"From the Lightest Light to the Darkest Dark": Re-Presenting *Ronia, The Robber's Daughter* in the Third-Grade Classroom

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The present study focuses on consuming and producing stories using various forms of expression in the third-grade classroom. The aim of the study is to examine pupils' and teachers' experiences of working with a teaching unit that encourages the use of various text and media forms through literary productions, re-presentations, of Ronia, the Robber's Daughter in order to gain increased insight into the pupils' narrative competence and identity development. Hence, in what ways can working with various text and media forms and various forms of aesthetic expression promote pupils' identity development?

The empirical data consists of qualitative interviews with the two teachers and 19 of the 39 pupils who participated in the teaching unit. A thematic analysis of the interviews illuminated two focal themes: *identity development* and *moving through various forms of expression*. While looking at the results of the study in relation to Langer's (2011) stances of envisionment, it becomes clear that applying a contrastive learning approach does the following: it contributes to the progress of the pupils' identity development, it encourages a deeper understanding, and, consequently, it facilitates and makes visible their learning processes, and their ability to apply a meta-perspective on their learning processes.

Keywords: aesthetic forms of expression, envisionment, identity development, narrative competence, third-grade classroom

1. Introduction

In Sweden, as in many parts of the world, the study of literature serves several purposes, for example, language acquisition, but also as a means to learn about oneself and about other people (Pettersson, 2015). It can also be seen as a mechanism to develop the student's literary competence (Martinsson, 2018) and as a way to discuss moral issues or to foster democratic citizens (Pettersson, 2015). The study of literature includes a development of, on the one hand, *literacy competence* (the ability to navigate between various texts, modalities, media, languages etc.) and, on the other hand, *literary competence* (the unique value of a piece of fictional text in a certain context, time, place etc.) (Lindberg & Svensson, 2020). In line with this, working with fictional texts, stories, in the primary school classroom, has a double focus where reading and reading comprehension are placed in the foreground and the interpretation and analysis of the story are placed in the background, and *vice versa*, thus including literacy as well as literary competence. The present study foregrounds literary competence as it focuses on interpretation and analysis in relation to pupils' understanding of stories. In particular, the study considers the literary competence that is engaged when working with a specific *material* – a text universe, that is, when a story, or parts of a story, is re-presented in various text and media formats (Svensson & Lundström, 2019) – and when working with a specific *method* involving consuming and producing stories using various forms of expression and thereby employing creative learning processes. Both the material and the method were selected by the teachers and the researchers together. Hence, the present study is a collaborative project where the teachers and the researchers jointly created a teaching unit that would provide the pupils with an opportunity to focus on a specific story told in various text and media forms where creative learning through literary production would play a big part, and where it would be possible to address subjects such as morality, democracy and identity development.

In today's rich media landscape, children meet stories in various forms from an early age, for example books, films, theatre performances, games, poetry and songs (Swedish Media Council, 2019). "What happens when young people acquire stories in other, new ways?", Lundström and Olin-Scheller ask (2010, p. 107, our translation). They argue that reading in today's media landscape demands new competences, and they suggest that narrative competence is a more apt concept to describe the process of acquiring stories today: "To understand the structure of a story and identify the plot, and then being able to creatively produce imitations are characteristics of narrative competence" (2010, p. 113, our translation). Hence, narrative competence is a way to add new perspectives to literacy and literary competences.

In accordance with the steering documents for the subject Swedish in primary school, where the study of, and through, fictional texts is present, the education should "stimulate pupils' interest in reading and writing," and in the teaching, "the pupils should meet and acquire knowledge of literature [and] other aesthetic narratives" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018). Furthermore, "[w]hen encountering different types of texts, performing arts and other aesthetic narratives, pupils should be given the preconditions to develop their language, their own identity, and their understanding of the surrounding world" (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018). Hence, it is relevant to study the teaching and learning processes that are activated when pupils in primary school work with a story. It is particularly relevant to study the use of various forms of expression, since they offer opportunities to compare and contrast various versions of a specific story; and through this comparative perspective, they experience the story and its characters from different perspectives, for example reading, listening, watching and playing. This use of plural forms of expression also provides the pupils with various tools to express their interpretations and understandings of the story through, for example, writing, dancing, painting and playing. It is relevant to see how these receptive and productive processes relate to the pupils' development of language, identities and their understanding of the world at large.

The aim of the study is to examine pupils' and teachers' experiences of working with a teaching unit that encourages the use of various text and media forms through literary productions, re-presentations, of Ronia, the Robber's Daughter in order to gain increased insight into the pupils' narrative competence and identity development. In order to reach this aim, the study is based on the following research question:

- In what ways can working with various text and media forms and various forms of aesthetic expression promote pupils' identity development?

2. Background: Narrative Competence, Identity Development and Aesthetic Forms of Expression

There are several studies that focus on reading, reading reception and reading comprehension of pupils of various ages and at various stages in their reading development as ways of focusing on identity development. In a dissertation on book talks in Grades 4-7, Eriksson (2002) finds that the opportunities for discussing topics that relate to life – such as gender, freedom, separation and loyalty – are often ignored. Similarly, Roe (2014) claims that there should be an atmosphere of openness and tolerance for teachers and for pupils to discuss significant topics that might facilitate

pupils' identity development during the interpretation and discussion of texts. In this way, fictional texts may be used as means to facilitate reading and reading comprehension to further the pupils' identity development and to cultivate their understanding of stories. Lundström and Olin-Scheller (2010) discuss reading in the new media landscape and the ensuing need for altered competencies by studying two examples of interactive storytelling – fan fiction and role-playing games – in relation to Felski's modes of textual engagement. They claim that the concept narrative competence makes it possible to discuss various kinds of stories, for example typographic or multimodal stories. Moreover, they argue that the concept also includes text as well as reader perspectives (Lundström & Olin-Scheller, 2010). Hence, this concept is suitable for the present study, where focus is placed on narrative competence, that is, the ability to consume and produce stories in various text and media forms.

