some teachers struggled to see the connections or significance of the practical implementation in their subject and most displayed some resistance and discomfort (Viklund & Norlin, pp. 35, 37). Teachers also stated that changes in society and the students' views on the sexuality have had greater impact than curriculum changes (Skoog, 2023, pp. 29-30). This, thus, suggests that SCaR is rather easily integrated, at least in primary school and religious studies, and that teachers adapt their teaching more to students than the curriculum.

Some bachelor and master level studies were also conducted prior to the implementation. Zakariasson Banfi (2022) interviewed teachers of Swedish in Secondary school, a subject fairly similar to English, both being language-based. The participating teachers all reported being positive and thought it would not change their workload significantly as they welcomed new content and topics, due to the freedom in choice of contents in the Swedish subject (p. 23). Sulaiman & Saleem (2022) and Eriksson (2022) interviewed teachers of compulsory school. Sulaiman & Saleem report that teachers generally viewed the change positively, particularly it being more clearly stated in the curriculum (p. 29) and Eriksson and that teachers already addressed relationships daily (p. 20), corroborating the findings of Skoog (2023) and Viklund & Norlin (2022). Similarly, Sulaiman & Saleem (2022) report that teachers intended to continue teaching relationships as before (p. 30). Zakariasson Banfi (2022) reported teachers being particularly positive towards the responsibility being shared (p. 23). Teachers, however, generally wished for more explicit guidelines, division of responsibility, and instructions (Eriksson, 2022, pp. 20-21; Mosrati, 2022, p. 28). Teachers also experienced lack of subject knowledge and requested more in-service training and time to prepare (Mosrati, 2022, p. 28; Zakariasson Banfi, 2022, p. 24, Eriksson, 2022, p. 21; Skoog, 2023, p. 30; Viklund & Norlin, 2022, p. 37). Skoog (2023) also reported that teachers found it difficult raising the topics at the right moment and in the right way to catch students' attention and to make all students feel included (p. 3).

Teachers had different approaches to teaching about sex and relationships. Several teachers found that having open conversations, being responsive to students' interests and needs, and staying updated about societal developments is most effective (Sulaiman & Saleem, 2022, pp. 30-31; Zakariasson Banfi, 2022, p. 24). Several teachers reported that the implementation largely depended on the teacher, such as their workload and responsibilities, priorities, interests, and comfort talking about the subjects (Eriksson, 2022, p. 19). Some emphasized the risk of

some teachers holding outdated views that promote a risk-preventative approach, rather than the current health-positive approach (Zakariasson Banfi, 2022, pp. 24-25). Similarly, Sulaiman & Saleem (2022) argue that teachers with experience teaching sex education generally have a positive effect on sex education and view it positively, while teachers without experience do the opposite and feel insecure towards the responsibility (p. 31). Moreover, the teachers who reported feeling insecure found that they struggled to identify students' maturity and adapting their teaching to it. They were also afraid of getting it wrong or excluding students, and lacked instructions and materials (Sulaiman & Saleem, 2022, pp. 29, 31; Zakariasson Banfi, 2022, p. 23).

In summary, only bachelor and master-level studies on teachers' approaches and views on teaching SCaR has been conducted. These studies indicate that the new guidelines have not affected the teachers greatly and are in general viewed positively. However, teachers generally wished for more support and some were unsure about how to do it correctly.

3 Method

In the following section, the methodological approach of this study is described and motivated. To reach the aim of investigating Swedish EFL teachers' views on and approaches towards the increased responsibility to teach *Sexuality, consent, and relationships* in the English classroom, qualitative semi-structured interviews with teachers of English in Upper Secondary School were conducted. Below, semi-structured interviews, the participants and the analysis are described further, as are the ethical considerations and limitations.

3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The data for this study has been gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers of English in Swedish upper secondary schools. This method was chosen since interviews are suitable when more freedom in the participants' answers is desired and when aiming to gather people's experiences and perceptions (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015, p. 84). Using semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured ones, allows for more flexibility, depth and adaption to the interviewees' answers and different amounts of experience (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). Additionally, focus during the interviews was on how the interviewees framed and interpreted the current issue and what they found important to mention, explain and describe, which this flexibility permitted. This flexibility also aligns with the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis where choice of language and the use of certain terms and topics and omission of others is central. Additionally, using semi-structured interviews, as opposed to unstructured ones, ensured that the desired issues were covered, and aided systematization, analysis, and comparison of the data.

The interviews were supported by an interview guide, which can be found in Appendix 4. During semi-structured interviews, interview guides are generally used, which consist of fairly specific questions or topics that should be covered, while there is room for adaptation (Bryman,

2012, p. 471). The interview guide in this study was constructed based on central themes surrounding SCaR that appeared during the initial research, but the questions allowed for other topics to be discussed. Before the interviews were conducted, the interview guide was piloted with teacher students and revised accordingly. This helped improve some phrasings, the order of the questions and made sure all questions could gather the information needed.

The interviews were conducted in March 2023. Five of them were conducted at each teachers' respective workplace and one online. The interviews were 30 to 45 minutes each. All interviews were conducted in Swedish, which was mainly due to the presence of discussions about guidelines only published in Swedish and translating terms to English could have led to misunderstandings. Additionally, all participants were native speakers of Swedish.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Sample

To get in contact with participants, local schools and teachers were contacted by e-mail. The teachers who were interested in participating were asked to fill out an interest form, which can be found in Appendix 1. Those who replied to the form were subsequently contacted with more information about the study. The final sample of participants consists of six English teachers working at upper secondary schools in southern Sweden. All, but two, work at different schools in different municipalities. The relevant information about the participants can be found in Table 1.

The sample is based on criteria and self-selection. The criteria were that the interviewees are currently teaching English at a Swedish upper secondary school and have done so in the fall of 2022, and preferably before this. The goal was to reach teachers of different genders, ages, and at a variety of schools, to gather teachers with different amount of experience, employment, and school leaders. Since the target group is extensive, the sample was also based on self-

selection, i.e., that the participants themselves decided whether they were interested in participating (Larsen, 2018, p. 125).

