

Interacting



# Interacting

Coordinating text understanding in a student  
theatre production

Martin Göthberg



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ISBN 978-91-7346-500-7 (print)

ISBN 978-91-7346-501-4 (pdf)

ISSN 0436-1121

Doctoral thesis in Subject Matter Education at the Department of Education,  
Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg.

The thesis is available in full text online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/58482>

This doctoral thesis has been prepared within the framework of the graduate school in educational science at the Centre for Educational and Teacher Research, University of Gothenburg. Doctoral thesis: 75.

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Distribution:

Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Box 222, 405 30 Göteborg, or to  
[acta@ub.gu.se](mailto:acta@ub.gu.se)

Photo: Kent Hägglund

Print: BrandFactory AB, Källered, 2019

## Abstract

Title: Interacting – Coordinating text understanding in a student theatre production  
Author: Martin Göthberg  
Language: English with a summary in Swedish  
ISBN: 978-91-7346-500-7 (print)  
ISB: 978-91-7346-501-4 (pdf)  
Keywords: Arts education, literature education, theatre education, text understanding, role-taking, character work, video analysis

The present dissertation explores student actors' and their teachers' coordination of text understanding in a theatre production – a two-semester process from page to stage in an upper secondary school in Sweden. With an interest in the collaborative work achieved in and through theatre education the research is realized against a background of the role of arts education and reading of literary texts in the neoliberal educational landscape that favors measurable effects of individual achievements. The overarching aim is to explore how text understanding evolves collaboratively as the participants transform drama text into stage text. This aim is pursued by investigating moment-to-moment contingency of unfolding social interaction in theatre activities grounded in a particular drama text. Analytically, such a focus is pursued by employing sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making, creativity and learning. Data has been generated from ethnographic observation and video- and audio recordings of the participants' staging of Molière's *The Affected Ladies*, including the process from the first reading to the last performance. The unit of analysis applied to the data is tool-mediated activities, encompassing the participants, their interactions and the tools used. Three studies are reported through two articles and a licentiate thesis. The studies complement each other as the analytical work moved from ethnographic orientation into finer-grained scrutiny of talk- and action-in-interaction. The research design allows investigation of the micro-genesis of specific text understanding in relation to the overall transformation of a literary text into stage text, in which complexity of text understanding in artistic practice can be demonstrated. The results illustrate the situated, interactional ways in which the participants progressed from a position as newcomers to the drama

text into a position of mastering the stage text. The findings show that anchoring text understanding in experiences in the material world developed the student's perspectives on the text and expanded their action possibilities. They also show that students' informal and playful role-playing provided the spaces necessary for appropriation of cultural and social interactional means that the students later re-used in rehearsal of scripted dialogue and in the stage text. One of the productive features was the dynamic, laminated interaction, including hybrid role-taking, in which substantial student agency surfaced. Such interaction supported collaborative realizations of meaning potentials in the situated habituation of characters' manners. Stretched-out over the production period, the micro transitions of text understanding formed salient examples of emergent learning across formal and informal situations. There seems to be good arguments for doing more things with literary texts than 'just' reading them, in order to explore their inherent dynamics as layers of cultural meaning. To reduce learning arrangements to what seems efficient to reach measurable goals for the individual appears ill-judged considering the educational potentials of collaborative, creative, explorative and transgressive forms of learning illustrated in the present research.

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## Acknowledgements

I drömmen häromnatten hade jag inrett det höga tornets väggar med stockar hemifrån skogen. Jag hade fäst dem så att de vindlade sig en god bit uppåt. När jag dagen därpå kom tillbaka till mitt bygge såg jag nya fästansordningar i konstruktionen. Någon hade varit där och ändrat. Jag greppade inte poängen med det. Men när jag klättrade uppåt inuti det drömda tornet för att bygga vidare blev jag tacksam för att de nedre stockarna nu satt fast bättre genom bruket av en annan byggnadstradition. Jag vaknade och tänkte att den traditionen möjliggjorde nya utsikter och insikter.

Under åren när doktorsavhandlingen byggts har jag mött inte bara drömda möjliggörare utan högst påtagliga, generösa, utmanande och stödjande möjliggörare som jag vill tacka varmt.

Elever och lärare, ni som öppnade er skolvardag två terminer för observationer, era namn kan inte nämnas på grund av studiens konfidentialitet men jag är ytterst tacksam mot er alla! En alldeles speciell möjliggörare var teaterläraren och kollegan som i texten går under namnet Lisen. Tack.

Under avhandlingsbygget har två huvudhandledare avlöst varandra. På så sätt har jag dragit nytta av kompletterande traditioner. Maj Asplund Carlsson, under licentiatstudierna inledde du med att fråga om jag inte ville forska om något som verkligen intresserade mig istället för den forskningsskiss som jag blev antagen på. Så öppnades möjligheten att skriva om teaterproduktion och textförståelse i en licentiatuppsats med etnografisk ansats. I det arbetet stöttade du med säker hand. Tack. Efter en paus från forskarutbildningen vände jag mig till Åsa Mäkitalo. Du trädde in som huvudhandledare och har skickligt guidat vägen in i de sociokulturella och dialogiska traditionerna. Där har jag kunnat bygga avhandlingen med stöd av dina uthålliga läsningar, skarpa synpunkter, uppmuntran och introduktioner till nätverk av andra forskare såväl lokalt som internationellt. Tack, för att du visste när det var möjligt för mig att klättra ett steg till. Och ett till. Biträdande handledare, Cecilia Björck, inte minst gjorde du denna avhandling möjlig genom att uppmuntra mig att på nytt söka in till forskarutbildningen efter lic:en. Du har visat att du trott på mig och du har varit en sammanhållande kraft under båda perioderna. Tack för inspiration, estetiska perspektiv och de många förslagen att vässa texten. Tack också mina kompetenta experthandledare, Birgitta Johansson Lindh och Cecilia

Lagerström, som med teaterperspektiv generöst hjälpte till att utveckla artiklarna som ingår i avhandlingen.

Läsare, granskare och diskutanter vid etappseminarierna har påtagligt bidragit till avhandlingsarbetet genom kritisk läsning och konstruktiva synpunkter. Tack, Annika Bergviken Rensfeldt, Cecilia Wallerstedt, Birgitta Johansson Lindh, Ann Carita Evaldsson och Elisabeth Öhrn.

Avhandlingsbygget blev möjligt genom mångahanda nätverk och miljöer, exempelvis SDS (seminariet för sociokulturella och dialogiska studier) med grundregeln för professor såväl som doktorand att bara work-in-progress får läggas fram. Och så kastar sig alla över de sköra raderna med konstruktiv och utmanande välvilja att utveckla texten. Det har varit en förmån att få läsa och att bli läst av er: Roger Säljö, Per Linell, Annika Lantz Andersson, Mona Lundin, Sylvi Wigmo, Thomas Hillman, Elin Nordenström, Ewa Skantz Åberg, Tina Kullenberg, Janna Meyer-Beining, Louise Peterson, Katka Cerna, Guilina Messina Dahlberg, andra mer tillfälliga deltagare – och ordförande Åsa Mäkitalo och sekreterare Anne Solli, som hållit ihop oss. Jag är likaledes glad över att ha fått delta i temat Kultur och estetik inom forskarskolan CUL. Vi har åkt på skivrinternat vid havet, haft nydanande temaseminarier och vi har presenterat pågående arbete för varandra. Tack för intresse, omtanke, spännande perspektiv och joggingturer: Monica Lindgren, Cecilia Björck, Carina Borgström-Källén, Tarja Häikiö, Cecilia Jeppsson, Christer Larsson, Emma Gyllerfelt, Ingrid Hedin Wahlberg, Joakim Andersson, Lena Ostendorf, Niklas Rudbäck och Ola Henricsson.

Doktorandtiden innebar ensamarbete. Vilken tur att tidvis kunna arbeta på doktorandrummet på Institutionen för pedagogik, kommunikation och lärande (IPKL), Göteborgs universitet. Där, back-stage, har vi delat framgång och motgång. Ni har hjälpt till att realisera avhandlingen, tack Ulla Jivegård, Agneta Pihl, Kristina Melker, Lena Ryberg, Panagioata Nasiopoulou, Anna Backman, Kerstin Botö och Caroline Önebro. På IPKL vill jag också tacka administratörerna Desirée Engvall och Carin Johansson samt studierektorer Annika Lantz Andersson och Mona Lundin – tänk att få tillgång till ert kunnande, stöd och uppmuntrande engagemang.

Licentiatstudierna genomfördes parallellt med undervisning på min hemskola där en gymnasielektortjänst väntar efter forskarutbildningen. Detta blev möjligt genom flera skolledare som hjälpt till längs vägen och alla kollegor och vänner som peppat och intresserat sig för forskningen, inte minst

arbetslaget. Inom ramen för avhandlingen står ni utan namn, men tacket mitt är inte namnlöst.

Jag skriver i avhandlingen om ett gränsland mellan det informella och det formella där det erbjuds särskild potential för utveckling. Vi möttes i mellanrummen mellan det formella och informella, om det så var i skidspåret, folkbildningssamtalet, debriefingen, eller på tåget till Luxemburg: Anne Solli, Janna Meyer-Beining, Lina Brustad och Jan Gustafsson, ni har alldeles särskilt gjort avhandlingen möjlig.

Käraste Britti, Emil och Sara, ni är och har varit mina närmaste. Oj, så ni har hjälpt mig när det tagit emot med stockarna och så fint när vi bara suttit och pratat om annat än avhandlingen länge, länge, precis som vi brukar hemma i köket.

Solens ö, 25 februari 2019

Martin Göthberg



# PART I – Extended summary

## 1. Introducing what is at stake

The present dissertation explores student actors' and their teachers' coordination of text understanding in a theatre production – a two-semester process from page to stage in an upper secondary school in Sweden. At stake for the participants, all enrolled in the Arts Program, is the artistic shaping of a coherent and convincing theatre performance based on a particular drama text, *The Affected Ladies*, by Molière (originally published in 1659 as *Les Précieuses Ridicules*). At stake for me as a researcher is to move my observations from stage to page in a coherent and convincing report of the analyzed activities. The significance of pursuing such a research undertaking is related to a number of societal, educational and scientific issues.

This dissertation can be read against a backdrop of prevailing neoliberal educational policies that focus on measurable learning outcomes for the individual. Arts education<sup>1</sup> is often associated with collaborative, creative, explorative and transgressive forms learning. Observed at different educational levels in several places, in policy and in practice, the dominant educational discourse gives priority to all-too structured educational programs and undermines arts education. A problematic implication of reducing, or removing, arts education in policy and practice concerns democratic perspectives on the right of all young people to experience aesthetic expressions through involvement in artistic practices. New forms of engagement of young people with fictional worlds have emerged through digitization and globalization. We can see a shift from the role of consumer of fiction to the role of prosumer (i.e., producer and consumer merged) through an increase in opportunities for interaction with and around fictional characters. In educational debates, engagement with fictional worlds through literary texts has

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<sup>1</sup> Arts education implies that the students are involved in artistic practice, not education primarily *about* the arts.

often been associated with democracy, personal growth and academic achievement. During the last decade or so, substantial efforts, financially, educationally and otherwise, have been assigned to instilling a desire in young people to read literary texts.

Against this background, it is necessary to study unfolding learning processes in and through the arts and to explore readings empirically to gain a deeper understanding of young people's social interaction that revolve around literary texts. Addressing creative and collaborative educational contexts, Sawyer (2015, p. 258) proposed more research "that analyses the moment-by-moment contingency of classroom dialogue, one that focuses on the unfolding process and not only the ultimate product, the desired learning outcome."

In terms of subject-specific matters, this investigation is positioned at the intersection of Swedish and theatre. The common ground of these subjects, surfacing in their respective curricula and syllabi of the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), is the students' understanding of, use of, and interaction around literary texts (Skolverket, 2011a–d). Two forms of text play a prominent role in the present dissertation: *drama text*<sup>2</sup> (equals script) and *stage text*<sup>3</sup> (equals performance). The dissertation provides empirical knowledge of emerging text understanding as the participants move from drama text to stage text during the period of theatre production.

In terms of research, specifically in the field of arts education, a student theatre production is an interesting site for learning in its own right and on its own terms, which contrasts research interests in the effects of theatre/drama education on, for example, other school subjects or study motivation. We need to know more about how text understanding regarding drama texts may evolve *in situ* in educational settings since it is sparsely researched, especially in a Swedish context.<sup>4</sup> We also need to know more about students' collective work on cultivating drama characters' emotional expressions<sup>5</sup> since it may provide further insights into patterns of collaborative learning in theatre/drama education and literature education. Moreover, it is necessary to address the little-investigated issue of how the micro-genesis of learning may contribute to

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<sup>2</sup> The written lines and stage directions, in which an intention of staging the drama is inscribed.

<sup>3</sup> The staging of the drama, which revolves around the drama text and in which the drama text supplies actors with lines to speak.

<sup>4</sup> Previous research in this field of literature didactics has seldom investigated students' reading of drama texts, although policy documents assign a pertinent role to such texts in literature education (Skolverket, 2011a–c).

<sup>5</sup> Bergman Blix (2010) used "cultivate" for actors' character work, specifically regarding refining of emotional expressions.

long-term processes of learning skills and practices relevant in arts education. Finally, considering the fact that theatre as a subject with a syllabus and grading criteria authorized by Skolverket (2011d) was established almost thirty years ago, the research gap regarding subject-specific research is a bit surprising.<sup>6</sup>

As regards research design, data was generated through ethnographic observation of the production from the students' first encounter with the drama text to a shop talk after the last performance. Video and audio recordings, fieldnotes, the adapted script, stage-light protocols and other written documents are included in the data set. During my exploration of this data set, focus shifted from literature didactics via theatre didactics to an interest in the participants' interactional achievements in coordinating joint understandings. These three areas of interest consort under the umbrella of text understanding in the context of artistic shaping of a stage text. Moreover, the interests amalgamate in the present compilation thesis through the progressive analyses of learning processes involved in the theatre production. I have conducted three empirical studies building on one another in the sense that the participants' talk-and action-in-interaction (Goodwin, 2007) is successively analyzed in greater detail. The shifting focus and gradual deepening of the analytical work has implications for the investigation and how the dissertation is arranged. For example, using the same data set in the empirical studies made it possible to scrutinize an educative process involving the same participants while adopting different theoretical and methodological approaches. Designing the research project this way allowed the present dissertation to illuminate the complexity of text understanding in artistic practice.

The aim of Study 1 is to gain insight into the development of text understanding through a longitudinal ethnographic approach. It is a licentiate thesis written in Swedish. In English it would be entitled: *Pimping the text. An ethnographic study of upper secondary school students' meaning making in drama text.* The aim of Study 2 is to gain more specific insight into how transitions of text understanding are established through fine-grained interaction analysis. We investigated how transitions are mediated and the relation between small-scale transitions and the transformation of drama text into stage text. Study 2 was published in 2018 as an article, co-written with my supervisors, entitled "From drama text to stage text: Transitions of text understanding in a student theatre production." Study 3 aims at obtaining insight into patterns of creative and

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<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge, Ahlstrand (2014) is the only dissertation investigating situated activities in the context of the theatre subject in upper secondary school in Sweden.

collaborative learning in cultivating a particular character through analysis of the participants' use of cultural resources and framing of activities. Study 3 is reported through an article currently in press, entitled "Cultivation of a deceiver – the emergence of a stage character in a student theatre production."

In the next section, I attend to central terms and concepts in the thesis. The section also provides initial information about the activities under study and my ways of approaching them.

