PROMOTING LITERARY UNDERSTANDING AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: TEACHER SUPPORT FOR GRADE 6 SWEDISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract
This study explores how teachers promote literary understanding and language development in Swedish as a second language (SSL) classrooms for Grade 6 students through read-aloud discussions. Addressing a research gap on core SSL curriculum delivery in elementary schools, this investigation observed two experienced teachers over a two-month period. The study draws on reader-response perspectives from Langer and Felski, combined with discursive strategies and Cummins' notion of reading engagement. Through analysis of classroom observations, field notes, and photos, the study examines how teachers use questioning, discussions, and language support strategies to foster students' growth in literary understanding and L2 knowledge.In both classrooms, linguistic aspects appeared to be highly integrated into the reading practices. For example, the teachers commented on the linguistic and aesthetic qualities of literary words. At the same time, the different dynamics of the student groups impacted the teachers' choice of texts, which affected the possibilities for a deeper understanding of the text; for instance, by perceiving symmetries between the text and knowledge acquired in other teaching areas. The strategies revealed in the present study can potentially be used in other contexts to elevate the quality and status of L2 teaching.

Keywords: literary understanding, language development, elementary school, Swedish as a second language

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational research has increasingly turned towards challenges and opportunities in fostering multilingual learners' language and knowledge development. Suggested teaching strategies often include paying explicit attention to language in content instruction and building on students' existing knowledge and linguistic repertoires (e.g., Cummins, 2015). However, there is still limited insight into teachers' strategies for promoting students' engagement with literary texts in L2 classrooms, probably due to the enduring dichotomy between language and literature in both teaching and research (e.g., Paran, 2008). Instead, studies have emphasized classroom reading as a way of extending students' vocabulary (Silverman et al., 2013) or practicing writing skills (Moore et al., 2018). Other studies have warned that discussions of literary words and discussions may not be sufficiently integrated into the practice of appreciating and critiquing the literariness of the language (Anundsen, 2021; Carroli, 2008). In the present study, we turn to the context of Swedish as a second language (SSL) to highlight the efforts of two experienced teachers to promote both literary understanding and language development in classroom discussions. An underlying assumption is that experienced SSL teachers are able to meaningfully integrate a focus on language in the practice of reading the books.

Since 1995, there have been two Swedish subjects in Swedish primary and secondary schools: Swedish (SWE) and Swedish as a second language (SSL). These subjects are equivalent in terms of content, and they provide eligibility for further studies in high school and university. The school principal ultimately decides whether a student should study Swedish as a second language instead of Swedish in compulsory school (SFS 2011:185, Chapter 4, § 14). Previous research on SSL has largely focused on organizational issues as well as the discourses and policy documents surrounding the subject and its students (e.g., Economou, 2015; Hedman & Magnusson, 2018, 2021; Sahlee, 2017; Siekkinen, 2021). For example, Siekkinen (2021) explored how SSL students in Grade 9 position themselves as SSL students and the results show that there is a complex interplay of policy documents, how teachers and other students talk about SSL students and how the teaching is organized. This interplay makes the students ambivalent in their negotiations of being a SSL student. Studies have also addressed conditions for newly arrived children's and students' literacy practices (e.g., Bomström Aho, 2023; Duek, 2017; Winlund, 2021). Winlund's (2021) results show that recent immigrated adolescents with little prior experience of school-based learning benefit from instruction that includes semiotic resources and also affirms the students' linguistic resources. The teacher's engagement and the relation to the students were also crucial for how the students were offered access to different literacy practices.

Studies with an interest in specific subject content have focused on literature teaching in upper secondary school (Asklund, 2018; Economou, 2015, 2021) and adult education (Walldén, 2020a; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021; Wilinger, 2021). Economou (2021) examined teachers' selection of literary texts in upper secondary

school for multilingual students, and the results show a contradictory picture in which teachers emphasize language development and education while choosing simplified versions of classics due to students' limited reading abilities. However, there is a lack of knowledge about how core SSL content is taught in essentially all school years of the Swedish school system. Like other subjects, SSL is characterized by subject-specific content and ways of utilizing linguistic resources. A study of SSL teaching in basic adult education (Walldén, 2020a), corresponding to lower secondary school, showed that two experienced SSL teachers integrated a linguistic focus in literature education; for example, by discussing new words and expressions in terms of how they related to the characters and events in the books. Moreover, the teachers drew attention to the structure of the words while still maintaining a focus on the experience of reading the book. While this is indicative of the integrated linguistic support associated with the SSL curriculum (see also Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021), similar findings have not been reported in studies focusing on elementary school.

Instead, research in elementary SSL classrooms has increasingly focused on students' opportunities to use their multilingual resources in the teaching according to principles of pedagogical translanguaging (Cummins, 2022; García & Wei, 2014; for a recent overview, see Fuster & Bardel, 2024); for example, by interacting in language groups (Schmidt & Molin, 2023), creating language portraits of how they use and feel about different languages (Snoder, 2021), or writing texts in their first languages (Wedin, 2017). While these studies show the significance of building and promoting students' multilingual literacies, they do not delve into the students' opportunities to develop and use the target language to engage in literacy practices that reflect the core content of the SSL curriculum. Other studies involving SSL learners in intermediate school (Grades 4–6) have focused on the integration of language in other subject areas, such as geography (Walldén, 2019) and physics (Uddling, 2021). Mirroring findings in international studies (e.g., Moore et al., 2018), those studies have found that a focus on language, depending on teachers' priorities and methods, may be more or less integrated in the content teaching which impact the students' possibilities to expand disciplinary capabilities in tandem with linguistic resources.

A corresponding focus on reading practices in intermediate school SSL teaching is currently lacking. This gap mirrors an overall scarcity of studies dealing with literature in the context of SSL (Hedman & Lubińska, 2022), in contrast to the prevalent research on literary discussions in Scandinavian L1 classrooms (Gourvennec & Sønneland, 2023).

In the present study, the instruction of two Grade 6 SSL teachers was observed for a two-month period. Both teachers worked mainly at the time with reading fiction, so the aim of the study was to contribute knowledge about the conditions that teachers create during literary work in Grade 6 in linguistically diverse classrooms. More specifically, we examined what characterizes the instruction of two SSL teachers when promoting students' literary understanding and language development in read-aloud discussions.

The questions we address are:

1) How do teachers promote literary understanding during read-aloud sessions in linguistically diverse classrooms learning Swedish?
2) What characterizes the teachers' linguistic support strategies in promoting the students' literary understanding during read-aloud discussions?
3) To what extent are linguistic aspects integrated into the read-aloud discussions?

1.1 Prior research on scaffolding read-aloud practices

The focal point of this study is discussions during read-aloud sessions. Apart from bolstering students' comprehension and facilitating their engagement with texts, interactive read-alouds are often perceived as a means to instill motivation for reading (e.g., Ariail & Albright, 2005; Gambrell, 2011; Moussa & Koester, 2022). Notably, Meller et al. (2009) underscored the potential for promoting critical literacy through read-aloud sessions by dissecting stories and characters as deliberate constructs and by scrutinizing the author's utilization of literary devices to elicit specific reader responses.