Table 1

The participating teachers.

Interviewee	Gender	Time being a teacher	Subjects	English courses
Teacher A	Woman	3 years	English and history	5 and 6
Teacher B	Woman	24 years	English and history	5, 6 and 7
Teacher C	Woman	4 years	English	5, 6 and 7
Teacher D	Woman	1 semester	English and physical education	5 and 6
Teacher E	Man	1,5 years	English and physical education	5, 6 and 7
Teacher F	Woman	17 years	English, history, and religious studies	5, 6 and 7

3.2.2 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of this study are based on The Swedish Research Council's principles for research and GDPR regulations. The document for informed consent and the information sheet is found in Appendix 2 and 3, which show what the participants were informed about and consented to. In short, all participants were informed about their role in the study and the conditions of their partaking, and that they were free to withdraw at any time. All participants have been anonymised, so that no identifiable information is present, meaning that all participants' names, ages, workplaces, and other identifying information shared in the interviews have been removed. The topic investigated in this study may be somewhat sensitive, partly as it relates to teachers' professional practice in an area that previously has been neglected. Thus, it was crucial that the participants knew they were anonymous, and that their opinions were of interest, rather than whether they were following the guidelines, so that they

were comfortable being honest and sharing their truthful opinions and experiences. The present topic of sexuality might also be sensitive. However, as this study does not encompass teachers' personal views, experiences, and identities, it was not requested that they discuss this. However, there were instances where teachers disclosed such things, which had to be omitted from the analysis. This, however, indicates that these interviewees felt comfortable to share.

3.3 Limitations

The limitations of this study are mainly concerned with the sample of participants and the analytical process. In this study, it was desired that the participants had experience teaching sex education and/or opinions about it. However, in terms of validity, the results presented might be skewed since certain experiences or particularly strong opinions might be overrepresented, which must be considered. Additionally, since the data only provides the opinions and experiences of a small sample, the results will not be generalisable to the entire studied group. This is however not the aim. In terms of method, ensuring reliability, i.e., the level to which the method is examining what is intended to be examined, effort was put into perfecting the interview questions and the teachers being comfortable sharing their truthful experiences and opinions, as discussed above. Regarding the analysis, the personal bias of the researcher does have an influence, especially conducting discourse analysis, since the interpretation of the researcher also is influenced by certain discourse practices (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97). Thus, the researcher has to depart from these, to discern the discourses at practice in the analysed data. In connection to this, Larsen (2018) also emphasises the importance of the interpretation of data being well-planned and carried out, as well as transparency in presentation of data and results (pp. 130-131), which has been considered.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data was analysed through critical discourse analysis, as described above. First, each interview was transcribed in detail, so that quiet reflection, emphasis, uncertainty, irony, or emotions are indicated. The data was imported to NVivo, where it was coded based on initial themes, allowing for an overview of the data. Svensson (2019) argues for categorisation and thematization of data when practicing discourse analysis (pp. 142-145). Thus, the initial categories were based on the research questions, i.e., teachers' *experiences* and *opinions*. Further themes were then created based on the interview questions and other topics that were brought up, as described by Galetta (2013, p. 122). It was central that this came across in the themes, since part of discourse analysis is to read sceptically and look for hidden purposes in the way something is said or omitted (Bryman, 2016, p. 534) and since what each participant brought up themselves or avoided was significant in this study. The themes were then developed into categories based on connections between patterns in the responses, which extended the analysis further and offered greater insight into the data (Galetta, p. 126).

As described in section 2.2., the analytical process was also guided by Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional approach to discourse analysis. Thus, following the thematisation, the text was interpreted and analysed linguistically, looking at word choices, syntax, and some aspects of grammar. Subsequently, connections to discursive practices were observed and analysed. The last step of CDA is to take a step back and put the analysed data in its social, political, and historical contexts that are required to understand the utterances (Svensson, 2019, pp. 145-146). Thus lastly, the text and the discursive practices were analysed in their greater context, attempting to explain the relationship between the discursive processes and the social processes, to understand the connections between teachers' views and approaches. This is the main part of the analysis presented below.

4 Analysis

Below, the analysed data is presented and discussed. First, the participating teachers' reported approaches towards teaching SCaR in the English classroom are presented. Subsequently, the teachers' opinions regarding SCaR are presented. The teachers are referred to by their abbreviated aliases, for example Teacher A being A.

4.1 The Teachers' Approaches

Within this section, teachers' experiences of teaching SCaR in the English classroom are presented. Thus, focus is on the teachers' practical work, while their opinions are presented in the following section.

What all teachers had in common was that their approaches had not changed much since the implementation of the new guidelines, with some exceptions. A, B, C and F had worked with these topics earlier and have not changed their approaches significantly since and D and E said they had not worked with it before or now. It should however be mentioned that D had not worked as a teacher before the implementation. This corresponds with what Skoog (2023), Viklund & Norlin (2022), Eriksson (2022) and Sulaiman & Saleem (2022) present, i.e., that teachers greatly continued working as before, while some also struggled to implement it practically, and that teachers generally adapted their work with these aspects more to the students than the guidelines. Three of the teachers, A, E and F had received some support or education from their schools, but implied it was not enough and had not affected their teaching of SCaR greatly. Below, the different ways teachers report that they have implemented SCaR are discussed.

