

## UV2007/2009 REFLECTIVE TASKS FOR VFU 1 Ht16

### TEACHING ENGLISH

#### INTRODUCTION

Now that you have completed the first few weeks of your journey into teaching here at the University, and are about to adventure out into the 'real' world of the school environment, it is important that you begin to prepare for your first VFU visit (**weeks 41 & 42**) by contemplating how theory meets practice. I look forward to meeting you all at the pre-vfu Seminar.

#### A: PRE-VFU SEMINAR

We will meet for a **pre-VFU seminar** on **Monday 3rd October 8-10**. The seminar will give me a chance to get meet the group before you go out on VFU, and also before I get to teach you in the English classes which will start in **week 45ish**, after you have completed VFU. So, in the seminar we will go over what is expected from you during VFU, and also prepare you for what you will be working on in English over the next year or so!

In order to get to know you all a bit better, and to be able to gain an idea of your proficiency in English, I would like you to write an essay, which both covers findings from your VFU observations, and your own journey from learning English to wanting to teach it. So, this is what I would like you to do:

#### B: REFLECTIVE ESSAY for Introduction to English & VFU.

This task gives you a chance to begin reflecting on your own journey with regards to learning and teaching English by writing an essay about that experience. The essay should be written from the heart and, therefore, does not need to be in a particularly academic style. However, it should be rich in description and you should reflect on why things happened, what led to choices, behaviours etc. You do not necessarily need to refer to academic literature, but as you have read quite a lot already this term, you may well be inspired to do

so, and it's a good chance for you to become acquainted with the key texts we will be using for English (see below). The essay is in three parts.

The **first** part of the essay should reflect on your own experience of learning English (from the very beginning, through gymnasiet and up until today). Among other things, you will need to think about are:

- Where, what and how did you learn? Did your learning take place inside/outside the classroom? What/who motivated you (or not?) about the learning of English.
- What were your teachers/classroom like? What materials/methods were used? What was the content of the lessons – a focus on language, literature, skills, culture? What kinds of tasks did you do?
- What were you like as a learner of English?

The **second** part should revolve around what it was that made you want to become a teacher and a teacher of English, in particular, and what you think you can bring to the teaching of the subject. You should also consider the following questions:

- What do you think the situation/experience of learning English is for young people today?
- What do you think the greatest challenges are with regards to the teaching of English in Swedish schools, both currently and in the future?

The **third** part should consist of a summary of your findings from the “**During Vfu task**” (See below). Please write up as connected text, not just a list of answers to my questions.

### **DURING VFU TASK (3<sup>rd</sup> Part of Essay)**

During your time out on VFU you have already been given a log book task by Ewa (to be written in Swedish), and your task for English is to build on Ewa's task by finding the answers to some of questions which are presented below. You can find the answers either through observation in the classroom or within the school environment (which means you need to become an active watcher, listener and observer), or you can ask the teachers, other members of staff and the students the questions directly. Thus, during your VFU-period you need to become both a participatory observer who takes notes in oral or written form, and a researcher who uses interview techniques to gather data.

You will also need to think about how you are going to document your time out on VFU and the answers to the questions. Do remember to take a note book with you (and maybe a digital recorder). You never know when they might be needed! However, you always need to get permission to do so before digitally recording/interviewing etc. Of course, you can include some of the observations you have made in your log book for Ewa, but which, of course, in the essay need to be written in English. You also need to begin this section by giving me a brief overview of the school you have been doing your VFU practice in, and the English class(es) you have been observing.

## **1. Questions on the teacher's own development as a teacher of English**

- a. Why did the teachers of English decide to teach that subject, in particular? What was their own experience of learning English?
- b. What kind of opportunities do the teachers get for their own development as teachers of English?
- c. What do the teachers feel are the biggest challenges with the teaching of English today, and for the future?

## **2. Questions on communication in the classroom**

- a. What kind of atmosphere is created in the classroom, how is it achieved, what do the teachers do?
- b. How do the teachers work with differentiation and individualisation? Have you seen any good examples?
- c. What is the layout of the classroom like? How do the students use the space?
- d. Who gets to speak in class? Who participates? How? When? Where? How long?
- e. Is there a difference between the way the teacher approaches the subject depending on the orientation of the class or level (for example: IB programme, practical programmes etc.)?
- f. What language is used by the teacher/students in the classroom (Swedish/English?) Are they used in equal amounts? When/how are they used.

## **3. Questions on the Policy Documents**

- a. How does the teacher use the national curriculum? Does it hinder or help? Why? Why not? How?

## **4. Questions on the content**

- a. What kind of materials does the teacher use & how often – textbooks, their own material, media? Why?
- b. What kind of content is focused on – Language? Topics? Literature? Culture? Skills? Etc. Why?
- c. Is there a shape to the lesson? Does it consist of a number of unconnected tasks or are there a number of cohesive steps that build on each other? Does one lesson connect to the next?
- d. How does the teacher decide on/get the students interested in the topics worked on?

## 5. Question to the Students

- a. What literature do they personally read in English? Find out specific titles. Do the students choose it themselves or do they only read what the teacher suggests /demands?
- b. What other sources do they use for learning English? Why?

## 6. Questions to yourself

- a. How does the teaching of English in your VFU school compare to your own experience?
- b. How do the articles you have read relate to what you have experienced in the VFU English lessons?

The essay may be as long as you like (minimum = 3 sides of A4) and written in English, of course. Although I don't demand a particular academic style, I do expect sentences and paragraphs to be well constructed, and spelling, grammar, punctuation should be as accurate as possible, so you must **proof read** carefully! As pointed out earlier, as well as being a task for VFU, it will also become part of your work for the English courses.

The essay needs to be written in **11 point** and **double spaced**. Please write in a **word document** and **email** a copy to [veronica.brock@hh.se](mailto:veronica.brock@hh.se) by **Wednesday 26th October 2016**.

## C. READING

In preparation for VFU, you should start some reading by looking at what teachers of English in Sweden are currently doing:

- <http://www.lararnasnyheter.se/amne/engelska>

As you read, decide which of the articles you find the most interesting and make a note of them. You also need to be acquainted with the **national curriculum documents** for English:

- **Gymnasiet**

<http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amnen-och-kurser/gymnasieutbildning/gymnasieskola/eng?tos=gy&subjectCode=ENG&lang=sv>

- **7-9**

<http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amnen-och-kurser/grundskoleutbildning/grundskola/engelska>

## **D: POST VFU SEMINAR**

We will be having a post-VFU seminar on **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 8-12** when you will get a chance to share your experiences of VFU and your own experience of learning English, and also tell us about any of the articles you found interesting.

Good luck!

If there are any problems, don't hesitate to contact me

Veronica Brock

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## **MORE READING**

As you will be using the key texts below in most of your English courses, you could make a start by skimming through the suggested chapters, which are particularly relevant for a first VFU and getting you thinking about the teaching of English.

- Harmer, J (2015) **The Practice of English Language Teaching** (5<sup>th</sup> edition)  
Longman/Pearson - **chapters 1-7 & 9**
- Lundahl, B (2012) **Engelsk språkdidaktik studentlitteratur** – **chapters 1-5**