

ON THE ROLE OF THE METAPHOR

LINKING LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN L1 EDUCATION

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Abstract

The research question guiding this article reflects an aspiration to elaborate and deepen the understanding of how Michael Polanyi's theoretical framework can enhance the integration of literature and language education. We ask: In what ways do the concepts of personal knowledge and joint meaning, as articulated by Polanyi, contribute to the enhancement of language comprehension within the context of literature education? In the pursuit of answering this question, we first aim to reveal the centrality of the use of metaphors specifically in literature and generally in the development of proficiency in spoken and written language. Secondly, the aim is to present and discuss how Paul Ricoeur's and Polanyi's phenomenologically oriented metaphor theories interlink. The third aim is to show how insight into Polanyian key concepts "personal knowledge" and "joint meaning" may help L1 / Language arts teachers to facilitate and world-orient their teaching. The latter question is explored empirically by analysing empirical data from ethnographic fieldwork of how teachers and senior college students in upper secondary Nordic classroom contexts attribute meaning to three works of literary aesthetic art: a poem, a short story and a play by the Norwegian, awarded authors Stein Mehren and Jon Fosse. Among other aspects, we find that teaching Fosse illuminates Polanyi's main point about the linkage between language and literature learning. For discussion, we argue that a Polanyian approach may help the L1 field overcome the "dyadic split" of separating language and literature in L1 teaching into completely distinct domains.

Keywords: metaphors, phenomenology, literature as art, personal knowledge, joint meaning, L1 education

1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors can be understood as powerful tools for creating meaning and understanding. Scientists rely on metaphors and analogy to make sense of scientific phenomena. Poets rely on metaphors and analogy to draw readers into their world, to express intricate emotions and to challenge conventional thinking. Both in art and science, interpreting metaphors requires the recipients to simultaneously explore the idea-world of a text and the lifeworld of experiences.

However, in the field of literature education research suggests that L1 teachers may find it demanding to invent and introduce mental activities that students need to perform with metaphors (Pieper 2020, p. 127; Zabka, 2016, p. 229). Many L1 teachers consider themselves as effective in teaching when they focus on technical linguistic awareness approaches to metaphors, as these are accepted as part of today's curriculums and assessments (Gabrielsen et al., 2019; Pieper 2020, p. 128). Research suggests that teachers prioritize fostering reading enjoyment, and that justifying literature reading through aims such as perspective-broadening, empathy and literacy development is also widespread (Dera, 2025; Fodstad & Husabø, 2021). Having said that, there is also a tendency, among upper and lower secondary teachers, and policy makers worldwide, to justify reading of imaginative literature for the more narrow, instrumental sake of developing language awareness and reading proficiency (Ongstad, 2024; Doecke et al., 2024; Erixon & Löfgren, 2020). Historically, and critically, this tendency has been characterized as an 'utilitarian paradigm' (Sawyer & van de Ven, 2006) reflecting standards-based reforms catalyzed, in recent decades, by OECD and international testing agencies such as PISA to promote a skills-oriented 'literacification' (Ongstad, 2024) approach to reading, including literary reading (Erixon & Löfgren, 2020; Doecke et al., 2024).

More specifically, looking into research on contemporary literature education practices in a Nordic context (which is the context of the present study), a recent large-scale comparative empirical study of textual practices in Nordic Language Arts/L1 based on video observations of 112 LA classrooms on secondary level across the five Nordic countries, finds a narrow approach to reading (Magnusson et al., 2026). The researchers conclude:

The findings show that teachers predominantly use literary texts over nonfiction texts and that these are most often introduced to students in a read-aloud format and discussed in whole-class dialogues. The purpose of these textual practices are, in general, to practise reading comprehension, mainly on a superficial level. (Magnusson et al., 2026, p. 143).

Other Nordic research finds that teachers attempting to legitimize literature education from reader-oriented and inquiry-oriented positions struggle with testifying progression and assessment, and more broadly the 'quality' of such open-

ended interpretative approaches (Myren-Svelstad & Grütters, 2022; Hansen et al., 2019).

In sum, empirical research both internationally and from the Nordic context, raises questions as to whether potentially fertile points of connection could be established between linguistic and literary educational practices in school and theories of literacy development and literary interpretations (Dera, 2025, p. 25; Myren-Svelstad & Grütters, 2022, p. 22). In relation to this, we find phenomenological literature theory, and especially Polanyi's (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) understanding of metaphors role in science particularly interesting. Polanyi contributes to literary theory and teaching ('didactics', as it would be phrased in a Nordic context) with concepts that clarify the intentional structure, which metaphors and literature in general are built on, and he also assigns an important role to imagination, personal knowledge, dialogue and shared interpretation between peers in knowledge building communities (Aaness & Elf, 2024; Aaness, 2025, in press). These contributions may also be situated within the perspective-expanding, literacy and empathy-enhancing potential inherent in literature (Dera, 2025; Myren-Svelstad & Grütters; Pieper, 2020).

In this article Polanyi's less well-known metaphor theory will be explored in relation to the more widely recognized metaphor theory of the French phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur (1978). Our choice of the theories of Polanyi and Ricoeur in our search for a use of the study of metaphors to inspire the teaching of literature, is closely related to their main interest being in the creative aspect of "living" metaphors of metaphors, and how this gives students access to reflection over the connection between the grasp of their own experiences and the manner in which literature and science may open the world for them. The Danish literature scholar Thomas Illum Hansen (2012) nevertheless emphasizes that phenomenology operates with theses about language and cognition that are compatible with cognitive and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Chavoshan & Fernández, 2025; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In relation to one of our empirical analyses, we will address some points of such a convergence.

2. METAPHORS, IMAGINATION AND MEANING IN L1 - A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Michael Polanyi was a British Hungarian phenomenologist and scientist. Before he began to take an interest in philosophy and epistemology of science, he had an extensive body of research in natural science (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, pp. ix-xi). In science, expansion of new ideas is always associated with development of new analogies, and new ideas are always explored through shared new language. Polanyi finds this to be true, also with the arts (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975; Aaness & Elf, 2024; Aaness, 2025, in press). One of Polanyi's most well-known expressions are that all knowledge is "from-to knowledge" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 34). By this Polanyi means that there is always a perspective that shapes what we see or understand.

Specifically, what we have in focal awareness (mind) – encompassing elements as abstract concepts, a written or an oral utterance – is always grounded in and formed by something we only have subsidiary and often “only” tacit awareness of, such as how our understanding of signs or sounds and words is constituted through our physical interaction with the lifeworld (body). The universal aspect of Polanyi's theory is grounded in the role given to embodiment (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975; Festré & Östbye, 2021). The mind relies on its working on the operation of physiological principles, though the mind can control the boundary conditions left undetermined by physiology (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 51; see also Hadjimichael et al., 2024).

In the paper “Thinking with Polanyi’s philosophy of art and knowledge: Embodiment and the language developing potential in world-oriented literature education” (Aaness & Elf, 2024, p.81), we found that Polanyi's main conceptual ideas on intentionality, “being in the world” and embodiment intersect with ideas expressed by other phenomenologists, such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Ingarden and Ricoeur. However, we also found that Polanyi's unique contribution to phenomenology in general, and literature education in particular, namely “the structure of tacit knowledge”, also known as “from-to knowledge”, offers profound insights into the structure of intentionality that is especially helpful for L1 teachers in revealing the language learning potential of metaphors. In Aaness (2025), a didactic model that illustrates the dual conditions between different forms of knowledge awareness is developed.