4.1.1 Pre-planned Lessons

Only one teacher reported that she had prepared lessons about SCaR beforehand, namely A. With some hesitation, A reported that she had, together with another teacher, worked with consent in a block of three lessons, as well as a few other lessons, before and after the implementation. She based her inclusion of consent on students' tendency to choose topics surrounding sexual assault during another assignment, and noted that there was "an interest, or a *need*", to talk about it. She repeatedly reverted to wanting to suit it to her students and emphasised that she always makes sure students are on board before raising these topics, especially pornography. A had received some support from her school, but what led her to integrate these topics in her teaching was greatly due to personal interest and a feeling that it is important, which also can be seen in B, C and F. Similarly, Eriksson (2022) reports that the implementation largely depended on teachers' personal interest, comfort, and responsibilities. A, however, signalled that she wants to be prepared, especially if she does not have personal experiences, not wanting to "tread into someone else's sphere". A, thus, had a strong sense of wanting to adapt her teaching to students and to do it correctly, which is also connected to her wanting to take the time to prepare lessons around this. However, being prepared and to cater to all students, she indicates, can be time consuming and difficult, not being educated about teaching sex education

In terms of guidelines, this approach corresponds with SCaR, both through the part of Skolverket's (2023) triangle concerned with subject-integrated teaching and the part concerned with seizing moments when students show interest. This, and her adapting her teaching to the students' needs, argues that this approach is an effective one. However, A does not discuss the role of or impact on English, suggesting that SCaR takes greater space than English learning when teaching these topics.

4.1.2 "Unplanned" Lessons

Some of the teachers reported initially that they had not taught SCaR explicitly, but added that these topics appear rather naturally. These are mainly B, C and F. F said that it has appeared naturally in her subjects and that she has not reflected upon it much. B also found that the topics of SCaR often appear, either from the students or from the materials used. C also expressed that the change has not affected her much, rather that she always knew she wanted to include these topics.

B, C and F greatly considered their approaches to SCaR as creating a space for discussion and, from there, lead conversations that are informative. C reported that, for the time being, she mainly builds upon questions and discussions from students. Similarly, B and F said that they let the students steer discussions, arguing that as long as students practice English, they are open for the students to lead. Sometimes students bring up sex and B happily lets them discuss this, saying she likes to have an open climate, before and after the change. B emphasised that she puts much effort into bringing up other perspectives and is not afraid of discussions with students. Conversely, C said that she does not want to argue with students, even if they are not in line with the fundamental values, as she does not want them to feel discouraged from sharing opinions. However, she mentioned being glad when another student continued the debate, so that these students are challenged in their opinions, especially if they come across as disrespectful towards other students. In summary, these teachers, especially B and F, regarded themselves as open and happy to discuss, and viewed it as an important part of their work to open students' minds. This also corresponds with what several teachers in Sulaiman & Saleem (2022) and Zakariason Banfi's (2022) studies report works, i.e., having open conversations and being responsive to students and their interests.

This approach covers both the subject-specific teaching and managing issues and catching students' interests from Skolverket's (2023) triangle. This allows for an integration of SCaR

and English learning with the students' interests and needs in mind. Additionally, it might help SCaR becoming more concerned with what students actually want to learn about, which there has been a lack of (The Public Health Agency, 2017b; The Swedish School Inspectorate, 2017). However, it should be considered that not all topics might appear when only relying on students steering the discussions. Correspondingly, Banegas & Lauze (2020) and Banegas (2021) emphasise the importance of teachers making informed decisions when planning lessons and choosing material for the teaching to be successful. Thus, teachers not planning lessons, but rather teaching SCaR on-the-spot might not be enough to teach students all the aspects of SCaR. In terms of norms and values being reproduced and distributed through language and teachers having to be aware of the language they use, this approach might risk reproducing unwanted norms, or single out students of non-normative sexualities and identities, if teachers are not attentive to the language they use. Additionally, the potential benefits can be lost. These teachers' approaches are also an indication that many teachers are not willing or have the time to plan lessons including SCaR, making the case for teachers being allocated more resources for SCaR to be effective.

4.1.3 Problematic Language

Another reported approach to SCaR is managing problematic language. This is mainly found in B and E. B said that she has not taught SCaR but said that "on the other hand I am always very careful to remark when, you know, sometimes if a homophobic comment appears", emphasising that she does this no matter what the curriculum said. E said that in his role as an educator of SCaR, he tries to "actively prevent when … [he] hears harsh language or discerns certain attitudes by bringing it up and taking notice of it". For example, he can interrupt to say that it is not okay to use that kind of language if he hears LGBT slurs. For him it is important

that students follow the core values and treat each other with respect, which he also argued comes closest to the English subject as it is language connected.

In summary, these teachers considered managing conflict and teaching students to use respectful language part of their work with SCaR. This approach also fits within SCaR, through the responsibility to teach students an understanding of their own and others' rights, in terms of using respectful language. It also falls within the part of Skolverket's (2023) triangle concerned with seizing issues in the moment, by managing conflicts. E's norm critical approach to teaching language is also in line with Simonsson (2020) Khan (2019) and Norwald's (2022) argued importance of being aware of norms and values being distributed by language.

4.1.4 No Reported Experience

Two of the teachers reported that they had not taught SCaR, namely D and E. Both teachers answered that they have not worked with it actively in English, both using the word *actively.* This may stem from a reluctance to admit a lack of work with SCaR or an attempt to be open to the possibility of having taught it in some way. Evidently, when asked again, E mentioned working with SCaR as described above and connected it to having a norm-critical approach. Similarly, D mentioned that she would teach it by "conveying and … promoting … an open or a tolerant atmosphere and everyone's equal values".

Both D and E connected not having worked with SCaR to a lack of time, materials, knowledge, and education due to them being new teachers. This corresponds with previous research, in which teachers reported lack of time, material and subject knowledge (Viklund & Norlin, 2022; Mosrati, 2022; Eriksson 2022; Sulaiman & Saleem, 2022; Zakariasson Banfi, 2022). E also said that his focus has been on the syllabus for English, suggesting that that the integration of SCaR into English may not be as natural as some teachers find it, or at least that the connections between them are not enough for all teachers to find it easy to integrate in

practice. However, these teachers also struggled with SCaR for reasons more personal. D shared not knowing how and feeling uncomfortable teaching SCaR to certain, less open-minded, students saying, “I would really struggle to manage that situation, and feel comfortable and prepared”. Permeating the interview with E is also him not feeling comfortable teaching SCaR. He connected it to him being relatively young and sensitive and having some underlying fear, making him careful. E also said that he wants to be personal, but not private, saying “that is probably why I think it is so tricky and difficult, because I want to be pretty professional and kind of have some type of distance to the students” and “I’m the grading teacher after all, so I'm always a bit cautious about certain things”. He, thus, also seemed to struggle with fitting SCaR into his personality and professional work as a teacher, while simultaneously connecting SCaR to acting professionally and promoting positive values. In summary, not all teachers feel ready to teach these topics, which might be connected to a lack of resources, or having less experience being a teacher and struggling to fit SCaR within the teacher role.