Reading is a transaction between reader, text and context that requires complex and analytical thinking and includes meaning-making, interpretation and critical thinking (Westlund, 2016). Moreover, reading comprehension should include language and listening comprehension, according to a report conducted on behalf of the Swedish National Agency for Education (Westlund, 2016). This wide definition of reading comprehension is also noticeable in a study of pupils from the age of six to the age of nine, where Jönsson (2007) shows that, in their meaning-making processes, the pupils "use their prior knowledge as expressed through language, image, experiences, and emotions, and that the text provides them with new perspectives on their own world. They listen and understand with the whole body" (p. 233, our translation). Jönsson further claims that reading logs is a way for the pupils to reflect on their own reading processes, as they function as a channel for asking questions to the text, to themselves and to the teacher.

Focusing on lessons in the subject of Swedish in lower-secondary school, where the pupils are 14-16 years old, Tengberg (2019) shows that the intellectual challenges students face are few. Some of the reasons for this are the instrumental approach to literary studies; the superiority of the teachers' own interpretations that are transferred to the students, hence not challenging the students' own interpretations; and a superficial attitude to textual engagement where the conversations focus on difficult words, plot and the students' experiences. Similarly, Gabrielsen, Blikstad-Balas and Tengberg (2019) demonstrate that the fictional text is often used to illustrate specific genres, genre features and literary devices, or it is employed for sustained silent reading, book presentations in oral or written form, or literary classroom discussions. They conclude that fictional texts are "reduced to a tool for achieving other learning goals" (2019, p. 24). Hence, fictional texts are not

used to their full potential in lower-secondary school; and when they are used, the reader's attention is often directed away from the text.

In a study focusing on the reading practices of pupils in Grades 3-5 (pupils who are 9-11 years old) inside and outside of school, Schmidt (2018) reveals that the discourse the pupils meet inside school differs from the one they meet outside school. Inside school, they predominantly meet instrumental reading without a focus on experience-related topics. Hence, there is an absence of reflective and critical readings. In addition, Schmidt claims, "popular texts and media that the children meet and use in their spare time belong to the sphere outside school and are not requested in the classroom discourse established inside school" (2018, p. 91, our translation). There is thus a focus on school-related texts in primary school, as well as in secondary school, where fictional texts are predominantly used as a tool for learning about other areas than the story and the fictional text itself. In a context where the pupils read fictional texts, they often write non-fictional texts, for example summaries, reviews and analyses; and these non-fictional texts are the ones that are assessed. However, in a report on reading comprehension, Westlund (2016) claims that in addition to assessing pupils' reading comprehension through written assignments, "they need to demonstrate their understanding of the texts through oral communication or *other forms of expression*" (p. 90, our translation, emphasis added). These 'other forms of expression' are of particular interest to the present study.

Learning through aesthetic forms of expression is explicitly present in the steering documents for primary school. In the subject of Swedish, the pupils should have the opportunity to express themselves and to demonstrate their understanding and their knowledge through the use of drawing and painting, music, dance, drama, and other aesthetic forms of expression (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018). Liberg (2007) emphasises the importance of facilitating meaning-making through the language of image, through the languages of dance and movement, and through the languages of music and play. In her view, these forms of expression are combined into a widened understanding of language. Liberg argues that "all languages, all parts of language development are used: spoken language, written language and aesthetic languages (music, dance, theatre, shape, media etc.) in order to formulate and express one's learning" (2007, p. 3, our translation). One of the advantages of using multiple and various forms of expression is that they facilitate a deeper and stronger knowledge: "Various forms of expression integrate with one another and through this, the knowledge is deepened and consolidated" (Liberg, 2007, p. 7). It is thus in the integration of various forms of expression that a deeper knowledge is created. The

present study focuses on integration of stories by looking specifically at contrastive aspects of various forms of expression. In a previous study focusing on pupils at upper- secondary level, the results show that the employment of a contrastive approach to different forms of expression strengthen the pupils' analytical perspective (Svensson & Haglind, 2020).

Several researchers focus on the transfer of a story from one medium to another, for example film adaptations, where the transfer often is from typographic to audio-visual text, in other words, from "the telling to the showing mode (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 38). In this transfer process, there is "inevitably a certain amount of re-accentuation and refocusing of themes, characters, and plot" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 40). Thus, using more than one form of expression offers several entrances into the text-world. Engelstad (2006) emphasises the significance of working with adaptations in the classroom, which could be a way to encourage pupils who struggle with reading. However, he points out that adaptations could serve other purposes as well, for example to learn the difference between "learning to read films" and "just consuming" (p. 434). In another study on the effects of transmedia processes in a classroom context, Jusslin and Höglund (2021) demonstrate how dance and images in poetry teaching can result in a widened and deepened understanding of poetry. Hence, using transmedia processes and varied forms of expressions can lead to a deepened understanding. In addition, their study shows that these varied forms of expression help pupils express and share their identity creation process with others.

In a study on text talks, Varga (2016) discusses reading comprehension in relation to text movability. She finds that question-posing functions as a way to train pupils to read *on* the lines, to read *between* and *beyond* the lines and to develop strategies to gain a meta-perspective on their reading processes. Jönsson (2007) also focuses on possibilities and challenges of using questions to facilitate pupils' learning from fictional texts, though in her study, these questions are raised through reading logs. In addition, Jönsson (2007) explores the conditions needed for the pupils to build envisionment during their reading processes. She finds that the teacher needs to maintain an equilibrium between providing opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts while building an envisionment and becoming engaged in the story and to not lose the plot.