Research that systematizes curricular aspects of literature education from an international perspective reveals that a poly-paradigmatic structure exists in today's L1-curricula that is linked to three main 'shifts': shifts in perception of literature (i); shifts in perspectives on students as learners (ii); and shifts towards expectations regarding institutional education in society (iii) (Pieper, 2020, pp. 118-119, with reference to Witte and Sâmihăian, 2013). Multiple paradigms and approaches lead to tensions between different educational aims and make teachers struggle to balance the fostering of personal growth and engagement with literature against the need to impart disciplinary knowledge and skills. As one implication, this complexity makes it difficult for teachers to effectively convey the significance of metaphors (Pieper, 2020, p. 126; Pieper & Strutz, 2018).

Nonetheless, in the paper ‘Thinking with Polanyi’s philosophy of art and knowledge: Embodiment and the language developing potential in world-oriented literature education’ (Aaness & Elf, 2024) we investigated the language promoting and developing potential of Polanyi's metaphor theory. Thinking with Polanyi's theory vis-à-vis classroom practices of the intermingling of literature and literature teaching amongst three teachers and eighteen students in upper secondary Nordic classrooms, we identified four different aspects of tacit knowledge as embodied in the engagement with literature as art: the functional, the phenomenal, the semantic, and inferred from these three: the ontological. Our results corroborate the hypothesis that both spoken and written language predominantly depend on metaphorical frameworks (Aaness and Elf, 2024; Aaness, in press; Polanyi & Prosch,

1975). This is also a key point in Irene Pieper's research. She emphasizes that there are strong links between literature as art and the communicative skills of speaking and listening, writing and reading (Pieper, 2020, p. 117). Moreover, she links language awareness, in line with other research on literature didactic, to reflections on literature and to linguistic knowledge that may lead to a broad notion of language and meaning (Myren-Svelstad & Grütters, 2022, p. 17; Pieper, 2020, p. 117). As we understand it, this assertion can be related to the ontological, basic phenomenological assumption that literature is a double-articulated phenomenon – allowing us to explore both language and lifeworld experiences (Aaness & Elf, 2024; Hansen, 2023; Harstad, 2020).

In *Meaning*, the book that culminated Michael Polanyi's philosophical endeavors and which he wrote with assistance of Harry Prosch (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, pp. ix-xi), a coherent theory of aesthetics and science based on a new understanding of meaning is developed. The theory underscores the indispensable role of imagination in scientific discoveries, emphasizing that imagination requires both trust and creative effort (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, pp. 57-66). Scientists, like poets, must trust their imaginative powers to perceive problems, come up with plausible hypotheses, and communicate envisions and solutions. A discovery starts by thrusting forward ideas that someone feels to be promising, because they sense the availability of resources that will support their ideas (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 58). Polanyi's point is that imagination goes into action to start a scientific inquiry that indicates, often vaguely, a hidden feature of reality. Considering the close relationship in phenomenological thinking between Paul Ricoeur and Polanyi, Ricoeur emphasizes, in the article 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling' (1978), that metaphors challenge the boundary between literal and figurative language, offering insights into reality through imaginative resemblance and emotional resonance.

While both authors and readers must trust in imagination to enable literature as art to truly come to life, Zabka (2016) finds that a challenge of today's L1 literature education is that even though readers' responses to literary works are inextricably bound up with their emotions and judgments, the most basic step of reading literature, through bringing the work of art into an existence as an imaginary space within one's self, has been displaced within the academic world "by (on the one hand) a rhetoric of unreadability and incomprehension, and (on the other) a focus on cultural and social forces that shape a text" (Zabka, 2016, p. 229). According to Fodstad & Husabø (2021), Myren-Svelstad & Grütters (2022) and Dera (2025), literature education must draw on students' experiences and imaginations. However, to give a coherent theoretical account of what happens in such work, and of its outcomes, remains challenging.

Both Polanyi and Ricoeur place imagination at the center of their metaphor theories. According to Ricoeur (1978, p. 146) a metaphor is a semantic innovation that creates new meaning by fusing cognition, imagination, and feeling, for accomplishing which the maker of metaphors is seen as a craftsman. Polanyi (Polanyi

& Prosch, 1975, p. 58) writes that “[w]e can speak as we do because we feel that many thousands of words are available for our novel purposes, and we can trust the powers of imagination, bent on this purpose, to evoke from these available resources the implementation of our purpose ...”

Polanyi's idea aligns with key findings in Margaret Magnus's thesis ‘What's in a Word? Studies in Phonosemantics’ (2001), that suggests that even phonemes—the smallest units of sound—carry semantic meaning. Analogously, Illum Hansen (2012) explores how subtle shifts in sounds can influence meaning in poetry. Drawing on the poem ‘Arabesk til en Haand-tegning av Michel Angelo’ [a hand-drawing of Michelangelo] (Jacobsen, 1929, cited in Hansen, 2012, p. 51), he shows how change in just one phoneme can alter a word's meaning—and with it, the entire tone of the poem. For example, replacing the /o/ sound in the verb “rolling” (the Danish word is *rulle*) with /i/ to form the verb “rilling” (the Danish word is *ralle*) shifts the reader's focus from a visual image of *seeing* a wave roll to an auditory experience of the echoing sound, of *hearing* a wave rill. Not only does this phono-semantic shift affect how individual words are perceived, but it also changes how words relate to each other within a sentence, ultimately shaping the reader's imagination. In Polanyi's terms, this illustrates how what we are seeing *at* or *to* is grounded in where we are seeing *from*. The two dimensions of from-to-knowing are working together to create meaning, and they thus bear on a “joint meaning” (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 80). Based on this initial diagnosis of how the concepts of metaphor, imagination and meaning are understood from a Polanyian perspective, and what role they play in L1 education, this article sets out to explore how the Polanyian concepts of personal knowledge and joint meaning might enhance language comprehension in the domain of literature education. The concepts are analyzed in relation to Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy and theory of metaphor, as both Polanyi and Ricoeur highlight the pivotal role of imagination and feeling – not only as personal and tacit forms of knowing, but also as shared, universal capacities for meaning-making that are deeply interwoven with language awareness.

3. AIMS, RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this article is to explore how the Polanyian concepts *personal knowledge* and *joint meaning* may help L1/Language arts teachers to facilitate, and world-orient their teaching. First, we present and discuss the Polanyian key terms by connecting them to main ideas in the more well-known metaphor theory of the French phenomenologist Ricoeur. Next, we use these concepts for analysing empirical data drawn from ethnographic fieldwork (Green & Bloom, 2005) of how teachers and senior college students in upper secondary Nordic classroom contexts attribute meaning to works of literary aesthetic art – a poem by Stein Mehren, and a short story and a play by Jon Fosse. While Polanyian concepts are our key conceptual, abductive access point for trying to understand how meaning-making evolves in these classroom examples, we also compare and discuss this approach, as hinted at,

with alternative Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; see also Chavoshan & Fernández, 2025) to test and challenge the strengths and potential limitations of a Polanyian approach.

Based on the analyses, we conclude and discuss our findings. Among other aspects, we argue that teaching Fosse – an author honored the Nobel Prize of literature for inducing feelings and questions in readers “that ultimately exist beyond language” (Nobel Prize Committee, 2023) – illuminates Polanyi's main point about the linkage between language and literature learning. For discussion, we argue that a Polanyian approach may help the L1 field overcome the “dyadic split” (Ongstad et al., 2007; Green & Erixon, 2020) of separating language and literature in L1 teaching into completely distinct domains. Furthermore, in the advent of artificial intelligence, we argue that his knowledge theory emphasizing the role of metaphor and imagination, is relevant for other L1 knowledge domains and for L1 education broadly.

