



---

# Policies, Textbooks, and Curriculum Constraints to Integrating Literature into Language Education: EFL Teacher Perspectives from Russia

Calafato Raees

Department of Foreign Languages, University of Bergen; HF-bygget, Sydnesplassen 7, Bergen 5020, Norway,  
[raees.calafato@uib.no](mailto:raees.calafato@uib.no)

---

**Abstract.** Employing a qualitative design, this exploratory study examined the challenges and constraints encountered by foreign language teachers in Russia when using literature in their lessons in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Consisting of interviews with nine Russian EFL teachers, the study's findings indicate that education policies, a strong focus on standardized testing, poor quality textbooks, and a lack of institutional support are not only hindering a wider adoption of literary texts as a language resource, but are also likely hampering language learning in students. The study presents policymakers, as well as school and university administrators, with insights into the structural issues that might be preventing foreign language teachers from more effectively integrating literature into their lessons, and offers recommendations that could help them to formulate policies and strategies that address these issues.

---

**Keywords:** *literature in language education, teacher education, English as a foreign language, language curriculum, education policy.*

---

## Introduction

Literature has been receiving greater attention as a viable resource for the teaching of English in recent years with countries in Asia and Europe reintroducing literature into their English language programs (Tatsuki, 2015). It has also been accorded greater recognition in the updated Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptors (North, Goodier, & Piccardo, 2017). In Russia, the focus of this study, a growing number of writers have written about literature's ability, in a foreign language (FL) learning context, to develop learners' intercultural competence (Ibragimova, Kadyrova, & Kharitonov, 2017; Klementsova, 2012; Zagraisakaya, 2009; Zagryadskaya, 2017; Zhirkova, 2016), improve their language skills (Bekisheva & Gasparyan, 2014; Gilmanova, Nikitina, & Daminova, 2016; Glatishina, 2017; Rogacheva, 2015), and satisfy their professional needs (Belkina, 2013, 2014; Belkina & Stetsenko, 2015). Most of these studies, however, have focused on the theoretical benefits of literature instead of providing empirical evidence regarding its actual use in schools' and universities' foreign language education programs. They also rarely discuss the practical aspects of using such texts, for example, the level of institutional support, teacher ability, training, and materials. Consequently, while the theoretical benefits of literature are constantly stressed, there is limited data available as to what teachers in Russia are actually doing (and able to do) and what challenges, if any, they encounter when using literature to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Internationally, a limited number of recent studies have explored the challenges that English teachers encounter when trying to incorporate literature into language education (Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017; Skaar, Elvebakk, & Nilssen, 2018), generally focusing on students' language proficiency or teacher reading habits. In Russia, literature has been designated as an essential component of foreign language education in schools and universities. The Ministry of Education, in this regard, has published FL teaching standards that strongly emphasize the need to use literature as an FL resource in order to develop students' intercultural competence in primary, secondary and tertiary education (MoE, 2012). Little information, however, exists with respect to how successfully these directives are being implemented by teachers in schools and universities.

This study explores what challenges and constraints FL teachers in Russia face when using literature in their lessons. The study's findings should help policymakers and educational institutions assess the effectiveness of their FL teaching policies from a teacher perspective, especially as these relate to the use of literature in language lessons, thereby helping them to design and implement education policies and teacher training programs that could lead to more effective learning outcomes in students as literature in language education acquires greater importance globally.

## Literature in foreign language education in Russia

Before proceeding to the literature review, it should be noted that this study builds on data gathered via an 85-item questionnaire from 140 Russian EFL teachers, from diverse teaching contexts, regarding their attitudes towards and use of literature as a language resource. Much of that data indicated statistically significant differences in teacher attitudes towards literature based on age, with younger teachers using it less in their lessons and thinking of literature in less positive terms than older teachers, findings that have been reported in Calafato and Paran (2019). The questionnaire, however, also contained a section on the difficulties teachers might encounter when using literature in their lessons (composed of seven Likert-scale items that covered quality of FL educational materials, time constraints, administrative support, training, curriculum, etc.). Here, age-related differences were almost non-existent, and it was clear that all teachers, on average, often faced several constraints, although a detailed understanding of these constraints was difficult to obtain given the relatively simplistic nature of questionnaire data (see Appendix for the items and the descriptive statistics for participant responses). Of the 140 Russian EFL teachers that completed the questionnaire, 57 respondents reported on their university teaching experience, 26 chose secondary school, and 10 chose primary school. This study, consequently, sought to explore these challenges in greater detail as they relate to the university and school contexts given Ministry requirements that literature be included as a component in FL education in primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

### *Training and teachers' knowledge about the subject matter*

Studies show that Russian teachers of English generally hold positive views about incorporating literature into their lessons and use it to improve learners' vocabulary knowledge, reading skills, and intercultural competence (Calafato, 2018; Calafato & Paran, 2019; Belkina & Stetsenko, 2015). At the same time, Calafato and Paran (2019) indicate that younger Russian teachers of English are using literature to a lesser extent than older teachers; they, moreover, do not enjoy reading literature in either English or Russian as much, and were exposed to literature to a lesser extent throughout their FL education. A lack of exposure to literature when learning an FL, as well as when learning to teach an FL, can certainly negatively affect pre-service teachers' confidence when they, as in-service teachers, encounter literary content, because they have not had the necessary training or classroom experience from which to draw on. Zagraiskaya (2009) makes mention of this when she writes that literature is frequently allotted a minor role, is often completely absent, and, when it is present, is not properly integrated into the FL curriculum at Russian universities. She notes that pre-service FL teachers, as a result, often do not develop literary competence or the ability to engage in aesthetic and cultural analysis, which severely limits their ability to use literary texts as cultural artifacts that

can develop the communicative competence of their students. For Paran (2008), a lack of training can function as a vicious circle, depriving teachers that are desirous of using literary texts of the means (and probably the motivation) to do so, forcing them to fall back on the traditional teacher-centered approaches that they encountered as learners. Appropriate teacher training, in this respect, has been shown to have a positive effect on teacher attitudes towards literature as a language resource (Duncan & Paran, 2017).