As previously indicated, studies of discussions as part of classroom work with literature have typically focused on L1 settings (see, for example, Carl, 2023 and other articles in the same special issue on literary conversations). In the Swedish context, Ingemansson (2018) validated that authentic inquiries rooted in Langer's stances (see Applebee et al., 2003; Langer, 2017) facilitated profound comprehension of literary works among primary school students in both elementary and lower-secondary settings. This finding was echoed by Mempel and Meyers' (2023) study of literary conversations in elementary school, which showed that students supported each other in understanding the ambiguity of challenging literary texts.

Further empirical investigations, such as the experimental studies conducted by Reichenberg (2014) and Olin-Scheller and Tengberg (2016), have demonstrated that employing reading strategies within discussions can significantly enhance reading comprehension. A study of reading strategy instruction with non-fiction texts in a multilingual elementary school setting showed that structured teaching, focusing on reading strategies like predicting and clarifying, was helpful to the students, according to the teachers. The strategy instruction also affected the students' engagement in the classroom (Lindholm, 2019). However, cautionary findings from McKeown et al. (2009) have warned against an overemphasis on reading strategies that may divert discussions away from the content and meaningful interpretation of the literary texts. Similarly, Walldén (2020b) found that classroom discussions focused on literary words in Grade 1 occurred in isolation from the reading and appreciation of the chapter book used in the teaching.

A common feature of discussion-based approaches to literature teaching (see also Magirius et al., 2023) is that they target a high-level understanding of literary texts while assuming that students' have access to the linguistic resources necessary to understand and reason about the text. It is well known that 95–98 percent of a

text's words need to be comprehended in order to understand a text reasonably well (Nation, 2013). As discussed by Drew (2018), L2 learners normally have more limited vocabulary, oral language skills and exposure to reading in L1 than L1 learners. Therefore, L1-oriented models may be difficult for educators in L2 classrooms to enact. From an L2 perspective, students' strategies for inferencing the meaning of unknown words may enhance their level of reading (Laufer, 2021).

The rare studies focusing on dynamics of read-aloud discussions in L2 settings have typically focused on younger children. Gort et al. (2012) concentrated on teachers' utilization of questioning techniques to engage students in discussions during read-aloud sessions in bilingual preschool environments. Their findings underscore the significance of students' active participation in extended dialogues to cultivate literacy skills. Similarly, Mascareño et al. (2017) highlighted how students' opportunities to partake in cognitively demanding interactions might be constrained by teachers' propensity to pose questions that are predominantly focused on literal comprehension, rather than inferential understanding, coupled with a lack of elaborative follow-up to students' responses. However, while both of the above-mentioned studies examined teachers' inquiries about vocabulary, they did not delve into the linguistic negotiation inherent in these exchanges or the broader scaffolding strategies employed by teachers beyond mere questioning.

Prior linguistically oriented research on read-aloud practices, typically conducted within preschool or early primary school settings, has consistently demonstrated the efficacy of explicit vocabulary instruction as part of read-aloud activities in fostering students' lexical development (Baker et al., 2013; Fien et al., 2011; Swanson et al., 2011). Moreover, Silverman et al. (2013) conducted a study affirming the advantageous impact of extension activities, wherein targeted words from read-aloud sessions were revisited and engaged with across various modalities such as oral discussions, writing, and drawing, thereby augmenting vocabulary acquisition. Among studies focusing on elementary school, Lu-Chun's (2014) quasi-experimental study in a Grade 4 EFL classroom showed that repeated story readings, with vocabulary explanations, facilitated the students' learning of word meaning. The present study addresses a gap in current research by examining the interplay between literary understanding and L2 knowledge development in Grade 6 students, with implications for holistic second-language teaching.

Among studies with a greater emphasis on the social practice of classroom reading, Malilang and Walldén (2024) focused on how a librarian made changes to the text while reading an old children's book to third-graders. This included linguistic alterations and other modifications to make the book more palatable in a present-day context, relating to, for example, gender roles and descriptions of characters. Also focused on story reading in Grade 3, Cho and Christ (2022) found that the ability of two bilingual students to make inferences varied according to the cultural relevance of the text. Such insights are important to counter deficit notions such as L2 students' having "more limited" background knowledge (cf. Drew, 2018). However, in linguistically diverse classrooms like those in focus in the present study, it is often not

possible to choose texts that will be of equal cultural relevance to all students. Therefore, it is important to consider the teacher's role in supporting the students' engagement with the book while also addressing their language learning needs.

The present study draws on insights from a previous study of read-aloud practices in Grade 4, where L1 students were mixed with L2 students. The participating teacher, who lacked a specialization in SSL, promoted students' playful, creative and intertextual engagement with a picture book by arranging discussions (Walldén, 2022) and writing activities (Malilang & Walldén, 2024) focused on the characters of the story. Regarding linguistic support, the teacher employed different discursive strategies to make the literary language available to the students, such as inserting explanations of technical words or using synonyms closer to everyday language (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2022). Furthermore, the teacher held some pre-reading discussions about words and expressions, but these were isolated from the practice of reading and enjoying the book. Additionally, the teacher did not bring attention to the formal properties for the words. In the present study, we instead turn to read-aloud discussions led by experienced SSL teachers.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

In the present study, we combine reader-response perspectives with a focus on how linguistic aspects of the texts were negotiated between the teachers and the students.

2.1 Literary understanding

Langer's (2017) theory of building literary envisionments have proven useful for describing how teachers and students respond to literary texts in educational settings. Her first stance, *being out and stepping into the envisionment*, describes how the reader forms, or reconsiders, an initial impression of the book. The second stance, *being in and moving through*, covers how the reader forms a deeper understanding of the text. This involves making inferences (Iser, 1978; Terwagne, 2006) and establishing connections with the characters and events in the book. In the present study, we associate this stance with aesthetic modes of engagement as described by Felski (2008) and operationalized in a prior study (Walldén, 2022). These involving *enchantment* (that is, the reader's immersion in the book) and *recognition* (that is, perceiving symmetries between life and text). Potentially, it also means *shock*, associated with painful and frightening events in the book.

Langer's third stance, *stepping out and rethinking what you know*, denotes instances of the book that transform the understanding of phenomena outside the book. Unlike, for example, Rosenblatt (1994), Felski (2008) described acquiring real-world *knowledge* through literature as an aesthetic mode of engagement. In the fourth stance, *stepping out and objectifying the experience*, the reader looks more analytically and reflectively at the book as an authored piece of writing craft. Langer

has also identified a fifth stance, *leaving an envisionment and going beyond*, but this stance is not used in the present study. As Langer argued, all these stances can be promoted in joint readings and discussions. Furthermore, more than one stance may be active at one time. Through these stances, the literary reading goes beyond efferent readings of the text, for example, reading focused on retrieving correct information from the text (Rosenblatt, 1994).