Methodologically, the study combines a theoretical exploration with empirical inquiry drawing on an abductive epistemology (Peirce, 1998 [1903]; see also Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2008, p. 55). The main interest is qualitative, and hermeneutic, in the sense that the study attempts to generate new generalisable theoretical understanding (Flyvbjerg, 2006) of L1 teaching in a situated upper-secondary context, without making any broader claims on L1 teaching, nor, of course, on empirical representativity. Theoretically, focus is on phenomenological theory on knowledge and meaning making with a particular focus on metaphor. We argue that this framework is both intrinsically robust and externally and practically applicable for developing a world-oriented L1 education focusing on the integration of literature and language learning, a key concern of L1/Language arts education. Empirically, the aim is to explore and illuminate – through indicative and generalisable examples (Flyvbjerg, 2006) – how the teaching of literary aesthetic works of art in L1 may contribute to the didactic conceptualisation and understanding of how the linkage of literature and language could be taught and learned by students. Empirical examples are selected based on strategic interests allowing for conceptual development and theoretical generalisation; or what prominent L1-scholar Debra Myhill has coined as “practical examples” (Myhill, 2026) that may help both researchers as well as practitioners and teacher educators understand what is at stake in practice. Specifically, examples are taken from fieldwork conducted in a Norwegian upper-secondary context that Author 1 had access to (see also Aanes & Elf, 2024). Students and teachers were fully informed about the fact that they were part of a research project and gave their consent to use data.

We approach the field from an *ethnographic perspective*. As Green and Bloome point out, “By adopting an ethnographic perspective, we mean that it is possible to take a more focused approach (i.e. do less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group” (Green & Bloome, 2005, p. 193). This is precisely what we do in the present study,

focusing on the particular aspect of literature education in L1. From a philosophy of science perspective, the selection of examples from ethnographic fieldwork is justified as a “proof of concept” (Elliott, 2021) for better understanding what may and could be realised in L1 teaching.

Further elaborating on our field methodology, in one of the empirical examples, we draw on Aaen's own teaching experiences (see section 4.2.2). The teaching experience was represented in a self-ethnographically reflected form (Aaen, 2024; Baarts, 2010, Ellis et al. 2015; Alvesson, 2003). Self-ethnography calls for a specific kind of epistemological and methodological attention. In Alvesson's view, self-ethnography should be distinguished from auto-ethnography. As he defines self-ethnography:

A self-ethnography is a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a “natural access”, is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. The researcher then works and/or lives in the setting and then uses the experiences, knowledge and access to empirical material for research purposes. (Alvesson, 2003, p. 174).

Alvesson further explains that “The term self-ethnography may sound as if the researcher her- or himself that is focused. The intention is, however, (...) to draw attention to one's own cultural context, what goes on around oneself rather than putting oneself and one's experiences in the centre.” (ibid., p. 175). Thus, he proposes that “the work situation provides the viewpoint”, arguing that universities could be one relevant setting for such studies. In our study's analysis based on self-ethnography, the setting is a similar educational context on a lower level, namely Norwegian upper-secondary education, more specifically L1-teaching of Norwegian, which Author 1 has prior in-depth organizational access to knowledge of. While self-ethnography has multiple advantages, not the least when it comes to getting access to ‘practical examples’ that could help us better understand, as in this study's case, the linkage between language and literature in L1 teaching, one should also, self-critically, beware of biased pre-understanding and researcher-subjectivity (Ellis et al., 2015; Alvesson, 2003, p. 184). Ensuring validity in analyses, resisting the temptation for subjectivity and pre-understanding bias, data analyses have been conducted in both separate individual and intersubjective ways in a collaboration between Author 1 and Author 2.

Finally, on a more specific methodological note, fieldwork comprises interviews, and citations from the interviews are transcribed verbatim. Full stop signals end of meaning and a marking of pause. Italics in citations signals emphasis by orator. Three full stops ... signals longer pause of talk.

4. THINKING WITH RICOEUR AND POLANYI'S METAPHOR THEORIES IN RELATION TO L1 LITERATURE TEACHING

In this part we explore how Polanyi's concepts of personal knowledge and joint meaning relate ontologically to Ricoeur's views on interpretation, cognition, imagination, and feeling in metaphor theory. Drawing on *Meaning* (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) and Ricoeur's (1978; 2016) key texts, we apply a "thinking with theory" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) approach to empirical examples, examining how these frameworks can deepen our understanding of teaching practices and the integration of language and literature in L1 education.

4.1 *The concepts of personal knowledge and joint meaning*

Both Ricoeur (2016, 1978) and Polanyi (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) view the meaning-making process of reading as an interactive, interpretative act akin to dialogue. They emphasize the reader's active role in the meaning making process, and they explain how this process involves a continuous interplay between the text and the reader's own lifeworld context and understanding. The dialogical approach underscores the dynamic nature of interpretation and the co-creation of meaning between the text and the reader.

Ricoeur (2016, p. 137) argues that the author's role diminishes once the text is written. The author's role consists primarily in the creation of the text. When the text is written, it gains autonomy and becomes independent of the author's intentions and context. The meaning of the text is not fixed by the author but is open to interpretation by its readers.

Polanyi emphasizes, like Ricoeur, that the text's meaning is not solely determined by the author. Though the author's creative imagination is crucial in the initial creation of the text. Polanyi explains an artist's vision as an integration of experience which, like perception, can succeed or fail – or achieve partial success. "The artist himself will judge in the first place whether his product is a true response to his experience. Then his readers will respond to his meaning by the experience the artist's work evokes in them and will accept it as true if they are deeply moved by it" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, pp. 108-109). The creative individuality of artistic work is seen as distinct from the vagaries of the artist's own entirely private existence. "Setting a work of art apart from the concrete practical problems of some unique person's daily life gives it a universal and *yet personal significance* to which others may also be able to respond" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 109, our italics). The quotation illustrates that Polanyi refrains from conceptualizing personal and universal meaning as mutually exclusive or inherently contradictory. A work of art—whether created by an artist or a scientist—will invariably convey personal knowledge and reflections.

As will become evident in the ensuing comparative analysis, both Polanyi and Ricoeur, though differently, argue that there is a difference between the kind of

objectivity that is created in artworks for the attainment of the readers and the denial of a false concept of objectivization that is used to deny the personal aspects of art. Polanyi focuses on fundamental similarities of science and art as both are forms of personal knowledge, whereas the dimension of explanation is understood by Ricoeur as the one where science meets language and art. Albeit differently, Ricoeur also accepts and sees science and art in a cooperative perspective.

In the essay 'What is a text? Explanation and interpretation', Ricoeur (2016) describes the act of reading as a dialogical approach that differs from the act of speech in the way that the presence found in dialogue, where two (or more) alternately speak and listen, is replaced in the text by the distance between the one who writes and the one who reads. Written language differs from spoken utterance in the way that the semantic independence of the language enables an objectification of the utterance. When the utterance is written down rather than spoken, the utterance is preserved and made into an archive available for the individual as well as the collective memory (Ricoeur, 2016, p. 137).

Ricoeur links explanation of a text to linguistics and semantics. Interpretation is linked to self-understanding: "(...) interpretation of a text ends up in the self-interpretation of a subject who henceforth understand himself better" (Ricoeur, 2016, p. 145). As he states, self-understanding provides a round-about way of understanding cultural signs in which the self contemplates himself and forms himself: "(...) reflection is nothing without mediation by means of signs and cultural work and (...) explanation is nothing if it is not incorporated, as an intermediary stage, in the process of self-understanding" (Ricoeur, 2016, p. 145). The constitution of the self and the constitution of meaning happen simultaneously. Referring to Aristotle, Ricoeur (2016, p. 149) retains the idea that interpretation is interpretation by language before being interpretation on language; and by referring to Peirce, Ricoeur (2016, p. 159) links meaning making to "a chain of interpretation produced by the interpretative community and incorporated into the dynamics of the text". Explanation of a literary work, in this context, involves analyzing the structure, function and deeper meanings embedded in the language of the text. As we understand it, self-understanding goes beyond personal response to analytical knowledge, language comprehension, engagement and discussion.