## 1.1 Approaching text understanding in a theatre production

At the core of the present research project, and included in the title, are three terms: *text understanding*, *coordinating* and *theatre production*. Text understanding refers to the participants' understanding of what the drama as a whole, and particular scenes, are about and how to enact the scenes through bodyliness,<sup>7</sup> speech and stage objects. The participants' development of text understanding refers to their opening of new perspectives on the text, while coordination implies the interactional work through which the participants display and align to these understandings. The co-creative and goal-oriented cultural practice of a theatre production is seen as an activity where the actors draw on their cultural resources in the artistic shaping of drama text toward stage text (Vygotsky, 1999).

One assumption made in this research project is that of the participants' need to coordinate text understanding in forms that enable a theatre performance. The current theatre production is drama-text based, which implies on a concrete level, for example, that the production begins with a collective reading of the text (in theatre parlance first reading) in which the so-called 'given circumstances' (Stanislavski, 2017) of the drama text play a central role in the participants' discussions. The participants then explore the characters through bodily interaction in improvisations and rehearsals of drama-text lines. Finally, the performances are announced as performances of the particular drama text. However, as will be illustrated, what is 'given' in the given circumstances is a matter of interactional accomplishments through negotiations during the entire period of preparation for the upcoming stage text. Such verbal and nonverbal negotiations are a major focus in my research. In

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<sup>7</sup>Bodyliness equals embodiment (cf. Franks, 2015, p. 314).

other words, this research interest concerns what the participants *do* with the text. What do they achieve and how do they achieve that through social interaction? What is the significance of the transformation from drama text into stage text in this particular case?

Underpinning my research is a view of a common ground shared by theatre and drama education. Historically, such commonality has been questioned. In brief, drama education has focused on processes within the group of participants and on instrumental aspects such as the benefits of drama for social skills and curricular uses, whereas theatre education has focused on the product – the production of performances – and on intrinsic aspects such as acting skills. However, there has been a theatre/drama-turn lately (the slash signals commonality). Such common ground has been addressed by a number of scholars: Ackroyd-Pilkington (2010), Bolton (2009) and Martin-Smith (2005), among others. I acknowledge that it may at times be relevant to separate drama and theatre to specifically focus on, for instance, classroom drama, process drama, dramatic play, scripted theatre and so on. For example, the theatre dimension comes to the fore when I address goal-orientation toward upcoming performances and the anticipated audience. However, when it comes to major parts of previous research and theoretical understanding addressed in this thesis, the common ground of theatre/drama comes to the fore. Here I attune to Martin-Smith (2005, p. 3) who argued that “[t]he multiplicity of approaches to drama and theatre education, each with its own aesthetic pattern, often obscures the common ground they all share.” One common ground is the emphasis on talk and bodyliness as indivisible in the analysis of meaning making.

The theoretical framework I have used to investigate the issues above is linked to three premises for the analyses. All three relate to the *sociocultural and dialogical traditions* in some sense. The first is the overarching premise of learning generated through participation in social interaction (Linell, 1998; Rommetveit, 1974; Säljö, 2014, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). The second is the premise of particular features of interaction and learning in theatre/drama activities, notably potentials inherent in taking on a drama role<sup>8</sup> (Davis, 2015a; Heathcote, 1991; Schechner, 1985; Vygotsky, 1999). The third is the premise of reading and responding to literary texts as forms of interaction and matching repertoires (Iser, 1978; McCormick, 1994).

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<sup>8</sup> Hereafter, *role-taking* refers to taking on a drama/fictional role.

## 1.2 The site and its institutional framing

The Swedish upper secondary school offers 18 national programs, all three-years in duration. One of them is the Arts Program, which attracted 6.8% of all students in the school year of 2013/2014 when the field work was carried out (Skolverket, n.d.-d). Within the Arts Program, there are five optional orientations: dance, media and aesthetics, music, theatre and visual arts. The current students attend the Arts Program with the theatre orientation which implies that they study a number of theatre courses (e.g., acting and stage design), along with eight other school subjects that are compulsory in all five orientations. Swedish is a compulsory subject. Literary texts, including drama texts, are assigned a central role in the subjects of theatre and Swedish. Courses in both Swedish and theatre follow the national syllabus and grading criteria (Skolverket 2011a–d).

The current public upper secondary is situated in mid Sweden. Its Arts Program annually conducts an extensive theatre production with Grade 3 students aged 18–19. Almost all scheduled theatre class time during two semesters is devoted to such productions, which typically are played for peers and the general public in about five performances. This is a familiar setting to me. I have worked in this school as a teacher of Swedish and theatre since 2002 and I knew the participating teachers and students from before, which facilitated access to observe the entire theatre production.<sup>9</sup>

The drama, Molière's *The Affected Ladies*, was first performed in 1658. It is a comedy of manners, an acrid satire about superficiality that brought Molière his first great success. Thematically it also resonates with a longstanding issue in the history of both comedy and tragedy – the father, in conflict with his daughter(s) (cf. Sophocles' *Antigone* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*). Out of four modern and classic drama texts provided by the theatre teacher the students chose to stage *The Affected Ladies*. They decided to play the Molièrian piece because they were interested in family and gender relations, and in young people's attraction to glamour and sophisticated, worldly people. In their argumentation, they displayed student agency by means of the desire to make an artistic statement concerning pretentiousness and indiscriminating imitation of the manners of people of elevated status. The relatively big time-gap, 350 years or so, between the origin of the current drama and the students' sociocultural circumstances oriented my research interest toward the

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<sup>9</sup> Both the teachers have worked more than 15 years in the teaching profession.

interactional work of bridging between the respective cultural repertoires of the drama text and of the participants.

The participants work within the Stanislavski tradition (for details, see Study 1). This includes viewing theatre as a depictive art form, as in the following basic definition of theatre: "A represents X while S looks on" (Fischer-Lichte, 1992, p. 257). Such an outset of producing theatre performances may differ from recent post-dramatic understanding of theatre which questions the dominance of a drama text and the traditional dramaturgic logic of a coherent plot and coherent, recognizable characters (Ahlstrand, 2014; Helander, 2011).

### 1.3 The research project – from ethnography to detailed interaction analyses

*A vignette: A performance unfolds. Off-stage, in the scenery-flats area, two student actors await their entrance onstage. Peering toward the stage, one of them whispers:*  
 - *Did you know that they are sisters?*  
 - *Nope, I didn't realize that until now.*

My research interest was born of many years of teaching Swedish and theatre and directing community theatre. I was fascinated by the different ways in which students and actors could understand the same literary text, constructing new layers of text understanding even after months of preparations for the performances. The vignette above is an example of such continuous text exploration. Experiences like this piqued my interest in finding out more about how students and actors shape understandings of drama characters and how to enact them. With the opportunity at hand to realize this concern in a thesis project, I decided to undertake an ethnographically informed investigation of the development of text understanding in one specific theatre production. In contrast to studies of text understanding in the field of literature didactics, which primarily focus on talk, a pilot study indicated the necessity of including other mediational means in my investigation. Literature in the field of arts education provided insights into the role of multiple semiotic resources for meaning making. Previous research in performing arts and theatre studies provided a background for my attempts to understand how actors cultivate characters. Engaging with the videos from the fieldwork highlighted the significance of collaborative work, negotiations and the moment-by-moment

contingency of interaction in-role<sup>10</sup> as regards coordinating text understanding. In this dissertation, I therefore decided to draw on a selection of research from different areas (see Chapters 2–3) and to focus on sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making, creativity and learning.

Having briefly sketched out the background of this thesis project so as to make various starting points a bit more salient, the overarching aim and research question are introduced in the next section.

## 1.4 Overarching aim and research question

As the title of the thesis indicates, this is an investigation of interacting actors' coordination of text understanding in a student theatre production. The overarching aim is to explore how text understanding evolves as the participants in the theatre production transform drama text into stage text. This aim is pursued by asking the following overarching research question:

How do the student actors and the teacher/director coordinate text understanding during the preparations for the upcoming performances of Molière's *The Affected Ladies* and by what interactional and cultural means do they pursue their objective?

The general aim and research question are specified in each empirical study in accordance with the particular aims and theoretical and methodological approaches, as mentioned above and accounted for in Chapter 5. To conclude this introduction, here follows a description of how the thesis is arranged in terms of what the individual chapters seek to achieve.

## 1.5 Vantage points for the coming chapters

Part I of this dissertation consists of an extended summary, while Part II presents the three empirical studies as they have been published (with Study 3 in press).

The next chapter provides a review of previous research. The review positions the present investigation in relation to relevant fields and indicates ways in which it can contribute to knowledge. I address three fields in which the object of research is located: literature education, arts education and theatre/drama education. The research review ends by pointing to needs for further research.

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<sup>10</sup> The notion of in-role refers to taking on a drama role.

Then, there is a chapter on the theoretical assumptions underpinning my research. I introduce and define central concepts. The presentation of the theoretical framework is organized by means of three central premises for the analytical work, all relating to sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making, learning and creativity. The chapter seeks to describe the ways in which the chosen approaches have guided the research undertaking in terms of what they make it possible to see, how the research object is delimited in the sense that specific aspects of the activity under investigation are foregrounded in the analyses, and which particular analytical tools are employed.

After that, a chapter on research design provides an account of the methodological approach related to the theoretical approach. Here, the participants, their project and the particular site, along with an account of access and ethical considerations, are addressed. Also addressed are the production and managing of data, followed by analytical procedures, including the selection of episodes for scrutiny. To conclude, I describe what is at heart of the production: the Molièorean drama. The purpose is to clarify not only how the empirical studies complement one another by gradually going into more interactional detail but also how the studies vary methodologically within the overarching methodological approach.

Subsequently, I provide a summary of the empirical studies, introduced by outlining commonalities. The objective is to have the summaries shape a comprehensible insight into what the research is about even without reading the complete thesis.

In the last chapter, I aggregate my line of reasoning into six different contributions to knowledge based on the results of the empirical studies. The discussion is then oriented toward a synthesis suggesting how to understand the contributions. I also address educational implications and further research needed on some of the issues at stake.



## 2. Research review

In this chapter, I review previous research that relates to the overarching aim of the thesis: to explore how text understanding evolves as the participants in the theatre production transform drama text into stage text. As mentioned, I locate my object of research in three fields: *literature education*, *arts education* and *theatre/drama education*. Literature education serves as an entry point from the perspective of the participants' engagement with a literary text (the current drama text) in an educational context. The field of arts education is of interest since it concerns embodied, explorative and collaborative learning processes that relate to the nature of the activities under study. The third field, theatre/drama education, is relevant since the participants work on an extensive theatre production included in an aesthetic educational program. As noted in the introduction, underpinning this thesis is a view of the common ground between theatre and drama regarding the special imaginary relation with the environment that constitutes in-role interaction, why the unified concept of theatre/drama is used, unless there is a particular reason to separate drama and theatre.

The chapter is structured in three sections outlining the central issues in the three fields of interest. Within these sections, studies of specific importance, predominantly empirical studies, are highlighted. In a concluding section, I outline the need for further research addressed by the present dissertation.

### 2.1 Reading drama text in the field of literature education

“It is a text full of gaps,” stated Heed (2002, p. 29, my translation), describing the general characteristics of a drama text. In a similar spirit, Sörlin (2008) argued that the reader of a drama text must undertake complex transformative acts in order to make sense of the reading – “comprehension is entirely dependent on the reader’s creation of a stage text privately in his/her thoughts” (p. 23, my translation). Such an extraordinarily demanding kind of reading may be troublesome for students with little or no experience of filling in the gaps between the scripted lines of a drama text, let alone the obstacles that will arise for those without practical experience of staging a drama text, following Sörlin’s

argument. With this view of drama-text reading as a backdrop for an outline of the field of literature education in (primarily) a Swedish school context, I focus on two issues: first, the use of central concepts and methods related to studies of the school subject of Swedish, then, the emerging interest in embodied readings.<sup>11</sup>

Empirical studies of readers' reception of literature are common in the field of literature education, typically within the scope of ethnographic classroom research, such studies include Asplund (2010), Bommarco (2006) and Olin-Scheller (2006). Another common feature in the field is adopting a sociocultural approach to learning and meaning making (e.g., Asplund, 2010; Bergman, 2007; Bommarco, 2006; Olin-Scheller, 2006). In a thorough review of Swedish dissertations on literature education, Degerman (2012) argued that it is so common for empirical studies in the field to adopt a sociocultural perspective that literature didactics have become almost synonymous with a dialogical view<sup>12</sup> on teaching literature.

Bommarco (2006) conducted three years of fieldwork in a class where she teaches Swedish. The students attended the social-science program in upper secondary school. Using Langer's (1995) theory of *literary envisionment* (for further detail, see Chapter 3), the students' reception of a novel and development of text understanding were investigated by analyzing literature talks in five small groups and written reading logs. Some of the literature talks were teacher-led, but not all. Bommarco concluded that the students continuously shifted and revised interpretations, stances and views of what they read. In the literature talks, the students did not strive to achieve a joint text understanding. Another interesting finding, was that the students demonstrated a capacity to view situations in a literary text as both authentic and – in parallel, seemingly without tension – fictitious.

In several studies in this field with an interest in students' response to literature, McCormick's (1994) concept of *repertoire matching* is commonly used, for example by Asplund (2010), which I will review next. According to McCormick, readers' engagement with a text is understood as an encounter, sometimes almost a battle, between the text's repertoires (or meaning potentials) and the readers' repertoires (or attitudes). Asplund's analyses of video-recorded small group literature talks among upper secondary school

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<sup>11</sup> The literature review in this section has as its focus a Swedish school context since Study 1 concerned the school subject of Swedish and was written in Swedish.

<sup>12</sup> The term *dialogical* is used differently by Degerman than in the present thesis, see Chapter 3.

students in a vocational program indicated that matching repertoires was important not only for development of text understanding, but also for the construction of community and identity among the male students. The fact that students had reproachful attitudes toward situations or characters in particular novels was explained as mismatching or tensions between repertoires. Asplund extended the application of the repertoire concept by actualizing encounters between individual students' different repertoires. Similarly, Ullström (2002) used the repertoire-matching concept to demonstrate discrepancies in how the students and the teachers perceived of literary texts. McCormick's repertoire matching appears to lend itself to dynamic analytical use.

Previous research on literature talks in Swedish classrooms indicates consensus on their educational potential (e.g., Molloy, 2002; Thorson, 2005). In a study of such activities in secondary school, Tengberg (2011) defined literature talks as "teacher-led talks oriented toward interpretation and analysis of the read text" conducted in an "organized and delimited activity which is given time and space in the classroom" (p. 12, my translation). Tengberg analyzed the participants' readings based on such organized talks and their writings, including ways in which the students responded to structures of meaning potentials in a number of literary texts and the teacher's guidance of reading the text in particular ways. The results resonate with Bommarco's findings, indicating the plurality of readings and the students' shifts between these readings. The readings overlap and the readers' perspectives of a particular text often shift in the literature talks. Potentials for learning provided by collective meaning making in the talks are emphasized in the conclusions. This enables "text responding *from numerous diverse positions*, which implies that students from various backgrounds and with different life experiences can participate in and benefit from the same activity" (p. 312, italics in the original, my translation). Tengberg also noted benefits from collective reading aloud. For example, all students finished the reading together and even if some students 'just' listened they were able to apply "the particular strategies of literature reading" (p. 53) such as feeling engrossed in the fictional literary worlds (further elaborated by Langer, 1995).