4.1.5 Topics

What teachers viewed as part of SCaR differs somewhat. Most teachers mentioned love and relationships when talking about SCaR, which is part of the syllabus for English 5 (Skolverket, 2022c, p. 2), and to some extent sexuality and consent. Since the implementation of SCaR, A has included pornography as well, and B reported her focus being on consent and relationships, and that she has “added the physical bits” to her theme about love. Common to all teachers, but B, is that they struggled to bring up honour-related violence and many said they would not even attempt to teach it, not being educated enough.

The teachers generally did not refer to SCaR in terms of sexual intercourse, but there were apparent traces of what they referred to as actual or classic sex education, or the biological or physical aspects, a view that Skolverket tried to diminish already with the 2011 guidelines

(Skolverket, 2013). This is seen to an extent in all teachers, however, while B and D stressed the importance of these aspects, A, C and F referred to the change as positive. C and F viewed the responsibility being on teachers other than the biology teachers positively, arguing that it is preferable for sex education to be integrated across various subjects, allowing for the inclusion of different perspectives, as opposed to solely focusing on reproduction. A also said she wants to "maybe kind of steer away from the *classic*".

On the other hand, while B admitted that the scope of SCaR allows it to fit in several subjects, she emphasised that the biological aspects should not be forgotten. C and B, seemingly assume it is asked of them to teach these aspects. B, for example, said that she of course does not teach "pure sex and cohabitation" in English, stressing that she does not think she should do so because it does not belong to her subject.

As is presented in the background, sex education with focus on reproduction of this type was central in the mid 1900s, but has, since as early as the 1970s, been phased out in favour of topics surrounding relationships and values (Centerwall, 2005b; Norwald, 2022). Nevertheless, it seems as though these aspects still are present in the teachers' perceptions of sex education. This corroborates the findings by The Swedish School Inspectorate (2017) and The Public Health Agency (2017b) that students were still mainly taught facts, not about norms or values. It should, however, be emphasised that while these teachers' perceptions seem to still be characterised by the biological aspects, they are rather teaching the aspects that previously showed to be missing, implying that asking teachers of all subjects to teach sex education is useful to include the "non-biological" aspects of SCaR. This, in turn, suggests that the new guidelines are meeting the desired outcomes in this respect and that the attempted change in discourse of the topics included in SCaR is working.

4.1.6 Summary

What the teachers present as them teaching SCaR is a combination of pre-planned and unplanned parts of lessons, as well as managing problematic utterances by students. While several teachers reported not having taught SCaR, they did raise ways that they include topics, discussions and actions that arguably are part of SCaR. While there are traces left of sex education being taught in biology, teachers mainly incorporate the topics relationships, sexuality, as well as values, critical thinking, and respect, which suggests that asking all teachers to teach SCaR helps include topics that earlier have been overlooked. However, while corresponding with the guidelines for SCaR, several of the teachers' descriptions of how they teach SCaR rather correspond with the general fundamental values rather than SCaR specifically, such as teaching open-mindedness, respect and preventing discriminatory behaviour (Skolverket, 2022b, p. 1), while SCaR-specific topics such as honour-related oppression, consent and pornography appear less. Furthermore, while most teachers seem to suit their teaching to the students, the lack of planned lessons might affect the teaching of SCaR negatively. For example, not all subjects might be taught. Moreover, the potential risks and benefits of teaching values in language education might be overlooked, as indicated by most teachers not mentioning this. It is also clear that not all teachers feel comfortable or know how to teach SCaR. All of this argues that teachers need more support and time to plan lessons to ensure sufficient sex education.

4.2 The Teachers' Opinions

Below, the teachers' views on SCaR, in connection to teaching English and in general, are presented. Gathered from the interviewed teachers' statements is that SCaR integrates well with the English courses, but that it takes more than this to incorporate SCaR in practice.

4.2.1 SCaR and the English Syllabus

Skolverket (2023) emphasises that all teachers should teach SCaR from the perspective of their subject, and, thus, teachers were asked about the possibility to include it in the English courses. The teachers were united in saying that the English subject is open for the inclusion of SCaR. A began by saying "I was about to say, 'where do I start?'", implying the inclusion of SCaR is endless. F expressed that "it has kind of come naturally like that in English" and that the freedom of the English subject allows "exactly everything, any subject you can imagine, any angle you can imagine" to be included. Similarly, B seemed to find it easy to include, saying that, in language education, the topic does not matter as much, as long as students practice speaking, writing, reading, or listening.

Additionally, A, B, E and F, especially, stressed how any topic can be included, providing they are related to English speaking countries, which is part of the core contents of the syllabus (Skolverket, 2022c, p. 1). B said, "I have the entire world to choose from", referring to English being spoken in most parts of the world. This, B and F said, provides many cultural differences and, in turn, a great variety of topics to be discussed. Additionally, B argued that topics such as love and sex permeate nearly everything. More specific topics mentioned are abortion rights, social movements, the Christian right's views on sexuality in the US, female genital mutilation, discussions of the Commonwealth. These topics can be connected to the political and historical conditions, or even ethical and existential topics, part of English 6 and 7 (Skolverket, 2022c). Something that was *not* brought up, or rather argued against, was using SCaR to incorporate students' own experiences, which is part of the syllabus as well (Skolverket, 2022c).