An absence of relevant training can be quite detrimental, in practical terms, to the language learning process. Akyel and Yalçın (1990), in their study of secondary school EFL teachers and students in Turkey, found that the teachers did not appear to grasp the importance of literature in an EFL setting, and failed to use classroom activities that promoted students' ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what they were taught. Weist (2004), in similar fashion, documents how university students, enrolled in a Spanish language course that integrated language and literature, felt frustrated with the course's organization and content because their instructor was unable or unwilling to accommodate their needs and expectations regarding how literature should be used in their lessons.

### ***Lesson schedules, curriculum and time allocation***

English is offered as a subject from the second grade in Russian schools and is mostly taught with a view to developing students' communicative ability (Lovtsevich, 2016). Students have 4 hours of English lessons per week on average from grades 2-11 and learning a second FL becomes possible in secondary school (two hours per week) (TASS, 2017). There are few studies that document how FL teachers use this time to incorporate literature into their lessons, keeping in mind the Ministry's FL education standards (MoE, 2012), although some institutions feel that the first FL, almost always English, should be taught for at least 6-7 hours per week, with the second FL taking up another four hours (TASS, 2017), almost double their allotted time slots at present. The implication is that the current level of FL exposure in schools is insufficient and likely constrains teachers in terms of what they can do in their lessons. Alluding to this, Morozova (2012) writes that time constraints often force FL teachers to forego literature in favor of narrowly-specialized texts that are aimed at developing functional FL competence. Time constraints can oftentimes be exacerbated by heavy administrative workloads: EFL teachers interviewed by Pitina (2015, p. 565) at Russia's Chelyabinsk State University complained that while they enjoyed using literature in their lessons, they often faced time constraints because they had to do "routine paperwork and constant administrative assessment", which prevented them from devoting more time and attention to their students' needs and teaching more effectively. Internationally, studies like Divsar (2014) have similarly indicated that EFL teachers who use literature in their lessons are often faced with time constraints, notably due to curriculum and test preparation concerns.

### ***Text selection and textbook quality***

In the Russian context, school textbook content is of vital importance because teachers can officially only use those EFL textbooks that the Ministry of Education has approved. These textbooks, edited by Russian language experts with occasional input from native speakers, have regularly been criticized for containing inauthentic language and substandard content (Lovtsevich, 2016; Pitina, 2015; Ter-Minasova, 2005), although studies that have included actual teacher feedback or an empirical analysis of the literary content in textbooks appear to be absent in the Russian context. Internationally, studies indicate that the amount of literary content found in contemporary EFL textbooks can be quite limited and has actually been steadily decreasing over time (Gümüşok, 2013; Skela, 2014; Takahashi, 2015; Yildirim, 2012). Gümüşok (2013), for example, discovered that while the EFL textbooks used at Turkish universities had a considerable amount of reading content, the number of literary texts was very limited, with more recently published textbooks containing less literary content than older textbooks. Skela (2014) reports a similar decline in the amount of literary content found in the EFL textbooks used at Slovenian secondary schools.

### ***Research questions***

Current research in the Russian context does not contain a detailed exploration of the challenges and constraints that foreign language teachers encounter when using literature in their lessons. At the same time, literature is a key component of foreign language education in Russia (MoE, 2012). Therefore, in order to better understand teaching conditions vis-à-vis literature in language education at Russian universities, as well as secondary and primary schools, it was decided to explore *what challenges and constraints EFL teachers in Russian universities and schools (secondary and primary) face when using literary texts to teach language, and whether these mostly arise from deficiencies in their own abilities or if they are due to external factors.*

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

Convenience sampling was used to find participants for the study. The administrative departments of four schools (primary and secondary) and three universities in Moscow were contacted via email. The choice of schools and universities was made based on established contacts in the administrations of these institutions. The email explained the scope of the study and also contained the contact details of the study's author for those who wished to participate. Nine Russian EFL teachers responded positively to the invitation and agreed to be interviewed for the research study. The participants were guaranteed anonymity, as well as assured that the interview recordings would not be shared with

third parties, would be securely stored, that there were no right or wrong answers, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without providing any justification.