In *Envisioning Literature: Literary Understanding and Literature Instruction*, Langer (2011) presents five stances of envisionment that lead to various stages of literary understanding, including the ability to interpret and analyse the story or text. Envisionment refers to "the world of understanding a particular person has at a given point in time" (Langer, 2011, p. 10). The five stances are relevant

for students and teachers of literary studies because they can be employed as a means to encourage pupils and students to become creative and critical readers. In her model of envisionment, Langer (2011) assumes that the reader builds envisionment as a way to create an understanding about a text. Thus, envisionment-building becomes an activity in sense-making.

In the first stance, *being outside and stepping into an envisionment*, the readers search for clues in order to form initial impressions about and relationship to the story and begin their journey into the text-world, that is, the fictional world of the story. It is not, however, only a first step on the journey of discovery that is left behind as soon as the readers enter the text-world completely, but rather a stance to return to when there is a need to clarify or adjust an envisionment (Langer, 2011).

The second stance, *being inside and moving through an envisionment*, allows readers to connect their personal experiences and prior knowledge to the text-world as they move through it and take in the setting; observe the lives of the characters, possible conflicts and dilemmas; and as they might wonder what they would do if they were in the characters' situations. Thereby, the readers participate in the text-world through their inner cognitive journeys. As they take on multiple perspectives and consider several possibilities, their understandings are deepened (Langer, 2011).

In stance three, *stepping out and rethinking what you know*, readers have an opportunity to examine their past, present and future lives as they use the text as a way to reconsider and reflect upon aspects of their own lives, for example experiences, decisions and dilemmas (Langer, 2011). To understand one's self and the surrounding world is one of the most powerful reasons to read literature (Langer, 2011).

The fourth stance, *stepping out and objectifying the experience*, provides the readers with the opportunities to critique the text as a literary work: analyzing the narrative techniques utilised by the author and their effects by objectifying their interpretations of the text (Langer, 2011). From this position, the readers have the opportunity to see how the various literary elements relate to the whole text as well as how the text relates to other texts, thus creating a distance between the reader and the reading experience, on the one hand, and between the reader and the text, on the other hand (Langer, 2011).

In the fifth stance, *leaving an envisionment and going beyond*, the readers step away from the envisionment, sometimes entering a new envisionment (Langer, 2011). This stance occurs when

the readers have built well-developed envisionments, and the knowledge that these processes entails might provide insight in new situations (Langer, 2011). "It is generative", Langer claims, "in that we apply critical aspects of one richly developed envisionment toward the creation of a new envisionment-building experience" (2011, p. 21). Hence, the stances are a set of strategies that provide different aspects of exploring the students' or pupils' rich thinking and extended meanings (Langer, 2011). In the present study, the pupils' narrative competence through creative and contrastive learning is discussed in relation to Langer's stances of envisionment.

3. Method: Applying a Contrastive Teaching Unit

The practice-based study utilises a specific teaching unit that focuses on using one particular story – in this case Ronia, the Robber's Daughter – and several forms of expression, receptive and productive, for example listening to the story being read aloud by the teachers, watching the film, creating a dance/writing an illustrated poem/painting with aquarelle colours, and writing a sequel. The teaching unit was constructed by the participating teachers and researchers in collaboration in accordance with design-based research (cf. Wang & Hannan, 2005).

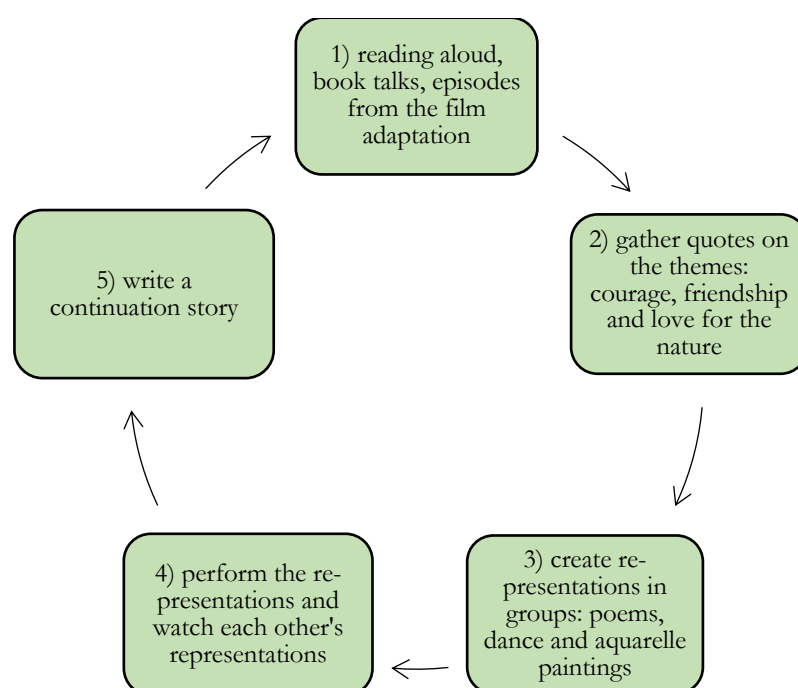The teaching unit consists of five stages, as can be seen in Figure 1:

Figure 1. The Five Stages of the Teaching Unit[1]

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[1] This teaching unit is an adapted version of the teaching unit applied in a previous study conducted with pupils at upper- secondary level working with various versions of a story as combined in a text universe (Svensson & Haglind, 2020).