However, not all teachers emphasised the simplicity of including SCaR with as much certainty. D thought English is a fairly flexible subject, where several topics can be discussed, but appeared slightly uncertain about the inclusion of SCaR, saying it is not "the most challenging subject" to include it in, implying it *is* challenging to some extent. However, she

expressed that with experience and consideration it is “do-able”. Similarly, E said he thinks that the possibilities are great, but that it requires some reflection and consideration. A, also, as mentioned, sometimes struggled with teaching these topics from other parts of the world, and said that it takes a lot of preparation, since she does not want to raise these issues without sufficient knowledge or be insensitive.

In summary, the teachers generally found that SCaR is easy to integrate with the English syllabus, mainly due to the freedom to include any content, as long as it is related to the English-speaking world. This also corresponds with Zakariasson Banfi’s (2022) study of teachers of Swedish, who found SCaR easy to incorporate due to the freedom in contents allowed, suggesting language-based subjects are more open to the inclusion of external content. However, not all teachers referred to it as this easy. These being the same who reported struggling to teach SCaR or spending much time on preparation, suggests that the integration with the syllabus might not mean it is easy to teach in practice. Additionally, in contrast to previous studies, teachers primarily viewed SCaR as a topic for discussion, rather than to enhance language learning or English to enhance the teaching of SCaR. C and E, however, did mention the latter, which is discussed below.

4.2.2 SCaR in English

The inclusion of SCaR in the English classroom also presents the matter of discussing these topics in a language that is not the students' mother tongue, which has been expressed as a concern by some teachers and an advantage by some. As presented, previous studies by Khan (2019), Ashcraft (2008), Simonsson (2020), and Williams (as cited in Khan, 2019) emphasise that gender, sexuality, and language are inherently intertwined, given the ways in which language teaching and learning conveys norms through the language that is used and taught. Correspondingly, C argued that language teaching is a useful way to teach identity, since we

create and display our identity though the language we use to define ourselves. As described above, E also connected teaching SCaR in English to teaching students which language is acceptable and which is not. He also reported analysing and breaking down language in song lyrics to bring awareness to what derogatory terms or slang represent or reproduce when used. He argued that lyrics convey not only language, but also messages, which allows for problematisation of the language used on a micro level, and its connections to macro level norms. This corresponds with how Simonsson (2020) and Norwald (2022) argue for the importance of being aware of how language upholds stereotypes and norms and break these down. Additionally, C also argued that teaching SCaR in English can create a distance to the topics and words connected to SCaR, English not being the students' mother tongue, and, in turn, making it easier to talk about. Several teachers also raised that students are interested in these topics, arguing for SCaR as a motivator to speak more English, as also raised by Benegas & Lauze (2020).

On the other hand, D and F suggested that the English language might be an obstacle, especially for students in English 5 or those who are not as proficient. When asked whether she thinks there is anything that makes SCaR fit less well in English, F said that it depends on how proficient or comfortable students are in English; if students are less proficient or uncomfortable, it might be even more challenging discussing topics such as these. F argued that SCaR is most suitable in English 6 and 7, since they are more advanced, and the students have chosen to take them. She argued that since everyone must pass English 5, she does not want to include topics that are too advanced. When asked the same question, D also mentioned that she "[thinks] the English classroom is quite exposed as it is … talking about a topic one is more or less [un]comfortable with might create two uncomfortable situations". D also raised that students in English 5 might not be mature enough to discuss these topics in a productive manner. This reflects a view that discussing the topics of SCaR must be advanced or is uncomfortable

and could impact students' language learning or performance negatively. On the other hand, it is only for English 5 that one of the topics of SCaR is mentioned explicitly, namely *relationships*, stating that these students should be ready to discuss this on this level (Skolverket, 2022c). It could, also, be argued that it is more important to teach SCaR in English 5, since it is obligatory for all students. All in all, this suggests that, according to these teachers, language learning still is at a greater priority than acquiring SCaR knowledge, it being an English course after all. On the other hand, this also enhances the argument that while SCaR merges well with English, it is not as straightforward to secure both SCaR knowledge and language learning.

In summary, teachers brought up both obstacles, such as low proficiency hindering students from discussing SCaR or the difficulty of SCaR hindering students from practicing English, and positives, such as making the topics easier to discuss in a second language. Both statements, however, show that SCaR is considered, or assumed to be, a difficult or uncomfortable topic. While not all aspects of SCaR are part of the English syllabus, discussing relationships should be part of students' proficiency and thus possible to include to some extent. Additionally, the only connections between language and sexuality, norms, or values that teachers bring up are those mentioned by C and E. The benefits and risks of reproducing and distributing existing and new norms are thus not a view seemingly shared by most of the participating teachers. Apart from losing benefits, this, based on Simonsson's (2020), Khan's (2019) and Norwald's (2022) statements, might risk excluding some students, if teachers are not aware of how language can uphold stereotypes or norms.

4.2.3 Materials

While the teachers argued that it is easy to include SCaR in English, one conclusion is that all the participating teachers want preparation and material support. All teachers mentioned it

being easier to bring up SCaR when teaching a film, literature, or other material. A said that it allows for the inclusion of such topics in a non-contrived way, however using the words *raising* and *pushing*, implying that it is not completely natural or easy including it. A said that it is difficult to "simply stand there and say, 'today we will discuss this', but needs a … some kind of distance, some kind of media to proceed from", so that students do not have to talk about their own experiences. E also said that some type of material is helpful if one is not comfortable introducing it out of the blue or from one's own experience. C also expresses wanting a connection to the English subject through these types of materials, or it feels difficult bringing it up.