### ***Instruments and data analysis***

This study, in order to obtain a more detailed understanding of the challenges EFL teachers face in Russia when using literature in lessons, used a semi-structured interview schedule, in English, which consisted of 17 questions (9 questions regarding attitudes towards literature and 8 questions on the more practical aspects of using literature, for example, approaches, challenges, and limitations). Each interview lasted an average of 30 minutes, was audio recorded, and then transcribed verbatim. A thematic analysis was carried out, adapting the methods used in Duncan and Paran (2017). The data first underwent an initial inductive coding process where the interview transcripts were scanned and recurring ideas and opinions, based on participants' answers to the questions, were coded. These initial codes were subsequently collated into potential themes and subthemes, and the seven items from the questionnaire were used as a reference during this process (see Appendix). The themes and subthemes were then checked against each individual interview and then the entire interview set, and refined where necessary. A final coding process was then initiated, using ATLAS.ti software. Once the codes were rechecked with their corresponding extracts and finalized, a final thematic analysis was performed, after which code groupings, subthemes and interview extracts were collated under the corresponding final themes. When discussing the interview findings, each interviewee is solely identified by their gender (M = Male; F = Female), teaching context (Pm = Primary School; S = Secondary School; U = University) and age. For example, FS29 indicates a 29-year-old female who teaches at a secondary school.

## **Results**

The nine interviews proved to be a very rich source of data, often putting situations and teacher attitudes in context in a way that provided comprehensive insights into the many challenges and constraints teachers face when using literature to teach English in Russia. Moreover, interviewees, despite their different ages, attitudes towards literary texts, and teaching contexts, shared many common themes and experiences with respect to teaching approaches, quality of EFL materials, and work environment (see Figure 1 for a visual representation of the themes).

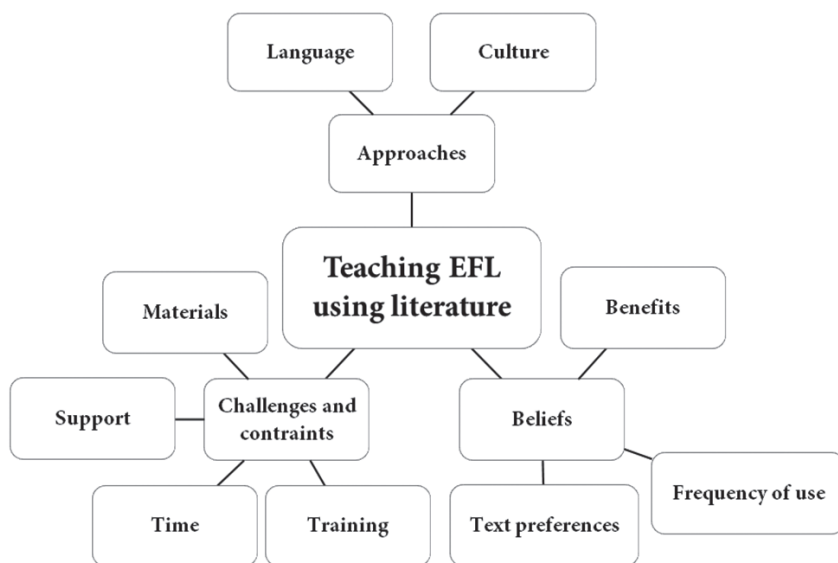


Figure 1. Visual illustration of the themes identified during participant interviews regarding their use of literature

### *Teachers' beliefs regarding literature and why they use it*

This section contains coded participant responses to the 9 questions regarding their attitudes towards literature.

All nine teachers perceived literature as signifying short stories, plays, novels and poetry. They also showed a clear preference for 20th and 21st-century works, notably works by Alexander McCall Smith, W. Somerset Maugham (secondary school and university participants) and Roald Dahl (primary school participants). None of the interviewees mentioned literature in terms of representing any media other than print, although five participants (FPm24, FS26, MS41, MS42, and FU52) did discuss the benefits of using audio books and films as audio-visual supplements. All the participants, with the exception of MS36, stated that they enjoyed reading literature, often in Russian (FPm24, FS26, FPm29), but also sometimes in English (FU38, MS41, MS42, MU45, FU52). All nine of them also felt that literary texts promoted FL learning, although not everyone agreed on how literature should be incorporated into lessons. FS26, a very infrequent user of literary texts (once a month), felt that the number of literary texts found in school textbooks was sufficient for her lessons and that any additional reading on the part of students was a purely personal pursuit. MS36, a moderate user (once a week), shared FS26's views to some extent, although he also noted that he actively encouraged his students to read. Both FS26 and MS36 agreed that literature helps learners better understand the rhythm of the English language. MS41, MS42, MU45 and FU38, all frequent users (more than once a week), stressed the linguistic and cultural benefits of using literary texts. They felt



that literature was suitable for studying aspects of grammar, helped to improve vocabulary, and was a rich, authentic storehouse of cultural knowledge. They also felt literature provided general benefits in terms of students' educational and personal development. FPm29, FPm24 and FU52, all infrequent users of literary texts (once every two weeks), similarly stressed the educational and cultural benefits of literary texts, in the sense that exposure to literature helped students become well-rounded individuals in terms of both education and language learning.

### ***Challenges and constraints***

This section contains coded participant responses to the 8 interview questions on the practical aspects of using literature in lessons during which five common challenges/constraints were identified.

#### **Teachers lack training**

Four interviewees cited a lack of training and confidence issues when using literary texts to teach EFL. Of the four, three interviewees (FPm24, MS36, and FS26) referred to or implied possible shortcomings in their own abilities, while one interviewee, MU45, made a general observation about how English teachers in Russia did not normally receive the appropriate training that could equip them, methodologically speaking, with the tools to use literature to benefit their students' language learning experience.