In stage one, the teachers read aloud from Astrid Lindgren's *Ronia the Robber's Daughter* (in Swedish) to the pupils, and they worked with book talks and watch episodes from Danielsson's film adaptation from 1984. Thereafter, in stage two, they collected quotes relating to the three themes the teachers had selected: courage, friendship and love of nature. In stage three, the pupils were divided into three groups, where they worked creatively with producing re-presentations of the story: poetry, aquarelle painting and dance. When the re-presentations were complete, the pupils, in stage four, performed their re-presentations in front of each other, the researchers and a couple of members of the staff. In the final stage, stage five, the pupils were instructed to write a continuation of the story, focusing on Ronia and Birk as adults.

In the teaching unit applied in this study, the participating teachers and pupils were instructed not only to read, listen to and watch various stories, but also to create their own stories in various forms, all of which relate to the story of Ronia. Because the pupils are in primary school and because individual forms of expression were considered too challenging for them as well as for the teachers, the teachers and researchers agreed to let the pupils choose between three set forms of expression: dance, aquarelle painting and poetry. After these productions were created and performed, all the pupils were instructed to write sequels, continuation stories, that take place when Ronia and Birk are adults. Hence, the pupils worked with creative productions both in groups and individually. Moreover, they created two different contributions per person; and in total, they worked with four different forms of expression in addition to listening to the story being read by the teachers and watching the film.

The two participating teachers are experienced primary school teachers working at a school with approximately 400 pupils in Grades 2-6 (eight- to twelve-years-old) in a small municipality in the south of Sweden. They work according to the team-teaching model, which means that they work as a team with a group of around 40 pupils when they start Grade 1 (at a separate school) and continue with them for three years until they start Grade 4. Thereafter, the participating teachers begin the cycle with new pupils. In addition to the participating teachers, 39 pupils in Grade 3 (ten-years-old) participated in the project, 19 of which were interviewed.

The teaching unit, which the participating teachers and pupils called "the Ronia project", was thoroughly documented, and it focused on the pupils' learning processes, their creatively produced re-presentations and the teachers' experiences. After the teaching unit was concluded, the pupils and the teachers were interviewed using semi-structured group interviews, and the empirical data

consists of these recorded interviews. The semi-structured interview model was chosen to facilitate follow-up questions (Cohen et al, 2011); and they were conducted in groups, which was thought to be an advantage, in particular for the ten-year-old pupils who had not been interviewed before. The teachers selected four pupils from each group (dance, aquarelle painting and poetry). Hence, Group 1 consisted of four pupils who created a dance, Group 2 consisted of four pupils who created aquarelle paintings, and Group 3 consisted of four pupils who created illustrated poems. Group 4 consisted of seven pupils who had not been selected to participate in the three groups, but who also wanted to be interviewed. These pupils had created aquarelle paintings and illustrated poems. The two teachers were interviewed together because they had jointly conducted the teaching unit. The interviews followed two separate but similar interview guides: one focusing on the pupils' experiences and one on the teachers' experiences. They were conducted at the school in connection to the lessons and were audio recorded. The main themes and most of the questions in the two interview guides were similar, or even the same, focusing on using stories in various text and media forms inside and outside of school, and in particular the participants' experiences of working with the teaching unit – the Ronia project.

In accordance with the ethical guidelines conducted by the Swedish Research Council (2017), all the participants, teachers and pupils, have given their consent to participate in the study. Additionally, the pupils' parents or legal guardians have given written consent for the pupils to participate in the study, including recorded interviews, using the literary productions and filming the performed productions. Furthermore, at the beginning of all the interviews, the participants were informed that they could terminate participation at any time. The pupils were also informed that if they did not want to answer any of the questions, they could indicate this through shaking their heads or waving their hands during the interviews. This happened a couple of times during one of the interviews. For the questions regarding their use of stories in various media forms, the interviewer asked the participants questions in the form of the following: How many of you play computer games at home? or How many of you like watching theatre performances outside of school? The participants then raised their hands, and the interviewer counted how many and reported the number (cf. Trost, 2012). All the interviews were conducted in Swedish, and the quotes used from these interviews have been translated by the authors to be understood by non-Swedish readers. The interviewed data have been treated with care so as to not mistranslate any parts or misinterpret any answers by moving them out of their context.

The recorded interviews have been listened to several times (Ahrne & Svensson, 2011). The first round was individually conducted, and notes were taken separately by the two researchers. Thereafter, the researchers read, compared and discussed each other's notes, and identified three themes: identity development, moving through various forms of expression (i.e. receiving and producing various versions of the story using different media forms), and comparing each other's re-presentations. These themes were agreed upon to form focal points in the second round of listening and note-taking. The second round was also individually conducted, and notes were taken separately with a particular focus on the three themes. In the subsequent discussion, it was decided that moving through various forms of expression and comparing each other's re-presentations overlapped frequently and should therefore be combined. Hence, the remaining two themes were *identity development* and *moving through various forms of expression*. During the last step of the analysis process, the results from the two first rounds of listening were compared and analysed, in accordance with structures for research triangulation, which aim to function as a form of trust control (Cohen et al, 2011). This process means that the analysis is discussed at different stages throughout the process in order to reach a consensus between the participating researchers and to validate the analysis (Cohen et al, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

4. Results: Identity Development and Various Forms of Expression

The results of the interviews are presented in accordance with the two identified focal themes: *identity development* and *moving through various forms of expression*. These themes correlate with the goals for the education in the Swedish subject, where fictional texts are involved: "When *encountering different types of texts, performing arts and other aesthetic narratives*, pupils should be given the preconditions to develop their language, *their own identity* and their understanding of the surrounding world" (The Swedish Board of Education, 2018 p. 262, emphasis added). To develop one's identity individually and collectively is part of the Swedish school's over-arching goals. While the phrasing 'to develop […] their own identity' can be seen as correlating to the first theme, identity development, the phrasing 'encountering different types of texts, performing arts and other aesthetic narratives' can be seen as correlating to the second theme, *moving through various forms of expression*.