Studying drama texts is part of the curriculum in the subject of Swedish (Skolverket 2011a), as noted in the introduction. One of the few studies in the field investigating students' work with drama texts in the subject of Swedish is Bergman (2007). Using data from two years of ethnographic observations in four different programs at an upper secondary school, Bergman analyzed a

four-week project of dramatization of certain scenes from classics like *Hamlet* and Strindberg's *The Father* (among several other projects). Bergman's results show weak scaffolding and an instrumental attitude toward the work with drama texts, with a focus on learning scripted lines by heart. Of specific relevance for the present study, Bergman also concluded that "through intense social interplay, the students collaboratively construct a joint understanding" of the drama text (p. 194, my translation).

### 2.1.1 Embodied readings and co-creation of fiction

The aim of the present thesis is related to an emerging interest in material aspects of reading, collective readings, embodied readings and co-creation of fiction (Elam & Widhe, 2015; Fatheddine, 2018; Persson, 2015; Tengberg, 2011, 2015; Widhe, 2017a). For example, Persson (2015) renounced a view of reading as a "purely mental phenomenon without any anchoring in the physical or social worlds" (p. 28, my translation). The relatively low level of research interest in the sensory and material aspects of reading is seen as "blind spots" in the field of literature education (p. 33, my translation). Similar requests for further research on embodied and aesthetic readings can be noted in Dahlbäck (2017) and Widhe (2017a). Another branch of this orientation is related to interaction in fictional worlds in contemporary culture, for example, computer games and fanfiction online (Lundström & Olin-Scheller, 2014; Olin-Scheller, 2006).

In an overview of policy documents and literature didactics research, Elam and Widhe (2015) addressed young peoples' desire to read as related to embodied text understanding. One point of departure is the internationally growing research interest in the bodily means of meaning making. Another starting point is the fact that recent educational reforms in Sweden and elsewhere have framed reading in school within the neoliberal emphasis on measurable effects of education. Such emphasis in policy, according to Elam and Widhe (2015), hampers the development of text understanding since more aesthetic and embodied readings will come to play a subordinate role in reading practices. An alternative is seen in the richer palette of semiotic means provided in literature education that is oriented toward more sensuous and material ways of reading. A core premise for their argument is that "the surrounding world is interpreted through our bodies and we make sense through our embodied existence" (p. 78, my translation). Pruning the reading experience from embodiment means that human experience and "meaning making will be

reduced to words and concepts only” (p. 78, my translation). A more aesthetic approach to reading practices, as in drama, would involve the whole body. However, Elam and Widhe (2015) reported a scarcity of studies encompassing such approaches to reading, particularly among young people beyond preschool age.

International and recent Swedish literacy studies on embodied readings suggest there is a great potential for developing verbal skills like text understanding (e.g., Baldwin, 2012; Franks, 2010; Lindell, 2012; Winner et al., 2013). This movement toward greater interest in sensory aspects of reading and responding to literary texts connects to studies of multimodal approaches to literacy development through the use of visual art and music (Borgfeldt, 2017; Dahlbäck, 2017; Skantz Åberg, 2018). For example, Dahlbäck (2017) combined studies from the fields of music didactics and Swedish didactics to investigate possibilities for 7–9-year-old children’s aesthetic expressions in the subject of Swedish. Through methods related to action research, policy studies and association-interview techniques, Dahlbäck used the material for qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis. One of Dahlbäck’s conclusions is that even if the subjects of Swedish and music are two separate school subjects, from a literacy perspective both of them can be viewed as communication forms, even forms of language. However, contemporary views of language in policy documents and among teachers favor skill-orientation in the subject of Swedish which contributes to a vertical language view where written language is seen as the ‘highest’ form at the expense of aesthetic means of expression and possibilities for viewing Swedish as a multimodal subject. In the present thesis, this issue has a bearing on the study of possibilities for learning in the intersecting areas of theatre education and Swedish which also resonates with research interests in the field of arts education.

## 2.2 Particular features of learning in Arts education

Since the empirical studies rely on observations of an extensive student theatre production accomplished within an Arts Program, it is connected to the field of arts education. Although, “[i]n rich arts education experiences, as with art, there is always more than one thing going on” as Haseman and Österlind (2015, p. 412) remarked, here I focus on just one, albeit broad, question. The present section concerns how arts education can be understood in terms of particular

features for learning through aesthetic experience. Especially I address theatre/drama.

The term arts education as an ‘umbrella’ for individual arts disciplines in school has developed over the past half century and has intellectual, political and artistic ramifications (Bresler, 2007). For example, arts education is addressed in OECD curricula policy (Winner et al., 2013) and several disciplinary boundaries have become less rigid as in crossing genre borders in artistic practice.

The field of arts education concerns embodied, explorative and collaborative learning processes (Bamford, 2009; Hansson Stenhammar, 2015; Sawyer, 2014). A common position in this field is a critique of neoliberal educational policies favoring measurable learning outcomes. Such favoring has been noted in terms of less space for arts subjects, for example in the curricula of Swedish schools, alongside particular views of what counts as valuable learning (Dahlbäck, 2017; Hallgren, 2018; Hansson Stenhammar, 2015; Lindgren, 2013; Widhe, 2017b). The narrow view on arts education and aesthetic learning, limited to its efficiency for learning outcomes in other school subjects,<sup>13</sup> is also noted in international educational policy trends. Ewing (2015, p. 150) remarks that ”political and policy demands for overly structured transmissive learning programs in the belief that this will improve academic success” may constitute a threat to other important forms of learning – ”[t]ime for imagination and creativity can be squeezed out.” It has been suggested that more research is needed to illuminate how learning processes develop in aesthetic learning, for example the moment-by-moment contingency of interaction in creative and collaborative learning (Sawyer, 2014, 2015).

### 2.2.1 Goal-orientation and attention to aesthetic choices

Arts education is often (although not necessarily) goal-oriented in the sense of making an artistic product public in events like a concert, an exhibition, or a stage show. This kind of goal-orientation can be related to *practical knowledge* (Molander, 1996; Schön, 2003) and particular learning processes in arts

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<sup>13</sup> Within the field, two positions can be noted; first a need to study arts education in its own right and on its own terms – the intrinsic dimension – and second, a need to investigate the impact of arts education on specific academic (and other) skills – the instrumental dimension (Dahlbäck, 2017; Hallgren, 2018; Haseman & Österlind, 2015; Lindgren, 2013), often related to meta-studies of so-called transfer effects (e.g., Winner et.al., 2013). Although transfer effects were mentioned as an entry point in Study 1, they are beyond the scope of this thesis. Having said that, I agree that more than one thing can be going on in theatre education, as Haseman and Österlind (2015) remarked.

education, which are summarized here through four aspects, drawing on Saar (2005). Saar conducted a one-and-a-half-year field study at an elementary school as a participating observer, on occasion as a teacher in-role in drama or a member in music ensembles, with the twofold aim of exploring conditions for pursuing arts education in schools and developing concepts for theoretical understanding of artistic practice and aesthetic learning in school. Specifically, by analyzing a range of observed artistic practices, Saar explored the underpinning epistemologies of aesthetic learning.

Saar (2005), aligning with Molander (1996), concluded that the participants need to orient their attention toward *aesthetic choices*, which means that during an explorative process of shaping something (for example, dance moves or a melody), they need to ask what seems relevant to use with regard to the goal. Second, the interplay between the part and the whole comes to the fore as participants engage in the sketching process aiming at a form – they can experience ‘firsthand’ the implications for the whole while altering a detail. Third, arts education often promotes student agency in the learning process related to the premises of participating in artistic shaping. For example, a student will assess how such shaping works: “whether it is beautiful, whether it sounds well, how it feels, what element might cause a particular effect, and if the latest attempt was better than the previous one” (Saar, p. 84, my translation). Arts education often employs methods and processes with potentials for young people to discover ways to develop their personal voice and creatively shape the material they are working with (Bamford, 2009; Ewing, 2015; Franks, 2015; Williams et al., 2018).

The concept of *aesthetic doubling* is commonly seen as experiencing the ‘real world’ and a fictitious situation simultaneously – as in children’s play, role-play in drama and stage acting. Aesthetic doubling provides particular possibilities for an interplay between involvement in and distance from activities in the fictitious situation (Hallgren, 2018), thereby allowing new possibilities to emerge regarding, for example, gaining new perspectives on oneself, social relations and the artistic material involved (Linds, 2006; Saar, 2005). A significant example illustrating one facet of aesthetic doubling, namely metacommunication concurrent with the action that is commented on, was reported by Elam (2012) in a study of professional dancers. By observing rehearsals and participating in training sessions during the preparation period of a stage production, combined with intense literature studies of dance theory, Elam (2012) noticed this particular form of metacommunication. As a dance

was conducted, in rehearsal and performance alike, one of the dancers “whispers some kind of code which represents a particular emotion with which they strive to stay” (p. 86, my translation). In the midst of unfolding artistic expression through choreographed moves, the dancer interweaved physical performance and distancing through verbal meta-reflection on the performance simultaneously. Elam claimed this blending of doing and verbal commenting is characteristic of aesthetic learning and reminds the reader of Schön’s (2003) example of architects’ verbalizing the sketching while sketching (see the next section). Somewhat similar forms of metacommunication are addressed in all three empirical studies in the present thesis.

### **2.2.2 Reflection-in-action and improvisation**

Traditionally, theatre education has been closely linked to practical knowledge through the premise of learning practical action (Ahlstrand, 2014; Johansson, 2012; Lagerström, 2003). The relationship between doing and gaining insights can be conceptualized as follows:

It is the doing per se that enables us to visualize where we are heading. While we give form to something, we also shape particular signs of our experience and understanding: first a sketch or a rough draft which one way or another catches the idea, which then is elaborated, a process in which the idea might be re-directed, overthrown or revised. (Selander, 2009, p. 212, my translation)

Similar shifts in the participants’ doings are considered in my analytical work, particularly in Study 1. In theorizing learning through explorative practical action, Schön (2003) employed the term *reflection-in-action*, which is viewed as different from reflection-on-action. Schön recounted an example from a school of architecture. New meaning potentials emerged through explorative sketching with a pencil on a piece of paper and concurrently verbalizing the evolving forms in a dialogue between a teacher and a student. Schön claimed that the close interplay between the part and the whole comes to the fore in the sketching process toward a form. This is related to the participant’s ‘firsthand’ experience of the implications for the whole while altering a detail. Conceptually, reflection-in-action constitutes an activity in which the participants in the midst of unfolding action nuance, or develop new understandings of their own doings. With regard to my thesis, I view Schön’s

described unfolding doing (i.e., the sketching without knowing the upcoming form beforehand) as part of an appropriation process.

Such a view of explorative sketching and interaction resonates with an explorative feature of theatre rehearsals that typically is described in the literature. In rehearsals, the participants thoroughly explore the meaning potentials of a drama through action and interaction in-role (Lagercrantz, 1995; Lagerström, 2003; Johansson, 2012). It might be noted that such reflection-in-action, here termed ‘theatrical sketching’, is quite different from a view of a theatre production as simple undertaking of instantiating scripted lines. Theatrical sketching, in which reflection-in-action is demonstrated, often appears in improvisations. As Duranti and Black (2011) noted, improvisation in different art forms “does not mean random behavior” (p. 453) but is made possible through comprehensive training. Previous research on group creativity and improvisation, for example Duranti and Black (2011) and Sawyer (2003, 2014, 2015), has indicated that a study of the present kind may contribute to knowledge about creative and collaborative learning. Sawyer (2015, p. 246) claimed that detailed analyses of interaction in improvisations in the theatre, in which the participants act without knowing the upcoming form beforehand, potentially unveil how “individual contributions build on each other over time.”

By studying arts education contexts in which the participants employ multiple semiotic resources and by analyzing acts of animating, demonstrating, enacting, instantiating and giving shape, researchers have discerned sensory aspects as essential in aesthetic learning (Lindstrand & Selander, 2009; Saar, 2005). New meaning potentials emerge by reflecting-in-action. Thus, one can see a reciprocity of giving shape to a particular understanding and, through this, new understanding emerges (Selander, 2009).

### **2.2.3 Appropriation of cultural tools through aesthetic experience across formal and informal contexts**

Finally, in this section on how arts education can be understood in terms of particular features of learning, I turn to three studies which offer empirically grounded insights into the appropriation of cultural tools across formal and informal contexts. The first study, Dunn (1998), analyzed an instance of elementary school children who, after a teacher-structured process-drama class, had access to props and costume from the drama session and used them in child-structured dramatic play. Dunn found that the children, in playful forms,

used prior drama experiences and developed elements of the drama without adult intervention. Of particular interest here is Dunn's remark that similar playful child-structured events occurred alongside the teacher-designed process drama, interwoven both in and between units.

In the second study, Bundy, Piazzoli and Dunn (2015) investigated how children aged 9–13 together with a teacher/facilitator “engage physically, intellectually and emotionally . . . to explore and collaboratively create dramatic meaning” in a scenario of an imagined natural disaster on an island. Data was generated through video and audio recordings of planning and debrief sessions, lessons and interviews with the children along with the children's drawings and written works. The authors illustrated how the children coordinate understandings of and contribute to the development of the drama they engaged in. In the analyses, a collective dimension of the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) is highlighted. Their results support the findings of other studies claiming that students may “create a collective ZPD through dramatic play” (p. 159). The study also analyzes a situation leading to a dance performance in-role. The dance continued into a “reveling” parody of the children's school performance. In this parody, the content of the drama was developed “in playful new directions” while the students, in some respects, also maintained the manners of their assigned characters (p. 163).

The third study, Wallerstedt and Pramling (2012), investigated the relation between play and learning in children's musical activities in primary school. They demonstrate how the children during free activities after lessons “make use of what the teacher introduced in the lesson” (p.14). The children continued to appropriate cultural tools (in this case mastering of a 3/4 musical meter) playfully on their own and without a teacher. Play and learning thus were interwoven. The authors conclude that “[i]n their play(ing, trying out), the children are given the opportunity to illustrate their competence through showing rather than telling their knowing” (p. 14).

These three studies inform my thesis in the sense that they show an ongoing appropriation process across formal and informal situations, which has an affiliation to all three empirical studies, although my studies are situated in a quite different educational context. Finally, I want to note that Wallerstedt's and Pramling's (2012) conclusion captures some of the core aspects of aesthetic learning that surfaced in this literature review. First, it denotes the explorative nature of aesthetic learning – the participants play and try out techniques, modes etc. Second, they do it together, collaboratively. Third, nonverbal

mediational means play a special role in the communication. Fourth, they reflect and actualize knowing embedded in practical action (Molander, 1996; Schön, 2003). Following this reasoning, approaching text understanding in terms of what the participants do with the text collectively in practical action seems relevant to my analytical work.

### 2.3 A special imaginary relation with the environment

The field of theatre/drama education is closely affiliated with arts education and most of the general principles presented in the previous section apply also in this field. In this section, I attend to some particularities of these principles as highlighted in theatre/drama research. Theatre/drama education is clearly distinguishable from other school activities in the sense that the students are invited to, encouraged to and eventually become familiar with taking on roles. Role-taking here implies acting as someone else, somewhere else and sometime else, which in Vygotskian terminology refers to action “in the imaginative field, in an imaginary situation” (Vygotsky, 2016, p. 18). In other words, role-taking concerns a special imaginary relationship with the environment.