FPm24 expressed unease with the content of literary texts and noted that she required time to read and thoroughly understand the text herself, and only then did she feel comfortable introducing it to her students. She admitted that the process might present difficulties, but that she thought it was also very useful, both for her personally and for her students. Similar issues were mentioned by MS36, who admitted that he faced difficulties in understanding literary texts in the original, and, as a result, much preferred using abridged versions since he did not have to worry about the text's vocabulary and grammar content. He said that he normally skipped texts he could not understand and expressed no desire to participate in training programs or workshops that might help him overcome these issues. Vocabulary was also an issue for FPm29, as were the "cultural peculiarities" (FPm29, p. 4) found in literary texts. She felt that training could help her overcome some of the methodological challenges of using literature to teach EFL.

According to FS26, literary texts often contained words that she felt nobody used in daily life, and that she, as a result, did not recognize: "*When I read authentic literature, I don't look up some words in a dictionary, I just understand the main sense, and that's what I would recommend to students*" (FS26, p. 3). Discussing her own reading strategy, she revealed that she first read a book in Russian and then in English. This could imply difficulties in improving vocabulary knowledge and an unwillingness to commit more deeply to reading in a foreign language, yet she, like MS36, did not express a desire for training. MU45, in contrast, said that while he had no difficulties using literature, he felt



that Russian teachers were generally not well-read and that they did not enjoy reading in English, which hampered their use of literature in English lessons. He revealed that he knew only a few teachers with whom he could discuss literature.

### **Time constraints**

A recurring theme in a majority of interviews was time, with seven of the nine interviewees stating that they, for some reason or another, faced time constraints that hindered or dissuaded them from using literary texts. The reasons for these time constraints were diverse in nature. Interviewees mentioned high administrative workloads, curriculum requirements, and a greater focus on test preparation. According to FPM29, the use of literature in FL lessons was common in schools, although some teachers did not like to spend time on text preparation. She had been asked, like the other interviewees, what she thought about literature's role in EFL education in Russia today. FU52 felt that time was an issue in terms of class length. She also remarked that literary texts had not been methodically or systematically incorporated into foreign language curricula. FU38 complained that teachers in Russia were burdened by tedious administrative tasks, which meant they did not have enough time to properly focus on their work, on *"the practical part, how to make it better, how to organize something more interesting"* (FU38, p. 7). She criticized the practice, saying, *"I think it's stupid to write plans, five or six sheets for every lesson you have been doing for many years"* (FU38, p. 8). MS41 said that although he liked to use literary texts, some of his colleagues did not, because they felt they were too pressed for time. He explained that this was because of a tight schedule and a focus on preparing students for standardized testing, revealing that Russia's Ministry of Education was planning to make foreign languages a compulsory part of school-leaving examinations for secondary school students in the near future. He felt this emphasis on testing was misplaced because it resulted in teachers having to *"focus on preparing students for exams rather than on really teaching them to speak or to use a language"* (MS41, p. 8). In fact, both MS42 and MS41 discussed the intensity of the school curriculum in Russia, which, they claimed, restricted teacher freedom. MS41 noted that there was a more receptive atmosphere at university as opposed to at school, adding that teachers were less constrained at university and were able to do more of the things that they liked.

### **Lack of support from the workplace**

Five interviewees mentioned a lack of institutional support. MS36, for example, said that his school provided no support or encouragement regarding the use of literary texts in language lessons, although he also said that his school did not mind him using literature. FPM24, too, felt that the use of literature had not really been accommodated in the school program, similar to FU52's contention that literature had not been properly integrated into the FL curriculum at universities. MS42 thought that his school's administration did

not have a serious approach to literature in FL education: they simply required teachers to follow the curriculum. This is not to say that the situation is the same at every school. FS26, for instance, drew a distinction between her school and the one where her colleagues teach. She revealed that her colleagues had fully integrated literature into their EFL lessons, adding, “*The school provides them with that. The school provides them with the books, the adapted books for each level, and the school encourages teachers to use the books. But here it’s not like that*” (FS26, p. 5).

### **Poor quality materials and misplaced priorities**

Materials posed various challenges for six of the nine teachers interviewed. School textbooks lacked sufficient literary content, were either too old or of very poor quality, and, at least in one case, a lack of appropriate materials appeared to have had a direct bearing on how often literary texts were used. FPM29, for instance, felt that there was a dearth of books with appropriate literary content that she could use in her lessons. Her difficulties in finding suitable materials also created time constraints for her because she had to first find something and then adapt it to her lessons. FPM24 recounted a similar experience. She explained that she needed to look for suitable materials herself because the school did not really help and there was no encouragement to be a more effective teacher. She stressed that there were restrictions on what teachers could use in lessons and that they had to follow the school curriculum, suggesting that there was little room for flexibility or teacher independence. As for EFL textbooks, which have to be Ministry-approved, these were described as containing little literary content by MS41 and FU52, and both teachers felt that whatever content was included was not very good. MS41 pointed out that the problem had two additional dimensions. He said, “*The Ministry of Education approves a list of federal textbooks. So the textbook has to be on this list so that the teachers will be able to use the budget money to buy it*” (MS41, p. 8). He also suggested that alternatives like seeking funding directly from parents might prove difficult because of the current economic situation in Russia, with parents less willing to spend extra money to finance the purchase of additional materials. When asked if she knew why the Ministry of Education would approve certain textbooks that EFL teachers so evidently disliked, FU38 thought it was likely due to corruption. She said that she could not understand why the relevant state entities that controlled the selection process would continue to approve books with which teachers were dissatisfied, especially when it was clear that these were “*not the books teachers want*” (FU38, p. 6).