2.2 Promoting reading engagement in L2 classrooms

The key question in the present study is how literary understanding can be promoted in linguistically diverse classrooms. To explore this, we employ Cummins' notion of reading engagement (Cummins, 2015). According to Cummins (2015), literacy achievement—operationalized in the present study as the ability to move between and within Langer's stances—depends on the teacher's scaffolding and the activation of students' prior knowledge and experiences. Another essential component for reading engagement is extending the students' knowledge of literary language (Cummins, 2015).

In this study, we draw inspiration from the notion of interactional scaffolding (e.g., Gibbons, 2006) to discern how knowledge about language is negotiated between the teachers and the students. In classroom interaction, the meaning of subject-specific expressions can be expanded and connected to students' previous knowledge and experiences. As previous studies have shown, teachers can employ discursive strategies to integrate a focus on language in classroom reading practices; for example, by briefly unpacking the meaning of literary words and expressions in everyday language or by re-connecting words and expressions unknown to the students to events, characters, and language use in the literary texts (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021, 2022). Furthermore, discussions may involve a focus on both formal and semantic properties of the words (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021). Transcending the long-standing division between language and literature in both research and curriculum, such integrated approaches may support both knowledge about literature (Paran, 2008) and L2 knowledge development (Cummins, 2015).

3. METHOD AND MATERIAL

Funded by the Crafoord Foundation, this study collected data over eight weeks in the spring of 2023. The research involved two Grade 6 classes, each located in a different school within a medium-sized municipality in Sweden. Throughout this period, there was a substantial focus on discussions about literary texts as parts of read-aloud activities, which aligns with the SSL curriculum's emphasis on joint activities related to reading (Swedish National Agency of Education, 2024a). A substantial proportion of the students had a migration background, which means that the students were born abroad or born in Sweden with both parents born abroad (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024b). School 1 is a Grade K–6 school with

approximately two hundred students, about half of whom had a migration background during the school year of 2022–2023. School 2 is a Grade 4–9 school with approximately three hundred students, around 70 percent of whom had migration background during the 2022–2023 school year (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024b). In Sweden, 27 percent of the students in the compulsory school had a migration background in the school year 2021–2022 (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024b), and about 150–200 minority languages are spoken in the country. The largest minority languages in 2020 were Arabic, Finnish, Somali, and Dari/Persian (Institute for Languages and Folklore, 2020), and those languages also reflect the languages spoken by students in the two participating classes (except for Finnish). Other languages were also represented, such as Albanian and varieties of Kurdish. It follows that many students spoke languages that are not Germanic or even Indo-European which increases the linguistic challenge in reading literary texts in Swedish, for example, due to lack of cognates. Teachers were contacted through a network with SSL teachers which Lindholm is engaged in, and we aimed to recruit teachers with professional experience. The data consist of 31 audio-recorded classroom observations, field notes, and photos. The researcher had regular conversations with the teachers, who are pseudonymized as Cathrine and Sophie, to gather contextual information about the lessons. Interviews were also conducted with the teachers, but these were not used in the present study. The teachers were experienced and had worked as teachers for 38 years (Cathrine) and 20 years (Sophie). Both had teacher certification for Swedish and for SSL. They were also designated as so-called "lead teachers" (förstelärare) in the municipality at the time of the study, which means they held a career position where they were responsible for conducting various professional development projects, among other duties.

Lindholm collected the empirical material, and an overview is shown in Table 1. Classroom observations were conducted as participant observation (Denscombe, 2018), but the researcher mainly had a passive role at the back of the classroom. When the class worked independently or in groups, the researcher moved around the classroom, listening to conversations and answering any questions about the research project or the lesson content. The lessons, primarily focused on whole-class interaction, were audio-recorded and the material was transcribed verbatim in standard Swedish. The transcribed material amounts to approximately 27,000 words. From the extensive data set, selected parts relevant to the article's content were transcribed. Field notes supported this selection, as they were detailed and described the focus of the instruction (Denscombe, 2018). The field notes were written in a notebook and typed up immediately after each lesson to complement or clarify the recorded observations. Reflections on what happened in the classrooms, which could not be captured by the audio recording, were also noted. Table 1 shows the number of classroom observations conducted at each school and the corresponding duration. Overall, the observation material consists of 31 lessons (19 in one class, 12 in the other), equivalent to 38.5 hours in total.

Table 1. Data overview

Material	Amount of data	Time of collection
Classroom observations	School 1: 12 audio-recorded lessons (the duration of the lessons was between 30 and 80 minutes). Total: 990 minutes = 16.5 hours	April to June 2023
	School 2: 19 audio-recorded lessons (the duration of the lessons was between 40 and 90 minutes). Total: 1305 minutes = 22 hours	April to June 2023
Field notes	School 1: 5300 words School 2: 9200 words	
Photos	263 (99 School 1 and 164 School 2)	

In the excerpts, "T" denotes "Teacher" and "S" represents "Student", sometimes numbered according to their participation in the interactional sequence (S1, S2, etc.). The selected excerpts have all been translated from Swedish to English by Walldén. When the linguistic negotiation between the teacher and the students is of key analytical importance, we provide excerpts in the original language beneath the translations.

3.1 Analysis

The material was analyzed using a thematic content analysis (TA) approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). We used the theoretical flexibility of this method to generate themes relevant to our research aim. The process entailed developing initial themes in which we identified teaching sequences that supported and enhanced students' literary understanding. We were guided by field notes to identify relevant sequences which were then transcribed. To generate the initial themes, the authors independently applied codes based on Langer's stances (2017), which were subsequently harmonized in a collaborative reflexive process. This meant that we looked for traces in the data of how the participants approached the texts (Stance 1), for example in introductory activities and strove for a deeper understanding. The latter could be achieved by making inferences and identifying with the characters. Stance 3 was identified when the participants made connections between the literary texts and other school-related knowledge, while Stance 4 entailed discussing the craftmanship of the texts, for example, in terms of author choices. The purpose of this analysis was to arrive at a shared understanding rather than coding reliability. In the next step, Felski's (2008) concepts of *enchantment*, *recognition,* and *knowledge* were employed to delve deeper into the functions of literary texts realized in the classroom discussions, for example, recognizing symmetries between text and life as a way to understand the text more deeply (Stance 2) and using the text as a source of knowledge about historical and current societal issues (Stance 3). Furthermore, the teachers' linguistic support strategies in working with fiction texts were analyzed by

highlighting the discursive strategies employed by the teachers (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021, 2022). These three theoretical perspectives guided us in finalizing the themes presented as subheadings in the Findings.

The discursive strategies can be used to unpack the meaning of literary words and expressions; for example, by moving between vernacular and subject-specific ways of using language. The strategies were of interest to discern what characterizes the teachers' linguistic support strategies in promoting the students' literary understanding and the integration of linguistic aspects into the reading practices of the instruction (RQ 2-3). In the linguistic analyses of discussions about literary language, we particularly focused on shifts between expressions that are abstract, infrequent, or formal and expressions closer to everyday language. Some relevant examples are shown in Table 2. Wording in the original language is italicized.