A crucial premise of participation in a theatre production as a learning arrangement is that the actors are supposed to find out who the characters are so as to be able to portray their manners and interactions onstage. This is an intriguing task, since drama characters do not exist – what exists is a drama text with lines for actors to use, as Ackroyd-Pilkington (2010) noted. Moreover, premises such as interaction in-role pivoted by roles in the drama text, a clear goal-orientation in a collective undertaking to stage performances, and an anticipation of an audience are also embedded in the theatre production as a learning arrangement. Scholarly discussions over the centuries, from ancient Greece to contemporary research, keep coming back to the issue of how we can understand in-role experiences and in-role interaction. Through their often strong emotional charge and sensory experiences of otherness, they are considered to provide educational potential (Ackroyd-Pilkington, 2010; Bolton, 2007; Davis, 2015a; Heathcote, 1991).

As mentioned in the introduction, for the purposes of this dissertation I assume common ground shared by drama education and theatre education. Arguments for commonalities of theatre/drama education encompass, for example:

- the special imaginary relation with the environment that constitutes in-role interaction
- so-called safe spaces through taking on a role, in which participants experience less accountability for their verbal and nonverbal actions and greater freedom to explore new meaning potentials and understandings of issues at stake
- new perspectives through sensory experiencing of otherness
- expansive learning (i.e., the outcome is not predefined)
- a unity of affective and cognitive domains
- collaborative and collective dimensions of learning

The present section mainly relates to the special imaginary relation with the environment that constitutes in-role interaction. I have arranged this section according to two major issues in the field. The first subsection concerns particular potentials for learning in- and out-of-role, while the second deals with actors' character work.

### **2.3.1 In-role and out-of-role – particular potentials for learning**

Vygotsky (2016) remarked that children in dramatic play may act as though they were a head taller than they actually are. A substantial body of theatre/drama research concludes that interaction in imaginary situations promotes the participants' expansion of action possibilities and many scholars see educational potential for the participants' inhabiting such spaces (Andersen, 2004; Anderson & Dunn, 2013; Clarà, 2016a; John-Steiner, Connery, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010; Lee et al., 2015; Sawyer, 2015). A common explanation for this potential is that the embodied enactment in-role in theatre/drama provides an opportunity to experience perspectives of the other (Bolton, 2007; Ewing, 2015; Heathcote, 1991). A crucial point in understanding the particular potentials for learning in theatre/drama seems to be that these perspectives are experienced through multiple senses in social interaction in-role (Linds, 2006; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002).

In theatre/drama research, particular features of learning, such as the collaborative and collective aspects of activities, are frequently highlighted (Ahlstrand, 2014; Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015; Dunn, 1998; Ewing, 2015; Franks, 1995, 2010, 2015; Sawyer, 2014). Typically, this is related to actors being interdependent in their presentation of characters. In her seminal works on learners' working in-role, Heathcote (1991) elaborated on action in-role as a

‘drama framework’ (which I will come back to). Within such a framework the participant-in-role experiences safe spaces in which they feel less accountable for their verbal and nonverbal actions and greater freedom to explore new meaning potentials. In drama used in second language classes, interacting in-role seems to support verbal communication. Taking on a role, students can feel less accountable for grammar errors and the like and experience greater ease in speaking the target language with peers in-role and teachers-in-role (Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015; Ewing, 2015; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002).

A fair amount of research on in-role experiences mention educational potentials (and the like) in theatre/drama education in a broad variety of fields, including cognition, creativity and motivation (cf. Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015; Clarà, 2016; Sternudd, 2000; Haseman & Österlind, 2015). Further research is suggested, for example by Davis (2015b, p. 288):

[T]here is scope for a range of future work including mapping the negotiation of collective objects and also in analyzing the relationship between learning and development that occur within the different frames of activity – such as in role and out of role – within a drama process.

From a basis of multimodal theories in social semiotics and Bakhtinian perspectives on language and culture, Yandell (2008) contrasted two English lessons on drama texts in secondary school. In one, the students remained seated with focus (more or less) on the teacher in front of them. In the other, they role-played in groups of three with substantial physical movement in the classroom. The role-play followed on reading the first part of the drama text and anticipates – without the teacher explicitly announcing it – a theme of persuasion in a particular scene to come in the drama text. The students were not asked to use the drama-text characters, Richard and Anne, in their dramatization, just role-play any situation of persuasion where one person did not at all want to be talked into something and they could use (or not use) any props and clothing at hand.

Because of this, the students remain free to draw on a wide repertoire of cultural resources, to make meaning with all the means at their disposal. And thus, when the class gets to read Richard’s scene with Anne, his words are filled with a much denser semiotic load, a much richer and more complicated network of cultural understandings of persuasion and power relations. Around Richard’s voice echoes the voices of the students’ role-play characters and of the diverse texts and genres on which these improvisations drew. (Yandell, 2008, p. 54)

Yandell's conclusion resonates with the conclusions of much theatre/drama-education research in the sense that the spatialization and voicing of texts in social interaction in-role provide a holistic experience of a text and "the performances enabled students to learn (more) about these things [i.e., themes in the current drama text]" (p. 53). The students in the other class in Yandell's study had to rely on fewer semiotic resources in their sensemaking of a drama text and, as Yandell noted, were more dependent on each individual student's ability to make sense on their own (cf. Sörlin, 2008, in the theoretical framework). Yandell's study informs the present one, for example through the design of contrasting two models of teaching drama text reading and the kind of learning that is made available (see Study 1). Even if teaching models are not within the scope of the present thesis, the contrasting of two teachers' approaches to the same drama text from different angles can provide insight into the primary focus: the students' coordination of text understanding in- and out-of-role.

In a similar vein as Yandell (2008), Franks (2014) analyzed drama students' onstage presentations through drama-lesson observation documented in fieldnotes and photos in an English comprehensive secondary school in which 75% of the students came from multilingual backgrounds and minority ethnic groups. The 16-year-old students were asked to dramatically interpret a true story from long before they were born. In their presentations, it was evident that they drew "from their experiences of contemporary culture [such as] visual 'body culture' displayed in social networking, on music videos and so forth" (p. 202). In terms of appropriating means for onstage presentation, this example indicates the important role of bodyliness when using cultural resources collaboratively. Franks (2015, p. 314) used the term "bodyliness" since the notion of "embodiment" due to "metaphoric slippage . . . is prone to being emptied of a sense of the physicality and material sociality of our bodies." It seems relevant to use bodyliness in the present study since it might better encapsulate the artistic semiotic organisation of bodies typically explored and arranged in theatre rehearsals, which contrasts everyday embodied interaction by making explicit its organization.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on Vygotsky (and others), Franks (2014) argued that more knowledge of theatre/drama students' "tortuous" (p. 205) co-work on "the *depiction* and *representation* of affect in drama" is needed since it might "reveal something about patterns of learning" (p. 196, italics in

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<sup>14</sup> In the present thesis, *blocking* is the theatre term used for arranged and rehearsed movements, from locomotion to gestures.

the original). For example, anticipating an audience in preparation for a performance may develop awareness of affect as “a dynamic process moving from ‘how I feel’, through ‘how we feel’, to ‘how we shall show’ and how, through showing [the actor] might affect others” (p. 196).

Ahlstrand (2014) provided useful contextual knowledge not least against the aforementioned background that this is the only dissertation addressing learning processes in theatre education in Swedish upper secondary schools. Ahlstrand’s aim differs from mine in the sense that the analytical focus is on subject-specific capabilities in order to articulate and specify “the meaning of knowing a performative capability [and how] this (partly tacit) knowledge [can] be articulated and specified” (p. 219). My analytical focus is on the interactional work of teachers’ and students’ collaborative artistic shaping of the stage text.

Studies addressing collaborative learning commonly view intersubjectivity and its conceptualization as a key dimension to attend to. Vossoughi’s (2011) adopted Rommetveit’s (1974) notion of intersubjectivity in a study of classroom interaction where a ‘collective mind’ seemed to emerge. Vossoughi investigated teaching and learning practices in a summer high school in California preparing its students, children of migrant workers, for university studies. Analyzing video- and audio recordings, fieldnotes and student writing, Vossoughi’s micro-ethnographic dissertation aims at answering the question of if and how students, over time, appropriate tools for reading, writing and social analysis. The Freire method of ‘Teatro’ (Theater of the oppressed) served as one of three main units in the curriculum. The dramatic play seemed essential for what Vossoughi discerned as the emergence of a collective mind among the participants. Vossoughi suggested that a “[c]ollective mind’ is fundamentally grounded in the establishment, movement and tensions of intersubjectivity” (p. 98). In my view, this resonates with the notion of constructing safe spaces in drama (Heathcote, 1991).

Collaborative learning falls within the scope of Sawyer’s (2015) analysis of how actors’ collectively build on each other’s contributions in theatre improvisation. Sawyer videotaped improvised stage dialogue among a cast of eight adult actors with himself involved as a musician. From a sociocultural outset, Sawyer scrutinized the material through the lens of Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of creativity. Sawyer argued that creativity stems from collective processes, systems and communities rather than isolated individuals. Such collectiveness is shown through analyses of the moment-by-moment contingency of theatre improvisation. Studying the interactional dynamics in

these kinds of in-role situations is like opening a window into tangible forms of collaborative learning, according to Sawyer, since the action and the lines are unpredictable and framed by the common goal of the improvisers to present a coherent scene of an imaginary situation to the spectators in "highly advanced forms of collaboration" (p. 258). Sawyer shows how a narrative evolved step by step through the improvising actors where "none of these turns [in the improvised lines onstage] fully determines the subsequent dialogue" (p. 247). Re-orientation of the narrative was always possible since previous lines could be reinterpreted while action unfolded (which often was the case in Sawyer's material). Hence, "individual actors are not solely responsible for the meaning and effect of their actions" (p. 247). As Sawyer (p. 250–251) noted, the actors in a theatre production, typically by improvising, 'fill in' a lot in a script while it is transformed into a performance since

[t]he script does not specify every element and feature of everyday conversation; how it is realized in performance includes a host of other factors beyond the pronunciation of the words themselves. . . .where to pause, and how long each pause should be; whether there should be speaker overlap at various points in the dialogue; and how to deliver each line – which words to emphasize, and what tone of voice. . . . All of the unwritten aspects of the dialogue have to be improvised by the actors, and the improvisation is collaboratively managed by all the actors.

In order to further understand collaborative learning, Sawyer (2015, p. 258) suggested more studies that analyze "the moment-to-moment contingency of classroom dialogue" in educational contexts where the participants' interdependency may surface in tangible forms, such as in theatre improvisation.

### **2.3.2 Actors' artistic shaping of stage characters**

While theatre actors' creative work on shaping stage character presentation has been researched for centuries (cf. Bergman Blix, 2010; Fischer-Lichte, 2012; Helander, 2011; Martin & Sauter, 1995; Vygotsky, 1999), the outline of previous research in this subsection addresses the following issues: explorative collaboration in stage productions, actors' emotional work, framing in imaginary spaces, and the concept of *perezhivanie* as lived experience in specially created dramatic situations.

An influential premise for theatre production seems to be its goal-orientation. In professional stage productions there is a powerful collective

orientation toward the goal of the performances, not only in the actors' preparations but also in the efforts of many others involved as well (e.g., carpenters, designers, producers, prompters, electricians and directors), forming a goal-oriented culture (cf. Atkinson, 2006; Enström, 2016; Lagercrantz, 1995). From the baseline of viewing a stage production as a learning arrangement it has been argued that a particular dimension of learning emerges through the participants' clear goal-orientation toward collective shaping of the upcoming performances (Olsson, 2006; Törnquist, 2006).

In a study of the staging of a musical in comprehensive school, based on interviews with music teachers involved in the student production, Törnquist (2006) investigated the implications for teachers working in such an artistic practice. The result indicates that the shared goal-orientation toward the final product of a musical presented to an audience promoted new relations between students and teachers in the sense that they acted as co-creators. "The character of the participation is mutual engagement, interest and the shared responsibility between the participants (students and teachers)" (p. 156). Furthermore, the joint engagement in preparing for the upcoming musical shaped an "*explorative zone* for both students and teachers, with the focus on a musical production as the solution of a problem solving, to which no one knows the answer. . . . In the zone of proximal development all are both teachers and learners" (p. 155, italics in the original). What Törnquist describes aligns to the features of a collective ZPD, which I elaborate on in the theoretical framework. For now, it is sufficient to indicate that previous research has noted that in a school stage production, the collaborative problem solving may be seen as a collective ZPD where explorative learning is characteristic and that the process and the final product appear intertwined by the necessity of making aesthetic choices (cf. Lagercrantz, 1995; Saar, 2005). Moreover, traditional working relationships between teacher and students can be challenged in a collective ZPD (Törnquist, 2006).

A longstanding discussion in research on acting is whether actors experience the same feelings as the characters. Vygotsky (1999) noted differences between feelings in everyday life and feelings in-role onstage and understood rehearsal work in terms of a cultivating process toward *generalized forms* of emotions. More recent literature on professional stage actors' emotional work while cultivating characters draws on, for example, interviews with actors closely after rehearsals (Bergman Blix, 2010), online surveys (Hetzler, 2012), and interviews with well-

known actors (Enström, 2016). These studies both further and move beyond Vygotskian and Stanislavskian ideas

A common conclusion in research on actors' emotional work is that the concept of *double agency* is central for understanding the cultivation process. It is described by professional actors as an experience of being "one persona that is in the fictional situation and one that watches the same situation and regulates its appearance" (Bergman Blix, 2010, p. 142). Using emotion theory and a phenomenological approach to investigate how stage actors understand their work (more specifically, their emotion work), Bergman Blix generated data in ethnographic fieldwork including observation of rehearsals and performances, informal talks and interviews with twenty actors during two separate productions. The analytical focus was on the relationship between actors' emotional experience and emotional expressions. Bergman Blix used the notion of "habituation of emotional expressions" (p. 161) for the actors' character work in rehearsals. Such a habituation process includes 'deep acting' (based on private emotional experiences) and 'surface acting' (expressions not related to the actor's own experiences) intriguingly intertwined. During the habituation process in rehearsals, actors regulate their appearance as stage characters. While acting in-role, they use the features of double agency, such as multiple and simultaneously operating perspectives on the same situation.

In Rönn's (2009) dissertation, based on fieldwork at a drama college, one aim is to gain insight into communicative obstacles that may restrain the students' involvement in their education to become professional stage actors. One of Rönn's studies deals with interaction in a basic acting course, observed in 15 lessons in the so-called 'Chekhov unit', partially audio recorded. Rönn analyzed verbal interaction in terms of communicative projects and communicative activity types, based on Linell (1998), in rehearsal episodes with student actors in-role, using scripted lines and a teacher/director instructing/directing them. The findings show a complexity of embedded communicative activity types and communicative projects that overlap. In a figure, the complex relations between the drama, the rehearsal, the enactment of the script, the educative process, the simultaneous roles of a student and of a drama character and so forth, are illustrated through boxes within boxes. The figure indicates several communicative layers operating concurrently, or, as Linell (2011) suggested in a comment on Rönn (2009), the interactants' shifts between interaction in-role and out-of-role in theatre education involve an extraordinary complexity of framing, viewed as *frames-within-frames* that are

“likely more complex than discussed by Goffman” (p. 555, my translation). Moreover, maintaining framing may constitute a demanding task for the participants in role-playing in educational settings, illustrated by Linell and Persson Thunquist (2003).

Framing in relation to interaction in imaginary spaces is also addressed by Buchbinder (2008) who explored both verbal and nonverbal interaction in the process of children’s understanding of their parents’ illness. From analyses of playroom video recordings of dramatic play in negotiations of medical practices related to cancer, called medical play, Buchbinder (2008, p. 139) understood “fantasy and reality as overlapping and embedded frames of experience that organize children’s playroom activities in distinctive ways.” Interesting from a bodyliness point of view is Buchbinder’s emphasis on the enactment of frame shifts (i.e., shift in footing) through embodied interaction, which (together with talk) in children’s play “provides a window into the ‘micro-genesis’ (Vygotsky, 1978) of cultural models” (p. 155). As regards framing in imaginary spaces Buchbinder (2008, p.154) proposed more attention in research “to the multiple ways in which frame shifts are accomplished by non-linguistic means.”