Previous research highlighted the benefits of integrating sex education and literature teaching (Krishnan, Lazim & Yusof, 2011; Ashcraft, 2008), and many of the interviewed teachers also reported using literature as their main method to bring up SCaR. Teachers C and D discussed literature in connection to which authors they represent in their classrooms. C stated she intentionally picks LGBT authors and poets, such as Allen Ginsberg, Carol Ann Duffy, or Oscar Wilde. In connection to this, Khan (2019) and Ó'Móchain (2006) argue using authentic narratives is a useful way to avoid static stereotypes. These teachers generally use fictional material, but C does to an extent, through these authors as well as people closer to the students, include authentic LGBT narratives. D also implied that the books normally used at her school are not as suitable, for example only including heteronormative narratives or authors, for example Romeo and Juliet. Teacher C, on the other hand, described including Romeo and Juliet to critically discuss and taking apart the traditional love story. F also mentioned using Shakespeare and Jane Austen to discuss how relationships looked back in the day compared to now. C also mentioned *It ends with us* by Colleen Hoover, in which abusive relationships are portrayed. These are great examples of how teachers can use literature and film to allow students to critically analyse how relationships and sexuality are presented in different media

and contexts, as is part of SCaR. C also uses literature to discuss gender norms, historically and today, by letting her students, who are often exclusively boys, perform a part of Romeo and Juliet.

In summary, all teachers wanted materials or some kind of media to introduce SCaR, mainly literature. Thus, apart from the connection to the English-speaking world, teachers also bring up the integration of SCaR and English through the different media for reception mentioned in the syllabus. This, however, does not only come across as a tool to include it, but rather as crucial to the integration being possible. Additionally, the freedom to choose which material to include is another aspect of English that allows the inclusion of SCaR, again arguing for the freedom in the syllabus for English as a benefit when attempting to include it. However, the demand for materials to be able to teach SCaR implies that while teachers found SCaR easily to integrate with the English syllabus, it is not as easy to introduce it practically.

4.2.4 Importance and Responsibility

What all teachers had in common is that they said that SCaR is important to teach, however with different levels of emphasis. This importance is closely connected to the teachers caring about the students' needs. F stressed its importance by raising that in other parts of the world where sex is not spoken about openly, there are a lot more issues. A and C described education about sex and relationships as "extremely important" and necessary to prepare adolescents for the future and view it as a great part of their lives. A argued it is a major part of students' lives and asked where else they are supposed to receive the information, since sexual curiosity will not disappear if it is ignored. C found that her role is to create a safe environment, prevent personal attacks and keep discussions professional, arguing that students do not have the maturity to do so on their own. She thus reflects a sense of wanting the students to be protected and seeing it as part of her responsibility to create that safe space. Similarly, D thought that it

is important to talk and be open about these things, while making sure students outside of the hetero norm also can feel safe and welcomed.

Another prominent aspect of the experienced responsibility and argued importance to teach SCaR is connected to students' parents. A, B, C, and F highlighted the importance of schools taking responsibility to teach SCaR, as not all parents can be relied upon to address these topics adequately. The teachers seem to find the default education about these topics to be in a home context, while they also assumed that many parents do not teach it. B also saw a risk in parents teaching it, repeatedly coming back to the importance of widening students' perspectives from the one they have been brought up with. B also highlighted the importance of students being able to confide in their teachers if they are unable to talk to their parents or if their parents are part of the issue.

While all teachers recognized the importance of teaching SCaR, their perception of their responsibility to teach it varied, which reflects their views on their profession. The teachers who readily take the responsibility upon themselves are mainly A, B, C and F. A expressed a strong commitment to being an additional adult in the students' lives, assisting them in their transition to adulthood. F argued that teachers should be role models for students. She loves being a teacher and feels comfortable teaching SCaR and willingly assumes the responsibility to invite students to discussions and supporting them if they need help, despite having encountered instances when she felt uncomfortable or uncertain about how to handle a situation. B and C also assumed the responsibility of broadening students' perspectives and shaping them into adults who can discern right from wrong and advocate for themselves. In conclusion, these teachers happily take on themselves to teach these topics, seemingly finding it to be part of their profession and responsibility as teachers. This can be compared to D and E, who said that they struggle with the responsibility and found it overwhelming. E said that he is reluctant to talk about sex and relationships because he wants to be personal, not private, and keep students at a

slight distance, for example not joking with them, struggling to fit SCaR in his professional role.

In conclusion, teaching values and making students responsible adults is a great part of several of the teachers' professional work as teachers. This arguably makes the transition to teach SCaR easier, compared to teachers who do not view their profession in this way, as shown by the fact that the teachers with these perceptions are the ones who report having taught SCaR. This also seems to be connected to the extent of teachers experience of teaching.

4.2.5 Summary

In summary, teachers' opinions on teaching SCaR in the English classroom are characterised by the view that the topics of SCaR integrates well with the syllabus for English, due to the freedom to choose content and materials. Teachers, however, want to use materials such as literature and films to bring up these topics, which suggests that while it might be easy to integrate English and SCaR in theory, it is not as easy in practice. Regarding teaching SCaR in English, teachers reported both pros and cons. While some teachers proposed incorporating metalinguistic discussions and language analysis to address SCaR, the potential benefits and risks in terms of reproducing norms and values are not regarded as particularly prominent. While all teachers brought up sex education as important, not all teachers felt ready to undertake the responsibility to teach it, which can be connected to their general professional practice and them being new teachers.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate Swedish EFL teachers' views on and approaches towards the increased responsibility to teach *sexuality, consent, and relationships* (SCaR) in the English classroom. Using semi-structured interviews with six EFL teachers and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study investigated the participating teachers' reported approaches towards integrating SCaR in the English classroom, and what these teachers' views on the possibility and responsibility to include SCaR in their teaching are.