Table 2. Examples of unpacking literary language

Expressions that are relatively abstract, formal or infrequent	**Expressions that are relatively concrete and close to everyday language**
freedom-deprived	take away their freedom
frihetsberövad	*tagit ifrån dem friheten*
uniformed	police clothes, clothes that one wears for a specific occasion
uniformerad	*poliskläder, kläder man har under ett specifikt tillfälle*
conscience	knowing that it's wrong
samvete	*vet att det är fel*
bandit	snatcher, swipe
bandit	*baxare, tjuva*

The first two examples of literary language are adjectivizations. This is a feature of abstract language that may be difficult to parse for second-language learners depending on their vocabulary and language backgrounds, particularly if they figure in compounds such as "frihetsberövad" (see below). These words are also relatively formal. The corresponding examples of everyday language unpack the meaning by using full clauses ("take away their freedom", "clothes you wear …", "it's wrong") and words closer to everyday language. The latter is also the case for the relatively formal "bandit", which was unpacked with vernacular synonyms. We also took note of when the teacher used metalinguistic expressions or otherwise pointed out formal features of the words to highlight potentially problematic areas from an L2 perspective, for example, morphology, compounding, and homonymy. For example, the Swedish language has a relatively rich inflectional system and makes highly frequent use of single-word compounds such as "frihetsberövad" (freedom-deprived"). These compounds are typically written as single words without spaces or hyphens that could help L2 speakers to identify the constituents of the compound. In sum, the analysis focused on both semantic and formal features of the literary language and its negotiation in classroom practice. Aside from these discursive strategies, we also

considered other means of linguistic scaffolding frequently employed in L2 teaching, such as the teachers' use of sentence starters and visual aids (see Gibbons, 2006).

In the analyses, we have considered the students' age and possible linguistic limitations in their ability to express themselves in the target language (Swedish) which was the language of instruction at all points in the present study.

3.2 The schools' context and the teachers' choice of books

The participating teachers taught in separate classes (Grade 6), and both worked with fictional text at the time of data collection. Our starting point in the study was to follow regular instruction in SSL, and both schools organized SSL instruction integrated with the subject of Swedish (SWE). At School 1, the students were taught in full classes once per week, and in the other instances, they were taught in half classes by the teacher Cathrine, with twelve students in each group. At School 2, the class was divided into two groups for all SSL/SWE lessons, and they were taught by two different teachers, one of whom was Sophie. Sophie's group comprised ten students.

The conditions at the two schools were slightly different. The teacher at School 1, Cathrine, described the students in her class as unmotivated and challenging to teach. There was good discipline in the classroom, but she needed to be strict in her teaching; otherwise, the students lost focus. At the time of data collection, the students were about to move on to lower secondary school, which Cathrine believed affected the atmosphere and engagement in the classroom. The teacher knew the students well and knew how to engage with them during lesson time. Considering the conditions in the class, Cathrine deliberately chose an "easy-to-digest" read-aloud book with an exciting plot and several unexpected twists that she believed could maintain the students' attention. The title of the book was "Det vita huset" (translated as "The White House"), by Petter Lidbeck. According to the publisher, the book targets readers aged 9–12. The plot of the book unfolds during a summer vacation, and the main character Yussef, who has nothing to do, is tricked by two friends, Hellman and Anna, into going to Anna's house to retrieve her wallet. However, it turns out not to be Anna's house, and Yussef is accused of burglary. Several unexpected events and twists occur thereafter in the book.

The students at School 2 were more engaged than those at School 1, and it was evident that they had great trust in the teacher (Sophie). There was good discipline in this class as well, and the students showed interest in working with the book. In choosing the read-aloud book, the teacher wished to challenge the students at the end of Grade 6, and they read the young adult novel "Holes" by Louis Sachar (Swedish title: "Ett hål om dagen"). The book is about Stanley Yelnats, who is falsely accused of theft. The judge offers Stanley the choice between prison or going to Camp Green Lake, and he chooses the latter, believing it to be a camp by a lake. However, the lake has been dry for over a hundred years, and the only thing the boys at the camp have to do is dig a hole each in the dry, hard ground. It turns out that they are digging the holes because the "Chief" is searching for a treasure. The book contains

parallel plots set in different periods and connections between different characters in the book, making it challenging to read.

3.3 Research ethics

The project adheres to the guidelines for good research practice set out by the Swedish Research Council (2024). Students were informed and asked for their assent to participate in the school, first by the teachers and then by Lindholm, and a written consent form in Swedish was sent home to the parents to sign. In consultation with the teachers, it was decided that the consent forms did not need to be translated into any other language. However, to ensure that parents had received and understood the information on the consent form, including the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time, they were also informed about the study during parent-teacher conferences near the data collection. The students were informed verbally about the purpose and structure of the study, how the material would be handled, stored, and pseudonymized, and that they could withdraw from participation at any time without providing a reason. For ethical reasons, we refrained from collecting sensitive information about the students, such as language background, which could potentially reveal the students' ethnicity. Furthermore, we have collected no information about language disorders and difficulties with reading and writing among the students since this constitutes sensitive information and falls outside the scope of the study. All collected data were stored safely according to university regulations.

4. RESULTS

In the following four subsections, we present the main findings of the study relating to what characterizes the instruction of two SSL teachers when promoting students' literary understanding and language development in read-aloud discussions.

4.1 Linguistic scaffolding and promotion of reading engagement when the book is introduced

In Classroom 1, the teacher arranged discussions to introduce the selected book (*The White House*), which promoted a focus on language that could be used to describe books and the experience of reading them. When Cathrine introduced *The White House*, she first showed a picture of the book cover and told the students the book's title and author (Petter Lidbäck). In one of several short writing tasks during the lesson, the students had been asked to write what they are most curious to read in the book. Cathrine said, "You can start with: I am most curious about…", which shows an integration of linguistic scaffolding in this task. After a few minutes of writing, some students shared what they had written. When asked what they had thought the book would be about, some students said (Excerpt 1):

Excerpt 1

S1: Horror.

T: Horror, you think? What do you think, [mentioning student name]?

S2: Horror as well.

T: Something horror-like. Do you also think that, [mentioning student name]? What do you think, [mentioning another student's name]?

S3: I think, maybe, he goes down to the basement and sees something creepy or something, and then tries to escape from there. But something tries to stop him.

T: Mm, we'll see. Here's the book. [Cathrine holds up the book, and the students respond with some positive remarks, 'yeah,' 'oh'.]

The students suggested "horror" and gave example of "creepy" events relating based on their interpretation of the cover. This entailed predictions based on genre knowledge and prior reading experiences, which also created a sense of engagement and expectations visible in Excerpt 1. In other words, the students were invited to step into the envisionment of the story (Stance 1).