The concept of micro-genesis refers to micro-genetic progress in appropriating skills and practices that may be witnessed in unfolding social situations (Rosenthal, 2004). Hence, action possibilities can expand within an activity while participants continue doing what is at hand. Micro-genesis of appropriation in aesthetic activity has been studied by Wallerstedt, Pramling and Säljö (2015) when investigating timing in a musical activity. Appropriation of the skill to be able to play on a drum in time with another person evolved in small steps, from non-coordinated to (almost) coordinated, as the situation unfolded.

Hallgren (2018) generated data through filming a full day process-drama session and writing in-role and interviews in secondary school, interested in how affordances of role-taking may relate to the development of contents in process drama. Hallgren explored “the relation between going into role, *perezhivanie* and aesthetic engagement” (p. 255, italics in the original). The Vygotskian concept of *perezhivanie* related to experiences in imaginary spaces has attracted attention recently, for example, in a special issue of *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (Cole & Gajdamschko, 2016), and Fleer, Gonzalez Rey and Veresov (2017), Ferholt (2015), and Mok (2017). I address *perezhivanie* in conceptual terms in the theoretical framework below. As for now, *perezhivanie* can be described as a lived experience in a social environment “recognising the

interrelation of affective and cognitive domains” (Davis, 2015a, p. 63). It includes experiencing drama in life and through the active process of overcoming struggle new understanding is developed. Often, the metaphor of *perezhivanie*, as a prism of emotional experiences in which the individual refracts the environment, is used to describe such a psychological process (Veresov, 2017). Hallgren (2018, p. 262) found that “going into role works as a pivot into *perezhivanie* (as intensely emotional live-through experience).” Furthermore, actions in-role can be used as objects for reflection by the participants after the role-play, which Hallgren links to possibilities for learning and “a change of route in life” (p. 262). Such a change would then relate to the other aspect of *perezhivanie*, namely, development. Furthermore, like Ferholt and Nilsson (2016) and Grainger Clemson (2015), Hallgren (2018) advocated more studies on the relation between *perezhivanie* and living through emotional struggle in-role in specially created dramatic situations and transformative learning. Such research may add knowledge about qualitative changes of the participants’ understanding of the content of a drama when it has been developed through interaction in-role, according to Hallgren. Therefore, investigating the interactional dynamics of drama education is suggested so as to understand “what the pedagogues and the participants do in more precise ways” (Hallgren, 2018 p. 51, my translation).

In Davis’s (2015a) study of an educational drama process lasting several weeks in a secondary school, it was also suggested that drama – with its specific framing (*metaxis*) – “can be seen to generate *perezhivanie*” (p. 64, italics in the original). Through the analyses of the students’ writing in-role after enacting a drama on ethical dilemmas due to water scarcity in the imaginary space of a fictitious village, Davis concludes that the students made connections to a wider cultural understanding of human relations beyond the current dramatic situation. This conclusion foregrounds a relation between meaning making through aesthetic experience from inside imaginary spaces and learning understood in terms of *perezhivanie*. The relation between *perezhivanie* and moving into new stages of text understanding may extend our knowledge about ways of learning in-role, according to Davis. Drawing on the widely recognized importance of “the interrelation of affective and cognitive domains, and the relationship of experience to meaning making” (p. 63), Davis claims there has been too little research interest in this interrelationship.

## 2.4 Needs for further research on text understanding

Based on the above review of previous studies on literature education, arts education, and theatre/drama education, I outline particular needs for further research in the present section.

From a literature-education perspective within the subject of Swedish, I conclude that there is need to know more about students' text understanding in empirical readings of drama texts. The sparsity of such research does not correspond to the role that drama texts are assigned in reading practices in the subject of Swedish and in policy documents. For instance, in the Swedish literature education research field it is hard to find analyses of drama-text-based social interaction as it unfolds moment-by-moment in the classroom. However, there is a growing general interest in sensory and material anchoring of students' engagement with literary texts (Elam & Widhe, 2015; Fatheddine, 2018; Persson, 2015). I aim to contribute to the understanding of young people's meaning making in fictional worlds, as called for by the embodied-material-co-creative turn in literature didactics. Related to this need to anchor literature reading in the material world, I will employ McCormick's concept of repertoire matching. In previous research, this concept has proved fruitful when employed dynamically.

As outlined above, there are a number of reasons for conducting fine-grained studies of the interactional dynamics of meaning potentials in literature education, arts education and theatre/drama education – for example by analyzing talk- and action-in-interaction in a student theatre production. Such studies can be oriented toward patterns of collaborative learning, for example, how interactants coordinate and maintain intersubjective understandings in-role while pursuing common communicative projects. It has been indicated that the premises of participation in theatre education, specifically in a full-scale theatre production, are related to particular dynamics of intersubjectivity. For example, there is inherent anticipation of a particular kind of intersubjectivity with the future audience. Such anticipated intersubjectivity is seen as a constituent of eventness (Lagercrantz, 1995; Sauter, 2008) in the upcoming theatrical event. Hence, there is scope for exploring how such anticipation is related to learning during the preparation period of a theatre production.

As implied earlier, further research is warranted on the intriguing task of finding out who a drama character is. Scrutinizing appropriation processes,

both long-term ones and micro-genetic ones, with a holistic focus on bodyliness and talk, can meet this need. Following the cultivation of characters from the students' first encounter with the drama text all the way to the last performance can contribute to knowledge about the learning process from page to stage. Moreover, the extraordinary complexity of framing in role-taking activities calls for analysis of activities related to learning and artistic shaping of characters in order to understand more of learning in and through the artistic practice of a theatre production.

Since metacognitive talk is commonly seen to promote learning, it is of interest to study metatalk in rehearsals. There is a need to know more about the interactional dynamics in such instances since they can inform us about forms of learning in unfolding artistic practice.

Furthermore, it seems relevant to contribute to the body of research that takes an interest in appropriation of skills and practices across informal and formal situations and in playful, explorative and unpredictable ways. Such research can illuminate how learning processes develop in artistic practice. This seems particularly important when viewed against the horizon of educational policies and practices that favor measurable learning outcomes, causing expansive and artistic forms of learning to be discarded from curricula and our classrooms (Ewing, 2015; Sawyer, 2015).

The growing interest in the concept of *perezhivanie* in recent research is often linked to lived-through experiences in specially created dramatic situations. Accordingly, investigating unfolding interaction in such situations may contribute not only to knowledge about the relation between *perezhivanie* and moving into new stages of text understanding but also to knowledge of appropriation processes that generate expanded action possibilities for the individual and for the ensemble in theatre education. As Grainger Clemson put it: “[T]he legacy of *perezhivanie* is a concept that is at once artistic, scientific, social and psychological, and may yet be termed educational (2015, p. 77).

Finally, I find it important to explore how the particular premises of participation in the current theatre production may be understood in terms of collective ZPD. As addressed above, theatre/drama is regarded as providing safe spaces for the participants to act in new ways and explore new understandings of issues at stake. Following this line of reasoning opens a window into the relationship between the appropriation of skills and practices and collective zones of development.

## RESEARCH REVIEW

To summarize, informed by the previous research reviewed above, I conclude that there is scope for further research on the interactional dynamics in developing meaning potentials in literature talks, rehearsals, and other activities in a student theatre production in order to know more about coordination and development of text understanding through the participants' transformation of drama text into stage text.



### 3. Guiding premises, theories and analytical concepts

In this chapter, I account for the theoretical assumptions underpinning the thesis and theoretical concepts that are used in Studies 1–3. The theoretical framework is presented by means of three central premises for the analyses. All three relate to the sociocultural and dialogical traditions in some sense. First, the overarching premise of learning as situated and emergent processes generated through participation in social interaction in which intersubjectivity is seen as partially and temporarily achieved (Linell, 1998; Rommetveit, 1974; Säljö, 2014, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Second, with a starting point in Vygotsky (1971, 1999), the premise of particular features of interaction and learning in theatre/drama activities, notably participants’ special imaginary relation with the environment in which dual affective planes are involved (Davis, 2015a; Heathcote, 1991; Schechner, 1985; Vygotsky, 1999). Third, the premise of reading and responding to literary texts as forms of interaction and matching repertoires (Iser, 1978; McCormick, 1994), which can be seen as part of the overarching premise as well as the second premise. Particularly, the critical role of a drama text, in a traditional theatre production (Vygotsky, 1971, 1999; Stanislavski, 2017), contributes to such a relationship. Figure 1 illustrates how the three premises are related in the present thesis.

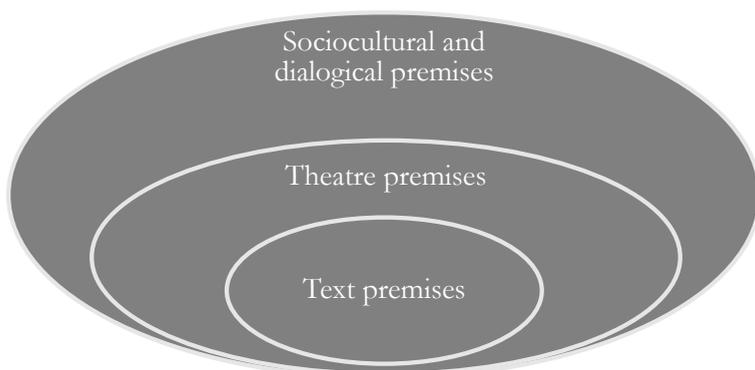


Figure 1: Relationship of the central premises which guide the analytical work.

Adopting the theoretical approaches associated with the three premises provides possibilities to study the interactional work of achieving coordination of text understanding in the theatre production. The approaches have also geared the thesis in particular ways toward its present shape. For example, the research object is delimited in the sense that specific aspects of the activity under investigation come to the fore in the analyses and particular analytical tools can be employed, which are highlighted in this chapter. The premises will be developed in separate sections. In each section, I have italicized concepts employed in the analyses in the empirical studies and discussion (Chapter 6).

### 3.1 Learning as a situated and emergent property of participation in social interaction

In sociocultural theory, “human beings are irrevocably interdependent” (John-Steiner, Connery, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010, p. 6) in their meaning making through the material-semiotic means that become salient in pursuing social activities *in situ* as part of cultural practices (Vygotsky, 1978, 1999; Vygotsky & Bruner, 2004). In other words, meaning making is viewed as a social activity; accordingly, learning is closely related to social interaction. A main principle in Vygotsky’s works is that knowledge and experiences exist and are made visible primarily between people in communication, enabling them to benefit from others’ experiences, which then are internalized into their own thinking and can be used in future social practices (Wertsch, 1998). This premise is foundational in the sociocultural tradition. However, the process of appropriation is not always as straightforward as it may sound from such a description. Rather, appropriation involves not only practice but often also struggle before new skills can be adequately used in ongoing activities (Wertsch, 1998). The point in this theoretical tradition is that appropriation concern situated activities. Aware of a range of interpretations of Vygotsky’s original works in the 1920s and 1930s, I here narrow such discussions to outline a sociocultural perspective on learning including key concepts such as *mediation*, *cultural tools*, *appropriation*, *zone of proximal development*, and *creativity and the circle of imagination* and indicate how they are used in this thesis.

A premise for the view of learning in the sociocultural tradition is that human capacity is not predominantly preconditioned by biological factors. Rather, social and cultural circumstances, such as the development and use of tools, overrides bodily limitations (Säljö, 2014; Wertsch, 2007). Physical tools

such as a needle enabling sewing or a train allowing transportation over long distances enable us to do things beyond our physiological capacity. Vygotsky (1987) argued that analogous to the way we use physical tools, the development and use of intellectual (or psychological) tools help us to think and communicate. Crucial for the concept of *cultural tools* (a concept comprising physical and intellectual tools) is that former human cultural experiences and insights have shaped the tool and are embedded in the use of the tool. In our actions, we take advantage of this embedded knowledge, most often without thinking about it (Säljö, 2014). In the current theatre production, one example of such cultural tools are the concepts the participants use as they negotiate how to think about the world of the drama in terms of, for instance, gender, power and fatherhood. The tools allow us to think about and analyze the world in particular ways. Moreover, the appropriation of cultural tools provides not only new possibilities but also, at times, new restrictions and, as Vossoghui (2011, p. 36) noted, users may transform tools: “As new generations pick up and learn how to use cultural tools, the tools open themselves up to be reconstituted, revised, developed.”

When thinking, communicating and conducting nonverbal action there is an interplay between tools and our activities, which is conceptualized as *mediation* (Wertsch, 2007). The concept of mediation is essential in sociocultural theory and refers to the premise that we as humans do not stand in direct contact with the surrounding world, rather we act in the world supported by cultural tools which are already embedded in social practices (Wertsch, 2007). The surrounding world is mediated to us, and by us, through the tools. The most important mediating tool is our language – “the tool of the tools,” according to Vygotsky (1978, p. 53). A mediating tool of special interest in this thesis is a stage character’s culturally recognizable manners.

The concepts of cultural tools and mediation have implications for how learning is conceptualized. Mediation suggests that thinking and knowing are impregnated by the culture embedded in the tools that are used in social practices. Thus, it would not be meaningful to analyze the tools per se “and then study the ‘pure’ human thinking” (Säljö, 2014, p. 81, my translation). Instead, thinking and knowing unfold by means of cultural tools in communication with others. Hence, in the sociocultural tradition, learning is about the gradual mastering of cultural tools. Such processes are conceptualized in terms of *appropriation*. The fundamentally social and cultural nature of appropriation processes were described by Wertsch (1998 p. 53 ) as “taking

something that belongs to others and making it one's own." The metaphor of appropriation implies situated ways of coming to know through communication with others. Thus, following Säljö (2014), rather than knowledge, the more dynamic term *knowing* may better depict the property of a gradual habituation process in which the learner's active involvement is crucial and ultimately allows the learner to act in new ways by using particular tools. Consequently, by learning to act with these tools, by appropriating them, *action possibilities expand* (Säljö, 2017). In the theatre production under study, at stake for the participants is to prepare for the upcoming stage text. Accordingly, from the students' first encounter with the drama text through to the onstage encounter with the audience, they need to master cultural understandings of a drama text that is 350 (or so) years old as well as appropriate mediational means to deliver a convincing presentation of the drama characters. In other words, they need to expand their action possibilities as stage actors.

Learning occurs whether a situation is pedagogically organized or not (Dewey, 2007; Säljö, 2014) and is hard to observe per se. How can we know that learning has occurred and what has been learned? Based on the sociocultural notion of learning as an emergent property of activities and that appropriation implies situated habituation processes of mastering cultural tools, over time we can observe changes in for example the participants' actions and way of reasoning (Lave, 1993; Säljö, 2014), which can be understood in terms of appropriation of relevant cultural tools for a particular purpose. As Säljö (2017, p. 16) remarked: "[L]earning and remembering will have to be sought in complex and extended interactions and interdependencies between collective and individual practices."

Informed by the sociocultural tradition as outlined here, I use the concept of learning in terms of the qualities of appropriation related to above. Accordingly, I study the actors' collective and gradual shaping of culturally recognizable forms of the stage text as an appropriation process.

