



Joining the adventures of Sally Jones – Discursive strategies for providing access to literary language in a linguistically diverse classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study illuminates a teacher's discursive strategies for promoting understanding of literary language in a linguistically diverse Swedish classroom. By means of field notes and audio recordings, a Grade 4 teacher's read-aloud of the award-winning picture book *The Legend of Sally Jones* was documented and analyzed employing concepts from Systemic-Functional Linguistics and Legitimation Code Theory. Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the findings show that the teacher used a rich variety of discursive strategies to make specialized terms and literary descriptions available to the students. Apart from using question-answer strategies and commenting on the text in clarifying ways, the teacher made linguistic alterations to either expand or simplify the literary language. The expansive strategies were particularly salient, entailing clarifying paraphrases or subtly infused additions to expand literary meaning. The significance of the strategies to support students' understanding of literary language and immersion in stories is discussed.

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This article focuses on discursive strategies to support engagement with literary texts and make literary language accessible to students in linguistically diverse classrooms. The analyses focus especially on a Swedish language arts teacher's linguistic negotiation of the text while reading a celebrated and verbally rich picture book, *The Legend of Sally Jones* (Wegelius, 2008), aloud to primary school students.

At the core of the present study lies the question regarding the relationship between language and literature. In the Nordic context, researchers have noted that Nordic language arts curricula foreground language and literacy skills in relation to literature teaching (Gourvenec et al., 2020; Liberg et al., 2012), leading to an emphasis on literary texts as a resource for developing literacy skills. Studies have highlighted the use of literary texts to foster disciplinary skills of analysis and interpretations (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Spires et al., 2018), genre-specific writing skills (Gabrielsen et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2018; Walldén, 2021), as well as generic literacy skills (Moussa & Koester, 2021). Some of the cited studies express concerns that the use of literature is subsumed under the literacy paradigm (Gabrielsen et al., 2019; Gourvenec et al., 2020; Liberg et al., 2012), while others show

that an explicit focus on language and text structures may promote meaningful engagements with texts (Moore et al., 2018; Walldén, 2021).

Research on read-aloud practices is often informed by dialogic and discussion-based approaches oriented to reading comprehension and literary understanding (e.g., Applebee et al., 2003; McKeown et al., 2009; Reichenberg, 2014; Walldén, 2022). In the reading of picture books, research has stressed the significance of using interaction to draw attention to the relationship between images and verbal texts (Barrentine, 1996; Sipe, 2000; Terwagne, 2006). While providing important insights into how to support students' understanding of literary texts, such research tend to marginalize the significance of learning and understanding literary words and expressions (discussed in Silverman et al., 2013). In the present study, we take the view that students' access to literary language is crucial both in relation to students' language development and their capabilities to participate in disciplinary literacy practices of language arts teaching, which includes enjoyment and appreciation of literary texts.

Previous vocabulary-oriented research in read-aloud practices, often conducted in preschool or the early grades of primary school, has shown that explicit teaching of vocabulary as a part of read-aloud activities is beneficial for students' vocabulary development (Baker et al., 2013; Fien et al., 2011; Swanson et al., 2011). Similarly,

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a study by Silverman et al. (2013) showed that extension activities, in which target words from read alouds were reviewed and engaged with through various modes (e.g., oral discussions, writing, drawing) had a beneficial effect on vocabulary learning. While explicit vocabulary instruction has shown to be valuable, it is only possible to target a few words at a time for this purpose (Beck et al., 2013). This particularly applies reading of narrative texts in language arts lessons, which generally target students' comprehension, enjoyment, and literary understanding rather than the learning of specific content area vocabulary (cf. Strachan, 2015). In high-quality children's book, many words can be presumed to be unknown to students, particularly in settings with many second-language learners.

Some studies have taken particular interest in the classroom discourse of read-aloud activities involving second or dual language learners. Gort et al. (2012) focused on teacher's use of questions to involve students in discussions during read-aloud activities in bilingual preschools. The findings show the importance of students' involvement in extended dialogue to develop literacy skills. This is echoed by Mascareño et al. (2017) which showed that students' opportunities to engage in cognitively challenging interactions may be restricted by teachers' asking questions centering on literal, rather than inferential, meaning and a lack of elaborative follow-ups of students' answers. While both studies include teacher's questions about vocabulary, the linguistic negotiation involved in the exchanges and the teacher's discursive strategies beyond asking questions are not analyzed.

The present study highlights discursive strategies that a teacher in Swedish language arts used to promote the students' understanding of literary language in conjunction with her read-aloud of a children's book. It contributes to the body of research in several ways. While previous research has been interested in vocabulary work conducted in isolated activities or in discussions that precede, interrupt, or follow the reading of the book (Applebee et al., 2003; Baker et al., 2013; Fien et al., 2011; Mascareño et al., 2017), we shift the focus to how literary language is negotiated while the participant teacher conducts a whole class reading of a high-quality children's book. It follows that this linguistic negotiation is a part of the disciplinary activity of enjoying and appreciating literary texts rather than a predominantly language-focused activity concerned with clarifying and learning the meaning of smaller selection of words. Furthermore, we contribute a new perspective on the classroom discourse of read-alouds by widening the scope of teacher's discursive strategies beyond the use of questions and follow-ups (see Gort et al., 2012; Mascareño et al., 2017). Finally, in contrast to previous studies' reliance on quantitative data, the qualitative approach of the current study allows us to show rich analyses of both the teacher's discursive strategies and the specific literary words and expressions encountered in the picture book. This further improves our possibilities to contribute new insights into a specific disciplinary literacy practice.

Students' access to literary language in common classroom practices is a pertinent question in the Swedish context since many classrooms have a large portion of second-language learners studying language-arts alongside first-language learners. One of the changes in a recently implemented revision of the national curriculum specific for Swedish as a second language¹ (SSL) (Skolverket, 2022) is that the teaching should focus on the "words and expressions" of literary texts. The wording is not present in the corresponding curriculum from subject Swedish, which indicates

the extra linguistic support expected in teaching the majority language from a second-language perspective (Hedman & Magnusson, 2020; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021a). While this seems to align with a literacy paradigm in language arts education (Gourvenec et al., 2020), there is nothing in the curriculum indicating either the nature of these words and expressions or how they should be highlighted in teaching practice to support engagement with literary texts in linguistically diverse classrooms. This linguistic dimension is also lacking in research on language arts disciplinary literacy, which tends to focus on analytical skills (Spires et al., 2018) or students' writing (e.g., Björk & Folkeryd, 2021; Moore et al., 2018). The present study seeks to fill a gap in relation to both research and teaching practice.

Research on teacher's discourse in classrooms in which students receive instruction in a second or additional language have often taken interest in students' opportunities to engage in sustained dialogue (e.g., Cummins, 2000; Ellis & Shintani, 2014). As in general research on classroom discourse, a common point of reference is the iconic classroom exchanges of initiation, response and follow-up/evaluation described by Simon and Coulthard (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) and Mehan (1979). Building on dialogic teaching and related concepts (e.g., Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991), they have highlighted the efficiency of teacher's questions and follow-ups with respect to challenging the students cognitively and stimulating their language use (e.g., Gort et al., 2012; Pessoa et al., 2007; Yang, 2021). From similar perspectives, studies based on systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) have nuanced the understanding of classroom dialogue by highlighting the interplay between different linguistic choices in teachers' questions to promote student participation (Yang, 2021) and the role of attitudinal language to constrain responses and govern the classroom discourse (Walldén, 2020). However, engaging the student in dialogue is not the sole purpose of teacher's discourse. For example, the meaning of words must often be made clear without interrupting the reading by questions and answers (Beck et al., 2013). Involving students in dialogue can also be counterproductive if results in guessing games, for example about the meaning of words, which lead the discourse and the collective thinking astray (Nichols, 2007; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021b).