4.1 Identity Development

Even though most of the pupils who participated in the interviews were already familiar with Ronia, the Robber's Daughter, a couple were only somewhat familiar prior to the Ronia-project: "I knew about it, but had not read it" (Group 3). Those pupils already familiar with the story had experienced it in different ways; several of the pupils had been to, or were about to go to "Astrid

Lindgrens värld" – a theme park with buildings, theatre performances and various playgrounds built around the stories by Astrid Lindgren, located in the south of Sweden. Many pupils had watched a theatre performance of *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*, the film adaptation (1984), or the Japanese animated series (2014). Some pupils conveyed that they had read other stories by the famous author, since they "read much Astrid Lindgren at home when they were younger" (Group 1), and that they had worked with Lindgren's stories in school. One pupil explained that her first reaction was "Are we going to read this? I already know this, but I have discovered so much more" (Group 1). Hence, most of the pupils had already consumed the story through various media forms, at the same time as their understanding of the story was expanded through their participation in this project.

In the interviews with the teachers, it was revealed that the process of interpreting the story of Ronia through re-presentations had an effect on the pupils in terms of their identity development: "these values, to construct identities, for example, are the first thing mentioned in the curriculum really […]. I mean that if you never get to work with other forms of expression than sitting in your corner and reproduce what someone else already has been thinking, it is very insufficient. I do not think that is the way to construct identities" (Teachers). Instead, they found that the applied teaching unit offered a good opportunity for identity development. They emphasised the significance of planning and teaching *for* identity development through the creative process: "in order for the pupils to work creatively in these three groups, we need to prepare for it" (Teachers). Hence, planning and preparation in accordance with the specific aim are crucial for the pupils' identity development in the educational situation.

While working with the story about Ronia, the teachers chose to focus on the themes: courage, friendship and love of nature. One of these themes, courage, became more than a theme that the pupils read about and discussed – it also became a quality that was visible in their actions. Despite being nervous, the pupils performed the dance, read their poems and explained their paintings during a public performance. One pupil explained: "it was very fun being wild harpies, but also embarrassing" (Group 1). Regardless of the embarrassment, the pupils enjoyed their performance. The teachers explained that "there were 39 pupils. It was not one single pupil who said that they didn't wish to read aloud, didn't dare to dance in front of others. I didn't hear that one single time – some children, I wondered if they would dare to do it" (Teachers). The teachers speculated on the reason for this demonstrated courage: "Perhaps they felt safe because we had taken the time for everybody to be a part of it [the text-world]" (Teachers). Another reason could be that they had

specifically focused on the theme of courage, "to stand up for what is right" (Teachers), by being inspired by, for example, Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg. It was easy to apply their knowledge about these public activists to their understanding of Ronia: "So, the teaching method, the way to get there and the Ronia message itself were what they became. I mean, I have to be in the wild stream in order to learn how dangerous the wild stream is. I have to do this now, whatever it is" (Teachers). Thus, while focusing on courage, the pupils became courageous, which was especially noticeable to the teachers in the construction and performance of the creative products.

The pupils related that they found the teaching unit educational: "It is very fun to do this and we learn very much" (Group 2). Moreover, the teachers noticed the pupils' learning development in relation to their identity development: "they are familiar with many core values. They can see connections to their lives and to other films" (Teachers). One pupil focused on working with sad stories: "It is kind of sad, but I still like to read a little of that because it is, sort of, because we need to learn sometimes. Otherwise, we will never be able to read this" (Group 1). Hence, the pupil is able to reflect on her own learning process and thus notices the advantage of challenging oneself. The teachers also identified the benefits of working with stories where they "can see how everything has value" in the eyes of the pupils (Teachers). In particular, it was fruitful to work with stories that contain the theme of estrangement: "we see that they feel good in the healing process. It is a healing process for us to see how they centre on what they find important in the friendship between Ronia and Birk, and how the families become friends and all that" (Teachers). By focusing on the contrasts between happiness and sadness, light and darkness, as expressed in the story, the teachers could see that the pupils learned about life:

> We talked about it when we created the dance and everywhere […] about the pain and not being afraid of it. And then it was as if we could see through the contrasts, and then they looked at their painting and realized that it is not possible for everything to be smooth and light. I noticed a child who from the transfer from one [version of the painting] to the other: aha, I couldn't see the light if I didn't have the darkness and then, somehow, how do we express this. And then we could talk about it: How does Astrid [Lindgren] express this in her text? And then, we could see, that's right. Then we found it, and we ran to our wall [of quotes] and found a sentence there and then, aha. And that is how it happens in the painting: the shadows and darkness, and suddenly the light became visible. If I want light, I also need darkness. And could that be the case in real life? (Teachers)

This emphasis on contrasts teaches the pupils about more than the story. It teaches them about ways to look at their own lives, which became apparent in all three groups, but "we put words to

it while working with the aquarelle paintings: from the lightest light to the darkest dark" (Teachers). Consequently, identity development is encouraged through working with contrasts and through a contrastive learning approach: the pupils learn "not only about reading and writing, the story-stage, but also about this identity construction" (Teachers). Hence, identity construction, one of primary goals in Swedish schools, is developed through a contrastive approach of learning.