### **3.1.1 ZPD related to theatre as an ensemble art form**

In the sociocultural tradition, interacting with others is seen as critical for learning to occur and support from more knowledgeable peers or adults can generate learning which would not be possible to achieve individually – conceptualized as *the zone of proximal development (ZPD)*.

What we call the Zone of Proximal Development . . . is a distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving through adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

The meaning and implications of the key concept of the ZPD have been substantially explored elsewhere (e.g., Daniels, 2007; Erickson, 1996) which is why I turn to two of the expanded notions of the concept. Mahn and John-Steiner (2002) argued that in speaking about the ZPD we need to consider the role of affective factors more with respect to the assigned role of emotions in Vygotsky's later works. For example, Vygotsky(1987, p. 282) stated that thought

is not born of other thoughts. Thought has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotions. The affective and volitional tendency stands behind thought. Only here do we find the answer to the final "why" in the analysis of thinking.

In a similar vein, several scholars (e.g., Wells, 2009) have highlighted that learning involves acting, thinking, and feeling – the emotional is intertwined with our actions. Bundy, Piazzoli and Dunn (2015, pp. 154–155) argue that a number of the central concepts within the Vygotskian tradition, such as ZPD, dual affect and *perezhivanie* "are closely interrelated across the cognitive, affective and social dimensions." The premise of thought and emotion as indivisible guides my investigation of learning in a theatre production and resonates with the nature of theatre rehearsals in general, in which emotional expressions and emotional experiences are explored in depth (Bergman Blix 2010; Lagercrantz, 1995; Schechner, 1985; Stanislavski, 2017).

Another expanded notion of the concept of ZPD herein employed is the *collective zone of proximal development* (Cole, 1996; Ewing 2015; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002; Moll & Withmore, 1993). A key characteristic of such a ZPD would be complementarity, which encompasses two planes. First, a complex whole of "interrelated and interdependent elements includ[ing] the participants, artifacts, and environment/context, and the participants' experience of their interactions within it" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002, p. 49). I will come back to these kinds of layers in communication. Second, the plane of interpersonal relations, like "a common understanding of the task at hand, an appreciation of one another's cognitive, social, and emotional development, and potential contribution" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002, p. 49). The notions of mutual trust,

support, safe spaces to suggest and demonstrate new ideas (Heathcote, 1991), and collaborative dialogue also describe qualities in a collective ZPD (Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015; Ewing, 2015). Such a learning context potentially supports joint problem solving, the co-construction of understanding, and the common appropriation of cultural tools. This resonates with Sawyer's (2015) notion that theatre is an "ensemble art form, and it is hard to isolate the creative contribution of any one actor" (p. 253) and Lagercrantz's (1995, p. 191) remark that "working in the theatre is primarily a collective enterprise." Furthermore, Franks (2015) argued that during an extended creative process with a specific goal, such as a theatre performance, the participants' interaction shapes a special learning context where teachers and students engage in collaborative problem solving. Collectively orienting toward a public performance means that students, early on in the production (through rehearsals for example), demonstrate their knowing which makes learning meaningful, according to Törnquist (2006). In other words, in the particular learning context of a theatre production, where the product (i.e., the stage text and its presentation) and the process (i.e., transforming the drama text) are interwoven, the participants' actions may be understood in terms of a collective ZPD.

### **3.1.2 A sociocultural view of creativity and imagination**

Since theatre/drama activities rely on a special imaginary relationship with the environment (Vygotsky, 1999, 2016), I now address a sociocultural view of imagination and creativity. Vygotsky (2004) described creativity as constituted through an intertwined relation of imagination and experience, in which "elements of reality" are "transformed and reworked" (p. 16) through imagination. This relationship is termed "the cycle of imagination," which is the foundation for creativity to Vygotsky. Moreover, Vygotsky (2004, p. 11) stated that "[c]reativity is present . . . whenever a person imagines, combines, alters and creates something new." Thus, while creativity commonly is associated with artistic processes, Vygotsky (2004) extended the concept of creativity to encompass everyday activities where people produce new structures by combining prior knowledge in new ways: "to combine the old in new ways, that is the basis of creativity" (p. 12). Hence, the source for what is created is to be found in the creators' previous experiences. In a similar vein, actors' socio-historic experiences and cultural resources are involved in cultivating stage characters (Vygotsky, 1999). A concrete situation from the context of theatre

education can illustrate this: a teacher asks students to walk as a particular character in a drama text they just read. Such nonverbal improvisation would open the way for acts of creativity as the students draw on walking patterns of people they know in everyday life in combination with how they imagine a fictional character's walking. Another example was referred to in the research review: Franks's (2014) analysis of 16-year-old drama students' use of contemporary media body-culture. The students' sharing of prior experiences of various genres that the participants were familiar with supported the development of understanding of a text new to them. In my view, it can be seen as a resource for collaborative learning in a collective ZPD (cf. Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002).

I adopt the conceptualization of creativity outlined above in analyses of unfolding social interaction with a focus on how the students make cultural resources useful in bridging the cultural gap between their time and the time of the drama text.

As mentioned, any adopted theoretical approach provides openings and restrictions in terms of what is possible, relevant and productive to observe and analyze. For example, the perspective of situated mastering of cultural tools implies that I as a researcher must ask what is at stake in the observed activities and what kind of competence and what kind of knowing count in the theatre production (cf. Lagercrantz, 1995; Säljö, 2014). Another aspect entailed in the choice of a sociocultural approach for studying a theatre production is that specific analytical means are required to study communication and framing related to (drama) role-taking and a theatre production as a profoundly collective undertaking. For the purpose of investigating how text understanding is coordinated, I turn to a dialogical approach to meaning making and interaction.

### **3.1.3 A dialogical approach to coordination of text understanding**

In a dialogical approach to meaning making, it is assumed that people in a social encounter share a common ground of culturally embedded knowledge and experiences in some sense. Therefore, they take *intersubjectivity* for granted, and maintaining intersubjectivity hence becomes a joint commitment (Linell, 1998; Rommetveit, 1974). However, for cultural and social reasons, people do not share an identical common ground. Accordingly, they do not conceive of a

social situation in entirely the same way and they need to negotiate meaning and attunement to the situation continually in order to move the activity forward. Thus, a premise in a dialogical approach is that intersubjectivity is seen as partially and temporarily achieved (Linell, 2017; Rommetveit, 1974) and maintained through interaction with mediational means (Wertsch, 2007).

For example, in the current case, the participants' intersubjective understanding of the drama text and how to enact it is always dynamic. It is a collaborative project underway in which joint understandings are achieved (Linell, 1998). Investigating such achievements is vital to gain knowledge of how intersubjectivity evolves *in situ* and what kind of mediational means are required for transitions of text understanding to take place. In this way, it may be possible to understand text understanding in-the-making. To that end, I use *communicative projects* (Linell, 1998) as entrance points to how participants coordinate their understanding of the stage text as regards for example stage objects, central themes and characters. Drawing on Linell (1998), in Study 2 (p. 250), we described communicative projects

as spaces for interactional work in which contextual resources are both used and shaped, and communicative tasks are completed by the interactants . . . to establish a sufficient overlap in their understanding of the situation. . . . At times, interactants engage in parallel and/or overlapping communicative projects to move the activity forward.

A dialogical approach to meaning making focuses on the interwoven aspects of the interactional work through which meaning emerges. Linell (1998, p. 199, italics in the original) argued that by investigating “talk-in-interaction, we can study the processes of *collaboratively and (partially) intersubjectively constructed cognition.*” Scrutinizing moment-by-moment social interaction has shown interactants' interdependency and complementarity in shaping situated discourse. However, the ways in which they build on each other's previous contributions are not entirely predictable. Linell (1998) further noted that complementarity is shown in the speaker's orientation toward an addressee in any kind of talk in a social situation, even in so-called monologues.

Sharing the dialogical view of how language and culture are organized, and aiming at understanding action and activities, Goodwin (2000, 2007) applied a multimodal orientation in the analyses of situated, local practices in which the focus is on “talk- *and action-in-interaction*” (2007, p. 46, my italics). Such a multimodal orientation comes close to the present study's recognition of the critical roles of multiple semiotic means in interaction, such as talk, gestures,

body positioning and tone-of-voice (cf. John-Steiner, Conner & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002).

As noted, complementarity and interdependency among participants may surface in tangible forms in theatre improvisations (Sawyer, 2003, 2014, 2015). Accordingly, improvisational elements in theatrical interaction seem particularly interesting to analyze to better understand the shaping of text understanding. In Study 3, I highlight improvisation in talk- and action-in-interaction where the participants move between in-role and out-of-role framing since it might tell us something about learning processes in theatre/drama education.

### **3.1.4 Framing and footing in relation to situated theatre activities**

Erving Goffman is closely associated with the ‘dramaturgical turn’ in the social sciences through affluent metaphorical use of theatre terminology in analyzing everyday interaction (applying e.g., roles, script, back-stage and front-stage in discussing social situations). Bergman Blix (2010, p. 2) remarked that such dramaturgical analyses have been so widely used that one might “lose sight of their actual origin: the role-playing of stage actors.” However, the present study is in the company of certain other studies that have used Goffmanian concepts to explore various aspects of theatre, for example, Bergman Blix (2010), Lagercrantz (1995) and Rönn (2009).

I use Goffman’s frame theory (1981, 1986) for scrutinizing the ways the participants make sense of what is going on in social encounters in theatre classes. Framing concerns how participants establish a mutual activity that is perceived as a certain type of social situation:

Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting. These organizational premises – sustained both in the mind and in activity – I call the frame of the activity. (Goffman, 1986, p. 247)

Goffman (1986) provided numerous examples of how people may apprehend and shape a social situation. In the context of my thesis, the seemingly simple distinction between participants’ framing of a situation as ‘real’ or ‘play’ is an interesting starting point for analysis. Furthermore, the framing shifts during any social encounter; for example, participants interpret shifts in topics, prosody, posture, gesture and so on as shifts in stance toward the topic at hand.

Ongoing re-framing is characteristic of social interaction (Goffman, 1981, 1986; Goodwin, 2007; Linell, 1998). When it comes to the re-framing of a social situation, Goffman (1981) applies the term *shift in footing* as “when we shift from saying something ourselves to reporting what someone else said” (1981, p. 151). Goffman’s (p. 128) definition of shifting footing reads:

A shift in footing implies a change in the alignments we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance. A change in footing is another way to talk about a change in our frame for events.

Whereas Goffman located shifts-in-footing mainly in speakers’ utterances, Goodwin (2007) highlighted how the participants’ interactive achievements in a wider sense generate shifts-in-footing. For example, listeners may modify their bodily displays of alignment to the speaker’s unfolding utterances; thus the speaker and listeners contribute to shifting footing collaboratively. Worth noting is that bodyliness (without talk) may not only support but also even constitute framing. Resonating with Goodwin (2007) and Franks (2014), Buchbinder (2008, p. 154) highlighted that participants “negotiate shifts in frame not only with linguistic markers, but also through embodied action.”

Goffman made a distinction between playing (as in role-playing in everyday life) and playing at (defined as playing a role for the stage). For instance, an actor plays at being an aristocratic suitor from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onstage and the audience recognizes that type of character onstage, while the actor in an everyday role-play might play the role of an actor, *or* the role of a student, *or* any role relevant for the social encounter. In the following, as I (along with theatre/drama research in general) speak about ‘in-role’ it roughly equals Goffman’s ‘playing at’, while ‘out-of-role’ indicates that in-role framing has shifted to some other framing (where, of course, Goffman’s everyday role-playing may occur). However, as illustrated in more recent research, the borderline between playing and playing at might not look as discrete as in Goffman’s works, instead, the presentation of the actor and the character can be viewed as intertwined (Bergman Blix, 2010).

In dialogical terminology, actors’ cultivation and presentation of characters can be viewed as laminated and multiple layers may unfold simultaneously – as well as sequentially (Goodwin, 2013). In a deconstruction of an actor’s talk- and action-in-interaction during rehearsal and performance, a layer to consider may be the spoken words provided by a layer of scripted lines written by a remote

author some centuries ago. Another layer may be how the use of these words is artistically shaped through collaborative exploration in rehearsal. Yet another layer to consider would be the character's voice in which the voices of fellow actors, a director and others may be heard related to the theatre production as a profoundly collective undertaking. Linguistic layers must be considered in relation to other layers, such as in what specific ways the participants draw on resources in the material, institutional, social and historic contexts (cf. Goodwin, 2018; Linell, 1998), or as Goodwin (2018<sup>15</sup>) put it, "human action as *a knot of diverse, intertwined resources*" (italics in the original). Two contextual resources seem critical for the artistic shaping of a traditional theatre production: the meaning potentials of a drama text, or in theatre terminology, the *given circumstances* (Stanislavski, 2017), and the anticipation of a future audience (Lagercrantz, 1995; Vygotsky, 1971, 1991).

To further illustrate layers in laminated activities, an example of the material context in the current case should be noted. Material things like theatrical artifacts may (or may not) be assigned symbolic meanings. For example, stage lights serve to make it possible to see something onstage while rehearsing (i.e., someone turns the lights on without further ado and rehearsal can commence), whereas the artistic design of stage lights for the performances implies a shift to the layer of symbolic meanings assigned to the quality of glow generated by the same set of technical light equipment that was used for everyday purposes. Previous research has indicated that lamination of talk- and action-in-interaction in theatre education may constitute an extraordinary complexity of framing from the analyst's perspective (Linell, 1998, 2011; Rönn, 2009). As Linell and Persson Thunquist (2003, p. 412) noted, even if "[a] communicative activity is understood in terms of its framing" we must consider the fact that "activity types are seldom pure." In other words, sub-activities and main activities may overlap and interplay, and the framing may look unclear. Especially in Study 3, I investigated framing and lamination, adopting a few more analytical tools in Goffman's frame theory.

Speakers tend to use someone else's words. It may be explicit, as in reported speech (e.g., 'then she said: . . .'), or in less explicit ways like picking up (and modifying a bit) a part of a preceding utterance while not announcing that another speaker's words are being used. In both cases the speaker takes on the role of *animator*, or "the sounding box in use," more than the role of *author* of

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<sup>15</sup> No page number due to the status of the source: a published transcript of a lecture.

what is said, whereas the author “has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded” (Goffman, 1981, p. 144). Moreover, the notion of a *figure* calls attention to someone “who belongs to the world spoken about” (Goffman, 1981, p. 147) (i.e., not someone in the world where the communication takes place). Accordingly, the pronoun *I* may represent a figure more than the speaker who utters “I”. Hence, multiple worlds can appear simultaneously. Reported speech enables the speaker to selectively depict a figure through, for example accent, pitch and posture. Rather than rephrasing word-by-word what has been said, attitude, alignment and emotion can be demonstrated (Clark & Gerrig, 1990). The interrelationship of the roles of author, animator and figure<sup>16</sup> tells us about the particular *production format* of a social encounter. Various production formats provide opportunities for the participants’ distancing to topics, situations, characters and so forth, for example, through irony, hedging, projections of visionary states, and so on. The point here is that their embedded actions constitute the laminated structure of talk- and action-in-interaction (Goodwin, 2013).

A forerunner in connecting frame-theory to theatre/drama education is Heathcote (1991) in her seminal works on learners’ working in-role. Heathcote found that action in-role can be understood as a ‘drama framework’. Within such a framework, particular potentials for learning are provided, which is related to the second central premise of the present thesis, addressed in the next section.