To contribute a broader perspective on teacher's discourse in linguistically diverse classrooms during read-alouds, we use concepts from systemic-functional linguistics and legitimation code theory to highlight the read-aloud practice (Macnaught et al., 2013; Martin & Maton, 2017; Nygård Larsson, 2018). In contrast to the focus on sequential turn-taking between teachers and students in other SFL approaches (e.g., Walldén, 2020; Martin & Rose, 2007; Yang, 2021), this approach explores the linguistic negotiation of disciplinary content. Previous studies sharing similar theoretical underpinnings have shown how appropriation of subject-specific discourse typically involves movements between the language used in everyday interaction and the abstract and technical discourses that characterize academic disciplines in formal schooling (see Martin, 1990/1993; Maton, 2013). An important resource for this learning is the oral interaction in peer group and whole-class settings, in which subject-related wordings can be "unpacked" and "repacked" and various discourses and modes can be bridged through interactional scaffolding (Gibbons, 2006; Macnaught et al., 2013; Maton, 2014; Nygård Larsson, 2018). This discourse-bridging interaction can be considered especially beneficial for second-language learners' meaning making and language development, since it promotes and sustains a dual focus on disciplinary content and the linguistic resources necessary to participate in disciplinary literacy practices (e.g., Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021a). The ability to move between and within discourses has also been described as a discursive mobility (Nygård Larsson, 2011, 2018), which can be seen as both a teaching strategy in lin-

¹ Swedish language arts comprise two subjects: Swedish and Swedish as a second language (SSL). The latter is studied, if needed, by students who do not have Swedish as their first language. In primary school, young students often go to the same class regardless of the subject being studied, but receive grades in the designated subject.

linguistically diverse classrooms and feature of all meaning making through language and other semiotic resources.

While previous research has highlighted discourse-bridging interaction in science teaching (e.g., Axelsson & Jakobsson, 2020; Humphrey, 2021; Maton & Doran, 2017; Nygård Larsson & Jakobsson, 2019), the same cannot be said of language arts classrooms. Probably as a result of the enduring dichotomy between language and literature in teaching and research (e.g., Paran, 2008), linguistically informed research has largely focused on linguistic resources and pedagogic metalanguage to promote students' writing (e.g., Iddings, 2021; Moore et al., 2018; Myhill & Newman, 2016; Rahimi, 2018). Among the few studies to take a linguistic perspective on classroom work with literary texts, some have focused on introduction of systemic-functional metalanguage to support students' interpretations of texts and awareness of authorial choices (e.g., Klingelhofer & Schleppegrell, 2014; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2016). Similar systemic-functional underpinnings are used in the carefully staged joint readings of texts according to principles of the Reading to Learn pedagogy (e.g., Rose, 2021; Rose & Martin, 2012).

Studies such as these rely on metalanguage and highly structured teaching processes that are unavailable to most language arts teachers. Our approach in the present study differs since we focus on discursive strategies used by teachers to support students' understanding of literary language that may be common in classrooms but unexplored in research. In part, we build on a previous study (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021a) that showed discursive shifts when adult second-language students and their teachers were engaged in explanations of figurative expressions encountered in literary texts. The participating teachers employed several discursive strategies, such as repeating the expressions, rephrasing them concretely and abstractedly, and making meaningful connections to the literary texts. The findings contrasted with an earlier study of pre-reading vocabulary work in primary school (Walldén, 2020), in which the discussions about vocabulary appeared to be isolated from the interpretation and enjoyment of the book. In the present study, we shift the focus to how literary language is negotiated not as a separate, language-focused activity, but in the disciplinary literacy practice of interactive read-alouds in Grade 4 (10- or 11-year-old students).

Based on a classroom study in a linguistically diverse Grade 4, the purpose of this article is to contribute knowledge about discursive strategies that a teacher in Swedish language arts used to promote the students' understanding of literary language in conjunction with her read-aloud of a children's book. The research questions (RQ) are:

- 1 What discursive strategies does the teacher use to promote understanding of literary language in read-aloud activities?
- 2 What characterizes the literary words and expressions that the teacher focused on?

1. Theoretical perspectives

To highlight the discursive strategies that the teacher used and the literary language these strategies focused on, we draw on theoretical perspectives from systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) and legitimation code theory (LCT). We primarily employ Martin's genre theory (Martin, 2001; Martin & Rose, 2008) and semantically oriented LCT analysis (Martin & Maton, 2017; Maton, 2013). While genre theory enables consideration of how different kinds of texts, such as children's books, drawing on specific resources of language, the LCT perspective is useful for highlighting how these resources of language are negotiated in the social process of making meaning of literary texts through oral classroom interaction (Macnaught et al., 2013).

In accordance with LCT, we conceptualize interaction focused on making meaning of literary language in terms of potential movements on a semantic scale. These occur between levels of semantic gravity (which is the degree of *context-dependence* of meaning) and semantic density (which is the degree of *complexity* and condensation of meaning) (Maton, 2013). The potentials in the different strategies used by the teacher will be understood through the lens of *semantic shifts*; that is, how they create possibilities to move between more or less contextualized meaning (concrete, specific, general or abstract meaning), and more complex specialized meaning or meaning closer to everyday language and experience.

Genre theory (Martin & Rose, 2008) was used to consider the linguistic features that the teacher focused on as part of the register patterns of narrative texts. While technical terms are not a salient feature of literary texts, literary language may contain specialized expressions and taxonomic relations endemic to the different domains of experience represented in the narratives. For example, the picture book used by the participant teacher contained many specialized sub-types to the everyday concept of boat, such as *junk* and *trawler* (see Section 2 for further discussion). From the perspective of SFL, specialization and taxonomic relations are important aspects the register variable of *field* (Martin, 2001, Martin & Maton, 2017). This variable describes activities in specific areas of lived experience, such as seafaring, and the people and things involved in these activities. A more general feature of literary texts is the use of literary descriptions, involving metaphors and expanded noun groups (Martin & Rose, 2008; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021a). One example from the book used in the study is "the most exclusive districts of Istanbul". Specific constructs for analyzing these features are presented in Section 2.1.

Combining SFL and LCT perspectives, the teacher's discursive strategies will be considered in terms of the opportunities they create for promoting the students' *discursive mobility* (Nygård Larsson, 2011, 2018) in relation to literary language and texts. Discursive mobility refers to the ability to move within and between everyday and disciplinary meaning and ways of using resources of language. The concept has been used to describe the linguistic negotiation of disciplinary meaning in different content areas, including language arts (see Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021a). While discursive mobility is a crucial goal for students regardless of linguistic background, teacher's active promotion of this ability is particularly important in classrooms where students come from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas and in many cases receive instruction in their second or additional language.

2. Method and material

The study was conducted in a Swedish Grade 4 classroom comprised of two student groups (20 students in each group). The first author established contact with the teacher due to a shared interest in opportunities created for primary school students to engage with subject-related texts and discourse. The teacher invited the researcher to her classroom. She had eight years of teaching experience and was certified to teach language arts in grades 4–9. Her first language was Swedish. The school (K-6) is located in a socially segregated and linguistically diverse area. According to official statistics, around half of the students came from a "foreign background", meaning that either they or both of their parents were born outside of Sweden. This reflects the substantial migration to Sweden from different parts of the world in the last decade. It follows that a large proportion of the students were second-language learners and followed the curriculum for Swedish as a second language. However, these students were not generally newly arrived but had some years of schooling in Sweden.

Given the social segregation, many of the students, regardless of linguistic background, could be presumed to have limited exposure to discussing literary texts in Swedish in their home environments. The participant teacher and other staff at the school both stressed the need to provide interactional support to both first and second-language learners. However, when commenting on the read-aloud activities, the teacher did not foreground language learning objectives. Instead, she stressed the students' enjoyment of the book and her wish for them to engage in discussions about the characters and events in the story. These discussions are explored in a different publication based on the same study (Walldén, 2022).

The study was conducted over a span of four months. However, due to winter and spring breaks, compounded by several weeks of COVID-related illness on the part of the teacher, the effective timeframe for the study was 10 weeks. This article builds on data collected during 12 lessons (each lasting 40–70 minutes) focusing on the reading of *The Legend of Sally Jones* (Wegelius, 2008, see below). The read-aloud lessons usually occurred once a week or once every two weeks. Reading intensified in the final two weeks of the study, with two weekly lessons. Since the teacher had commenced the read-aloud when the study started, the reading of the first 15 pages was not documented. Due to the somewhat erratic occurrence of the activity, another read-aloud session (eight pages) occurred without the researcher being present. The present study focuses on the teaching of one the student groups since it was followed more consistently (9 out of 12 lessons).

The read-alouds, including related discussions, were captured through audio recordings (10 hours) and field notes, which provided extra contextual information, such as when the teacher pointed to projected images in the book. The researcher took the role of participant observer (Fangen, 2005) by listening, taking notes on a laptop, and managing the audio recorder. During the read-aloud sessions, the teacher gathered the students close to the whiteboard, which was used to project the pages from the picture book in the read-aloud sessions. Therefore, it was possible for the students to see both the images and the verbal text. While the detailed and evocative images can be presumed to have had an important role to support the students' meaning making of the literary text, we will highlight the role of the teacher's oral interaction to make the literary text available to the students. Generally, the students showed great appreciation of the read-aloud; for example, by requesting the activity, expressing disappointment when it stopped, and reacting to events of the story. These responses, reported elsewhere (Walldén, 2022), indicate that the activity successfully involved the students in comprehending and appreciating the book.