MU45, discussing foreign language education at universities, explained that most EFL materials were designed for limited purposes, focusing on basic communication skills and for preparing students for international examinations like IELTS. He revealed that he had shared his concerns with the relevant department heads at his place of work, informing them that not only did such a narrow focus on test preparation prevent students from seeing the English language in its entirety, but it also restricted teacher freedom

in terms of course content and teaching methods. The feedback he received was not very encouraging. He felt that the priorities of the institution in terms of EFL teaching were misplaced in that they chose to focus on a very narrow interpretation of language competence, which resulted in students suffering from notable gaps in their knowledge of English.

## Discussion

Before moving on to a discussion of the study's findings, it is worth noting that the study is not without its limitations. For example, participants were drawn based on a convenience sample of universities and schools in Moscow, and it is likely that teachers in other cities might feel differently about literature, or face a different mix of challenges. The sample is also relatively small, which might also limit the study's generalizability. At the same time, this study does build on data from a much larger sample of EFL teachers (see Appendix), and the findings offer valuable insights into the conditions in which Russian EFL teachers operate, notably with respect to their use of literary texts.

Indeed, the data from the interviews identified several common challenges that EFL teachers from both Russian universities and schools encounter when using literary texts, specifically time constraints, poor quality EFL materials, a lack of relevant training and institutional support, and an intense focus on standardized testing.

Institutional policies regarding testing and a lack of support were cited by a majority of interviewees when they discussed how FL curricula were implemented in primary and secondary schools and universities. It was apparent that in most cases teachers received little to no encouragement to use literature in their EFL lessons and had to strictly follow the curriculum, which often restricted teacher freedom due to its intense focus on test preparation, which some felt was actually counterproductive to learning English. It is worth pointing out that too intense a focus on test preparation can not only limit learners' exposure to the language in its entirety, as mentioned by MU45, but such a focus can also produce negative washback that might impact teaching methods and priorities in ways that lead to ultimately unsatisfactory learning outcomes for EFL students (Choi, 2008; Spratt, 2005). Concerns about curriculum requirements and test-preparation practices have similarly been voiced by EFL teachers in other studies (e.g. Divsar, 2014).

The time constraints cited by the interviewees, in many ways, represent a disconnect between institutions and the teachers they employ, which results in teacher agency and productivity being restricted through policies imposed from above. One way to overcome this particular challenge would be if local and regional decision-making bodies in Russia established a regulatory framework that would enable them to systematically and regularly collect EFL teacher feedback at the grassroots level. As part of this framework, they could prepare and distribute digital assessment kits containing a range of online tools

(open source or proprietary) to schools and universities. Teachers could then use these tools to assess and report on curriculum quality at the local level, as well as to identify shortcomings in the system. These kits would also contain tools to assess the challenges and constraints identified by the teachers when using literature in language education. The feedback thus gathered would help schools, universities and the relevant ministries more effectively and accurately identify areas that require improvement, which would lead to a more effective allocation of resources. Of course, there is the possibility that such a project would initially impose additional time constraints on teachers, but these constraints would likely be short-term in duration as teachers adapt to using the evaluation tools. In the long term, the feedback would help in streamlining the collaborative process between teachers, educational institutions and the state, which would lead to better learning outcomes for students. Such an initiative would also boost teacher morale in the long term since teachers would be able to see that their collective feedback has a tangible effect on FL education policies.

Several study participants also criticized the generally poor quality of the EFL materials used in Russian schools and universities. The findings, to some extent, corroborate the observations made by Ter-Minasova (2005, p. 453), who writes that, despite an “ocean of books”, most of them are of “very poor quality”, with content simply regurgitated from textbook to textbook and no real progress made with regard to addressing the needs of students. It certainly appears that there is a lack of communication and collaboration between teachers and the decision-making bodies responsible for publishing FL educational materials in Russia. For example, the fact that the Ministry of Education continues to approve textbooks that teachers do not want to use, as FU38 pointed out, suggests that current policies regarding the development and approval of EFL materials are doing more harm than good since they do not involve all stakeholders, notably teachers. Moreover, a majority of interviewees, regardless of teaching context, mentioned poor quality materials and a lack of suitable literary content, suggesting that the issue exists at all levels of education. One way to tackle these two issues, i.e. poor quality materials and a lack of appropriate literary content, could be via the evaluation tools discussed earlier on in this section. This would allow the relevant ministries and government departments tasked with textbook design and selection to benefit from big data during the decision-making process. A second recommendation would be for teachers and their institutions to collectively lobby textbook publishers to include a greater amount of appropriate literary content in EFL textbooks (teacher feedback from the assessment tools could be very helpful in this regard) or to lobby them to publish a wider range of supplementary literary materials to accompany the textbooks. The Ministry of Education could also be petitioned to promote direct collaboration between teachers and textbook publishers, seeing as how the Ministry’s FL teaching standards designate literature as an important component of FL learning (MoE, 2012). While these steps might result in a higher workload, the fact remains that, as pointed out by the participants in this study,

the current narrow focus on test preparation might be preventing students and teachers from benefitting from more effective and innovative teaching methods and content. It should also be noted that steps to include more literary content would result in FL programs that more accurately reflect the growing recognition accorded to literature in the CEFR's updated descriptors (North, Goodier, & Piccardo, 2017), as well as the Russian Ministry of Education's FL education standards (MoE, 2012).