The concept of joint meaning developed by Polanyi refers in a similar way to how we, by integrating background knowledge, can be aware of the constituent parts that establish focal wholes (Polanyi, 1975, p. 34). As previously discussed, literature education can facilitate understanding of the interplay between phonetic elements within words and the mental imagery they evoke (Hansen, 2012; Magnus, 2001). To elucidate the mechanisms underlying this process, Polanyi (1975, p. 34) employs a metaphor to how a stereoscopic viewer presents two images—one to each eye – and how the brain integrates these two images into a single, three-dimensional perception. Neither image alone produces the full effect; it is the integration that creates the depth and coherence of the experience. The metaphor explains joint meaning as an integration of several different images. Subsidiaries or background

knowledge are generally like the individual images in the stereoscopic viewer, not in the focus of attention, still we can isolate and integrate them to expand our understanding of their significance for our perception of focal wholes (Aaness, 2025, p. 137). The example with the stereoscopic viewer is thus used in a metaphorical grasp of the function of metaphors as integrating more meanings. It's a metaphor of the metaphor's function in producing focal meaning. "(...) the two pictures function as *subsidiaries* to our seeing their *joint* image, which is their joint meaning" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 34).

According to Polanyi there is a hierarchy of two-level structures in from-to-knowing operating in knowledge of all sorts of things. What we are seeing "from" is always directing what we are seeing "at" or "to". An oral utterance involves multiple two-levels structures:

At the lowest level (1) there is the production of voice sounds. These sounds are combined at the next-higher level (2) into the utterance of meaningful words. These words then (3) achieve further meaning by our dwelling in them in order to integrate them into the sort of meaning that only sentences can have. Sentences themselves are then (4) worked together into a style or mode of creating impressions of intelligible points – something that does not exist in sentences as such. Finally (5), the style or mode of creating impressions must be used (dwelt in) towards the attainment, through it, of the ideas or results that are the ultimate focal aim of communication (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 50).

As Polanyi explains, the relationship between the levels in an utterance is such that each level operates under the control of the next higher level. Each level is subject to dual control. First by the laws that apply to its elements in themselves, secondly by the laws that control the comprehensive entity formed by them (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, pp. 50-51). The highest level of meaning-making is by Polanyi identified as that which emerges when we immerse ourselves in the entirety of the utterance (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 50).

To summarize, we find that Polanyi's and Ricoeur's descriptions of the meaning-making process have much in common. Both emphasize the role of the individual and the strong links between literature as art and communicative skills such as speaking and listening, writing and reading. What Polanyi specifically provides us with are analytical concepts that enable us to distinguish between different knowledge bases. As Ricoeur (2016, p. 143) links explanation of a text to linguistics and semantics, and interpretation of a text to a subject who henceforward understands himself and the cultural signs in which the self contemplates and forms himself, Polanyi (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, pp. 32-42) describes understanding as shifts between subsidiary awareness (background knowledge ("from" where we see)) to focal awareness (foreground element ("to" what we see)). Joint (novel) meaning both emerge from the dynamic interplay between background knowledge and focal elements and arise when individuals extend their knowledgebase through sharing individual subsidiary knowledge through dialogue in a community among peers. The latter can be compared to what Ricoeur (2016, p. 150) refers to as "a chain of interpretation produced by the interpretative community and incorporated into the

dynamics of the text". Hence, we find that the term joint meaning can be used in two different, though connected senses: 1) Joint meaning is created in metaphors particularly, and in both science and art more generally, through the integration of more components or images in the background knowledge. 2) Joint meaning is established through communication among peers, both among readers of art and students of science (in communities of different kinds and compositions).

Now, after we have been thinking with Ricoeur and Polanyi in a comparative theoretical mode synthesizing their shared insights, we want to bring these insights into thinking with the empirical practices of L1 education. The following 'practical empirical example' (cf. above), collected in a Norwegian classroom context, will be used to explore how joint images, which bear on joint meaning (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 34) can be established and communicated.

4.1.1 Reviving dead metaphors: Joint meaning created through dwelling in subsidiary clues exemplified through a classroom exploration of the poem I hold your head (Mehren, 2019)

The teacher starts the literature class by telling the students that in an effort to understand the poem of today, they will have to bring out the knowledge they carry with them from the subject Technology and Research Theory. Then he asks the students if they have ever reflected on the weight of the head on their bodies? Today they will talk about metaphysics, but before they enter the conversation, he wants his students to physically put their heads in each other's hands. The students start talking, and the atmosphere in the classroom gets noisy. A boy points out that he will not take part in this. He pulls his chair aside and remarks that he won't participate because he got a cold. Otherwise, the students move their chairs and lower their upper bodies and heads to the floor, and in an almost horizontal position they place their heads in the hands of their classmates. There is talk of how much a head weighs, and a boy says that he has heard that the weight of the head is approximately 2 kilos. The teacher asks if anyone has ever held a baby, and they talk about the weight of various objects they have held. This way the students' life-world experiences are activated. From there, the teacher projects the poem 'I hold your head' (Mehren, 2019) on a screen in the front of the classroom and reads the first lines of the poem loud:

I hold your head
in my hands, as you hold
my heart in your tender care

The teacher stops reading, and comments on the first three lines. "There is an interaction here; head-heart. Can you imagine it? Try to explain this in your own words. What does 'tender care' mean?" The students talk with their neighbors, and thereafter they have a classroom conversation about what the word 'tender care'

could mean. One boy says that he thinks that 'tender care' has to do with trust. Another interprets the lines to be about mutual love. A third student agrees.

The teacher thinks aloud: "When I recently asked you to hold each other's heads, it is because I wanted you to remember the poem. In the rest of the poem this is magnified. Tenderness and trustworthiness are becoming increasingly widespread phenomena". The teacher reads on:

as everything holds or is
held by something else than itself

"Can we understand this?" The teachers' question is hanging in the air. "Well, then something sensuous and physical comes again", he says, as he continues reading:

As the sea lifts a stone
to its shores, as the tree
holds the ripe autumn fruits, as

"Have you been walking on such stony shore beaches? Have you ever thought about what the forces of nature can do? How does the sea lift rocks? I'm not a physicist, we know a lot, but not everything about the universe", the teacher says. "What holds and is held? And if it is not held, then wouldn't all this be wasted? What or who is keeping order in all this?" The teacher wonders aloud and then he finishes reading the poem:

(...), as
the world is lifted through the space of worlds
thus we both are held by something
and lifted
to where mystery holds mystery in its hand

As he finishes reading, he asks the students what they think the poem is about. The students raise their hands, and the teacher lets them speak:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Student 1: | If one thinks of love. To hold and to be held. It's about relationships in a way. To hold and be held? |
| Student 2: | We depend on each other. That everyone is dependent on each other. It's about mutual dependency. |
| Student 3: | It's about balance. That balancing is important. |

The teacher listens, he confirms and asks the students questions. He acknowledges and follows up on the students' statements, such as when he is saying:

Teacher: Yes, it's kind of about trust and proximity, isn't it? Could it be a love poem?

Student 4: I find that it talks about the moment against eternity.

Teacher: It is an existential theme Things live forever when we take care of the moment and write it down.