Cathrine then spent some time discussing the back cover of the book, which included reviews of the book. She pointed out to the students that *Dagens Nyheter* (*Daily News*) is "a daily newspaper, just like, what's it called again, I mentioned it just now, when someone writes about books or music or theater or something and gives their opinions." Thus, she used everyday language ("someone writes something") to provide clues to an abstract, metalinguistic word that the students successfully identified ("review"). This illustrates how the teacher sometimes pretended to lose track so that students could recount where they are in the book or use a previously mentioned academic term. Thus, students were invited to participate in the interaction and take on the role of "the one who knows", which potentially strengthens their reading engagement.

In Excerpt 2, the teacher and the students further explored the paratext of the book by focusing on what the reviews said. This entailed a linguistic negotiation of abstract language describing reading experiences. The transcript in its original language (Swedish) is shown in smaller font.

Excerpt 2

T: [the teacher reads aloud] 'An exciting thriller for the middle years, one that almost has to be read at a stretch.' What does that mean [mentioning student's name] if you read something at a stretch?

S: So [gesticulating].

T: You keep going the whole time, yes, you show with your finger. You can't put it down.

S: [inaudible] is done.

T: No, and look at the first review, the one at the top.

S: A real page-turner.

T: Page-turner. Then you imagine pages and turning, so you can't stop reading. Reading at a stretch. To read at a stretch. A real page-turner. You just have to find out how it's going to end. And the third review [mentioning student's name]. Which newspaper is the third review from? [name of journal], and it says, do you see that [mentioning student's name]? A book with surprising twists that grab you right away. Hard to put down.

T:[Läraren läser högt] 'En spännande thriller för mellanstadiet, en som nästan måste sträckläsas'. Vad menas med det [nämner elevnamn]? Om man sträcksläser någonting.

S: Så [gestikulerar]

T Man håller på hela tiden ja, du visar med fingret. Man kan inte lägga ifrån sig.

S: [ohörbart] är klar.

T: Nej och titta på den första recensionen, den som är överst. Där står det-

S: En riktig bladvändare.

T: Bladvändare. Då tänker du dig blad och vända, alltså man kan inte sluta läsa. Sträckläsning. Att sträckläsa. En riktig bladvändare. Man måste bara få veta hur det ska gå. Och tredje recensionen [nämner elevnamn]. Vilken tidning är tredje recensionen från? Piteå-Tidningen och där står det, ser du det [nämner elevnamn]. En bok med överraskande vändningar som griper tag direkt. Svår att lägga ifrån sig.

As is evident from the excerpt, Cathrine drew attention to words and expressions related to reading and reading experiences. This includes two abstract words from the back cover: "sträckläser" (literally "stretch-reading", to read at a stretch) and "bladvändare" (page-turner). Both are single-word compounds, a common feature in the Swedish language, which may be difficult to unpack for L2 learners.

In Excerpt 2, a student explained the term "sträckläser" through body language, using his finger to illustrate that a person cannot stop reading. Catherine explained "bladvändare" by breaking down the compound word ("you think page and turn") and paraphrasing it in everyday language ("you can't stop reading"). The term "sträckläsa" is reiterated in connection with the explanation of "bladvändare," demonstrating the teacher's interactive approach through the use of various discursive strategies, such as repetition, paraphrasing, and drawing attention to the structure of the abstract and compound words. This illustrates the linguistic focus prevalent in the classroom. In this instance of the instruction, this negotiation was connected to the practice of stepping into the envisionment of the book by tentatively exploring its paratext.

As a further step to immerse themselves in the imaginative world of the text, Cathrine encouraged the students to think about who the main character of the book is—if it becomes apparent in this chapter, and how, in that case, they can tell that this person is the main character. Cathrine read the first pages of the book, and the students noted that Yussef is the main character because the book was written in the first person. The students were still in the process of entering the envisionment (Stance 1), but the teacher also let them reflect on the author's craftsmanship (Stance 4) and use of linguistic resources (first-person pronouns) as a way of understanding who the main character was. Cathrine continued to engage the students in

the envisionment, trying to build up excitement for the upcoming reading by saying, "Now things are going to happen."

4.2 Promoting the students' inferences and alignment with the main character

In Classroom 2, the teacher had chosen to read *Holes,* which was classified as a young adult (YA) novel, in contrast to *The White House* (intended for readers aged 9–12). The teacher read every chapter aloud, and, as in Classroom 1, the reading was intertwined with different kinds of reflection tasks conducted in oral discussions or in writing. Furthermore, a distinctive aspect of the literature work in both classrooms was that the teachers asked questions and encouraged students to make connections between the text and their own experiences.

In a chapter read in an early lesson studied in Classroom 2, the main character Stanley had written a letter to his mom in which he lied about how he was doing. At the beginning of the lesson, Sophie had written two questions on the board: "Can it be good to lie? If so, when?" The students discussed these questions briefly and then Sophie captured what the students had talked about. One student suggested that parents may be allowed to lie sometimes, such as when they tell stories about the tooth fairy. Another student mentioned that it might be okay to lie if you do not want to hurt someone, such as when you are asked whether you like someone's sweater. A third student said, "if someone threatens you" and explained his thoughts. The questions about whether it is okay to lie or not were used as an introduction to step into the envisionment (Langer, Stance 1) by having students make connections between the text and their own experiences. Sophie then began to read the chapter aloud. She moved around the classroom as she read and enhanced the reading with her tone of voice and body language, pointing and making gestures. In Excerpt 3, the class discussed the letter that Stanley wrote to his mom:

> Excerpt 3
>
> T: Stanley, he started writing a letter to his mom, and there he lied too, in the letter, right, he lied. Why did he lie to his mom [mentions student's name]?
>
> S1: He wrote that he was having fun and that he was going to learn to climb mountains or something.
>
> T: Yes, and why did he do that?
>
> S1: So that his mom wouldn't worry about him.
>
> T: What do you think [mentions student's name]?
>
> S2: Same thing, so his mom wouldn't worry and think like this, that you feel bad and all.
>
> T: Mm, what would you have done if you were Stanley?
>
> S2: [inaudible]
>
> T: You would have told it as it was, mm. We do things differently.

The conversation in Excerpt 3 is an example of how students were encouraged to make inferences, which is one of the reading strategies that Sophie emphasized. Reading strategies were used to deepen students' literary understanding and to support them in expressing their understanding, both orally and in writing. In the excerpt, they also discussed how the students would have acted if they were in Stanley's situation. In this activity, students were prompted to align themselves with the character and recognize symmetries between life and text (Felski, 2008). Such promotion of recognition is characteristic of movements within the envisionment (Stance 2).

In promoting the students' activation of Stance 2, the teacher also provided linguistic support by means of sentence starters. On one occasion, when the class had just finished a chapter, Sophie said "We're going to read another chapter, and in that, a lot of things happen. But before we start reading, it's good to pause and think." She wrote, "Stanley is on his way to the boss" on the board and asked the students to write it down in their logbooks. After that, she said (Excerpt 4):

> Excerpt 4
>
> T: You will get [writes on the board: "I believe that…"]. You got a starting sentence here, but I want you to finish the sentence. What do you think happens? I believe that ... Write what you think happens when he comes to the boss. Start now.
>
> S: I don't know what he does.
>
> T: No, you don't know, that's, but you believe. But remember now, you shouldn't read what's written but what you believe, yes, there's a difference in that. Believe.