### 3.2. Double agency related to interaction and learning in theatre/drama

Scholars, philosophers and theatre practitioners have long been enticed by the question of how we can understand in-role experiences and in-role interaction in theatre (Aristotle, 1997; Diderot, 2015; Stanislavski, 2017; Vygotsky, 1971, 1999; Goffman, 1981; Sawyer, 2015; Schechner, 1985). Echoing such theoretical discussions, Vygotsky (1971, 1999) theorized the emotional experiences of a theatre audience and the actor’s emotional work. Considering whether an actor in-role experiences the same emotions as the drama character, Vygotsky notes differences between feelings in ‘real life’ and feelings in-role onstage. Rehearsals involve an *artistic shaping* (1999, p. 243) of the emotional

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<sup>16</sup> Aware of more roles in Goffman’s schemes, these are the ones I use.

expressions from the drama text's given circumstances (Stanislavski, 2017) toward *generalized forms*, which are to be displayed in the performance(s). Vygotsky (1971, 1999) viewed these generalized forms as refined cultural experiences that stir up emotions in the audience in a theatrical performance. Co-experiencing between audience and actors thus relies on a set of shared cultural experiences between the audience and the actors. In other words, the emotions expressed onstage relate to something *culturally recognizable*. Smagorinsky (2011, p. 334) described such a sense of community as: "shared social understandings of what counts as tragic, triumphant, poignant, and so on." In living through the conflicts projected by the actors onstage, the spectators' personal emotional experiences encounter the generalized human experience of the drama. In this manner "art complements life by expanding its possibilities" (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 247). Vygotsky (1999) proposed that to be able to create and cultivate such feelings, in other words, doing them (not having them), the actor draws on personal emotional experiences and on situated historical and social conditions. Hence, the highly regulated emotional expressions demonstrated by actors onstage should resonate with socio-historic experiences of the audience.

The fictional framing of theatre activities implies the actors inhabit an imaginary space and the 'real world' simultaneously, which Vygotsky conceptualized as *dual affective planes*, alike "the child [who] weeps in play as a patient, but revels as a player" (2016, p. 15). Several terms have been used in theorizing this imaginary relation with the environment, for example, 'aesthetic doubling' (Eriksson, 2007; Saar, 2005), which focuses on the actors' double perception in drama and has been suggested as "a core premise for learning in drama" (Eriksson, p. 15). 'Metaxis', often associated with Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed', is used to grasp "the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image" (Boal, 1995, p. 123). In the case of Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed', the interstices of these two worlds provide expanding action possibilities for the oppressed, contrasting with the action possibilities in the oppressing everyday world (Davis, 2014). According to Edmiston (2003, 2015), in-role interaction provides an arena for meaning making in *what-IF spaces* as well as in the everyday *what-IS world*. In a what-IF space, participants co-create and inhabit imaginary spaces, simultaneously as they are aware of the everyday what-IS world outside. Vygotsky (2016) emphasized that children in play, through experiencing dual affective planes, can develop cultural meaning, and

children in dramatic play may act as though they were a head taller than they actually are.

Within theatre research the term *double-sided subjectivity* is used to conceptualize in-role experiences. For example, Schechner (1985) gives an account of theatre workshop-rehearsals in which the actor experiences being neither the drama character nor her/himself as in the ‘real world’, but instead experiences new behavior based on old familiar behaviors. Thus, “choice and virtuality remain activated” side by side in a double negation in the actor’s in-role actions (p. 110). The actor “Olivier is not Hamlet, but he is also not not Hamlet. The reverse is also true: [...] Hamlet is not Olivier, but he is also not not Olivier” (p. 110). Drawing on Schechner, Ferholt (2015, p. 68), in an empirical study, concluded that experiences of double-sided subjectivity in processes that pivot on a fictional character “allows one to be that which one could not imagine without this process.” Using the notion of the actor’s *double agency* Bergman Blix (2010) foregrounded “the complexity of subjectivity” and illuminated a space “in between identities” (p. 20) in which the actor can regulate onstage appearance of the character. Underpinning Bergman Blix’ reasoning on features of in-role experiences is the significant premise of participation in theatre production: the anticipated audience.

As indicated above, the art experience may serve a transformative function for the audience, for example, in theatre (Vygotsky, 1971). The transformative aspect of art suggests a relational view of what happens in the encounter between art and audience. Such a relational view of the interaction between performers and spectators focuses on the quality of *eventness* of a theatrical event (Sauter, 2008). The concept of eventness is relevant in relation to a theatre production as a goal-oriented activity. In the preparation for the goal (the upcoming event), the participants’ anticipation of the interaction with an audience is linked to the artistic shaping of culturally recognizable forms of stage-text presentation (Vygotsky, 1999). Therefore, I see it as a premise for the present investigation that the participants strive for culturally recognizable forms in terms of anticipation of such qualities of eventness.

Double agency and double-sided subjectivity, which are the two main concepts I use for the experiences of the described imaginary relation with the environment, relate to the concept of actors’ *lived experience*. Theatre instructor and director Stanislavski designed “‘living through’ exercises” (Grainger Clemson, 2015, p. 42) that enabled actors to draw on their emotional memories of situations similar to particular characters’ emotions in the current drama. For

example, actors were asked to do certain things in an as-if state of mind, like walking in a room as if a violent person was outside the door (Stanislavski, 2017). Such lived experiences were designed as tools for actors to create as ‘authentic’ acting as possible. As regards this kind of artistic shaping of actors’ emotional expressions, Vygotsky (1999, p. 243) remarked that “[t]his path is much more tortuous and, as Stanislavsky correctly notes, more like coaxing than direct arousal of the required feeling.”

Through Stanislavski’s (2017) theorizing of the acting tool of living-through experiences, he is considered a forerunner in the conceptualization of the previously mentioned concept of *perezhivanie* (Grainger Clemson, 2015; Mok, 2017).<sup>17</sup> Whereas Stanislavski used *perezhivanie* to theorize actors’ work toward ‘authentic’ stage acting, Vygotsky used it, in his early writings, to encompass psychological experiences as phenomena and later as a theoretical lens for explaining human development (Veresov, 2017; Veresov & Fler, 2016). A critical aspect of *perezhivanie* is that it includes not just experiencing a social situation but also the process of working through the experience, surviving the struggle involved, overcoming some kind of drama, integrating the experience related to previous *perezhivanya*,<sup>18</sup> changing in some way, and reaching a new stage in the personality (Blunden, 2016; Clarà, 2016b).

*Perezhivanie* is mainly associated with drama in life (Clarà, 2016b; Mok, 2017); however, it may also be seen as a phenomenon which involves experiences in role-play: *fantasy-based experiencing-as-struggle* (Clarà, 2016a). The conceptualization of *perezhivanie* as a phenomenon informs my study in combination with Mok’s (2017, p. 24) remark that the emergent and transactional aspects of *perezhivanie* may transform “the course of the activity as the activity itself emerges” (compare micro-genesis in Rosenthal, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998). As noted in the research review, by inhabiting specially created dramatic situations and going through struggle there, students or children may reach a wider cultural understanding of the issues at stake (Davis, 2015a; Hallgren, 2018). In Study 2, I used this particular understanding of *perezhivanie* analytically, whereas in Study 1 I used it in a more general sense to illuminate the actors’ work in terms of border crossing of affective and cognitive domains. In exploring the relationships between learning, creativity,

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<sup>17</sup> The Russian word *perezhivanie* is difficult to translate into languages where cognition and emotion are seen as separate entities and a unifying word is thus lacking (Davis, 2015; Ferholt, 2015). On the translation of *perezhivanie*, see e.g. Blunden (2016); Clarà (2016a); Ferholt (2015).

<sup>18</sup> *Perezhivanya* is the plural.

and emotional experiences in imaginary spaces, several researchers have come to employ a similar understanding of *perezhivanie*, for example Bundy, Piazzoli and Dunn (2015), Davis (2015a), Ewing (2015), John-Steiner, Connery and Marjanovic-Shane (2010), and Mahn and John-Steiner (2002).

Taking on a role in theatre/drama may provide a safe space with particular possibilities for learning, as mentioned in the research review. It may be experienced as safe in the sense that the participant in-role is not as accountable for her/his actions as out-of-role, including transgressive enactment, why new ideas, new actions and new relations can be explored with fewer restrictions (Edmiston, 2015; Heathcote, 1991; Hallgren, 2018). Following this line of reasoning, the potentially safe spaces provided by role-taking may also be understood in terms of collective ZPD as described above (Ewing, 2015; Mahn & Marjanovic-Shane, 2002).

In a sense, Vygotsky (2016) indicated the essence of the view that in-role experiences provide particular potentials for learning in the example of two real-life sisters (aged five and seven) who took on the role of (i.e., played at being) sisters in dramatic play. Through the orientation toward sisterhood in social interaction in-role, they explored the cultural understanding of 'sisterhood'. The possibility of inhabiting the 'real world' and a fictitious situation simultaneously, as in role-play in drama, or stage acting, enables experiencing the perspective of the other through body, mind and interaction as well as distancing from the imaginary world through reflection on what has occurred. The participants can thereby open new perspectives on a wide range of issues, as mentioned in the research review.

To summarize the two hitherto addressed central premises of this research, the significance of the educative processes involved in cultivating characters in the current production is that they are oriented toward the appropriation of cultural and social interactional means during rehearsals and other theatre activities. Such appropriation concerns a particular kind of emotion regulation, drawing on Vygotsky's (1971, 1999) notion that the emotions an actor onstage projects to an audience are highly regulated. As noted, from a sociocultural perspective, learning is conceptualized as an emergent property of the activity – a process in which action possibilities expand (Säljö, 2017). In the current context, this means that the object of study is an appropriation process in terms of how the participants expand action possibilities for onstage acting.

The third central premise concerns text theory and is important to consider due to the centrality of text in the participants' process of transforming drama text into stage text.

### 3.3 Learning through reading as interaction and matching repertoires

Text understanding is addressed frequently in this thesis. As noted, in traditional theatre productions – educational and professional ones alike – the centrality of text is significant (Lagercrantz, 1995; Vygotsky, 1999). The drama text is at the center of attention from the first reading. It is assumed to provide important meaning potentials for the staging; therefore, it is used as a pivot for a number of activities (Ahlstrand, 2014; Bergman Blix, 2010). Then, as Lagercrantz (p. 198–199) put it, “through intensive role taking in the acting team, the characters beg[i]n to emerge as real persons . . . imbued with dreams, disappointments, penchants and personal histories.” Gradually, drama text is transformed to stage text. In other words, the characters are incarnated. An assumption in the present research is that such a transformation relies on the participants' particular coordination work so as to enable the joint text understanding required for the collective undertaking of a stage performance. But what does it mean to understand a text?

From an objectivist standpoint one might ask: What is there to understand? A question which an expert reader, for instance a teacher of literature in school, might be seen as better qualified to answer than others. However, after debates in the 1970's, literature education in school has included views other than the objectivist view of reading and responding to texts, for instance, orienting the discussion toward what happens in the act of reading (Sørensen, 2001). A starting point for such a discussion is the question of whether a text exists prior to the reading of it (Mehrstam, 2009). Of course, the text as an artifact 'exists' in some sense, for instance, in the form of a book, a digital file or a photocopied manuscript with drama characters' lines. However, what kind of text emerges in readers' engagement with that artifact? And how might such a process be conceptualized?

The *transactional perspective* (Rosenblatt, 1978) and the *interactional perspective* (Iser, 1978) provide different answers. Advocates of the transactional perspective argue that the text emerges in the act of reading – drastically speaking: the reader creates the text (Mehrstam, 2009). In the interactional

perspective, on the other hand, the text is seen as a structure of meaning potentials that can be realized by the readers. It might be claimed that advocates of the interactional perspective cannot describe this structure with exactitude (Tengberg, 2011). However, as Agrell (2009) noted, if there was no agreement on some structures in a text that a group has read, what was it then that they were oriented to in their reading? The term interaction in this perspective of text theory refers to the reader's interaction with the text to make sense out of the structure the text provides.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the two perspectives both emphasize the active role of the reader, but they differ regarding the ontological status of text (for further accounts of text theory, see Study 1).

The third central premise in this thesis is the interactional perspective in text theory. According to the interactional perspective a central idea is that the text provides a structure with gaps and reading implies that the reader's sensemaking relies on 'filling in' gaps in the text. As mentioned in the research review, it is common to characterize a drama text as a text with more gaps than other literary texts (Heed 2002; McCormick, 1994; Sawyer, 2015; Sörlin 2008). The third central premise for my research sits well with the overarching premise, primarily due to the crucial role of social interaction in the collective undertaking of transforming drama text into stage text (Bergman Blix, 2010; Lagercrantz, 1995; Stanislavski, 2017; Vygotsky, 1999). Such transformation highlights an incarnation of a text's given circumstances through collaborative artistic shaping. In other words, a conceptual understanding of meaning making through the material-semiotic means that become salient in pursuing social activities *in situ* as part of cultural practices. Moreover, even if it is not explicitly stated, an interactional text-theory perspective seems to underpin much of the research on drama education where drama texts are used (cf. Ackroyd-Pilkington, 2010; Edmiston, 2015; Yandell, 2008).

The interactional perspective of text theory also guides another theoretical approach that I use, namely the view of the reading act as a matter of *matching repertoires* between the text and the reader (McCormick, 1994). As mentioned in the research review, according to McCormick, the act of reading is understood in terms of an encounter between the text's repertoires (or meaning potentials) and the readers' repertoires (or attitudes). McCormick outlines two kinds of repertoire: literary and general. The literary repertoires of the text may concern literary conventions of the time period it was produced, for example what

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<sup>19</sup>To clarify, the notion interaction here concerns an ideal reader's act of reading, which carries a different meaning from the social interaction under investigation in Study 1–3.

counted as appropriate forms and content for a comedy. Whereas former reading experiences are important for the formation of the reader's literary repertoires since they contribute to, for example, views of what to expect from a particular literary genre. The general repertoire of the text includes meaning potentials regarding for example morals and social practices. The reader's general repertoire encompasses presumptions and experiences of, for instance, politics, lifestyle and love. McCormick (p. 74) suggested that the repertoires are governed by basic ideological stances, like "a powerful force hovering over us as we write or read a text; as we read it reminds us what is correct, commonsensical or 'natural'." Especially in Study 1, I used the concept of repertoire matching to understand how the participants develop text understanding across the approximately 350-year time gap between the Molièrian text and the students' encounter with it. In terms of cultural resources used in talk- and action-in-interaction, repertoire matching resonates with the notion of bridging contemporary and historical resources that was used in Studies 2 and 3.

Langer (1995) suggested a theoretical understanding that sees readers' capacity of viewing situations in a literary text as authentic and – in parallel, seemingly without tension – fictitious in terms of *literary envisionment*. Langer's concept encompasses readers' active work of creating literary worlds by moving between different forms, or stages, of involvement in the fictional world and relating the envisioned world to their own lives. Reading and the understanding of a text are described as moving back and forth between life and text. In such a view, the movement enable sensemaking through the dual positioning of involvement in the literary world and viewing the text from a distance. In other words, closeness to and distance from the imaginary go hand in hand. For the purposes of the current study, it seems possible to view the in-role engagement with the drama-text characters as a process of literary envisionment where the actors' material-somatic experiences of the text world come to the fore. Thus, I find Langer's theory inspirational for my exploration of the participants' appropriation of means for the presentation of characters in the stage text.

Conceptualizing the participants' process from page to stage in a theatre production is challenging. While my starting point as regards text theory is the interactional perspective, my object of research is not the drama text per se or the students' understanding of it without staging it. Instead, I am interested in the transformation of one form of text to another form through the situated communicative work of interacting actors. Drawing on Martin and Sauter

(1995), among others, I see the drama text as a trigger for the spatializing and voicing of the scripted lines. In the stage text, new meanings emerge beyond the linguistic level of the drama text, why I see the stage text as a new text. In Vygotskian (2004) terminology, the collective and creative process of creating dramatic play based on a drama text implies that the participants develop a new literary text.