Four interviewees (FPm24, FPm29, FS26 and MS36), all teachers from secondary and primary schools, also mentioned possible shortcomings in their own capabilities when using literary texts, especially in terms of understanding literary content, although most of them did not feel that they needed additional training despite some admitting that their level of English was not sufficient to handle literary texts. It is possible that, as Paran (2008) has pointed out, they are simply not aware of their methodological needs as teachers. Alternatively, the fact that their schools do not actively promote the use of literary texts in English language education, and, as noted by FPm24, do not encourage teachers to further develop their skills, might have a dampening effect on their motivation. For example, FS26 remarked that her colleagues from another school do use literary texts, but that this is a result of them being encouraged to do so by the school administration. One of the most effective ways to remedy this would be for universities and institutes that are responsible for training pre-service EFL teachers to introduce a compulsory literature component to their Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) programs. The reason for focusing on pre-service teachers is that this would ensure that teachers are already equipped with all the necessary tools at the start of their careers, rather than at some middle stage, when not all teachers might be motivated, as evidenced by some of the participants in this study, to enroll in remedial training programs. It would also help combat some of the current issues with regard to teachers' language competence vis-a-vis literary texts, for example, their inability to engage in cultural and aesthetic analysis or use literary texts to develop students' cultural competence (Zagraiskaya, 2009). The result would be more successful language learning outcomes for students.

## **Conclusions, implications of the study, and directions for future research**

The study's findings indicate that the use of literature in EFL education in Russia is, to some extent, hampered by policies and decisions over which teachers have little control. The need, then, is to promote greater collaboration between all stakeholders, taking into account the growing importance of studying authentic texts as part of English language education. In this regard, sustained, formalized teacher feedback is vital to understanding conditions in the classroom, where much of the actual learning takes place. Should concrete steps not be taken to address the concerns of foreign language teachers in this

respect, it is likely that FL teachers will be discouraged from using literature in their lessons, which will negatively affect their students' ability to understand and process authentic texts, as well as their literacy, in a foreign language. Lower levels of literature use among younger EFL teachers already appears to be a reality in Russia (Calafato & Paran, 2019), and younger teachers in Norway similarly exhibit lower levels of literary reading enjoyment (Skaar, Elvebakk, & Nilssen, 2018), which likely has implications for literature use in that country, too.

The recommendations presented in this study should contribute to learning outcomes that more accurately reflect the potential diversity and richness of EFL education while avoiding washback effects that often occur due to too intense a focus on test preparation. The study's suggestions should also ensure that teachers are given the tools to provide feedback in a systematic manner and that, following their training, they have a more comprehensive repertoire of skills at their disposal when teaching their students.

In terms of directions for future research, based on the teacher constraints identified in this study, there is a need for more research on the nature and amount of literary content found in officially sanctioned FL educational materials in primary and secondary education, as well as observational and interventional studies that target teacher training programs, focusing on the ability of pre-service teachers to benefit from authentic language materials, including literature, in their lessons. There is also a need to go beyond English and explore the status of literature as a language resource with respect to other foreign languages, and more attention needs to be paid to Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, regions that have so far received little attention. Such studies would help shed greater light on the status of literature in foreign language education globally and would contribute to a more complete understanding of how different countries are faring in terms of their attempts to incorporate authentic texts into their FL education programs.

## References

- Akyel, A., & Yalçın, E. (1990). Literature in the EFL class: A study of goal-achievement incongruence. *ELT Journal*, 44(3), 174–180. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/44.3.174>.
- Bekisheva, T. G., & Gasparyan, G. A. (2014). Ispol'zovanie domashnego chtenija kak vida samostojatel'noj raboty studentov v neязыkovyh vuzah [Home reading as independent study for students in higher education]. *Filologicheskie Nauki: Vopros Teorii i Praktiki* [Philological Science: Theory and Practice], 6(36), 27–29.
- Belkina, E. P. (2013). Ob ispol'zovanii fragmentov hudozhestvennogo proizvedenija priobuchenii studentov napravlenija «Menedzhment» anglijskomu jazyku [Using extracts from literature to teach English to Management students]. *Anglijskij dlja nefilologov. Problemy ESP-2013* [English for non-Philologists. Problems ESP 2013], 5, 10–13. Voronezh, Russia: Istoki.