The excerpt shows two common features in the instruction. Firstly, the teacher often asked the student to stop reading and think about what could happen next. Secondly, the teacher repeatedly offered explicit linguistic support to the students to engage with different tasks by suggesting start-off phrases. In Excerpt 4, the student appeared not to grasp the need to make an inference ("I don't know what he does"), which prompted the teacher to clarify the difference between reading "what's written" and stating what one thinks. The teacher repeated the key verb, *believe*. This illustrates how the teachers actively needed to promote a culture of transcending efferent readings of the text and promote the deeper engagement characterizing Stance 2. The moderate size of the student group likely facilitated students' admission of difficulties along the lines of Excerpt 4.

Promoting the students' inferences and connections with the book was also a prominent focus in Classroom 1's reading of *The White House*. This is illustrated by the classroom discussions when reading the third chapter of the book, in which the protagonist, Yussef, had been tricked into stealing. After reading the chapter aloud, the students were asked to respond in writing to some questions about Yussef, including why he cried. This required an inference. After about five minutes of writing time, the students shared what they had written. Examples included: "Hellman claimed he had been stealing" and "He was tricked into stealing."

Cathrine agreed with the students' answers and added that Yussef felt betrayed and strongly believed that stealing is wrong. In the following discussion (Excerpt 5, original language in small font), the teacher brought attention to the word *con-science* (samvete), which can be used to describe the feeling of the protagonist. The second root morpheme of the Swedish word (vete) is homonymous with the Swedish word for "wheat".

Excerpt 5

T: And all people have that, what's it called when you kind of know what's right and wrong? You have an inner compass, an inner guidance that tells you what is right or wrong. Very good [mentions student's name], I'm reading your thoughts, but don't say it. All people have some kind of inner ... guidance, you could say, that deep down, you know what is right and wrong. Then you make mistakes sometimes. But what's that called when you actually know what is right and wrong?

S: Conscience.

T: [writes "samvete" on the board] and words are so strange. We've talked a lot about "vete" concerning fields and such, that you cultivate wheat, which you then make a bun from, as we discussed in geography. But now it's "*sam*vete," and that word is one you should know. How should we explain "conscience" if we turn it around? What is a con-science? I mentioned several things like this before, [mentions student's name].

S: Isn't it like you can also feel guilty, that you kind of feel sorry for someone, like anxi-ety?

T: Yes, you can have a guilty conscience, and conscience means that deep down...

S: Knowing that it's wrong.

T: Och alla människor har ju det där, vad heter det där att man liksom vet vad som är rätt och fel. Man har liksom en inre kompass, en inre vägledning som säger vad som är rätt eller fel. Jättebra [nämner elevnamn], jag läser dina tankar men säg det inte. Alla människor har nån slags inre ... vägledning kan man säga, att man vet innerst inne vad som är rätt och fel. Sen gör man fel ibland. Men vad heter det där att man faktiskt vet vad som är rätt och fel.

S: Samvete

T: [skriver samvete på tavlan] och ord är ju så konstiga. vete har vi pratat jättemycket om vad det gäller åkermarker och så, att man odlar vete, som man sen gör en bulle av, som vi pratade om när det gäller geografin. Men nu är det sam-vete, och det där ordet är ett ord man ska kunna. Hur ska vi förklara samvete om vi nu vänder på det. Vad är samvete? Jag sa flera så här olika saker förut, [nämner elevnamn].

S: Är det inte typ att man kan få dåligt samvete också, att man tycker typ synd om nån, typ ångest.

T: Ja, man kan ha dåligt samvete, och samvete betyder att man innerst inne…

S: Vet att det är fel.

In Excerpt 5, we see how a linguistic focus was integrated into a conversation where students are prompted to identify with the character or at least infer things about the character by paying attention to a vivid description of how Yussef feels when forced to steal. Knowledge about language was integrated in the process of meaning

making, with a focus on the word "samvete" (conscience) to promote a deeper understanding of what was occurring in the book (Stance 2). The teacher also highlighted the homonymy of "vete" and was clear about which meaning is relevant in the context. Additionally, the conversation enabled the students' alignment with the protagonist as they use their previous knowledge and experiences to empathize with the main character. In the conversation, Cathrine used a metaphor, "inner compass," which she further explained by clarifying, "a compass is something that shows where you're going, north and south, and, such things, and an inner compass can sometimes be called conscience." This exemplifies how the teacher used rich verbal language in the conversation, while also making the language accessible to the students, in this case by clarifying the figurative use of the word "compass" in connection to the abstract word "conscience".

On a different occasion, the teacher noted how a lack of punctuation conveyed the protagonist's state of mind at a tense moment in the story (Excerpt 6):

> Excerpt 6
>
> T: I'm pausing here for a moment. Did you notice that this was all one long sentence, there's no period anywhere. Why do you think the author wrote it like this? [Silence for a few seconds] These are all, well, Josef's, the narrator's, thoughts coming all jumbled up like that, like when you're very stressed. Yeah, then lots and lots of thoughts come here and there, up and down.

This observation by the teacher activated Stance 4 since it concerned the literary craftsmanship of the novel while also inviting alignment with the protagonist (Stance 2). While Sophie did not explicitly refer to authorial choices in the same way, she sometimes commented on the aesthetic effect of the words and expressions in the book, for example, when encountering the word "föga", a literary or formal word meaning "scarcely" or "little". In different ways, these examples give further evidence of how a linguistic focus was integrated into the reading practice of moving into and within the envisionment.

4.3 Promoting connections between the text and societal issues

The teaching in Classroom 2 was characterized by allowing students to make connections, not only to everyday experiences but also to current and historical societal phenomena. During one lesson, Sophie displayed a document on the projector that she called a "character gallery," and this became a visual aid to explain the parallel stories connected to the main character Stanley in different ways. The document consisted of three columns—Present-Day Texas, 100 Years Ago, and 100 Years Ago in Texas—with each of the key characters from the book placed under one of these three columns. When the students had difficulty remembering one of the characters in the story one hundred years ago (Kate Barlow), a discussion arose about a public display of affection involving this character. When the teacher asked the students about why people got "pissed off" by seeing this, the students pointed out that the man Kate kissed was black and that there was "racism". The teacher clarified that

"there was a lot of racial tension in the US" and asked the students if they remembered learning about Rosa Parks.

A student responded, "she would sit on the bus." The teacher drew a bus on the board and asked what it was like on buses during this time in the USA. A student replied, "It was like this, Black people had to sit at the back or at the front, I can't remember." Sophie confirmed the student's answer and simultaneously sketched on the board that they had to sit at the back of the bus. The conversation continued in the class by discussing how Rosa Park bravely defied the law by sitting in front of the bus. Sophie noted that her act was important to promote discussions about racial tensions. Furthermore, Sophie connected the discussion about racial tensions to Black Lives Matter (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7

Teacher: But you know about Black Lives Matter, we've talked about it, right? Do you remember? That it still exists, you know. And that's why, this happened over a hundred years ago. Kissing, she lived a long time ago, like at the end of the 19th century. She kissed him. She was in love with him. You know, love knows no bounds. You can fall in love with anyone. And she fell deeply in love with Sam. But Sam was dark-skinned and she was white, and it wasn't okay for them to kiss each other.