The book chosen by the teacher was the picture book *Legenden om Sally Jones* (in English: *The Legend of Sally Jones*), by Jakob Wegelius (2008). The book has been critically acclaimed and was awarded a prestigious Swedish literary prize, the August Prize, in 2008. The book is 107 pages long and has characteristics of graphic novels (e.g., Boglind & Nordenstam, 2015, p. 198). It tells the story of Sally Jones, a gorilla, who is captured in Congo and then experiences a series of unlikely adventures, encounters, and misfortunes across the world. While the detailed and visually striking images used in the book play an important role in conveying meaning, the verbal language is similarly rich, containing evocative literary descriptions as well as many specialized expressions. Therefore, the book is conducive to our research interest in the linguistic aspects of the read-aloud.

The audio recordings were transcribed (54,000 words) according to broad verbatim standards (e.g., Nikander, 2008). Traces of learner language in syntax and word choice, for example, were retained. The analyses were conducted on the Swedish transcripts by both authors. Afterwards, the first author translated the excerpts

chosen for the presentation of the results from Swedish to English. The translations were reviewed and discussed by both authors, and as far as possible, the translations preserve the linguistic and semantic aspects relevant to the original language use. Important discrepancies will be commented on. In the excerpts, the students are numbered according to their participation in the relevant discussions.

Regarding research ethics, the guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (2017) were followed. Therefore, written consent from the teacher and the students' caregivers was collected. To ensure informed consent in a context with possible language barriers, consent from caregivers was collected during the annual progress conference with the teacher, enabling oral explanations and the opportunity to ask questions. In addition, the researcher explained the nature of the research to the students and asked for their oral consent to participate, while stressing that they could tell their teacher if they did not want to be recorded.

This study focuses on the parts of the material documenting the read-aloud of the book, and to some extent adjacent activities of particular relevance, such as pre-reading discussions about words from the book. Other discussions that focused on elements such as characters or reviewing previous events are explored from the perspective of literary understanding in another publication (Walldén, 2022).

2.1. Analysis

As stated in Section 1, we used SFL to analyze the data. We were guided by the metafunctions described by SFL (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2007):

- the *experiential* function for representing different domains of experiences
- the *logical* function for linking units of language together
- the *interpersonal* function for building and maintaining relationships
- the *textual* metafunction for channeling resources of language into a meaningful flow.

These metafunctions all had a role in categorizing and discussing the strategies that the teacher used. However, we particularly leaned on the experiential function. It is closely related to the register variable field (see Section 1) and proved useful to highlight the teacher's discursive strategies and the nature of the literary words and expressions she focused on. For example, the specialized expression *emperor suite*, encountered in the book, stands in a class-member or hyponymic relation to the general category of *room* (see Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 80–81). The children's book used by the teacher particularly featured the field of seafaring, which actualized discursive strategies to facilitate the understanding of specialized expressions such as *coastal tanker* and *gunwale*. These have a different semantic relationship to the boat: *class-member* (boat-coastal tanker) and *parts-whole* (gunwale-boat), respectively. These semantic relations can potentially be used in interaction to explain the specialized vocabulary.

Another feature of the literary language was literary descriptions. It follows that SFL was used to highlight discursive strategies for making meaning of, for example, lexical metaphors (for example, the *sharpest* brain) and abstract expressions such as doing something *through guile*. Although naturalized by many first-language-speakers, figurative uses of words like *sharp* may not be easily understood by second-language learners (Nation, 2013). The preposition phrase *through guile* is complex because it contains an abstract noun and a logical grammatical metaphor, that is, a logical relation expressed not by a conjunction but through, for example, prepositions or processes (see Halliday, 1989/1993).

Other salient features of literary descriptions are expanded nominal groups (for example, *the most exclusive districts of Istanbul*) and adjectival grammatical metaphors (such as *frozen* and *stranded*). Grammatical metaphors, including logical ones, refer to shifts between grammatical categories (Halliday, 1989/1993), for example, when a meaning typically expressed as a process (congruent realization, such as *freeze*) is recast as an adjective (incongruent realization; for example, *frozen*). The relationships between congruent and incongruent meaning offer further potential for using discursive strategies.

While the present study foregrounds the experiential SFL perspective, relating to representation of experience from the perspective of different fields, literary language also carries interpersonal meaning. From the perspective of appraisal (Martin & White, 2005), a word such as *phenomenal* carries positive attitudinal meaning while also being lexically graded. In other words, it carries more *force* than synonyms such as *good* or *skilled*. Understanding the word involves knowledge about the attitude and graduation it carries.

While SFL was a foundation for analyzing both the literary language and discursive strategies employed to make it accessible for the students, the LCT perspective of Semantics (Maton, 2013) enabled a deeper qualitative insight into the linguistic negotiation of meaning in *The Legend of Sally Jones*. Specialized and abstract vocabulary (with complex and less contextualized meaning) are generally placed high on the semantic scale suggested by LCT (Maton, 2013) and will be more difficult to access for students. If such expressions are contextualized, rephrased, or unpacked in common or concrete wordings encountered in everyday discourse, this creates downward semantic shifts that can facilitate an understanding of the literary language. Equally possible, but more rarely evidenced in classroom research, are upward semantic shifts, which re-pack common meaning in more abstract or specialized wording (Maton, 2013). Analyses of classroom interaction and texts have revealed their semantic profiles, such as how several semantic shifts, moving up and down the semantic scale (often described as semantic waves), result in a semantic profile with a wide semantic range, or how few or no semantic shifts result in a more flattened semantic profile.

From the perspective of LCT, students' opportunities to engage in semantic shifts are seen as a key component for knowledge-building and language development (Macnaught et al., 2013; Maton, 2013). As such, teaching practices and strategies that simplify disciplinary content and language are seen as counterproductive. For example, substituting disciplinary vocabulary in a text with common counterparts would result in a low semantic flatline, which is uncondutive to learning new ways of making meaning through language (Maton, 2013). Rather, the aim is to expand the disciplinary discourse to promote the students' understanding and successive appropriation of it. We view the teachers' use of discursive strategies in this light, while also considering that the purpose of read-aloud activities typically differs from, for example, using textbooks to learn about subject-specific concepts.

The five categories of discursive strategies presented in the first part of the findings, in answer to RQ 1, are the result of an abductive process (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) of repeated movements between the data and our theoretical understanding of language and classroom discourse based on SFL. In addition, we counted the occurrences of the strategies to gain knowledge of their relative frequency. Our application of SFL analysis entailed close readings of the transcribed interaction with attention to if and how the teacher's linguistic alterations of the literary text added or transformed experiential, logical, interpersonal, or textual meaning to the text. Aside from the analytical perspectives mentioned above, the teacher's use of conjunctions proved an important analytical marker, notably *additive* conjunctions (e.g., *and*) and *com-*

parative conjunctions (e.g., *that is*, see Martin & Rose, 2007). The SFL analysis resulted in three categories of strategies used by the teaching in the read-aloud: *expansive strategies*, *reductive strategies*, and *cohesion-supporting strategies*. The fourth category denotes comprehension-oriented comments that are not focused on specific words or expressions (*text-comprehension strategies*), and the fifth category involves the teacher eliciting the meaning of literary words and expressions from the students (*question-answer strategies*). These latter strategies have no explicit grounding in the SFL framework but were developed in the abductive analysis as two qualitatively distinct categories.

The second part of the findings uses SFL and LCT to take a more in-depth look at the literary words and expressions negotiated in the read-aloud (RQ 2), and the expansive and reductive strategies the teacher used to communicate their meaning (RQ 1). We employed SFL to highlight the linguistic and semantic properties of the words and expressions with attention to previously mentioned aspects such as attitudinal meaning and level of specialization or abstraction. The LCT perspective was used to closely examine how the expansive and reductive strategies contributed to semantic shifts that altered the semantic profile of the text, or the degree of context-dependence and complexity of meaning negotiated in the read aloud interaction (see also Section 1).

3. Discursive strategies for negotiating literary language

In the first main part (Section 3.1), we provide an overview of the discursive strategies used by the teacher. In the second main part (Section 3.2), we specifically highlight two strategies that had a particularly important role in providing access to the literary words and expressions of the book.