The example illustrates the intentionality and dynamics in from-to-relying, how subsidiary-focal orientation is revealed, and joint meaning is created within a class community. By asking the students to lower their upper bodies in the hands of their classmates, we can see how the teacher gives the students a shared, specific experience that enhances their ability to form analogies. Next, through projecting the poem on the front board, as well as reading the poem aloud, the teacher directs the students' focus on the poem. By doing this, a conversation about the poetic language (to what we see) that shapes the imaginative and embodied images (from what we see) arises. The relationship between words and subsidiary embodied lifeworld experiences are simultaneously and jointly explored.

The teacher points out that the atmosphere in the first lines of the poem is characterized by a relationship of trust between an I who holds a your's head, and a you who holds an I's heart in his tender care. The students have already had a bodily experience by holding a fellow student's head in their hands. Through this experience the meaning of an abstract universal word—the verb “to hold”—has been actualized. In everyday speech the metaphorical meaning of this verb is trivialized, but in the context of the poem the meaningful content of the verb is brought back to the lifeworld. After reading the next lines, “so everything holds and is held / by something else than itself”, the teacher questions whether it is possible to understand this, before he comments aloud on the sensual physical image of how “the ocean lifts a stone to its shores”.

How stones end up on beach shores is not something we usually walk around thinking about, though we do have background knowledge of how the power of tides and waves lift and distribute millions of stones to shores around the world. By asking the students questions, such as “have you been to such stony shore beaches?”, the teacher makes the students aware of how subsidiary lifeworld knowledge and experiences form their interpretation of the poem. The teacher, so to say, models the extent and dynamics in from-to relying. He shows how literature connects to the students' lifeworld experiences and demonstrates how we tacitly integrate subsidiary knowledge into a focal whole.

The elasticity of written language or “how chains of interpretation can be produced in interpretative community and incorporated into the dynamics of the

text” (Ricoeur, 2016, p. 159), is e.g. shown when the teacher invites the students to share their interpretation of the words “tender care”. One of his students suggest that “tender care” has to do with trust, while another student interprets the words to be about mutual love. The example shows how shared understanding is built through communication about polyphonic qualities of texts and how words have nuances of (semantic) meaning—how words are pointing in a personal subsidiary way to the focal integration upon which they bear.

The reading of the poem ‘I hold your head’ (Mehren, 2019) in the Norwegian L1 class, demonstrates the dynamics between the subsidiary and the focal link in knowledge processes. It illustrates how joint meaning is created through dwelling in subsidiary clues and shows how the subsidiaries, in addition to carrying their own meaning, also incorporate meaning into the focal whole. It illustrates the collaborative and integrative process of discovery and understanding, and it provides us with ideas on how we, in literature education, simultaneously can explore language and lifeworld experiences, these «(...) pictures [that] function as *subsidiaries* to our seeing their *joint* image, which is the joint meaning” (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 34).

Though the teacher clearly facilitates a meaningful encounter with the poem, the basic metaphor that is activated, the concrete and extended meanings of the verb “to hold”, might be categorized as a dead or conventionally established metaphor (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 34; Aaness & Elf, 2024, p. x). The metaphorical expression tends to be so obvious that it can be reduced to an analogy, and this may be the reason why the poem does not engage the students personally, as the two following two texts of Fosse where the students' feelings become infused in the personal reception. As presented in the scheme cited above from Polanyi, the framework on levels 4 and 5 are particularly open to embodiment of the students' imaginations and experiences. These levels invite the creation of living metaphors—whether they are found in the text or not or defined by the students themselves. In the following section, this will be explored.

4.2 Creating living metaphors: Towards an understanding of the semantic role of imagination and feeling

Due to the fact that the activation of the imaginative world through a first-person perspective is at the core interest of phenomenological approaches to literature, we should reflect more on the matter of interpretation and objectivity.

In the article ‘What is a text?’ we find Ricoeur (2016, pp. 149-150) referring to Peirce and the triadic relationship between object, sign and interpretant in his effort to account for how interpretation can attain objectivity. Ricoeur regards Peirce's model, with its openness to an infinite series of interpretants, as the most suitable framework for articulating his own concept of textual interpretation. Whereas structuralism models higher-level structures on phonology, it is the structure of

lexical units that informs the organization of utterances and texts. In the model which Ricoeur draws from Pierce:

(...) the object is the intended meaning of the text, the sign is the depth semantics, unearthed by structural analysis, and the series of interpretants is the chain of interpretation produced by the interpretative community and incorporated into the dynamics of the text. In this chain the first interpretants serve as a tradition for the last interpretants which constitute the interpretation in the true sense of the term (Ricoeur, 2016, p. 150).

As we remember, Polanyi (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 50) underscores that it is by dwelling in the imaginary space that we can be aware of the subsidiary clues in which we dwell and upon which we create our joint images. Within a class community, this means, as we understand it, much like how Ricoeur puts it, that we can extend our meaning of a word, a sentence, an utterance or a text, when we share from what we are seeing to or at. According to Polanyi, meaning is constructed through the integration of background and foreground knowledge—either individually or collectively—into a coherent focal whole, while Ricoeur argues that the meaning of a text is always co-created in interaction with one or more readers. As we interpret it, both underscores that while there is a relationship between the different levels of meaning in a text, higher-order units possess a greater degree of complexity and place greater demands on the reader or the community of readers. We understand this to be connected to the factors that both enable and constrain the space for imagination to operate.

In line with Polanyi, Ricoeur (1978) emphasizes that understanding metaphorical meaning making involves more than just analysing language; it also requires consideration of how imagination works. By integrating insights about how we imagine and create mental images, Ricoeur (1978, pp. 147-153) explains the operation of how metaphors function and convey meaning in three steps.

First, imagination is understood as “seeing” and the ability to make good metaphors is understood as the ability “to contemplate likeness” (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 147). Insight into likeness is both a thinking and a seeing, it consists of the grasping of “combinatory possibilities offered by the proportionality and consequently the establishment of the proportionality by the rapprochement between the two ratios” (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 148). Ricoeur calls this productive character of the insight “predicative assimilation” (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 148), emphasising that this process has another character than that in terms of the old association by resemblance. The function of imagination in the process of semantic innovation he sees as the ability to produce new concepts—not above but through the differences (Ricoeur, 1978, pp. 148–149).

Secondly, Ricoeur (1978, p. 149) incorporates the semantics of the metaphor by describing the process of imagination as a pictorial dimension. The pictorial dimension refers to the way metaphors evoke images in our minds blending the verbal and non-verbal elements of language. As he says: “[m]etaphorical meaning

compels us to explore the borderline between the verbal and nonverbal" (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 151).

The third step Ricoeur (1978, p. 151) calls "suspension". Suspension allows us to "dwell" (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 153) in the metaphorical space—exploring new meanings and connections that are not immediately apparent. By suspending our literal understanding, we dwell in the imaginative and creative potential of the metaphor. This process opens a space where we can engage more deeply with the metaphor's imagery and emotional resonance. Suspension invites us to dwell in the metaphorical realm, embracing the ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings that metaphors offer. According to Ricoeur (1978, p.153) dwelling is essential for fully experiencing and understanding the transformative power of metaphors. In Heidegger (1997, 2010, 2013) dwelling appears as a phenomenological key concept intrinsically linked to language.

Feelings accompany and complete imagination in its function of schematization of the new predicative congruence. Schematization is, as Ricoeur describes it, a kind of insight into the mixture of like and unlike (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 156). The grasping of the new congruence is "felt" as well as "seen". By saying that it is felt, he underscores, as we understand it, that the readers by imagination are included in the process of meaning making, as feelings are essentially personal and cannot be objectified.

If the process can be called, as I called it, predicative assimilation, it is true that we are assimilated, that is, made similar, to what is seen as similar. This self-assimilation is a part of the commitment proper to the "illocutionary" force of the metaphor as speech act. We feel like what we see like (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 156).