- Belkina, E. P. (2014). Ob ispol'zovanii hudozhestvennogo teksta pri obuchenii studentov napravlenija «Turizm» anglijskomu jazyku [Using literary texts to teach ESP for tourism]. *Na Peresechenii Jazykov i Kul'tur* [Language and Culture Crossroads], 6, 150–156.
- Belkina, E. P., & Stetsenko, E. O. (2015). Ispol'zovanie hudozhestvennogo teksta pri obuchenii studentov nejazыkovogo vuza inostrannomu jazyku [The use of literary texts to teach a foreign language to university students]. *Filologicheskienauki: Voprosyteoriiipraktiki* [Philological Sciences: Issues of Theory and Practice], 3(2), 30–32.
- Calafato, R. (2018). Literature in language education: Evolving language pedagogies and text preferences in contemporary Russia. *Voprosy Obrazovaniya / Educational Studies Moscow*, 2, 91–116. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2018-2-91-116>.
- Calafato, R., & Paran, A. (2019). Age as a factor in Russian EFL teacher attitudes towards literature in language education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 79(1), 28-37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.12.002>.
- Choi, I. C. (2008). The impact of EFL testing on EFL education in Korea. *Language Testing*, 25(1), 39–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532207083744>.
- Divsar, H. (2014). A survey of the approaches employed in teaching literature in an EFL context. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods*, 4(1), 74–85.
- Duncan, S., & Paran, A. (2017). *The effectiveness of literature on acquisition of language skills and intercultural understanding in the high school context*. University College London, Institute of Education. The Hague: The International Baccalaureate Organisation. Retrieved from <http://www.ibo.org/contentassets/1fcfe0df17448bebe6781ea0396adff/effect-of-literature-on-language-acquisition-final-report.pdf>.
- Gilmanova, A. A., Nikitina, S. E., & Daminova, E. R. (2016). Authentic reading texts in teaching foreign languages. *Mezhdunarodnyj Nauchno-issledovatel'skij Zhurnal* [International Journal of Scientific Research], 5(47), 24–27.
- Glatishina, P. (2017). The role of authentic texts in developing speaking skills in English at school. In G. Y. Gulyaev (Ed.). *Innovative technology and science in education* (pp. 40–42). Penza, Russia: MCNS.
- Gümüşok, F. (2013). A quest for literature in ELT coursebooks. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 2(2), 114–133. <https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v2i2.241>.
- Ibragimova, A. N., Kadyrova, A. A., & Kharitonov, E. A. (2017). Using fiction to develop intercultural competence in teaching foreign languages. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods*, 7(9), 112–120.
- İşıklı, C., & Tarakçioğlu, A. (2017). Investigating problems of English literature teaching to EFL high school students in Turkey with focus on language proficiency. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(2), 82–95.
- Klementsova, N. N. (2012). The text in foreign language teaching. *Vestnik MGIMO*, 5, 204–209.
- Lovtsevich, G. (2016). Education. In Z. G. Proshina, & A. A. Eddy (Eds.). *Russian English: History, functions, and features* (pp. 132–140). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139683623.008>.



- MoE. (2012). Federal'nye Gosudarstvennye Obrazovatel'nye Standarty (Federal State Educational Standards). Retrieved from The Ministry of Education and Science of Russia: <https://минобрнауки.рф/документы/336>.
- Morozova, I. G. (2012). The use of literary texts to build sociocultural competence while learning a foreign language at university (in Russian). In N. Karlik (Ed.). *Current issues in Philology and methods of teaching foreign languages: Materials from the 3rd International Scientific Conference (in Russian)* (pp. 317–327). Moscow, Russia: The Higher School of Economics Publishing House. Retrieved from <https://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/57077725>.
- North, B., Goodier, T., & Piccardo, E. (2017). *Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR): Companion volume with new descriptors*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/168074a4e2>.
- Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: An evidence-based survey. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 465–496. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480800520X>.
- Pitina, S. (2015). English language teaching policy at a Russian university. *US-China Foreign Language*, 13(8), 562–567. <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8080/2015.08.003>.
- Rogacheva, Y. V. (2015). Chtenie inozazychnoj literatury kak universal'nyj instrument formirovaniya kljuchevyh kompetencij studentov nejazykovyh vuzov [Reading foreign literature as a universal instrument in establishing key competencies for students in higher education]. *Sinergija* [Sinergy], 2, 34–39.
- Skaar, H., Elvebakk, L., & Nilssen, J. H. (2018). Literature in decline? Differences in pre-service and in-service primary school teachers' reading experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 69, 312–323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.10.019>.
- Skela, J. (2014). The quest for literature in EFL textbooks: A quest for Camelot? *ELOPE: English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries*, 11(1), 113–136. <https://doi.org/10.4312/elope.11.1.113-136>.
- Spratt, M. (2005). Washback and the classroom: The implications for teaching and learning of studies of washback from exams. *Language Teaching Research*, 9(1), 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168805lr152oa>.
- Takahashi, K. (2015). Literary texts as authentic materials for language learning: The current situation in Japan. In M. Teranishi, Y. Saito, & K. Wales (Eds.). *Literature and language learning in the EFL classroom* (pp. 26–40). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137443663\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137443663_3).
- TASS. (2017). V regionah obsuzhdajut vozmozhnost' prepodavaniya v shkolah tol'ko odnogo inostrannogo jazyka [Discussions in the regions are ongoing for the teaching of only one foreign language]. Moscow: TASS Russian News Agency. Retrieved from <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/4635781>.
- Tatsuki, D. (2015). Repositioning literary texts in language teaching: The state of the art. *Annals of Foreign Studies*, 90, 1–13.

- Ter-Minasova, S. G. (2005). Traditions and innovations: English language teaching in Russia. *World Englishes*, 24(4), 445–454. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0883-2919.2005.00427.x>.
- Weist, V. (2004). Literature in lower-level courses: Making progress in both language and reading skills. *Foreign Language Annals*, 37(2), 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2004.tb02194.x>.
- Yildirim, A. (2012). Literature and English culture in ELT. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 6(2), 137–153.
- Zagraiskaya, Y. (2009). *Metodika integririvannogo obuchenija anglijskomu jazyku i zarubezhnoj literature na zanjatijah po domashnemu chteniju* [An integrated method to teaching English and foreign literature via reading at home activities] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Irkutsk, Russia: State Linguistic University of Irkutsk. Retrieved from <http://scipeople.com/publication/96065/>.
- Zagryadskaya, N. A. (2017). The possibility of using fiction to teach English to psychology students. *Mir Nauki, Kul'tury, Obrazovanija* [World of Science, Culture and Education], 63(2), 21–23.
- Zhirikova, O. P. (2016). The role of fiction in training students whose foreign language is their second major. *Inostrannye Jazyki: Lingvisticheskie i Metodicheski Easpekty* [Foreign Languages: Linguistic and Methodological Aspects], 35, 40–42.