3.1. Categories of discursive strategies

In the analysis, we found five main categories of discursive strategies employed by the teacher to facilitate understanding of the literary text:

- 1 *Expansive strategies* related to literary words and expressions: Making additions or paraphrases to clarify literary words and expressions.
- 2 *Reductive strategies* related to literary words and expressions: Reducing the complexity of the literary language by removing or substituting words.
- 3 *Cohesion-supporting strategies*: Making additions to facilitate understanding of the logical and textual unfolding of the story.
- 4 *Text comprehension strategies*: Commenting on the text to summarize or otherwise draw students' attention to elements of the text or the story.
- 5 *Question-answer strategies*: Involving the students in classroom discussions by asking them about the meaning of literary words and expressions

The first two categories are closely related because they are both concerned with linguistic alterations of the text to promote understanding of literary words and expressions. The third category involves alterations of a different nature, relating to the information flow and logical cohesion of the text. The fourth category differs from the other three since it concerns the teacher commenting on the text, often directed at a global understanding of what presently occurred in the story. The fifth category differs from the first two categories since the question-answer strategy involves students in classroom discussions about the meaning of literary words and expressions.

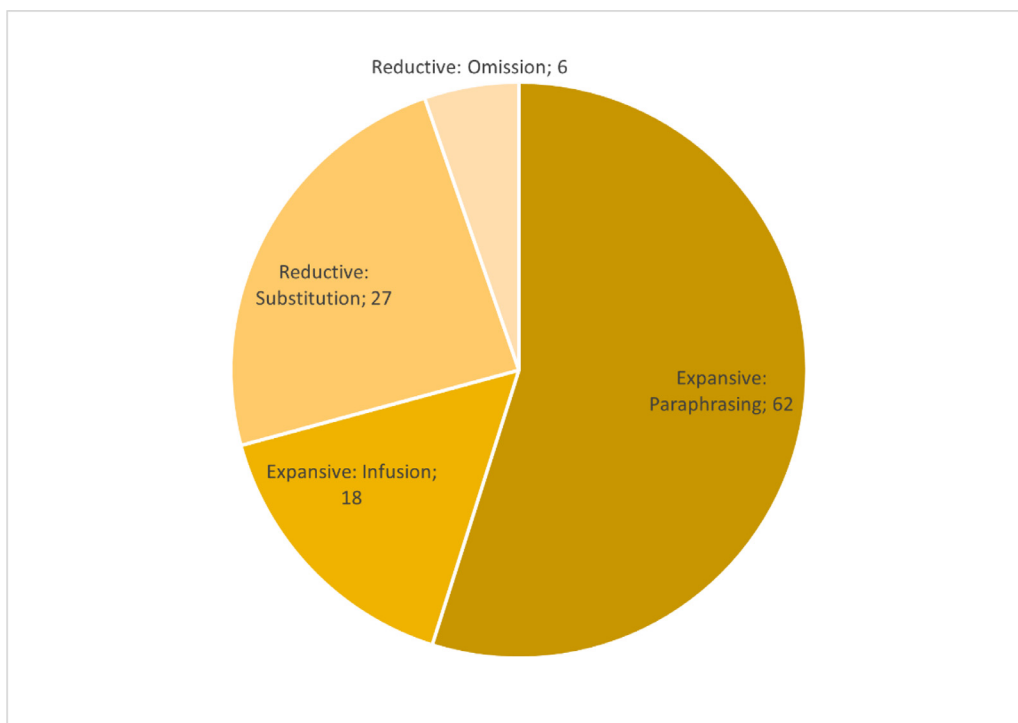


Fig. 1. The teacher's use of expansive and reductive strategies.

Table 1
Expansive and reductive strategies

Expansive strategies	Reductive strategies
<p>Paraphrasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the most exclusive districts of Istanbul <i>that is the richest parts of Istanbul</i> Istanbuls förnämsta stadsdelar <i>alltså dom rikaste delarna av Istanbul</i> stevedores <i>and that is when you carry cargo on such to boats</i> sjåare och det är när man bär på last och sådär till båtar complete debacle <i>debacle that's when something goes very badly</i> fullkomligt fiasko <i>fiasko det är när något går urdåligt</i> monotonous <i>nothing happens</i> enformiga <i>det händer ingenting</i> to their campong by the river Bengaloen <i>so, to their village</i> till sin kampong vid byn Bengaloen <i>så till sin by</i> <p>Infusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> its most audacious <i>and most risky</i> sin alla djärvaste och mest riskfyllda fruits <i>and figs</i>, mangustines and mangos <i>frukt och fikon</i>, mangustiner och mangofrukter appropriates <i>or takes</i> beslagtar <i>eller tar</i> with the <i>train</i> Orient Express med <i>tåget</i> Orientexpressen Marseille <i>in France</i> Marseille i Frankrike 	<p>Substitution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India [the colonies in Indo China] Indien [kolonierna i Bortre Indien] stops by [anchors] <i>stannar till</i> [ankrar] foremen that <i>he found</i> [were recruited] in Batavia förmän som <i>han hittade</i> [rekryterades] i Batavia the storm <i>calms down</i> [abates] stormen <i>lugnar ner sig</i> [bedarrar] small space [stowage space] <i>litet utrymme</i> [stuvutrymme] <p>Omission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a[n organ-grinder's] chimpanzee en [positivhalares] schimpans [blowpipes] and rifles [blås rör] och gevär [Malay] crew [malajisk] besättning wool [from Anatolia] ylle [från Anatolien]

3.1.1. Expansive and reductive strategies related to literary words and expressions

We start with the expansive and reductive strategies for promoting understanding of literary words and expressions. Due to their closely related yet distinct nature, the quantitative distribution of these strategies (n=113) is displayed in Figure 1. These main categories each contain two subcategories.

As Figure 1 shows, the teacher used expansive strategies more than twice as often as reductive strategies (80 versus 33 instances). The strategies and subcategories are exemplified in Table 1 below. Italics indicate wording that was added to the literary text, while

brackets indicate omitted wordings. Original wordings in Swedish are displayed in small font.

By using the expansive *paraphrasing*² strategy, the teacher elaborated on the meaning of the words. As evident from the examples in Table 1, the act of explaining was sometimes explicitly marked by a comparative conjunction (for example, *that is*). On other occa-

² While some of the other strategies can also be considered paraphrasing strategies, we use the category for instances in which it should be comparatively clear to the students that the teacher makes a paraphrase of a literary word or expression.

Table 2
Cohesive-supporting strategies³

Insertion of conjunctions	Insertion of pronouns, auxiliary verbs, or prepositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>and</i> now they were in tropical waters och nu är de i tropiska farvatten • as far as I know <i>så</i> the sea law makes no difference between apes and people så vitt jag vet <i>så</i> gör sjölagen ingen skillnad mellan apor och folk • by then, the lifeboat is <i>already</i> gone då är livbåten <i>redan</i> borta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a barge of his own <i>that</i> he will never afford en egen skuta <i>det</i> kommer han aldrig ha råd med • the Chief and Sally Jones <i>they</i> become stranded chiefen och Sally Jones <i>dom</i> blir strandsatta • and <i>does not want</i> to disappoint Frau Schultz och <i>vill</i> inte göra Frau Schultz besviken • Galveston, <i>in</i> Texas Galveston, <i>i</i> Texas

sions, the explanation was just inserted after the word (for example, monotonous *nothing happens*).⁴ In four of the 62 instances, the teacher commenced the explanation by repeating the word. The expansive *infusion* strategy was similar, but entailed adding clarifying words in noun phrases. This was accomplished by additive conjunctions plus the clarifying word (for example, audacious *and most risky*, appropriates *or takes*) or, on fewer occasions, by adding elements to noun groups such as classifiers (for example, the *train Orient Express*) or qualifiers (*Marseille in France*). In contrast to the paraphrasing approach, the clarification enabled by infusion becomes part of the texture of the story, slightly changing the meaning. In the reductive *substitution* strategy, the teacher instead exchanged literary words with easier ones (for example, *stops by* instead of *anchor*).⁵ Through the sparingly used reductive *omission* strategy (six instances), literary words were removed from the texture of the story with no alternative being inserted in their stead. While two very specialized terms stand out among the mixed examples (*blowpipes* and *organ-grinder*), it is difficult to attach significance to this category due to the few occurrences and the high possibility of omissions made by mistake or chance. Therefore, it will not be considered further.