Ricoeur states that feelings must not be seen as something contrary to thought; "It is thought made ours" (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 156). He describes feelings, like imagination, to have a split structure in poetic discourse. Just as imagination suspends literal reference to open new ways of seeing reality, poetic feelings suspend everyday emotions and transform them into symbolic experiences. This transformation allows readers to be attuned to reality in a non-objectifying, existential way (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 157). As we understand it, new semantic pertinence is born by the whole utterance. Feeling, imagination, and cognition work together in metaphors to generate meaning that transcend literal expression. Feelings are described as ways of being or finding ourselves within the world in ways that are pre-cognitive and cannot be (fully) represented in and with discourse (see also Schatzki, 2017).

According to Polanyi (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) an author distills a focused emotional form from a vast reservoir of unstructured feelings, which the readers, in turn, respond to by resonating emotionally, drawing on their own memories and experiences. To produce a work of art is to make something never seen but grasped in a vague way by powers of anticipation. In this essential feature the artist's quest is near to that of the scientist. However, once a scientist has made a discovery, the possession of these things by others requires little effort of the imagination. This is

not the case with art, as it is only through the vision of a creative artist's enormous capacity that his art is enabled to live for others. The meaning he creates therefore requires re-creation by the imagination of readers (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 95). Fortunately, the readers' visions do not have to include the artist's strict personal feelings, memories, etc. Whenever our powers of integration produce coherence, they do so by cutting off the subsidiaries of the artist's integrated body. According to Polanyi this is in fact the principle which turns every discovery or work of art "into a sort of reality with life, so to speak, of its own—into a body of living thoughts severed from continued dependence upon the personality of its maker and thus capable of being understood by other personalities" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 85).

The frame into which an artwork is cast is what detaches an artwork from the artist's personality (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 85). The frame isolates the artwork from our everyday existence and occupancies. Every artificiality, such as rhymes, expressive sounds, peculiar grammar constructions and connotations of words function as subsidiaries, which combine with the content (the story), form the meaning of an artwork (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 85). Consequently, the meaning is integrated into an artwork's formal pattern. Frame and story embody each other. The artist has sent his artwork "into the world, detaching it even from his own daily affairs by giving it its artificial frame. We are able, therefore, to enjoy it *in itself*—not as we enjoy the satisfaction of our own personal desires" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 87).

In order to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the underlying mechanisms of how poems and prose are framed, Polanyi mentions how theatrical subsidiaries enable us to watch a murder in a play without jumping up to rescue the victim or feeling the action on the stage, the pretense of a murder, to be nonsensical. "We accept the clues which the play offers to the imagination for sharing its meaning, and we live in this meaning rather than in the meaning these events would have for us in our ordinary 'interested' lives" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 87). In grasping of the reality of an artwork something more than the integration of its frame and its story occurs. The artwork takes us out of "the diffuse existence of our ordinary life into something clearly beyond this and draws from the great store of inchoate emotional experiences a circumscribed entity of passionate feelings" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 88).

Polanyi acknowledges the Romantic tradition's emphasis on the artist as a genius, someone who can access and express deep, often ineffable truths through creative intuition and skills. Though he also, discussing modern art and the loss of shared meaning, blames the Romantic movement for claiming that the content of art is predominantly subjective, in the sense that art merely expresses our subjective personal feelings (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 110). By making this the case, the "romantic influence lost its battle against scientism and was swallowed up by it" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 116).

The generalized point of Polanyi, as we understand it, is that human understanding of the world always is deeply rooted in personal perceptual

experiences that are extended and transformed through metaphorical language and thinking. New scientific insights, innovations and inventions are ideas about something new, which, before they are communicated, do not (yet) exist (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 95). The eyes of two scientists observing a phenomenon through a stereo viewer do not necessarily see the same; they must put in words and discuss the images they are seeing *from* to agree on a focal whole. This is the nature of science.

The meaning in art is created by a powerful act of imagination and feeling which grasps all details in one. "It must be grasped as a visionary experience, as the poet himself grasped it in his act of creation" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 112). To form a joint vision of the subsidiaries we have to induce our imaginative power.

To summarize, both theories address the semantic role of imagination and feelings, and both theories see imagination and feelings as intertwined. Ricoeur describes feelings as a way within which we find ourselves in the world, like thoughts made ours. As imagination suspends literal reference to open new ways of seeing reality, poetic feelings suspend everyday emotions and transform them into symbolic experiences. The transformation allows readers to be attuned to reality in a non-objectifying, existential way. In contrast to Ricoeur, Polanyi argues that it is the frame within which an artwork is cast that isolates it from our everyday existence, but though the artwork takes us out of the diffuse existence of our ordinary life, it still draws on aspects from our store of inchoate emotional experiences in life.

As Ricoeur (1978) describes the role of suspension as creating a space for imagination and feelings to operate, we find Polanyi saying, not unlike Ricoeur in any radical way, that our acceptance of a work of art should be relying on our immersion in the belief that works of art are meaningful. Because it is by being sustained by this belief, we eventually succeed in discovering a joint meaning for the focally incompatible elements in artwork. We respond to the shape of an artwork by surrendering from our "diffuse memories of moving events a gift of purely resonant feelings" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 88).

With this in mind, let's turn to two examples derived from the intermingling of text and students in literature classroom, to see if they can make these abstract theories more accessible and concrete for us.

4.2.1 *The role of the imagination exemplified through a classroom conversation of the short story I couldn't say it to you (Fosse, 1991)*

First example, derived from literature education in a Norwegian classroom, illustrates how joint meaning can emerge when a work of art is brought into an imaginary space by dwelling in the style of its creation. In this instance, the class listens to an audio version of the short story *I Couldn't Say It to You* (Fosse, 1991, the original title is «Eg kunne ikkje seie det til deg»). Prior to listening, the class talks about Fosse's distinctive style of writing; the repetitive language and his mastery of

giving voice to the unsayable. As this example shows, the space for imagination and feelings evoked by this text is much more extended compared to the previous example of the poem by Mehren (section 4.1.1.). The teacher's reason clearly indicates this: He explains that he used the audio version alongside the written text because he can't read the text aloud himself as it moves him too deeply. He emphasizes his appreciation for the narrator's ability to preserve the literary qualities of Fosse's writing and expresses that his hope for the class today is to have a shared reading experience (fieldnotes, Aanes & Elf, 2024, p. 89).

The short story is about someone who soon will have to die, and about a moment that has made an indelible impression on him. The moment he refers to is linked to his time in upper secondary school, to the movements of a person walking across the school ground, and to eye contact he had with two eyes in the school canteen. The main character cannot understand that it is this, which really seems to be so completely insignificant, that will be the most significant thing he remembers, at the deathbed. During the reading, and in the classroom community afterwards, the students talk about the materiality of the language (fieldnotes, Aanes & Elf, 2024, p. 91). They also talk about the *who*, the *what* and the *where* of the text. The teacher has told the class that part of his motivation for bringing this text to class is to take the students into existential reflections. By virtue of the short story, it becomes possible for teacher and students to talk about "the unspeakable", the relationship between an I and a you, and the relationship between the moment and the eternity.