In the above quote, Sophie reiterated Black Lives Matter (BLM), which the class had discussed several times before, and connected it to the content of the book and Kate Barlow. With the references to Rosa Parks and BLM, symmetries between the life and text were used to shed light on oppressive power relations in the real world (Felski, 2008). Furthermore, the discussion gave important context to understanding an important event in the book. This indicates a fruitful interaction between Stance 2, developing a deeper understanding of the book, and Stance 3, to step out of the envisionment and reconsider what one knows, thus gaining real-world knowledge from the book (Felski, 2008).

In a follow-up activity, the teacher showed three images (Figure 1) on the whiteboard displaying (1) the Atlantic slave trade, (2) a picture of Rosa Parks, and (3) a BLM demonstration.

From top to bottom, the text in the circles translates as "cotton, tobacco, sugar", "gunpowder, rifles, brandy, textiles", and "slaves". She asked the students to discuss how these images are connected to each other. As evident from Excerpt 8, a student found this challenging.

Excerpt 8

T: These things we see here, there are three pictures. And now, I would like you, sitting in pairs or groups of three, to think a little bit about, what is the connection between these [draws lines between the pictures].

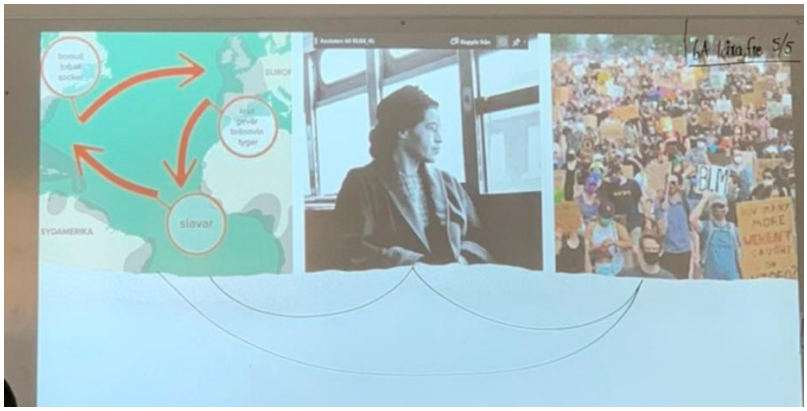
S1: How should I know?

T: Well, how should you know? You should think now and ponder. I'm not saying you should have an answer, but I want you to think together, two by two. Remember now, it's okay to dare to fail here. It doesn't have to be right, but I want you to think of connections. Okay, are you with me [turns to S1]?

S1: Mm.

T: Good, start, two minutes.

Figure 1. Teaching materials that one of the teachers use



The teacher followed up the question "how should I know?" by asking that the students think about it together and "dare to fail" (in Swedish: "våga fejla"). This request occurred on several occasions during the data collection, and the class has been working on it since Grade 5, as many students were afraid to speak in front of others and afraid to make mistakes. As also indicated by Excerpt 8, the students sometimes needed encouragement and support to expand their literary understanding beyond efferent readings of the take by making inferences (Stance 2) and stepping outside the text to connect with prior school knowledge (Stance 3).

4.4 Discursive strategies to promote the understanding of literary language

As was also evident from previous sections, the teachers in both classrooms integrated a focus on literary language into the practice of reading aloud. This is exemplified by the following exchange (Excerpt 9, original language in small font) in Classroom 2 when Sophie stopped reading at the word "bandit" (in Swedish: "bandit"):

Excerpt 9

T: [reading aloud] "... as he wondered if the lipstick tube—that is, the lipstick holder—really could have belonged to the kissing bandit." And a bandit, what is a bandit exactly?

S1: A snatcher.

S2: A robber.

S1: A thief, a snatcher.

T: What did you say, robber, you said trickster, uh ... and what does 'snatch' mean?

S1: Swipe.

S: Swipe, and that's kind of what we say when we talk, but when we write we don't say snatch and swipe, instead we say that one ... [several voices] You said stole, then that's the past tense, if one does it now?

S3: Steals.

T: Steals, good. Very good!

T: [läser högt] "…samtidigt som han undrade om hylsan, alltså läppstiftshylsan, verkligen kunde ha tillhört den kyssande banditen". Och en bandit, vad är en bandit för någonting?

S1: En baxare.

S2: En rånare.

S1: En tjuv, en baxare.

T: Vad sa ni rånare, baxare sa du, eh …och vad betyder baxa för nånting?

S1: Tjuva

T: Tjuva, och det är ju lite sånt som vi säger när vi pratar, men när vi ska skriva säger vi inte. Vi skriver inte baxa och tjuva utan då säger vi att man....

S3: Tog

T: Ja man kan ta. Man kan ... Stal sa du, då är ju det preteritum, om man gör det nu då?

S3: Stjäla

T: Stjäla, bra. Jättebra!

Following the teacher's question, the student gave different suggestions of synonyms to "bandit", including the urban slang expression "baxare" (translated as "snatcher" above). The teacher asked the students to explain "baxa", and received the suggestion "tjuva", the verb form of "tjuv" ("thief"), which is often used by children and more seldom by adults. This prompted the teacher to clarify that these terms are used in spoken language and to elicit a more neutral alternative, "steal", from the students. In doing this, the teacher also made observations about the tense of the verbs. The integrated linguistic focus illustrated in the excerpt provided an opportunity to make connections between the literary language ("bandit") and counterparts that are more commonly used in everyday speech (snatcher, robber, thief).

While the integrated linguistic approach of the teaching was also evident in Classroom 1, Cathrine placed additional emphasis on the form of the words. For example, she asked the students to notice how the single-word compound "frihetsberövad" (literally freedom-deprived), could be "pulled apart" and understood as "deprived of his freedom". Furthermore, she paraphrased it more closely to everyday language as "take away someone's freedom". Although Cathrine's approach was less interactive than Sophie's, there was a similar movement between literary and everyday language, as illustrated in Excerpt 9.

In addition to "pulling apart" compounds, Cathrine encouraged the students to observe derivations of words. This is illustrated in a discussion of the adjectivization

"uniformed" (in Swedish: "uniformerad"), displayed in Excerpt 10 (original language in small font).

Excerpt 10

T: What does "two uniformed policemen" mean? Where can "uniformed" come from? Can you derive and trace a bit? What does it sound like? What do you think?

S1: From uniform.

T: From uniform, yes. And what is a uniform then?

S2: Clothing.

S3: The police have a police uniform, for example, so it's clothes, police clothes.

T: Clothes that one wears for a specific profession, exactly. Some professions require certain clothing. A uniform is when it includes a hat and everything. So, let's scan, where were we?