3.1.2. Cohesion-supporting alterations related to the logical and textual unfolding of the story

The above categories involved linguistic alterations related to experiential content of the text. In addition to these, the teacher made frequent linguistic alterations related to accentuating the logical and textual unfolding of the story. The two main categories are exemplified in Table 2 below.

The most common insertions of conjunctions (14 each) were two that are common in everyday speech: *och* (*and*, 14 occurrences), making the sequential unfolding of the story explicit, and *så* (also 14 occurrences), having no counterpart in English. The latter is frequently used in spoken Swedish to mark the boundary between marked themes (for example, “as far as I know”) and the rest of the clause, in Swedish initiated by a finite verb.⁶ Both of these alterations bring the story closer to everyday speech. More rarely, the teacher inserted conjunctions that signal expectancy, such as *redan* (*already*) and *till slut* (*finally*) (see Martin & Rose, 2007). These seem more interpersonally motivated since they add drama to the text. As evident from the examples, the teacher sometimes also inserted auxiliary verbs (*want*), prepositions (*in*), and pronouns (*that*, *they*). Additions of pronouns (*it*, *they*) and the Swedish *så* are considered textually oriented, since they mainly affected the information flow of the clauses, delaying the follow-

ing part of the message in a way that gives it greater emphasis (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014). Furthermore, the inserted pronouns, modal verbs, and prepositions all add redundancy to the text. Like the common conjunctions, they bring the literary text closer to spoken language. Compared to the strategies outlined in Table 1, the insertions of function words (for example, conjunctions, prepositions) and pronouns seem less a matter of conscious scaffolding; rather, they can more fruitfully be understood as alterations related to the change of mode. When a written text is read aloud, the reader can be expected to infuse some syntactic features of speech. While such changes may make the text more accessible to listeners, this will not be further explored in these findings.

3.1.3. Text comprehension strategies

The previous sections have focused on the teacher’s linguistic alterations of the text or her commentary on literary words and expressions. In the process of reading the picture book, there were also instances in which the teacher commented more globally on the story and the pages read. It involved paraphrasing or summarizing a passage – for example, “So, *he just sits and drinks alcohol all day*” – after several sentences describing the lethargic and deceitful behavior of a scientist in the story. Similar to the paraphrasing strategy discussed above, but not focused on any particular word or expression, it occurred on eight instances. In addition, these strategies involved 12 instances of pointing out connections to visual elements (for example, “here’s that big ship”) and three instances of circumstantial comments, such as additions that pointed out inferred meaning (for instance, “They don’t have any tickets, right?”).⁷ Furthermore, the teacher commented on the dramaturgy of the story (“What a disaster!”, “Now, it seems to have turned around for them”) and gave comments engaging the children in understanding and enjoying the text (“And we know who it is, right?”, “But now you’ll see”). These more interpersonally oriented strategies, involving reactions and engagement with the text, occurred on five occasions. Finally, in one read-aloud session (session 8, week 1), there were three instances of added wordings clarifying a character telling his story to the protagonist: “So, here he tells ... he says to Sally Jones ... says the Chief”. Thus, the teacher orally conveyed textual aspects of the story indicated by quotation marks in the text itself. In different ways, these comments were directed at supporting the students process of understanding and engaging with the text. The text comprehension strategies detailed here were employed more sparingly than the strategies that focused on literary words and expressions. In addition, the enactment of these strategies can be seen as secondary to the more substantial discussions about the characters and the unfolding of the story that is often held before or after reading parts of the book. These discussions are reported elsewhere (Walldén, 2022). Due to their peripheral role in providing access to literary language in the reading of the book, these strategies are not explored further in the present study.

⁷ The questions occurring in this category were rhetorical. Thus, they were not part of the question-answer strategy about words and expressions.

³ Untranslatable Swedish adverb. It is omitted in the English parts of the excerpts.

⁴ These insertions were marked by prosody.

⁵ The example of substitution of when the teacher substituted “kolonierna i Bortre Indien” (the colonies of Indo China) for “Indien” (India) could also be considered an omission strategy since it entailed omitting part of the noun group. However, since the geographical meaning was changed – substituting “Bortre Indien” (Indo China) for the more recognizable “Indien” – it was classified as substitution.

⁶ As in German, Swedish syntax reverses the order of subject and finite after marked themes (for example, “as far as I know *makes the sea law no difference*...”).

3.1.4. Question-answer strategies

The teacher rarely involved the students in interaction about words and expressions during the read-aloud. Only four instances of the teacher asking the student about the meaning of words were observed. On one of those occasions (session 5, week 7), regarding the meaning of *brass music*, the question seemed rhetorical since she immediately supplied a lengthy explanation, involving both the meaning of brass generally and mention of particular brass instruments. Therefore, the meaning was unpacked and concretized in a way that mirrored other instances of explaining specialized expressions (see Section 3.2.1). In asking the students about the meaning of *konditori* (in English: *confectionery* or *patisserie*), she elicited a short explanation in which the student used everyday wording: “Where you buy cakes and sweets”. Thus, the student participated in creating a semantic shift from more abstract to more concrete meaning. Another example is shown in Excerpt 1 (session 5, week 7). In all the excerpts, italics indicate teacher’s emphasis while capital letters show contextual details.

Excerpt 1

T: Kaspar Meyer lives the rest of his life as a *bitter*. STOPS READING Now, what’s bitter? Leonora.
S: Like grumpy. If you want to talk with someone. And he, like, don’t show any feelings. /.../
T: Exactly. If you are *bitter*, you are *grumpy* and sulky because you are maybe *dissatisfied* with something. Something has happened earlier in life or something you keep thinking about. Everything went to the dogs, so now he’s like stuck.

T: Kaspar Meyer lever resten av sitt liv som en *bitter* SLUTAR LÄSA. Alltså vad är bitter? Leonora.
S: Sur typ. Om du vill snacka med nån. Så han visar knappt känslor. /.../
T: Jamen precis. Om man är *bitter* då är man *sur* och grinig för man är *missnöjd* med nånting kanske. Nånting som har hänt tidigare liksom i livet eller nåt sånt där som man går och tänker på. Allt gick åt skogen så nu har han typ fastnat.

The student suggested the common word *grumpy* and gave an example of someone not responding to conversation. The teacher affirmed this response by repeating the students’ suggestions (*grumpy*) and adding another common synonym (*sulky*). The teacher elaborated on the suggestion by using the nominal group *dissatisfied with something*. This relatively abstract meaning was unpacked by examples in everyday language related to the book: “something earlier in life ... you keep thinking about ... so now he’s stuck”. In this exchange, several semantic shifts are apparent as the complex quality *bitter* is put both in everyday wording (“sulky ... he’s like stuck”) and rephrased abstractedly (“dissatisfied with something”).

On two observed occasions (session 1 and 4), a limited selection of literary words and expressions were discussed as a pre-reading activity. Thus, they were negotiated in relative isolation from the reading of the literary text. This impression was strengthened by the teacher neither referring to the pre-reading discussions about the words and expressions when they were encountered, nor refraining from explaining them while reading the text. For example, the teacher led a lengthy pre-reading discussion about the meaning of *plunder*, involving elicitation of semantically related words (such as *pinch*, *steal*, and *rob*) and suggestions of how they differ from *plunder*. While reading the relevant passage, the teacher did not refer to the discussion, but used the expansive rephrasing strategy (“plundered, *taken everything*, in the secret compartment”). Due to their relatively isolated nature, these activities will not be considered further. Instead, we will focus on the discursive strategies the teacher employed while reading.

3.2. Semantic shifts in enactment of expansive and reductive strategies

In the coming sections, we will highlight semantic shifts in the teacher’s enactment of the expansive and reductive strategies. We turn to these strategies because they were often employed by the

teacher to make the literary language comprehensible to the students while reading the book aloud. In particular, the paraphrasing expansive strategy emerged as a large category with varied implementation. It should be noted that we did not see any longitudinal aspects of these strategies, as they seemed to occur pretty evenly throughout the read-aloud. This is illustrated by the two longest excerpts below (Excerpt 3 and 6) from the end and beginning of the read-aloud respectively. Both show a rich use of strategies. A possible explanation is the richness of the prose in combination with the varying milieus and events Sally Jones and her co-adventurers experienced throughout the story. As such, there was always new words and expressions to negotiate. The use of the other strategies, as outlined above, appeared consistent as well.