When we, some days later, in a group interview, ask some of the students to talk about texts and memories of texts they have read during their years in upper secondary school, the students highlight this text. In the conversation, they talk about how they could relate to the text and how the text resonated and reminded them of what reality really is like:

Even:	I liked I couldn't say it to you (...). It was this short story by Jon Fosse. It was about a boy's relationship with a girl ... or his wife... where he described quite ordinary events during high school over several pages and tried in a way to depict the importance of these moments. The moments had significance Specifically, how these moments had significance for him later in life. That's what I remember from the story, but I'm also remembering it being a very nice and calm short story to read. It went very slowly. It had a one step forward, two steps back melody. In a repetitive way, it always went back to the same theme; it depicted, or it dealt with the fact that, well, what can I say, it was about very ordinary events, but they somehow had a very special significance for him, and I think one can relate to that in the sense that there are special events in life or ... there are certain moments that may not mean much to other people, but that you somehow remember for the rest of your life. I know that I myself, yes, I have had experiences that I remember very well without there necessarily being any special reason for it. (...) Well, I felt that I could relate to that text.
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- Tilde: It is this type of text that provokes thoughts. Initially you don't think that small moments can have a big impact on life ... and it is also that ... that if you tell something to someone, it can change how they behave (...). I hadn't thought of that before.
- Hanne: It may also be that the small things you do can be very important to someone else.
(...)
- Morten: Yes, really small moments I attached myself very closely to that text. Because perhaps one of the things I best remember from one of my childhood friends is how he tied his shoes. (...) It was which step in the staircase he sat on, and how he sat when he tied his shoelaces. It sticks in your mind and it's ... usually something you don't think about, but the text brought back such memories and when you think back to that time, it's just ..., okay.

(The students talk into each other's mouths).
- Even: There were also this thing with that text in relation to your memory, that it makes sense to you and you remember it so well, but to us it seems completely absurd. But there's also something about the fact that we can't understand it

(Several students nod).
- Even: Only you can understand it. ... similarly, in this short story, it was only him ..., the narrator, I think, who could understand these moments. He couldn't really explain it to her, because it would just sound strange and absurd.
- Synne: If I remember correctly, she is on her deathbed ..., or she dies, his wife?
- Others: It's him who is going to die ...
- Hanne: Both.
- Even: No, she is dead.
- Hanne: He says, in the writing process, that he is ready to die, he knows he soon will die.
- Synne: ... but he also describes her deathbed, doesn't he?
- Tilde: Yes, I think so.
- Synne: Then he says something like now she is gone, but he carries her within him.

- Even: The grief
- Synne: No, he carries her within him.
- Hanne: He carries her memory and essence within him. It is about the moments, what we remember

Fosse is well known for the way he gestalts emotions and moods into the structure of the text as a whole. Listening to the audio version, the class has dwelt in the imaginary space shaped by Fosse's creative style of writing. In the conversation about the reading experience, it is precisely the text's artificiality and atmospheric qualities that engage the students. The short story *I couldn't say it to you* (Fosse, 1991) allows the students to put into words aspects of life that awaken their own recollection of seemingly unimportant events that still resonate deeply within them. It lets the students converse about the duality through which we understand a story, an experience or a phenomenon. The power of imagination and background knowledge of lifeworld phenomena jointly allows the text to stand out to them in particular ways. The students' individual contribution of subsidiary knowledge enriches the collective joint meaning. The students seem to agree with the image of reality that the text has brought forward, that language and memories not just exist in the head, but that language and memories are embodied as individual emotionally loaded experiences—it is something you carry “within” you, as both Synne and Hanne say.

On the one hand, the conversation shows how the students create a common focal understanding of the text—mainly built on subsidiary clues that they are jointly united about in the interview situation. The text seems to give them an opportunity to talk about dimensions of life that are present in their common everyday experiences. On the other hand, Morten's utterance about how the text evoked memories of how his childhood friend sat, and on which step in the staircase when he tied his shoelaces, shows that the horizon we see and ascribe meaning to the text from, subsidiarily also includes personal embodied experiences that are stored in the individual. Yet when these memories are communicated, they become part of the joint image (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975, p. 34) and, as practice theory inspired by phenomenology would put it, intersubjective (Schatzki, 2017).

When embodied memories are communicated, the students in this class community show a deep interest in the individual experience. They seem to be fascinated by the double aspect in literary meaning-making processes. As Even says; “That was also the thing with that text in relation to your memory, that it makes sense to you and you remember it so well, but to us it seems completely absurd. But there's also something about the fact that we can't understand it...”. Even's words contain an understanding of the dynamics in from-to knowledge. As we find it, his words express understanding and acceptance of the fact that what is in focal attention always is supported in subsidiary knowledge which can be either, or both,

particular/personal and universal. Considering the practical implications of the example, we would argue that the example illuminates that there is a potential found in teaching literature to develop insight into how subsidiary and focal knowledge create joint meaning, especially when we must fill in the proximal experiences on our own to give determinate meaning to the focal.

The next example is, as accounted for in the chapter of methodology, derived from Author 1's own classroom context (Aaness, 2024, p. 99; Aaness & Elf, 2024, p. 93). Once again, we find a class working with a text of Jon Fosse. This time it is a play.

4.2.2 *The role of feelings exemplified through a classroom conversation about the play *Someone Is Going to Come* (Fosse, 1996)*

In Jon Fosse's play *Someone Is Going to Come* (1996), we meet a couple who have moved to the countryside, to a house that is secluded, far from people, because they want to "be alone together in each other". Despite the move, the couple is constantly disturbed, either by the thought that "someone is going to come" or by the actual arrival of someone, specifically the heir who until recently owned the house and knows it better than the two newcomers. The image we form of the house is not only based on the background knowledge Fosse gives us, like where the house is located, why the couple moved there and how the atmosphere and conversation between the pair inhabiting the house unfolds. The descriptions also reflect background subsidiary knowledge, vague memories, and experiences we carry with us from our own lives, such as the desire for our home to feel safe, to be a place where we feel at home, etc. This subsidiary knowledge is something that we most often are only tacitly aware of when constructing meaning in the focal imaginary object. By virtue of the framework provided by the play the students are offered both a focused experience, distinct from other more chaotic and unreflected experiences in lifeworld, and to engage in dialogue about feelings and conceptions related to "having a home" that are only tacitly communicated in the text.

After reading the play in groups, the students are invited to engage in an activity that let them dwell in the text—the class has a conversation about the images they have formed of the characters that inhabit the play: he, she and the man. Next, they reflect on how they envision the setting of the play's action. Then, the teacher asks the students what they think the play is all about. It is not always the case, but today the classroom discussion unfolds with energy and enthusiasm. One student suggests that the play is about jealousy. He explains how the play evoked the same feelings one feels when experiencing jealousy. Another student proposes that the play is about the complexities of love. A boy raises his hand. He says: "I think the play is about trying to build a house strong enough to withstand storms" (fieldnotes, Aaness, 2024, p. 93).

The teacher repeats the students' words, simultaneously as he offers his own initial reaction: "I think the play is about trying to build a house strong enough to withstand storms. Wow, wasn't that well expressed? What Daniel is doing here, is

employing a metaphor to articulate what he perceives as the deeper thematic essence of the play. Daniel, so to speak, demonstrates how our cognitive processes are fundamentally metaphorical." (fieldnotes, Aaeness, 2024, p. 100).

As we know, the play is about a couple who have moved into a house, far from people, to "be together alone in each other"; but they do not find security in the house because they are constantly disturbed by the arrival of a man, the heir. The double vision that the student's poetic metaphor creates in the imagination is rooted both in experienced feelings or relational moods such as insecurity and anxiety, and in lifeworld experiences with a nature phenomenon—a storm—such as the experience of struggling to stand upright or move forward, and the common worry about whether our house is solidly founded as the storm hits.

Within class, the student's metaphorical creation opens up for a conversation about how metaphors create connections between lifeworld and the text's world. Its very form invites for dialogue about the way metaphors communicate both verbal and nonverbal meaning.

The example shows how joint meaning is drawn both—and at the same time—from personal (yet often universal) lifeworld experiences and from our personal (yet often shared) knowledge base.