In addition to this expanded knowledge, that is knowledge beyond the story, the teachers also experienced another benefit of working with the same text-world for a long time: "Every time we work with a story world for a long time, where we enter and exit it several times, it is specifically fruitful for pupils who are struggling with language acquisition or are newly arrived to Sweden, where we notice an increased vocabulary. And we can see their thoughts as if they were making films in their heads and literally carry the stories inside them. We see that" (Teachers). One pupil in particular who struggles with language acquisition made an impression on one of the teachers:

> When she was writing her own story, which was very hard initially, but then I sat, because I had time […] I will write for you, so you can tell me the story, and it was crystal clear. It was, sometimes, she saw, she is struggling, "there is an error, don't write that" and I kept writing. Yes, I was very happy because it was such a good story and it was, like, it was her own, but it was strongly connected to Ronia. And there were lambs and wild harpies who took the lambs, and they were climbing and […] riding their horses. And then it is possible to see that she has acquired the vocabulary and knew exactly […] she knows this. But, it is not possible to do this on her own because the step is too high. (Teachers)

Even though it is fruitful for all pupils to work with a specific text-world for a long time and experience it in various text and media forms, it seems to be particularly rewarding for pupils who, for one reason or another, struggle with language acquisition.

4.2 Moving Through Various Forms of Expression

The teachers have experience of moving through various forms of expression themselves. One of the teachers explains: "To move between various forms of expression is something that I have always just loved […] The depth it gives, it is priceless. To stay for a long time in the various versions of the text-world has always been appealing to me" (Teachers). When it comes to using stories in various media forms together with their pupils, they relate: "It is always our responsibility to widen and not judge […] to make it clear that we do not judge. It is very important that we might start with the film or in the computer game, or whatever it may be" (Teachers). There are some forms of expression, some media forms, according to the teachers, that the pupils recognise

from their spare time activities: "To move between various forms of expression becomes a way for them to feel at home in one of these forms and then move on, but we don't know where they start. But it's important to keep that in mind when we design the teaching and that we occasionally also probe the terrain" (Teachers). In order to know which forms of expression the pupils are familiar with or not, or which forms of expression they work well with, it is important to 'probe the terrain', as one teacher puts it. It is helpful to know about the pupils' experiences of stories inside and outside of school in order to design the lessons as well as possible. It is also vital to see that there is a difference between using stories outside school as a spare time activity and inside school as part of the education: "We always offer, whatever we do, even if it were a game; we offer education. We never offer a package similar to a home situation [where] one might just press play and sit on the couch. We always add teaching, so it is always wider. Yes, that is what we want. We offer something more, sort of, something else" (Teachers). The teachers illustrate that even though they might use the same forms of expression, the same media forms, in an educational setting that the pupils might use at home, it becomes something else when it is used for education. Hence, working with a story, regardless of form of expression in school, is not a passive activity; rather, it is an active process that contributes to an expanded experience.

It is particularly beneficial for pupils who struggle with language acquisition to work with stories in various forms of expression: "One pupil who struggles with language acquisition, she came with Ronia [the book]. She wanted them to use it as their read-aloud-book at home. It is too difficult for her, for her own reading, but she loves it. We see that those who are newly arrived, those who struggle with language acquisition; everybody benefits from these various entrances into the text-world and to move between or through various forms of expression, and to process it" (Teachers). It is, then, effective to work with various forms and various versions of the same story: to offer numerous entrances into the text-world.

Several of the pupils are familiar with creating stories in their spare time: "I usually write about something I would like to do" (Group 1), one pupil says. Another adds: "I can make up poems in my mind, but I don't write them down" (Group 3). The pupils enjoyed the creative process of the Ronia-project. Those who created poems reported that the best part was "that we could use one sentence and apply our own imagination to it" (Group 3). Those who created a dance disclosed: "that feeling was fun, that one had contributed" (Group 1). The teachers conveyed that the pupils were very proud of their creative productions: "In the three groups […] they interpreted the story deeply […] no chatter […] it was very nice to see. Everybody did it from the heart. They were very

satisfied" (Teachers). Several times during the interview, the teachers revealed how important it is to stay for a long time inside the text-world: "It takes longer for some pupils to be satisfied. One can see the need to continue or else this person will not be satisfied" (Teachers). This wish to work thoroughly during the creative process was also visible in the creation of the dance: "It was their ideas from Ronia. It was not, perhaps, a usual dance where one tries to make it nice […] here, it was more Ronia" (Teachers). Evidently, the pupils enjoyed working with their productions, valued the creative process, and found it advantageous to be given the opportunity to remain within the text-world throughout the whole project.

The pupils indicated how they approached the process of creating stories in various media forms. One example can be seen in the group that worked with aquarelle paintings, where the pupils sat in a ring on the rug in the centre of the classroom and brainstormed various ideas that were gathered on a large piece of paper. Then, they individually made a first attempt on a regular piece of drawing paper. Thereafter, they made a second and third attempt at developing and improving their paintings before they were given a piece of paper with good quality, which they used for their final product. Hence, they "made a journey through different papers" (Group 2). Another example can be seen in the group that worked with poems. The pupils gathered quotes and sentences from the Ronia novel, for example "life is something that we need to take care of" and "the spring belongs to everybody" (Group 3). Thereafter, they drew a circle around the quotes and sentences that they liked the most before they were instructed to choose one quote or sentence. Next, they were asked to write a poem where the quote or sentence was included and to structure the poem as a response to the question: What do you think about when you hear this sentence? Moreover, they were also instructed to find pictures to illustrate their poems, thus making use of various modalities and media forms. Hence, the creative process of constructing these stories is made visible through the pupils' progresses, and it is clear that they understand that it is a matter of creating something through a process of refining and developing. The poem is not finished once it is written down. Rather, it is developed further, for example through adding an illustrative picture. Similarly, the painting is not finished once it is visible on paper, but it is refined and developed in several stages, hence challenging, developing and illuminating the pupils' creative learning processes.