3.2.1. Negotiating specialized language

In understanding the negotiation of the literary words and expressions, it is necessary to consider the nature of these words and expressions. Many of them can be considered specialized since they are strongly related to a specific field. Considering the reductive substitution strategy, it is revealing that almost half (13) of the words exchanged for more common ones by the teacher related to seafaring. Some of these were highly specialized, such as “trading *junk*”⁸ (*handelsdjonk*), prawn *trawler* (*räkrälare*), *gunwale* (*reling*), *galley* (*kabyss*), and *stevedore* (*sjåare*). These nouns are indexical (see Martin, 2001) to seafaring. Some other terms substituted by the teacher were connected to the same field but not exclusive to it, such as the noun *provisions* (*proviant*) and the processes *abate* (*bedarra*) and *succour* (*undsätta*). In using the reductive substitution strategy, these field-specific or field-related terms were changed to less specialized counterparts that occur more frequently in everyday discourse. An example from the read-aloud is shown in Excerpt 2 (session 9, week 10). Bold marks analytical findings, while “+” sign show words the teacher add to the text. Unarticulated words from the original text are within brackets. Parentheses shows the teacher’s comments on the text.

Excerpt 2

They smuggle *vodka* across the Gulf of Botnia and +**help**+ [**succour**] a frozen in +**prawn boat**+ [**prawn trawler**] outside Greenland. (They travel round the world on *many* adventures.)

Dom smugglar *vodka* över Bottniska viken och +**hjälp**+ [**undsätter**] en infrusen +**räkbåt**+ [**räkrälare**] utanför Grönland. (Dom åker runt över hela världen på *många* äventyr.)

As the example shows, the specific terms *succour* and *trawler* were exchanged with general counterparts. Instead of the specialized *trawler*, a common hypernym, *boat*, was chosen (a *trawler* is a kind of boat). As such, the teacher used class-membership relations as a resource. This also occurred with words that are less immediately connected to seafaring, such as when the teacher used (trafficking of) *drugs* (*knarksmuggling*) instead of *opium*, and *food* instead of *provisions*. While semantic relations between verbs are not as clearly defined, it is possible to show that the teacher also substituted infrequent and field-related verbs with more general and ordinary counterparts. This included the verb *succour* (not exclusive to seafaring, but often used in relation to specific situations of distress), substituted with *help*, and the specialized verb *anchored*, exchanged with *stopped by*. On rare occasions, the teacher used whole-parts relationships, for example by substituting *gunwale* (*reling*) for *boat* (*båt*). Since specialized expressions were exchanged with ordinary counterparts, these substitutions constituted semantic shifts that flattened the semantic profile of the text. This reduced the students’ exposure to specialized language. Apart from the substitution strategy, Excerpt 2 also illustrates that the

⁸ For clarity, *junk* refers to a sort of Chinese sailing ship. The Swedish word (*djonk*) does not expose the students to homonymy.

teacher seemed less inclined to use reductive strategies for adjectival grammatical metaphors (for example, *frozen in*, compounded in Swedish as *infrusen*). The teacher's comment on the text ("They travel around the world on *many adventures*") rephrases the gist of the information and exemplifies the text comprehension strategy of paraphrasing or summarizing entire passages. The specific geographical names, which may not be familiar to all students, bring a complexity to the text that may warrant the use of simplifying strategies and text comprehension strategies.

While the reductive substitution strategy was relatively frequent (27 instances), it was dwarfed by the teacher's use of the expansive paraphrasing strategy. As shown in Figure 1, it constituted more than half of the instances of strategies for dealing with literary words and expressions. While the enactment of these seemed to cover a wider variety of words, several of the instances (almost a third) were related to the field of seafaring. Excerpt 3 (session 8, week 10) shows several instances of this strategy being employed in bold font. Some of them pertain to negotiation of non-specialized expressions and will be discussed in the next section. In addition, there are several instances of the cohesion-supporting strategy discussed above; for example, additions of the preposition *in*, a reference to visual element, in this case a map, and another instance of the teacher commenting on a passage. As such, the excerpt is highly dynamic in terms of strategies employed by the teacher.

Excerpt 3

Sally Jones and the Chief are employed on a **general cargo vessel +that's a kind of boat+** heading to Galveston +in+ Texas. **There, they enrolled on +that is, they start working on+** a small **coastal tanker** bringing them to New York. (So, they start here in San Francisco in USA, right? And then they go around here POINTING through the Panama Canal. Here, to Texas. And then they go on up to New York.) In New York, times are bad. Outside the **shipping office +that is those owning the boats+** on Lower West Side, there are winding queues with seamen **+wanting jobs+ [searching for work]**. The Chief and Sally Jones are **stranded +it means they don't get anywhere. They don't get a job and [unclear]**. + A bleak day of February, the Chief and Sally Jones takes the ferry to Staten Island to look for employment in the harbour +there+. When they are plodding along the quay, they catch sight of a **small freighter +a small boat+** that is for sale at 10 000 dollars.

Sally Jones och Chieffen får jobb på en **styckegodssare +det är en typ av båt+** som går till Galveston +i+ Texas. Där +så+ **mönstrar dom på +alltså dom börjar jobba på+** en liten **kusttanker** som tar dom till New York. (Så dom börjar ju här då i San Francisco i USA. Och sen åker dom runt här POINTING genom här Panama-kanalen. Hit till Texas. Och sen så fortsätter dom upp till New York.) I New York är det dåliga tider. Utanför rederiernas kontor **+alltså dom som äger båtarna+** på Lower West Side ringlar köerna långa med sjöfolk som **+vill ha jobb+ [söker arbete]**. Chieffen och Sally Jones **+dom+ blir strandsatta +där det betyder att dom kommer ingenstans. Dom får inget jobb och dom kan inte (x).+ En råkall februaridag tar Chieffen och Sally Jones färjan över till Staten Island för att söka arbete i hamnen +där+. När dom traskar längs kajerna +så+ får dom se en liten **lastskuta +en liten båt+** som är till salu för 10,000 dollar.**

Regarding the wording that is most relevant to the analysis at hand, the teacher expanded the meaning of three specialized boat terms, such as "general cargo vessel *that's a kind of boat*" and "a small freighter *a small boat*". This means that the teacher kept the specialized terms while adding an everyday hypernym to explain the meaning, thus creating downward semantic shifts towards more everyday meaning. In the first instance, the semantic relationship was made explicit ("that's a kind of boat"). Similarly, in explaining *enrolled*, a field-related word,⁹ the teacher achieved a downward semantic shift by using an everyday expression, "start working on". In contrast to the substitution strategy, the paraphrasing strategy did not flatten the semantic profile of the text, but instead added downward semantic shifts by insertion of easily recognizable words and expressions. However, one of the specialized terms, *coastal tanker*, was not explained, but was emphasized prosodically. While it is not possible to draw certain conclu-

⁹ The Swedish term *mönstra* is specifically associated with enrolling in the military or to a ship's company.

sions based on choices that are likely made spontaneously by the teacher, the text itself provided cues for understanding the word: "coastal tanker *bringing them to New York*". Therefore, it may have been easier for the students to understand.

As a reductive substitution strategy, the expansive paraphrasing of specialized terms was not restricted to the field of seafaring. For example, the teacher paraphrased *emperor suite* (*kejsarssviten*) as "the nicest room" and "the most luxurious room", again choosing a hypernym frequent in ordinary language. The same occurred with "drinking gin", paraphrased as "that is alcohol", and *tall tales* (*skröna*),¹⁰ explained as "that is, stories that may not be exactly true" (see Excerpt 6). Specific terms were again paraphrased using general and common counterparts. The relative precise paraphrase of *tall tale*, "stories which are not exactly true", can likely be attributed to the term being associated with core content of language arts, learning about different genres. The same cannot be said for the numerous specialized terms related to ships and seafaring.

Less frequently, specialized terms were negotiated by using the infusion strategy. For example, the teacher inserted the word *fruit* in the nominal group "*fruits and figs, mangustines and mangos*". Once again, a hypernym was used to facilitate the understanding of specialized vocabulary, in this case related to fruits. As discussed above, it is similar to the paraphrasing strategy in that it retains the original wording while elaborating on it by putting it in simpler words. However, the infusion strategy, relying on additive conjunctions (such as *and*) rather than comparative counterparts (such as *that is*) construes these additions as part of the text rather than departures from it.¹¹ In some instances, the teacher infused words from the same semantic field, which differed from the meaning from the word or expression in the text. For example, the teacher inserted "and money" after the specialized term *securities* (Excerpt 4, session 1, week 1).

Excerpt 4

When Sally Jones knows *everything* about finding hidden bananas +then+ she gets to learn how to find other things, for example gems and jewellery in night tables and **securities +and money+** in alarmed safe boxes.