When Daniel says that the play is about "trying to build a house strong enough to withstand storms" we first read the image through Polanyi's account of tacit knowledge, because it is this theoretical framework we aim to explore and develop a deeper understanding of in this article. However, Daniel's answer could also have been explored in relation to Conceptual Metaphor Theory mapping structure (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Chavoshan & Fernández, 2025). From a Conceptual Metaphor perspective, the teacher would search for conventional metaphors, and this would lead him to ask other types of questions than those asked in the classroom example with Daniel. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is concerned with source and target domains finding conceptual metaphors to operate by mapping structure from a familiar source domain onto a more abstract target domain. In the example with Daniel the house may be considered a source domain structuring intimacy as shelter, while the storm may be considered a target domain structuring jealousy or relational threat as external force. The source-target domains could help teachers and students to distinguish between an individual interpretation and a culturally shared conceptual pattern.

Daniel makes original use of well-known conventional metaphors, where both source and target are available in the way they are used. However, the manner in which those two metaphors are put together and applied to characterize what takes place in the situation presented in the play is novel. He makes use of a specifically suitable metaphor to describe what is played out without metaphors.

World language teachers find conceptual metaphor theory that identify the underlying concepts of linguistic metaphors, fruitful to foreground the ways in which language is embedded and transmits meaning through its form both in and across culture and history (Chavoshan & Fernández, 2025). In a different context, there is

no doubt that it would be relevant to examine more closely what Polanyi's metaphor theory shares with Conceptual Metaphor Theory. An important difference, however, is that whereas Conceptual Metaphor Theory is more concerned with the cultural and historical roots of language, Polanyi is more interested in and focused on the living and creative dimensions of language and meaning-making, and their empowering potential for personal development and world-opening.

As demonstrated in this article there are dead, dormant and living metaphors. Language constantly evolves and renews itself, and at the same time newness of language is relative. Expansion of new ideas in science is always associated with development of new language and new analogies; the same is true with art, vocabulary and artistic expressions. David constructs a metaphor that illustrates the creative leap in his thought; a new metaphor—which still, however, has historical roots.

The central concern of both Polanyi (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) and Ricoeur (1978) lies in understanding metaphors as innovative and dynamic acts of discovery rooted primarily in tacit, embodied knowing. Our position is that this is what makes them especially significant for literature and language education.

In this case, the classroom dialogue also opened a space for integrating subsidiary theoretical background knowledge into the joint image—knowledge about how metaphors evoke mental imagery by blending verbal and non-verbal elements of language. One could also have included Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Nonetheless, at this point we want to underscore that the practical example illustrates how the frame of the play has the same role as the stereoscopic viewer presenting two images which integrated form a three-dimensional perception that among a community of peers can be discussed. The stereometric image—like the image that an artwork forms—transcends what is given by virtue of two or more images. Feeling, imagination, and cognition work together to generate new meaning—that is both seen and felt.

5. RESULTS AND CONSEQUENCES

This article has examined how Michael Polanyi's concepts of *personal knowledge* and *joint meaning* can enhance language comprehension within literature education. By examining the role of metaphor in both literary texts and language acquisition, the study supports Polanyi's phenomenological view that language creates an imaginative space grounded in embodied experience.

A comparison between Polanyi's and Ricoeur's metaphor theories reveals shared ground: both emphasize the interplay between individual insight and communal knowledge. Metaphors are not merely linguistic tools but modes of knowing that connect personal engagement with disciplinary understanding. Polanyi's notion of integrating subsidiary knowledge into focal awareness offers educators a framework for guiding students from textual interpretation to lived experience.

In practice, this involves helping students transition from the *text world* to the *life world*, uncovering joint meanings through metaphorical language. Before critical detachment, teachers are encouraged to foster openness, allowing emotional and imaginative resonance to shape understanding. Overemphasis on theoretical or historical context prior to reading may hinder this process by diverting attention from the imaginative space that a literary work of art opens up for.

Polanyi's theory of intentionality suggests that meaning arises from coherence among particulars. If students do not dwell in the imaginative space of a text, or are not allowed to do so, they may miss how rhythm, sound, grammar, and word connotations function as subsidiary elements that evoke embodied memories and contribute to meaning.

Empirical examples illustrated this dynamic. In Mehren's poem (section 4.1.1.), students engaged with metaphor through intentionality and from-to structures. However, the example shows that overly explicit or dead metaphors may reduce interpretive depth as it becomes more difficult to engage the emotions. In contrast, texts by Fosse (section 4.2.1. and section 4.2.2.), invite personal and tacit engagement, allowing students to articulate experiences typically tacit - beyond conscious awareness. Their individual contributions of subsidiary knowledge enrich collective understanding and foster joint meaning. This supports Polanyi's claim that coherence arises when we dwell in particulars—using metaphorical language as a bridge between individual perception and collective meaning. One implication is that literature education will benefit from recognizing metaphors as a mode of knowing, where personal insight and shared meaning converge through imaginative engagement.

6. DISCUSSION

By legitimizing personal interpretation as a valid form of literary knowledge, we find that Polanyi's metaphor theory (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975) offers a potential resolution to curricular tensions (Pieper, 2020; Witte & Sâmihăian, 2013). Our position is that in the context of literature education, where teachers navigate multiple paradigms and often conflicting aims (Myren-Svelstad & Grütters, 2022), the concepts of personal knowledge and joint meaning may support L1 / Language arts teachers with a conceptual and didactic tool that is valuable for fostering in-depth knowledge amongst students. As a contribution to the field of literature education, we argue that this study offers a strong argument for rethinking literature education. One key principle would be that teachers should allow students to approach literature in a more personalized, sensory-, and bodily-oriented form, where students can dwell on their experiences with literature. This may very well help them connect their personal experiences with not only their own individual feelings and cognition, but also with their peers. Not staying with the individual experience, but bringing it into play in the classroom, would be a key step within an inquiry-oriented approach (Hansen et. al 2019) and a productive gateway for intersubjective knowledge sharing

that could lead to further in-depth collaborative inquiry into the literary work of art—and hence, as phenomenologists would argue, into the world. From a critical perspective, such an approach to literature education implies not to over-emphasize transmission-oriented literature teaching, which may be found in the L1 classroom (Gabrielsen et al., 2019; Pieper, 2020; Skaug & Blikstad-Balas, 2019; Zabka, 2016), nor to use literature simply as an instrumental means for standards-based reading development, which we showed, in the state of the art section above, is an international trend.

Furthermore, we argue that the empirical examples illuminate how Polanyi's theory might contribute to didactic conceptualisation and understanding of how the linkage of literature and language could be taught and learned by students. We find the framework both intrinsically robust and externally and practically applicable for developing a phenomenological world-oriented L1 education focusing on the integration of literature and language learning, a key concern of L1/ Language arts education. At the same time, we acknowledge that a Polanyian approach to language-and-literature education emphasizing the role of the metaphor, may have limitations and could be complemented by alternative theoretical approaches, including Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Thus, we argue that literature didactics would benefit from consolidating, refining, and extending the empirically-analytically inferred insights presented in this article through complementary theoretical frameworks addressing the same phenomena (Hansen, 2023; Pieper, 2020). In a broader L1 research context, this may help overcome the so-called 'dyadic split' between literature and language teaching, which has so often been highlighted as a key problem of L1 teaching (Green & Erixon, 2020; Elf, 2009, 2024). Our study demonstrates, on deep ontological and epistemological and practical teaching levels, that language and literature teaching are not split. On the contrary, Polanyi helps us understand that they are complementary, and that this complementarity can be taught and learned through a focus on the powers of imagination and metaphor found in literature and, indeed, in human beings.

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