The interviews showed that the participating teachers had varying approaches towards teaching SCaR. At first, most teachers were hesitant to say that they had taught SCaR, however, all but one later mentioned ways they had included aspects of it. One teacher reported having carried out pre-planned lessons including SCaR, while three of the other teachers reported SCaR coming up naturally, such as through building upon discussions initiated by students and when topics such as love or social issues around the world had arisen in materials used. Two teachers also stated reprimanding and preventing disrespectful language as part of their work. These different approaches are all part of Skolverket's three sides of SCaR and include topics mentioned in the guidelines, although not all of them. However, the teachers' replies suggest that their practice has not changed significantly since the implementation, which indicates that the new guidelines might not have had great impact. This is corroborated by several of the teachers' descriptions of teaching SCaR rather corresponding with the general fundamental values than SCaR specifically. It is also clear that not all teachers do teach SCaR, due to not feeling prepared, a lack of time, education, and materials, or to more personal reasons. Evidently, they do, as suggested by Fairclough (1995) as common reactions to technologisation of discourse, to different extents "comply, try to appear to comply or make compromises between already existing practices and the new ones" (p. 102). This, by adapting SCaR to their discourse practice and what they are comfortable with.

Regarding the possibility of teaching SCaR in English, all teachers said that SCaR integrates naturally with the English syllabus. This is mainly through the core contents connected to parts of the world where English is spoken, as well as literature and other media. This, teachers emphasise, allows almost anything to be included. However, while merging SCaR and the English syllabus is considered easy, it is not necessarily easy to include it practically. For example, all teachers reported wanting to use some sort of media where such topics are present, since they find SCaR difficult to introduce out of the blue. This indicates that it takes more than SCaR merging naturally with English to have teachers comfortably and successfully include it.

Teaching SCaR in English has been brought up as both an opportunity and involving obstacles. As presented in the previous research, language, sexuality, and norms go hand in hand. However, only two of the teachers acknowledged this, mentioning language and identity being connected and that analysing language and words can bring out norms and stereotypes in English, or that teaching SCaR in English can help students distance themselves from the topic. However, other teachers found teaching SCaR in English as an obstacle if students are not proficient enough, hindering them from improving their English, an impression that does not correspond with previous research. The capacity of language and language education to transfer norms and values, is not a view or ideology shared by most of the participating teachers. This could possibly enhance the risks, such as singling out or excluding students, or limit the benefits, such as enhanced transfer of values.

All of the teachers emphasised the importance of sex and relationships education in school, but had different views on their responsibility to teach it. Part of the argued importance is that not all adolescents receive this education at home and that schools can bring more perspectives and safe discussions, compared to if students were only taught by parents or online. Most of the teachers indicated a strong feeling of responsibility to support students becoming responsible

and respectful adults and finding it an obvious part of their profession. However, not all teachers displayed this view, rather finding it difficult to add teaching SCaR to their professional work.

In conclusion, based on these teachers' discussions, the openness of the English syllabus, content wise, provides great possibility to integrate SCaR and English in theory, but that it is more difficult in practice. While students not being proficient enough is mentioned, the difficulties of including SCaR in English is mainly not connected to English, but rather surrounding factors, such as lack of material, time or support, or more personal reasons. Furthermore, the possibilities raised are mainly not connected to language teaching and learning per se, or languages' function to reproduce values, but rather the syllabus allowing for any content or materials. The factors affecting teachers' implementation of SCaR, thus, seem to lie mainly outside of the English language.

Another conclusion is that the new guidelines have not affected teachers' approaches significantly, either because they continue as before and consider it SCaR, or because they struggled to teach it before and now. This indicates that, while teachers do follow the guidelines, mere changes in them appear insufficient to change the discourse and teachers' practice concerning sex education. This suggests that teachers' views and discourse surrounding their profession is strong and guides their practice more than some of Skolverket's guidelines. This is also supported by the teachers who reflected a view that fostering students into adults is an important part of being teachers are those who were more comfortable teaching SCaR; it was already part of their work. It should, however, be added, that those who struggled to teach SCaR are the newest to teaching, indicating that having less experience makes it trickier or that focus is on teaching their subject, rather than fundamental values. This still argues that what rather is required for improved sex education is for Skolverket and school leaders to offer *more* support, materials, and time to prepare. Additionally, it further argues that English should not be omitted from Skolverket's subject-specific recommendations, i.e., since there *are* many possibilities

and benefits to including SCaR in English, while there is need for more support and materials. This is particularly important considering the research highlighting the significance of teachers being educated and making critical choices when addressing topics such as sexuality and norms.

While this study covers several aspects, there are many more to be investigated. The results in this study cannot be generalised to all teachers. For example, those who teach SCaR might be over-represented and some argued connections will not apply to all teachers. However, the study has brought to light the different approaches, opinions, and the supportive and caring nature of these teachers, and it can still be concluded that there is a continued need for more support. To gather a more comprehensive view, more teachers could be interviewed and more areas could be studied in the future. Since a great majority of the participants were women, it would also be fruitful to study more teachers of other genders. For further research, it would also be valuable to interview students about their views on SCaR and to investigate practical ideas, methods and materials that can be used and are needed to teach SCaR successfully.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Notice of Interest

Intresseanmälan intervju

Jag heter Jeanette Rolfsson och studerar till lärare i engelska och historia med inriktning mot gymnasieskolan vid Lunds universitet. Jag skriver just nu mitt examensarbete om lärares åsikter gällande ändringen av, och det ökade ansvaret att, undervisa kunskapsområdet sexualitet, samtycke och relationer. Jag är därför intresserad av att komma i kontakt med lärare som undervisar i engelska i gymnasieskolan som är intresserade av att delta i en intervju om just detta.

Kriterierna för att delta är endast att du har undervisat i engelska i gymnasieskolan under hösten 2022 och helst även tidigare.

Intervjuerna kommer äga rum under februari/mars 2023 och kommer ta ca 30-60 minuter. Jag befinner mig i Karlskrona, men är beredd att träffa lärare runt om i Skåne och Blekinge, samt om önskas kan intervjuerna göras digitalt.

Om du är intresserad, fyll i formuläret nedan för att bli kontaktad för mer information.

Tack på förhand,
Jeanette

(Din mailadress sparas inte om du är inloggad. Du behöver inte logga in för att besvara enkäten.)