När Sally Jones kan *allt* om att hitta gömda bananer +då+ får hon lära sig att leta efter andra saker som till exempel juveler och smycken i låsta nattduksbord och **värdepapper +och pengar+** i larmade kassaskåp.

The semantic relationship between *money* (*pengar*) and *securities* (*värdepapper*) is more complicated than relationships of hyponymy and meronymy discussed above. However, both can be found in "alarmed safe-boxes". Thus, the insertion of a common word potentially illuminated a quite dense noun group in the literary text, comprising the specialized term *securities* and an adjectival grammatical metaphor, "*alarmed safe boxes*". In another instance of practicing the infusion approach (session 4, week 5), the teacher infused an orthographically similar *och ror* (in English: *and rows*) to the specialized expression *till rors* (*at the helm*, more literally *at the rudder*).

Excerpt 5

Sally Jones learn to **sit at the helm +and rows+** so the Chief can sometimes get a rest.

Sally Jones lär sig att **sitta till rors +och ror+** så att Chieffen ibland kan få vila litegrann

The teacher's alternative again had a slightly different meaning; sitting at the helm (*till rors*) is different than engaging in rowing.¹²

¹⁰ The meaning of the Swedish word *skröna* is less transparent than *tall tale*.

¹¹ Unlike comparative conjunctions, additive conjunctions feature heavily in narrative texts (Martin & Rose, 2008).

¹² The Swedish expression *till rors* originates from the noun *roder* (that is, rudder), not from the semantically related verb *ror*.

Nevertheless, the infusion of *och ror* conveys the important point of the main character sharing the responsibility for sailing the ship.

The previous examples have discussed the teacher's strategies for simplifying or expanding specialized and field-related terms. The semantic shifts enabled by the frequent paraphrasing strategy were between relatively specialized and ordinary meaning. In other instances, the paraphrasing strategy enabled movements between something abstract and something relatively concrete. This is exemplified in [Excerpt 3](#), when the teacher unpacked the abstract and field-related term "shipping office" with the paraphrase "that is, those owning the boats". This concretizing paraphrase brought an abstract concept closer to everyday experience (adding persons and processes; that is, someone does/has something). In reading another section of the text (session 4, week 5), the teacher similarly explained the abstract concept of *crew* with "those who work on the ship". These stand in contrast to the previously discussed paraphrases, which often provided a general category (for example, *boat* instead of *freighter*) instead of concretizing explanations. The different paraphrasing approaches share the characteristic of creating downward semantic shifts facilitating the understanding of the literary language.

Although the concretizing explanations were comparatively rare in dealing with specialized language, similar strategy use was evident in the negotiation of words and expressions that were not specialized but more generally associated with literary language. This will be explored in the next section.

3.2.2. Negotiating the language of literary descriptions

Still focusing on the frequently used paraphrasing strategy, we turn to the teacher's negotiation of the language of literary descriptions. While the previous sections have reflected the pervasiveness of specialized vocabulary in the book, particularly in relation to the field of seafaring, a more generally expected feature of literary texts is vivid descriptions of characters and setting. These can involve idiomatic expressions that may be unknown to young students and second-language learners. In the excerpt below, the teacher rephrases one idiomatic expression, *at a loss* (*handfallen*),¹³ in everyday wording: "they don't know what to do" ([Excerpt 6](#), session 1, week 1).

Excerpt 6

The police force was at a loss +they do not know what to do+ before the mysterious theft. The thief must have entered through the window of the third floor. But *no* person can climb there. The following months, ten *unexplainable* burglaries occur in the most exclusive districts of Istanbul +that is the richest parts of Istanbul+. The only lead for the police +it+ was that the thief must be a *phenomenal* +an amazingly skilled+ climber. Everyone that may be suspected is arrested but the burglaries continue. In the streets of Istanbul, rumours, and *tall tales* +that is stories that may not be exactly true+ are spread about the flying thief. (And we know who it is, don't we? STUDENTS ARE TALKING We'll see.) When a prince of Egypt visits Istanbul, the flying thief performs its *most audacious* +and most risky+ coup.

Polismakten står handfallen + dom vet inte vad dom ska göra+ inför den mystiska stölden. Tjuven måste ha tagit sig igenom fönstret på tredje våningen. Men dit klarar ju *ingen* människa att klättra. De följande månaderna inträffar ytterligare ett tiotal *oförklarliga* inbrott i *Istanbuls* förmåsta stadsdelar +alltså dom rikaste delarna av Istanbul+. Polisens enda ledtråd +det+ är att tjuven måste vara en *fenomenal* +en fantastiskt duktig+ klättrare. Alla som kan misstänkas blir arresterade men inbrotten fortsätter ändå. På Istanbuls gator sprids rykten och *skräror* +alltså berättelser som kanske inte riktigt är sanna+ om den flygande tjuven. (Och vi vet ju vem det är STUDENTER PRATAR Vi får väl se.) När en egyptisk prins är på studiebesök i Istanbul utför den flygande tjuven sin allra *djävaste* +och mest riskfyllda+ kupp.

She also rephrased *phenomenal* (*fenomenal*) as "amazingly skilled", again choosing an easily recognizable expression. This alteration unpacks the lexical grading of *phenomenal* as a quality (*amazingly* skilled). A recognizable paraphrase was also used for

¹³ The Swedish expression, the compound *handfallen* (that is, *with fallen hands*), is challenging since it is a lexical metaphor that relies on an adjectival grammatical metaphor (from the process *falla*).

the expanded noun phrase "the most *exclusive districts* of Istanbul", rephrased in the common wording "the richest parts". This constituted another downward semantic shift. In other parts of the read-aloud, grammatical metaphors were briefly rephrased congruently, such as "the unavoidable, *that which can't be avoided*" (session 5, week 7) and "repetitive, *nothing happens*" (session 3, week 3). Thus, the processes contained in the descriptive words (*avoid*, *repeat*) became visible. Words like these are important for managing tension and expectancy in narrative texts ([Martin & Rose, 2008](#)).

On other occasions, the teacher expanded significantly on literary descriptions. An example is shown in [Excerpt 7](#) (session 1, week 1).

Excerpt 7

Detective superintendent Xavier Buda, the *smartest* +and *sharpest*+ brain of Istanbul police, +he+ understands that the flying thief can *only* be caught through *guile*. (He can't just, like, try and run after him. So, now it's all about *figuring out a smart plan*.)

Kriminalkommissarie Xavier Buda, *Istanbulpolisens* skarpaste +och smartaste+ hjärna, +han+ förstår att den flygande tjuven *bara* kan fångas med *list*. (Han kan inte bara liksom bara försöka springa efter honom. Utan nu handlar det om att bara *tänka ut en smart plan*.)

The teacher elaborated on the abstract preposition phrase *through guile* ("med list") by referring to the situation in the text (the difficulty of catching a flying thief) and rephrasing it using a common verb, "figuring out a smart plan" ("tänka ut en smart plan"). Similarly, the teacher explained *stranded* (see [Excerpt 2](#)), an adjectival grammatical metaphor, as "they don't get anywhere ... they don't get a job", thus elaborating on the contextual meaning of the expression by using common words and expressions. On another occasion (session 4, week 5), a figurative compound, *långsint* (roughly *unforgiving*), consisting of a metaphorical use of the word *long* (*lång-*) and a barely used word meaning *angry* (*-sint*), was unpacked by the common wording "He is not one to forget easily". Similarly, the concept of *sjöfolk på dekis* – roughly "derelict seafolk" – was concretized as "seamen and such that are on land who are drinking and living it up". In these examples, the literary expressions are not just restated but unpacked by drawing on examples and contextual information. In such an enactment of the rephrasing strategy, the semantic shifts are more pronounced compared to the brief rephrasing of, for example, *amazingly skilled* and *repetitive*.

The final part of [Excerpt 6](#) and the first part of [Excerpt 7](#) are examples of the teacher employing the comparatively rare *infusion* strategy for negotiating literary language. After reading the word *audacious*, the teacher added "and most risky". Thus, a more recognizable word was infused in the nominal group. This was also the case with the infusion of *smartest* in *sharpest and smartest brain*, giving a common alternative to the metaphorical use of *sharp* in the literary text. In encountering the adjective *kry* (in English: *hale*) in another part of the text (session 8, week 10), the teacher infused the common word *frisk* (*well*), thus producing a common collocation *frisk och kry* (approximately *hale and hearty*). On another occasion (session 4, week 5), the teacher facilitated the understanding of *Marseille* by adding a qualifier with recognizable geographical information: *Marseille in France*. Similarly, she infused the everyday term *train* in front of the less familiar *Orient Express*. The infusion strategy seemed a more subtle way of providing access to the literary language than the more frequent paraphrasing strategy.