T: Vad betyder två uniformerade poliser? Vad kan uniformerad komma från för ord? Kan du härleda och spåra lite? Vad låter det som? Vad tycker du?

S1: Från uniform

T: Från uniform ja. Och vad är en uniform för nåt då?

S2: Klädsel

S3: Polisen har en polisuniform, till exempel alltså det är kläder, poliskläder.

T: Kläder som man har för ett visst yrke, precis. Vissa yrken kräver ju vissa kläder. Uniform är när det är mössa och allt möjligt så. Då sökläser vi, var var vi.

The meaning of "uniformed" was unpacked by having the students mention the base form of the word and provide a concrete example, which the teacher then generalized ("clothing that one wears for a specific profession"). This enabled the student to connect the word to their prior knowledge and also to observe the structure of the word, in this case an adjectivization. The terms "freedom-deprived" and "uniformed" show how the teacher drew attention to two common principles for word formation in Swedish: derivations and single-word compounds. Although the teacher did not use formal metalanguage, the explicit attention to the structure of the words can be described as a metalinguistic strategy to promote both the understanding of the literary language and the students' knowledge about the workings of the Swedish language.

While Sophie did not draw attention to the structure of the words in the same way, she frequently employed a different strategy by asking the students to notice literary words and by attempting to guess the meaning from the context. For example, she asked the students to read the phrase containing the infrequent word *gassande* (blazing)—"under den *gassande* solen" (under the *blazing* sun)—which enabled the students to connect it to known words ("it's hot"). She also asked the students to repeat the word and to draw an illustration; for example, of someone sweating in the sun.

All the examples in this section show how the attention to literary words and expressions were an integrated part of the practice of reading and making sense of the book. This is further accentuated by how Cathrine concluded the exchange in Excerpt 10 by asking the students to resume reading by "scanning" for the word, a reading strategy frequently practiced and referred to in the classroom.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study adds to the body of L2 classroom research by showing how two SSL teachers negotiate the linguistic challenges L2 readers face (Drew, 2018) while still maintaining a focus on experiencing and enjoying the books. Unlike findings from Anundsen (2021) and Walldén (2020b), the linguistic focus was integrated in the reading practice. It follows that the study contributes knowledge about SSL instruction beyond the prevalent focus on translanguaging practices (Fuster & Bardel, 2024), newly arrived students (Winlund, 2021), and reading practices on other content areas (Uddling, 2021).

Regarding the first research question—"How do teachers promote literary understanding during read-aloud sessions in linguistically diverse classrooms learning Swedish?"—the findings show that the teachers used both classroom discussions and written reflection tasks to achieve this. At the same time, there were differences between the two student groups when it came to engagement and the teachers adapted their choices according to that fact. Cathrine, who struggled to motivate her students, chose "The White House" since she knew from experience that it engaged students. She spent time introducing the book and creating interest and engagement before reading, which she did by studying the front of the book, exploring paratexts, identifying the main character of the book, and discussing what the students were most curious about in the book. This encouraged the students to step into the envisionment (Langer, 2017). Sophie, on the other hand, chose to challenge her students in their literary understanding. Her students were engaged and with scaffolding they managed to read "Holes" which was a challenging book with parallel stories that required many inferences. Sophie used the literature to discuss the content and to make connections to the students' personal experiences as well as societal issues, through topics such as Rosa Parks and Black Lives Matter. In the resulting discussions, the students pointed out symmetries between the life and text to discuss oppressive power relations in the real world (Felski, 2008). As also argued by Felski (2008), gaining real world knowledge from the book is not exclusive to teaching practices, but can be perceived as a form of aesthetic engagement with the text.

It is evident from the findings that the exploration of the novel and the making of inferences (see Iser, 1978; Terwagne, 2006) did not always come easy to the students. Rather, the teacher encouraged the students to express their beliefs and applied linguistic support strategies, such as sentence-starters. While Cho and Christ (2022) emphasized the importance of using culturally relevant texts for the students to make inferences, we believe that a fruitful path for whole-class teaching of

culturally diverse students is to build and maintain a common frame of reference for making connections between challenging literary texts and content negotiated in prior instances of instruction, as exemplified by Sophie's teaching.

While Cathrine and her students were not able to delve as deeply into "The White House", we do not interpret this as meaning that Cathrine wanted to reduce the literary challenge or experience according to a deficit view of the students (Economou, 2021). Rather, she directed attention to aesthetic aspects of the literary language and craftmanship in a way that previous studies have found to be lacking (e.g., Anundsen, 2021).

Regarding the second research question—"What characterizes the teachers' linguistic support strategies in promoting the students' literary understanding during read-aloud discussions?"—the two teachers employed different discursive strategies, as previous research also showed (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021, 2022). Catherine employed discursive strategies such as repetition, paraphrasing, and highlighting the structure of abstract and compounded words (Excerpt 2). Excerpt 10 showed how Cathrine drew attention to word formation and word structure like derivations and single-word compounds ("uniformed" and "freedom-deprived"). By asking the students to "trace" and "pull apart" words, while also drawing explicit attention to aspects such as homonymy, she applied what we choose to describe as a metalinguistic strategy that can promote both the students' target language and their application of successful inferencing strategies (Laufer, 2021). The approach was similar to that of the experienced teachers participating in Walldén's (2020a) study of adult SSL teaching. While Sophie did not lean on these strategies, she still integrated a linguistic focus by creating ample opportunities for the students to make connections between the literary language ("bandit") and the word used in everyday speech ("baxare", snatcher, robber, thief), while also pointing out grammatical features such as tense. Furthermore, she explicitly modelled how the meaning of literary words may be inferenced by looking at them in context (Laufer, 2021). Such interactional strategies have the potential to expand semantic and formal features of literary language by connecting it to the students' knowledge and experiences (Gibbons, 2006; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021).

Concerning Research Question 3, the linguistic aspects appeared to be highly integrated into the reading practices, which may reflect a key SSL competence shared by these teachers. While a focus on words and expressions is expected in the SSL curriculum, L1-oriented research has typically not illuminated teachers' attention to language in classroom reading (Gourvennec & Sønneland, 2023). As Walldén and Nygård Larsson (2021) also pointed out, SSL instruction is a dual literacy practice comprising both language development and the study of disciplinary texts. In this way, the teaching of literature in SSL classrooms is similar to other subject-specific scaffolding practices in L2 classrooms, entailing a delicate balance between a focus on language and a focus on the substantial subject content (e.g., Uddling, 2021; Walldén, 2019). Our hope is that the findings of the present study, including the metalinguistic and discursive strategies enacted by the teachers, can be used to foster

integrated approaches to L2 teaching. We do not think that these strategies are exclusive to the teachers participating in the current study. From our own extensive experience as L2 researchers and educators, we believe that they may be common, but hitherto underexplored in research. By illuminating L2-oriented methods and practices, we hope that the findings may help raise the status of both L2 teaching and L2 teachers in Sweden and other comparable contexts.

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