The way they transferred the story from one medium to another, in this case a poem, involved an act of interpretation: "When one sort of shortens the whole story and makes it into something else, to what one is thinking about to this specific sentence, or line or paragraph, I think this is fun"

(Group 4). The work with transferring the story to a new media format, and thereby moving through forms of expression, is not only fun, it is also educational: "I have learned a lot" (Group 2). The pupils are very proud of the stories they have created through various forms of expression, which can be seen, for example, by the pupils who created a dance. They convey that it "feels bigger" and that "we have done something big" (Group 1). Clearly, the pupils experience having learned a lot from using the story about Ronia in various text and media forms, and this expands their understanding of the Ronia story. It is also clear that they have learned much through creating their own Ronia stories, where the expansion of the story results in addition, where the text-world becomes bigger as they gain insight into and contribute to the Ronia text universe.

As part of the Ronia-project, the teachers and pupils used various forms of expression. Not only did the former listen to the teachers reading the story, watch the film, write poems/paint with aquarelle/create a dance, and write a continuation story, a sequel, but they also "played Ronia during the breaks" (Teachers). The teachers explain that these played stories focus on Ronia as an adult: "This was before we had written the sequels, before we had informed them about it […] they were really into this that it was the future […] during the breaks. It is free; we do not have any rules then" (Teachers). The teachers also point out that "several pupils made their own dances during the breaks" (Teachers). These initiatives indicate that the pupils wished to remain inside the text-world. That they played Ronia as an adult without having been instructed to do so could be an indication that they did not want the story to end, that they wanted it to continue.

Through the employment of various form of expression, the teachers noticed the pupils becoming aware that a story can be told in different ways: "It becomes clear that it is possible to use various forms of expression when you have not done all of them yourself" (Teachers). Hence, it is fruitful for the pupils not only to use various forms of expression themselves, but also to experience the other pupils' forms of expression, and, consequently, realise that it is possible to create a Ronia story through, for example, an aquarelle painting, a poem or a dance. When asked if there was something that was fun or exciting with the Ronia project, one pupil answered: "to see the others" and the rest of the pupils in the group agreed (Group 2). Another pupil clarified: "Yes, the exciting part was to see what the others had written because I only knew what I had written myself", and the other pupils agreed (Group 2). The teachers noticed this excitement among the pupils: "The others who were watching were very fascinated. I could see that one can see that. It was very fun to watch them during the process and when they watched each other in the groups. It was fun" (Teachers). They also noticed that the pupils realised it is possible to create different versions of

the story using different forms of expression: "Aha, this is also Ronia, and they have done it in this way" (Teachers). Hence, the greatest reward from this project, according to the teachers, is the contrasting of various ways to (re)tell the story:

> That is the greatest finesse, I find, that not everybody participates in the same creative process. This is something that I have learned from this really, that it is an eye-opener. And I think that this is because one is in the same text-world, one is there deep in the thoughts […] and then, right? Could it be expressed in a dance? I could see how their brains made summersaults […] They have seen it from one perspective for such a long time, the text, the letters and words and their ideas. Then, they move on to their selected form of expression, and then one and two more ways to interpret it. Yes, it is, it is impressive. To experience that from a teacher perspective, that is awesome! (Teachers)

While the pupils enjoyed and learned from the contrastive approach, so did the teachers: "It was an experience for us as well" (Teachers). This way of working with creating stories in various forms in separate groups "with closed doors" was a new method for them (Teachers). One teacher concedes: "I can admit that I did not believe in this initially, hahaha! I like it when I can discover something about myself that I doubted" (Teachers). She adds that she was impressed by the pupils' learning processes throughout the teaching unit, in particular regarding the contrasts of utilising various forms of expression: "that not everybody does everything, I find that very good, because that is when you see […] I could really see it: what? The same paragraph, the same, they were so invested and then they see it in another way and that was cool. That was awesome" (Teachers). Hence, contrasts facilitated the pupils' work with identity development and becoming familiar with a text-world by moving through various forms of expression.

5. Discussion: Envisionment and Contrasts

This study examines pupils' and teachers' experiences of working with a teaching unit that encourages the use of various text and media forms through literary productions, re-presentations, of Ronia, the Robber's Daughter in order to gain insight into the pupils' narrative competence and identity development. The results of the study show that it is particularly fruitful for pupils who, for various reasons, struggle with language acquisition to be given several opportunities to enter into a text-world. Working with various versions of a story told through various media forms facilitates pupils experiencing Langer's (2011) stance 1 – being outside and stepping into an envisionment. However, the results also show that it is not only significant for pupils who struggle to experience the first of Langer's stances of envisionment. One girl, who was already familiar with the Ronia story, explained that she had discovered so much more from working with the story

during the project. Instead of returning to the first stance to find clarification or adjustment (Langer, 2011), it seems as if the return offered an expanded understanding of the envisionment. Consequently, it is beneficial for pupils to step into, or return to, an envisionment several times, regardless of where they are in their reading processes.

Throughout the project, the pupils demonstrated a desire to remain inside the text-world by, for example, playing Ronia during school breaks. In addition, this initiative shows that they wished for the story not to end. In their created products, the pupils connected their personal experiences and prior knowledge to the text-world by relating quotes from the story to their own lives. In this way, their commitment to the story and their understanding of the characters deepened (cf. Jusslin & Höglund, 2021). This increased participation in the text-world can be related to Langer's (2011) second stance – being inside and moving through an envisionment.