4. Discussion

Previous research has shown the value of explicit teaching of vocabulary as part of read aloud activities ([Baker et al., 2013](#); [Fien et al., 2011](#); [Swanson et al., 2011](#); [Silverman et al., 2013](#)). Instead of focusing on the explicit teaching of vocabulary, the present study has contributed to the body of research by high-

lighting the various discursive strategies a teacher employed to support the linguistically diverse students' understanding of literary language while reading a children's book. In answer to RQ1, we have highlighted five broad categories of discursive strategies. Among these, the *cohesion-supporting strategy* comprised linguistic alterations that were not immediately concerned with the meaning of literary words and expressions. Furthermore, it did not involve transformation of the experiential meaning of the text. Rather, the teacher's insertions of logical connections, including ones underscoring the drama of the story by signaling expectancy (such as *already* and *at last*) and textually oriented changes of syntax, such as additions of pronouns and auxiliary verbs, played a part of the transformation of the text from writing to speech (see Halliday & Mathiessen, 2014). In addition to making the written story easier to follow by making logical connections more explicit and facilitating tracing of identities and actions (see Martin & Rose, 2007), these alterations also served to insert the teacher's voice as part of appropriating the text in the read-aloud activity.

Although different in nature, the *text comprehension strategies* also put less emphasis on literary words and expressions. Their focus on summarizing important information, pointing out relationships between verbal text and images, and commenting on the drama of the story reflect comprehension-fostering interaction highlighted in research on discussion-based teaching approaches and interactive read-alouds (e.g., Applebee et al., 2003; Sipe, 2000; Terwagne, 2006; Walldén, 2022). From a systemic-functional perspective, they mirror some of the other, more locally oriented, strategies since they involved making connections between text elements explicit and pointing to the drama unfolding (cohesion supporting strategies), as well as rephrasing passages (paraphrasing strategy). While the text comprehension strategies likely supported the students' comprehension and engagement in the read-aloud activity, they were not salient compared with those that focused more explicitly on linguistic alterations of literary words and expressions in the verbal text.

Although rarely used, the *question-answer strategy* served to highlight literary words and expressions by involving the students in discussions. Previous research on read-aloud practices in classrooms with dual or bilingual learners has emphasized the importance of involving students in extended dialogue (Gort et al., 2012) and posing cognitively challenging questions (Mascareño et al., 2017). In contrast to Yang's (2021) SFL approach of uncovering interpersonal patterns promoted by teachers' use of questions (Yang, 2021), we took interest in the opportunities provided for the linguistically diverse students to negotiate the meaning of literary words and expressions. In line with findings of previous research on discourse-bridging interaction, the students were engaged in semantic shifts in which literary words were related to common counterparts (Macnaught et al., 2013; Nygård Larsson, 2018). The exchange focusing on *bitter* (Excerpt 1) resembles examples in a previous study (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021a) since the meaning was negotiated by common synonyms (*sulky*, *grumpy*), a more abstract rephrasing (*dissatisfied with something*), and contextualized by examples from the book. Thus, the interaction reflected the complexity of the meaning of *bitter* (see Maton, 2013) – the common synonyms from everyday language would not have sufficed – while still building closely on the experience of reading the book. As in Walldén (2020), this was not the case with the few occasions of pre-reading discussions about words. Therefore, the present study provides further evidence of the value of making the discourse-bridging interaction part of the social process of reading and understanding the disciplinary texts. Such interaction is conducive to students developing the discursive mobility necessary for accessing disciplinary language and interpreting texts central to the teaching and learning of language arts (Nygård Larsson, 2011, 2018).

While research informed by SFL and LCT has often focused on interactional exchanges between teachers and students (see also Axelsson & Jakobsson, 2020; Humphrey, 2021), the present study highlights the frequent use of strategies to negotiate the meaning of literary words and expressions that did not involve interrupting the read-aloud by asking questions. The relative frequency of these latter strategies is not surprising in itself, since asking questions about all the words that might be unknown to the student would make it very difficult to provide a coherent story reading of a verbally rich picture book such as *The Legend of Sally Jones*. However, previous studies have not described the nature of such strategies. The present study has contributed by showing the teacher's frequent use of *expansive strategies*, either by *paraphrasing* literary words and expressions in common language – to similar effect as the question-answer strategy – or, less frequently, by more subtly inserting words (*infusion*) carrying everyday meaning to illuminate the literary words and expression.

Among the different approaches to literary language, the paraphrasing strategy was particularly frequent and varied. Accordingly, it was an important resource for both main categories of literary language highlighted in the analysis: specialized vocabulary and literary descriptions. The specialized vocabulary in the book, largely relating to seafaring, was negotiated both through use of common language hypernyms, such as *boat* for explaining *general cargo vessel*, and by concretizing the people and processes presented by abstract concepts such as shipping office. The teacher's use of common language entailed semantic downward shifts facilitating comprehension of the terms (see Maton, 2013).

In answer to RQ2, the findings have shown two broad categories among the literary words and expressions: specialized language and language of literary descriptions. While specialized language is a common feature and learning object in content area teaching (Martin, 1990/1993; Maton & Doran, 2017), these expressions have a different role in language arts. For the diverse students in the language arts classroom, the intrinsic value of learning the meaning of the varied and frequent seafaring expressions in the book is low. Rather, the reason for understanding them is that they are part of the adventures of Sally Jones. Therefore, it does not seem problematic that the teacher, by using *reductive strategies* on several occasions, merely *substituted* such terms for common language counterparts, thus flattering the semantic profile of the text instead of widening the semantic range. This points to a balancing act in the read-aloud process: substituting too many specialized words would limit both the aesthetic value of the text and the students' exposure and possibility to learn new language, while retaining too many would diminish the aesthetic experience by either comprehension issues or belaboring the read-aloud with frequent explanations. In other words, the students' involvement in semantic shifts must be weighed against the aesthetic experiences of enjoying and being immersed in the story (e.g., Sipe, 2000). From this perspective, the teacher's prominent use of paraphrases – creating downward semantic shifts by adding everyday meaning to the text – and less frequent but still substantial use of substitutions – appears a fruitful way of managing this balancing act. The sparing use of the reductive *omission* strategy, in which the literary words and expressions were simply removed, strengthens this impression.

With respect to the other main category of literary language, the language of literary descriptions, the result has highlighted that the paraphrases differed in the degree of elaboration. Some literary words and expression were briefly reworked by using common synonyms in expanded noun phrases (for example, rephrasing *exclusive districts* as *richest parts*) and unpacking processes contained in grammatical metaphors (for example, *unavoidable*). In one instance (Excerpt 6), the teacher drew attention to the lexical gradation of the word *phenomenal* by grading a more common word

(*amazingly skilled*). Other literary words and expressions were elaborated with concrete examples and contextual information (such as *through guile*), creating more prominent semantic shifts. Another salient approach for negotiating literary descriptions was the infusion strategy, in which the teacher added common language alternatives (such as *and smartest*) to complement the metaphorical use of *sharpest* in the noun phrase *sharpest brain*. While the use of lexical metaphors, attitudinal vocabulary, grammatical metaphors, and expanded noun phrases has been highlighted as part of disciplinary language arts practices (e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012), the present study has highlighted how such features of language are negotiated through discursive strategies in read-aloud activities.

While the expansive infusion strategy seems conducive to smoothly inserting recognizable meaning in the text, the expansive paraphrasing strategy more explicitly drew attention to the literary words and expressions, and to the process of understanding them through semantic shifts. Although differing slightly in this way, both became part of the teachers' oral transformation of the story and the students' immersion in the adventures of Sally Jones. In addition, they were both conducive for promoting the students' discursive mobility by making connection between literary and everyday meaning. While some researchers have warned against language development concerns overshadowing other important aspects of classroom work with literature (e.g., Gourvenec et al., 2020; Liberg et al., 2012), the present study has highlighted discursive mobility not only as a desirable outcome of the educational process, but as a necessity for ensuring students' enjoyment of a high-quality children's book in a linguistically diverse classroom. Our hope is that the present study can inspire teachers and researchers to approach literary language in a more conscious way. This could involve studies in which teachers reflect on their strategy use and take strategies into consideration when they plan read-aloud activities.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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