---

## Politikos kryptių, vadovėlių ir ugdymo turinio apribojimais integruojant literatūrą į kalbų mokymą(si): anglų, kaip užsienio kalbos, mokytojų iš Rusijos požiūris

Calafato Raees

Užsienio kalbų katedra, Bergenio universitetas; HF-bygget, Sydneplassen 7, Bergenas 5020, Norvegija, [raees.calafato@uib.no](mailto:raees.calafato@uib.no)

---

### Santrauka

Šis tyrimas paremtas nepublikuotais apklausos duomenimis, kuriuos autorius (2018) surinko tirdamas 140-ies Rusijos anglų kalbos mokytojų požiūrį į literatūrą kaip į kalbos mokymo(si) šaltinį. Remiantis pusiau struktūriniu interviu, išsamiai nagrinėjami konkretūs iššūkiai ir suvaržymai, kuriuos patiria Rusijos anglų kalbos mokytojai pagrindinėje, vidurinėje ir aukštojoje ugdymo pakopose, kai įtraukia literatūrą į savo pamokas (Rusijos švietimo ministerijai rekomenduojant). Šiam tyrimui buvo apklausti devyni Rusijos anglų kalbos mokytojai iš Maskvos mokyklų ir universitetų, su jais buvo susisiekti elektroniniu būdu per atitinkamus

jų institucijų administracinius padalinius. Interviu duomenys patvirtino apklausos duomenis, susijusius su iššūkiais ir apribojimais, kuriuos patiria mokytojai, ir nuodugniau atskleidė šių apribojimų pobūdį. Devyni mokytojai ugdymo turinio reikalavimus, nuostatą gerai parengti mokinius standartizuotiems testams, žemos kokybės užsienio kalbos mokomąją medžiagą ir nepakankamą jų institucijų skatinimą įvardino kaip ribojančius jų gebėjimą efektyviai įtraukti literatūros komponentą į užsienio kalbos pamokas. Šis tyrimas yra reikšmingas, nes tai yra vienas iš nedaugelio tyrimų, kurie leidžia išsamiai išnagrinėti apribojimus, su kuriais susiduria anglų kalbos mokytojai Rusijoje, norėdami įtraukti literatūrą į savo pamokas; straipsnyje taip pat pateikiamos rekomendacijos, kaip įveikti šiuos apribojimus. Siekiama skatinti geresnę institucijų ir mokytojų bendradarbiavimą kuriant ir įgyvendinant užsienio kalbų ugdymo politiką, taip pat kuriant mokytojų rengimo programas, kurių tikslas – plėsti užsienio kalbų mokymo įvairovę ir perteikti visapusiškesnę kalbos mokymosi patirtį asmenims, besimokantiems pagrindinėje, vidurinėje ir aukštojoje ugdymo pakopose.

---

**Esminiai žodžiai:** *literatūra kalbos mokymo(si) procese, mokytojų ugdymas, anglų kaip užsienio kalba, kalbos ugdymo programa, švietimo politika.*

---

## Appendix

Table 1

*Participant responses regarding the challenges and constraints they face when using literature in lessons*

	Teaching Context	n	M	SD	Mdn
1. Using literary texts is very time-consuming and requires a lot of preparation	University	56	4.13	.81	4.00
	Secondary School	25	3.64	1.04	4.00
	Primary School	10	2.90	1.37	2.50
	Total	91	3.86	1.02	4.00
2. Teacher's grasp of English is insufficient to use literary texts	University	56	2.43	1.08	2.00
	Secondary School	25	2.84	1.03	3.00
	Primary School	10	2.60	1.35	2.50
	Total	91	2.56	1.10	3.00
3. Materials are of poor quality	University	56	2.68	.94	3.00
	Secondary School	25	2.60	.96	3.00
	Primary School	10	2.90	1.20	3.00
	Total	91	2.68	.96	3.00

	Teaching Context	n	M	SD	Mdn
4. Teachers are not trained to use literature to teach English	University	55	2.64	1.13	3.00
	Secondary School	24	2.92	.83	3.00
	Primary School	10	3.80	1.14	3.50
	Total	89	2.84	1.11	3.00
5. There is a lack of support to use literature to teach English	University	56	3.02	1.36	3.00
	Secondary School	24	3.33	1.24	3.00
	Primary School	10	3.60	1.07	4.00
	Total	90	3.17	1.30	3.00
6. Teachers lack sufficient knowledge about English literary works	University	56	2.82	1.05	3.00
	Secondary School	24	2.67	1.05	3.00
	Primary School	10	3.30	1.70	3.50
	Total	90	2.83	1.13	3.00
7. The literary materials my institution provides for use as an English language resource are sufficient.	University	55	2.98	1.24	3.00
	Secondary School	24	2.79	1.10	3.00
	Primary School	10	2.00	1.25	2.00
	Total	89	2.82	1.23	3.00

*Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Regularly*

Gauta 2018 05 25 / Received 25 05 2018  
Priimta 2018 12 17 / Accepted 17 12 2018