Jag är intresserad av att delta i en intervju
☐ Ja
☐ Kanske/vill ha mer information

För- och efternamn

_____

Mailadress för vidare kontakt och information

_____

Skola du arbetar på och ort

_____

Jag undervisar just nu i
☐ Engelska 5
☐ Engelska 6
☐ Engelska 7

Övrig information?

_____

Appendix 2. Document for Informed Consent

Samtyckesblankett

Samtycke att delta i studien: Lärares åsikter angående det ökade ansvaret att undervisa sexualitet, samtycke och relationer.

Jag har skriftligen informerats om studien och samtycker till att delta.

Jag är medveten om att mitt deltagande är helt frivilligt och att jag kan avbryta mitt deltagande i studien utan att ange något skäl, tills det att studien är inlämnad.

Jag har fått möjlighet att ställa frågor och få svar från forskaren.

Min underskrift nedan betyder att jag väljer att delta i studien och godkänner att mina personuppgifter behandlas i enlighet med gällande dataskyddslagstiftning och lämnad information.

☐ Jag har läst och förstått den information om ovanstående studie som anges i informationsbladet.

☐ Jag samtycker till att delta i studien som beskrivs i informationsbladet.

☐ Jag samtycker till att mina personuppgifter behandlas på det sätt som beskrivs i informationsbladet.

…… ……..……
Underskrift deltagare Datum och ort

……
Namnförtydligande deltagare

Appendix 3. Information Sheet

Informationsblad för deltagande i intervju

Studie: Lärares åsikter angående det ökade ansvaret att undervisa sexualitet, samtycke och relationer

Forskare: Jeanette Rolfsson tel. nr.: [censored]
e-mail: [censored]

Handledare: Ellen Turner e-mail: [censored]

Beskrivning av studien
Det är jag, Jeanette Rolfsson, lärarstudent vid Lunds universitet, som ansvarar för denna studie, som är en del av mitt examensarbete på ämneslärarutbildningen med inriktning mot gymnasieskolan, ingång engelska. Studien ämnar att undersöka undervisande lärares åsikter och förhållningsätt gällande ändringen av riktlinjerna för, och det ökade ansvaret att undervisa, kunskapsområdet *sexualitet, samtycke och relationer* samt bidra med kunskap om hur det kan påverka lärares yrkesutövande. Studien kommer baseras på intervjuer med undervisande lärare i engelska i gymnasieskolan under feb-mars 2023. Som intervjudeltagare kommer du att få dela med dig av hur läroplansändringarna har påverkat ditt yrkesutövande, samt dina åsikter gentemot ansvaret att undervisa *sexualitet, samtycke och relationer* i engelskkurserna. Det är alltså i din roll som undervisande lärare i Engelska 5, 6 och/eller 7 som du är tillfrågad att delta.

Intervjun beräknas ta 30-60 minuter och kommer att dokumenteras genom inspelning för att därefter transkriberas. Intervjun kommer beröra ditt arbete med det tidigare området sex och samlevnad, samt det nya *sexualitet, samtycke och relationer,* men främst även dina åsikter om sexualundervisning, de nya riktlinjerna och det ansvaret som medföljer, allt utifrån din undervisning i engelska. Ditt deltagande är helt frivilligt och du har rätt att avbryta ditt deltagande, tills det att studien är inlämnad, eller avböja att besvara frågor när du vill utan att ange orsak.

Studien beräknas vara färdig i juni 2023 och kommer då publiceras i Lunds universitets databas för studentuppsatser, där du kan ta del av studiens resultat. Du kan även få till gång till studien genom att kontakta mig, Jeanette.

Konfidentialitet
Alla personuppgifter kommer att vara konfidentiella i samband med ditt deltagande. Ditt deltagande kommer vara anonymiserat och ditt namn, din arbetsplats och andra uppgifter som kan vara identifierande kommer inte användas i studien. Samtliga intervjuer kommer att spelas in för att sedan transkriberas. Detta material kommer förvaras på forskarens dator, vilken endast forskaren har tillgång till. Materialet kommer också endast användas för denna studie.

Som sagt är ditt deltagande frivilligt och du har rätt att avbryta ditt deltagande när du vill utan att ange orsak. Om du inte längre vill deltaga ska du meddela detta till forskaren på ovanstående uppgifter. Om du har några andra frågor är du också välkommen att kontakta mig.

Appendix 4. Interview Guide

Intervjuguide

Del I

- Vad heter du? Hur gammal är du?
- Vilken skola arbetar du på? Hur länge har du arbetat där?
- Hur länge har du arbetat som lärare?
- Vad var det som gjorde att du ville du bli lärare?
- Vilka ämnen är du behörig i/undervisar du i nu? Kurser i engelska?

Del II – Arbete med Sexualitet, samtycke och relationer (SSR)

1. Har du arbetat med någon form av undervisning om sexualitet och relationer i engelska innan läroplansändringen 2022? (Hur?)
2. Hur har du arbetat med undervisning om sexualitet och relationer i engelska sedan läroplansändringen? (Hur? Skillnader?)
3. Det betonas ju i riktlinjerna att varje lärare ska bidra med perspektivet på SSR i sitt ämne. Hur ser du på möjligheterna att inkludera SSR i undervisningen i engelska?
    a. Vilka perspektiv kan engelskan bidra med?
4. Känner du att du fått tillräckligt stöd för att arbeta med SSR?
    a. Hur tar du del av information om hur du kan undervisa om SSR?

Del III – Åsikter och ansvar kring SSR

5. Vad tycker du om sexualundervisning generellt?
6. Vad tycker du om de riktlinjer som föreslås idag? Just fokus på *sexualitet, samtycke och relationer* och kritiskt tänkande *(framställningar i media (pornografi) och hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck, kön och makt?)*
    a. Hur tycker du att man bäst undervisar om SSR?
7. Hur ser du på skolans ansvar som förmedlare om SSR till unga idag?
8. Hur ser du på *din* roll/*ditt* ansvar som förmedlare om SSR till unga idag?
9. Är det något du vill tillägga, förtydliga eller ändra?