A fact that became apparent throughout the study is that being inside and moving through an envisionment had a positive effect on the pupils' learning processes. This became especially noteworthy when they worked with the theme of courage: the pupils became courageous themselves and approached the task at hand in a similar way to how Ronia faced fears in life, that is, by exposing herself to them. The teachers noticed the increase in courage among the pupils. Indeed, they speculated that this increase was because they worked with the story for a long time using various forms of expression and that they made sure that all pupils were able to connect to the story and its characters, that is, to be inside and move through the envisionment.

Another fact that became apparent throughout the study is that the pupils also learned about themselves, developed their identities through working with contrasts that make visible how life consists of light and darkness, and that both are necessary. As oner girl explained, if you want light and happiness in your life, you also need darkness. Hence, she demonstrated that she could, in line with Langer's third stance, step out and rethink what she knew. Another example of how the pupils were able to step out and re-think what they knew and objectify the experience is by relating the story and its main character, Ronia, to changes that are going on in real life. Here, the pupils focused on the current climate crisis and made a connection to the climate activist Greta Thunberg, who can be seen as a contemporary Ronia-figure – someone who demonstrates love of nature and who stands up for what is right.

The study shows that working with contrasts also makes visible the pupils' understanding of their own learning processes, which can be seen when one girl explained that she wanted to read about sad events, as she realized that if she never reads sad stories, she will never learn to do it. Thus, the pupils' identity development, their learning processes, as well as their understanding of their own learning processes, become visible through working with contrasts. In Langer's (2011) fourth stance – stepping out and objectifying the experience – the reader is able to look at the text and critique it by seeing how various literary elements relate to the whole text. In addition, they are able to see how the text relates to other texts and create a distance between the reading experience and the text. Because the pupils in the study are ten-years-old, they are not expected to be able to fully critique the text. However, as is exemplified by one girl, at least one pupil is able to distance herself from the reading experience and apply a meta-perspective on the reading and learning processes (cf. Varga, 2016).

In accordance with Langer's (2011) fifth stance – leaving an envisionment and going beyond, where the readers step away from the envisionment, sometimes entering a new envisionment – the teaching unit applied in the study focuses on re-presenting the story in various forms, hence encouraging leaving the envisionment and going beyond. This creative process is appreciated by pupils and teachers alike: they enjoy it and, at the same time, learn from it. When the pupils assert that their re-presentation "feels bigger" and that they have done "something big" (Group 1), it signals that they see beyond Lindgren's story about Ronia and that they, through their creative productions, leave the envisionment and go beyond. Another example of leaving and going beyond the envisionment can be seen when the pupils played Ronia as an adult during the breaks, thereby entering a new envisionment in a generative way (cf. Langer, 2011).

This generative view on envisioning literature, which can be seen in the pupils' narrative commitment, demonstrates that their narrative competence, in line with Lundström and Olin-Scheller (2010), is also generative, that is, they re-create stories in various forms of expression using their narrative competence. The applied teaching unit focuses on the pupils' own interpretations and their own re-creations of the story. In this way, working with fictional texts is not reduced to an instrumental approach to literary studies, where the stories function as tools for achieving other learning goals or where the teachers' interpretations are transferred to the pupils (Gabrielsen et.al., 2019; Tengberg, 2019).

In this study, the pupils' literary competence has been placed in the foreground, while their literacy competence has been placed in the background, even though both competencies were in focus during the teaching unit. Therefore, it would be fruitful to place literacy competence in the foreground in future research projects. This is especially significant because the results of the present study show that it is particularly beneficial for pupils who, for various reasons, struggle with language acquisition to be given multiple opportunities to enter into a text-world. Hence, it would be productive to focus on the effects of the applied teaching unit on groups of diverse learners in future research studies. Additionally, it would also be interesting to apply the same teaching unit with another text universe and/or another theme to ascertain whether the pupils' learning processes are similar. Another interesting and stimulating aspect would be to investigate how to develop and make visible the pupils' understanding of their own learning processes – to adopt a meta-perspective on their own learning processes.

6. Conclusion

It is expressively stated in the steering documents for the subject of Swedish in primary school that the pupils should have the opportunity to express themselves and to demonstrate their understanding and their knowledge through drawing, painting, music, dance and drama (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018). Hence, learning through such aesthetic forms of expression is significant for developing the pupils' meaning-making processes (Liberg, 2007) and for their identity development. Liberg (2007) claims that it is in the integration of various forms of expression that a deeper knowledge is created. The present study demonstrates that an expanded knowledge is also created through the contrasting of various forms of expression. This is particularly noted by the teachers who expressed that the greatest advantage they experienced while applying the teaching unit was that the pupils were able to contrast their own re-presentations to those of the other pupils. This result is in line with the results of a previous study, though conducted at upper-secondary level, where contrasting between two forms of re-presentations, remake and makeover, contributed to an increased analytical perspective and to making the pupils' analysis processes visible (Svensson & Haglind, 2020).

Previous studies, both national and international, focus on various aspects of the narrative process, such as reading (e.g. Westlund, 2016), narrative competence (e.g. Lundström & Olin-Scheller, 2010), identity development (e.g. Roe, 2014), aesthetic forms of expression (e.g. Jusslin & Höglund, 2021) and multimodality (e.g. Svensson & Lundström, 2019). The present study combines these aspects and demonstrates the relevance of using various forms of aesthetic expression as a way to

encourage pupils to compare and contrast various aspects and versions of a particular story in order to strengthen their narrative competence and identity development.

In conclusion, the results of the study show that working with contrasts "from the lightest light to the darkest dark" (Teachers) and applying a contrastive teaching and learning approach contribute to the progress of the pupils' identity development. Further, this approach encourages a deeper understanding, and, consequently, facilitates and makes visible their learning processes and their ability to apply a meta-perspective on their learning processes.

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