Aware of competing terminology regarding transformative work in a theatre production,<sup>20</sup> I have concluded that the transforming of drama text into stage text (Heed, 2002, 2006; Martin & Sauter, 1995) suits my purposes terminology-wise. This choice reflects my research interest in the ways meanings develop in talk- and action-in-interaction why analytical tools from the sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making are preferable. Among several functions, drama text and stage text serve as starting- and ending points in the production process that I explore. Drawing on Elam (2002) and Sörlin (2008), a drama text is here seen as both a complete work of art in the sense that it can be read and analyzed (as a literary text) and an incomplete work of art in which an intention of being staged is inscribed. Likewise, a stage text is a complete work of art where its linguistic side includes the drama text (the spoken lines) that can be analyzed (as what is being staged) and, at the same time, an incomplete work of art in which an intention of being used in a theatrical event is inscribed.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the drama is constituted on three (nonetheless deeply intertwined) levels: 1) drama text, 2) stage text, and 3) theatrical event (or performance, where the interaction between performers and audience is in focus [Sauter, 2008]). As did Smiding (2006), I see the concept of stage text as filling a gap between drama text and theatrical event (or performance). However, occasionally in Studies 1–3, it is not relevant to uphold the distinction between stage text and performance, and for readability purposes – when this distinction is less relevant – they may be used interchangeably.

### 3.4 Summary of the theoretical framework

Following the reasoning based on the three central premises of the present thesis: text understanding in the current context implies understanding of what a drama scene is about and how to enact it. In a drama-text-based theatre

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<sup>20</sup> For example: ‘performance text’ (Pavis, 1998); ‘spectacle text’ (de Marinis, 1993); ‘theatrical event’ (Sauter, 2008), not to mention ‘performance’ and ‘mise-en-scène’.

<sup>21</sup> Then, spectators and performers engage in a performance and thereby transform the text yet a step.

production, a transformation is to be expected from one form of text to another, from drama text to stage text. Accordingly, the process under study can be anticipated to go from the participants' focus on the given circumstances of the drama text through the artistic shaping of drama characters in rehearsals to the stage text and its presentation. A drama text can be understood in terms of layers of cultural meaning connected to, for example, historical time periods, literary conventions, lexical issues, characters, and its central themes, whereas a stage text additionally can be understood in terms of its audio-spatial properties, for example how scenes are presented through objects onstage and verbal and nonverbal actions of the stage characters. Considering that the staging in this case concerns a drama text written several centuries ago, it is interesting to explore how the participants use cultural resources to bridge the cultural time gap. Coordinating joint text understanding is crucial in the collective endeavor of a theatre production, not only for the participants to establish a sufficient overlap of the understanding of unfolding social situations, so as to be able to move on in activities at hand, but also to become sufficiently prepared as an ensemble for the performances. However, the nature of such intersubjective understandings is that they are only partially shared among the participants; they are dynamic, always under way. Since theatre activities typically rely on multiple semiotic means used simultaneously and artistically, I adopt a multimodal orientation in the analytical work to enable analyses of developing text understanding, focusing talk- and action-in-interaction. For example, when using frame theory, I attend to shifts in footing as interactive processes encompassing talk, bodyliness and use of stage objects.

The present study explores coordination of text understanding related to role-taking in the sense of working in-role in theatre/drama. Such role-taking differs from role-taking in everyday life in its special imaginary relation with the environment. Interaction in-role implies participants talking and acting as someone else, somewhere else and elsewhere in time than in the 'real world' without ceasing to experience the 'real world'. The fictional framing of theatre activities implies the actors inhabit an imaginary space and the 'real world' simultaneously, which Vygotsky conceptualizes as dual affective planes. The notion of dual planes foregrounds actors' double agency, in which the actor can regulate the onstage appearance of the character. Living through experiences of the other in double agency provides a wholeness of somatic and verbal experiencing of a text, which potentially promotes richer text understanding. The spatialization and voicing of texts in social interaction in-role are

understood in terms of an appropriation process of cultural tools (e.g., culturally recognizable manners of stage characters). Interaction within such a drama framework is seen to enhance mutual trust, support and safe spaces to suggest and demonstrate new ideas. Such a learning context potentially supports joint problem solving, the co-construction of understanding, and common appropriation of cultural tools. Thus, the participants can expand their action possibilities as stage actors.

The outlined way of understanding social interaction and text understanding in the cultural practice of theatre is well accommodated to the sociocultural and the dialogical traditions and the interactional perspective in text theory. In addition, it applies to the particular features of learning and interaction in-role in theatre/drama theory as described above. Thus, the theoretical framework and the analytical concepts accounted for in this chapter make it possible to study text understanding in-the-making.

## 4. Research design

In this chapter, I address methodological choices made to pursue the aim of the thesis. First, I account for the overarching methodological approach and the ways in which it is connected to the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter. Then the participants and their project are presented, along with a discussion of access to the site and ethical considerations. Thereafter, there is a section on the production and managing of data. Subsequently, I present analytical procedures. Finally, the heart of the production, *The Affected Ladies*, is described. The empirical studies not only complement each other by gradually going into more interactional detail but also vary to some extent methodologically within the overarching methodological approach. Such nuances are addressed.

Methodological concerns were addressed substantially in Study 1 (pp. 57–87) and I refer to that part on some issues that I do not elaborate in this chapter, foremost: a) the choice of video- and sound-recording and possibilities and restrictions related to this choice, b) technical specifications of the recording equipment, c) non-chosen methods, d) the production calendar in the sense of detailed information on the kind of activities that took place during particular periods of the production, and e) research validity from an ethnographic point of view.

### 4.1 The general methodological approach

I study the coordination of text understanding by attending to talk- and action-in-interaction in social situations of a school theatre production. The overarching unit of analysis (UoA) for conducting such an investigation is elaborated in this section in combination with other general issues in the methodological approach. I understand UoA as a means of linking the overarching theoretical approaches with the general methodological approaches.

#### 4.1.1 General research design and overarching unit of analysis

Dialogism insists on the inherently sociocultural nature of discursive activities and dialogues. The individual is always supported by, and

negotiates with his partners in talk-in-interaction and the available cultural artefacts (Linell, 1998, p. 47).

The quote above describes properties of the dialogical approach included in the overarching theoretical framework. Hence, a unit of analysis compatible with this approach attends to talk, social interaction, and cultural artifacts. Furthermore, the quote indicates the importance of anchoring the analysis in observable situated activities of unfolding social interaction in order to understand what the participants make relevant.

In the sociocultural tradition, tool-mediated activities are seen as a resource for meaning making. Thus, in a study of a cultural practice like a theatre production it is important to address the semiotics of situated mediational means. With regard to units of analysis Säljö (2009, p. 207) addressed the necessity to attend to “the dynamics of the semiotics of human uses of signs” in analyzing acts of meaning. Accordingly, I include the participants’ use of multiple semiotic resources in the artistic shaping of stage characters in the UoA. Furthermore, in line with the view of learning as contingent on social interaction and the solving of situated tasks, it is required that the UoA encompass the participants’ appropriation of mediational means that are relevant for the staging. Moreover, Säljö’s argument that “the study of how human skills—be they bodily, cognitive, perceptual or a mix of these dimensions—are appropriated by individuals” constitutes “a major interest in the sociocultural perspective” (2009, p. 207) indicates that action and gestural aspects of meaning making also should be included in the UoA. Following this rationale focused on human communication by multiple semiotic resources and learning in a particular institutional and artistic environment, the overarching unit of analysis in the present dissertation is *tool-mediated activities*.

Hence, to understand the participants’ coordination of text understanding in the situated socio-artistic practice of a theatre production I include the participants’ interactions with each other in the UoA, specifically talk, tone of voice, gesture, movement, use of physical tools and socio-historic resources (Goodwin, 2018; Linell, 1998; Säljö, 2009). This UoA resonates with theoretical-methodological considerations common in the field of theatre/drama education (e.g., Franks, 2015; Yandell, 2008). Franks (p. 313) suggested that “a holistic view of bodily presence and co-presence that is indivisible from thinking and feeling” is needed in empirical studies, which sits well with Goodwin’s (2007, p. 27) argument that “participants are building relevant action together through talk while attending to each other as fully

embodied actors, and frequently to relevant structure in their environment, the larger activities they are engaged in, etc.” The attention to socio-material issues also sits well with the ethnographic approach of Study 1, considering that everyday interaction takes place in particular locations and that physical objects are involved. In other words: ”People do not act in a vacuum. Not only do they do things with words, but also they do things with things” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 137).

Since one of my general research interests is to investigate how multiple mediational means are used in the artistic shaping of a stage text, video recordings were a significant part of the research design. Using video data is a well-established method within educational science (Derry et al., 2010; Heath et al., 2010) and carries a number of benefits. Consistent with the sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making, video data provides possibilities to observe “fine details of conduct, both talk and bodily comportment” (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002, p. 8) comprising human interaction and the shaping of situated everyday culture. Even if video recordings cannot possibly encapsulate all facets of social interaction, they nonetheless provide rich material on speech, gesture, posture, locomotion and the use of objects. In the current project, repeated viewings made it possible to single out both patterns and critical incidents of meaning making, for example, regarding the cultivation of stage characters’ manners, which I will come back to. A way to discern patterns and critical incidents was through recurrent data sessions held with supervisors and larger groups of researchers.

The overarching unit of analysis encompasses a broad spectrum of interaction. While this is relevant to the overarching aim of my research and the theoretical approaches, research is also a reductionist undertaking. By that I mean that “[w]e simply cannot represent and codify the world in all its complexities in our accounts,” quoting Säljö (2009, p. 204). To that end, I specified the analytical interests, units and procedures in the empirical studies according to the aim of each study (see below). For now, it may be noted that the UoA lends itself to exploring the Vygotskian (1978) idea of a relation between micro-genesis of meaning and longitudinal meaning making. Such an exploration is reflected in the general design of the research project in which I gradually oriented the studies toward finer-grained interaction analysis of the same set of data. Ethnographic engagement in Study 1 provided me with contextual understanding that proved valuable for the selection of appropriate strips of interaction in the video data in relation to the analytical interest in the

following studies. It also provided useful background in interpreting observations. Thus, the general research design enabled analytical work on different levels of the coordination of text understanding in the theatre production. It allowed for the inclusion of interactional work in small-scale transitions of text understanding in particular strips of interaction as well as longitudinal coordination of text understanding that eventually helped to transform drama text into stage text.

Reconnecting to the issue of possibilities to observe learning, the focus on observable changes in the participants' actions and way of reasoning implies a few methodological considerations (Derry et al., 2010; Säljö, 2009). For example, as an observer and analyst, I must interpret cultivation of stage characters both in light of what is being presented in the final performances and in light of what seems productive for the present ongoing activity. Franks (2014, p. 201) emphasized the interpretative dimension of studying learning processes in a theatre/drama context:

Looking at signs of learning is necessarily an interpretative exercise requiring attention and alertness to the semiotic potential of socially organised bodies and ways in which meanings are physically realised by the students through dramatic activity and presentation to an audience.

The general methodological approach in brief: I have pursued an interaction analysis with a multimodal orientation linked to video ethnography and corresponding with sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making, creativity and learning.

## 4.2 The site, the participants and their project

The site for the research is a public upper secondary school. At the time of the observations, approximately 1 000 students were enrolled, engaged in eleven different national study programs, including the Arts Program with optional orientations for visual arts, dance, music and theatre. The school features a substantial sports profile recruiting talented student athletes from all over the country, a human rights profile that receive media attention, and relatively rich possibilities for arts appreciation through concerts, exhibitions and performances produced by Arts Program students and visiting professional performers.

#### 4.2.1 The participants and particular premises of their participation

In Study 1 which was written in Swedish, the participants were given names in which the first letter identified a person as a student or a teacher. The naming system is maintained in Studies 2–3 and here. However, the names in Swedish hardly make sense in English, which is why an explanation is required. *Teacher* in Swedish is *lärare*, hence, teachers were given names beginning with an L. The theatre teacher is named Lisen, and the teacher of Swedish Lydia. Furthermore, *student* in Swedish is *elev* – Ebba, Elin, Elle, Elvira, Emma, Erik and Evelina constitute the body of students and the ensemble onstage. Petra (from Swedish *praktikant*) is a trainee, serving as prompter and assistant director. It can be noted that occasional guests (typically serving as interim spectators) appeared in the theatre classroom. These guests and the spectators of the four public performances can also be seen as participants in a way and were all informed orally that observations for a research project were conducted. The fact that the students were attending their third year in the Arts Program implies that they knew each other rather well and had worked with Lisen in several courses.

The students were expected to take part in activities, such as reading drama texts (to choose what to stage), analyzing the current drama text, exploring characters, improvisations, rehearsals of scripted lines, production of costumes, props and stage lighting, and promoting the performances. Not least, they were asked to carry out various activities required by a performance, for example, arrange costumes, make-up and hair/wigs, warm up (voice and body) tidy up afterwards and so on. The students had theatre assignments to complete outside class. For example, they were expected to learn their lines once roles were distributed, prepare props and costumes and do some promotion for the upcoming event. In addition, students volunteered for stage lighting design, choice of music during set changes, taking photos and designing posters and leaflets.

The activities under study took place in a particular physical space – a theatre classroom with a 5 x 10m stage, a stage-lighting system and seating for some 70 spectators. The walls, floor, ceiling, backdrops and the seats are all black. First-time visitors tend to say something like: “Wow, a real theatre!” This physical space clearly signaled the socio-material premises for the upcoming event. During classroom work, the students served as performers, and, when not onstage, as spectators. The production was directed by Lisen who also often

served as a spectator during the preparations. The observer and Petra served as additional spectators. Thus, a live audience was always present. In a sense, the future stage-text audience was also present through the participants' anticipation of the upcoming event.

Another particular premise of participation which I deal with next was the specific institutional framing expressed through the governing curricula, syllabi and grading criteria provided by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

#### **4.2.2 The role of Swedish and theatre in the Arts Program**

This section adds to the brief orientation on the Arts Program which was provided in the introduction. The aim of the program is for students to develop knowledge in and about aesthetic forms of expression and knowledge about people and the world, historically and in our time, through artistic, cultural and communicative perspectives (Skolverket n.d.-a).

Drawing on material from the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket 2011a–d) it should be noted that Swedish is a compulsory subject, comprising 300 credits of the total 2,500 credits earned during three years. Literature education has a prominent position: “The core of the subject of Swedish is language and literature” (Skolverket, 2011a, my translation). The students are supposed to develop an ability to use fiction, other forms of text and film as sources for the development of self-knowledge and understanding of other people's experiences. The students are to be challenged to open up to new ways of thinking and new perspectives. Drama texts, narrative fiction, and poetry count as the three major genres of fiction. The Swedish National Agency for Education recommends that students attend theatre performances as natural part of the subject of Swedish. Some studies indicate that drama texts are used frequently in the classroom (cf. Bergman, 2007). Textbooks in the subject of Swedish typically contain excerpts of drama texts (e.g., Jeppsson, Lindqvist, Lindqvist, & Sjöstedt, 2012). It can be assumed that most teachers of Swedish would include, for example, ancient theatre, Shakespeare and Brecht in the history of literature.

Within the Arts Program with theatre orientation, focus is on artistic practice aimed at “developing the students' capability for stage performances and communication” (Skolverket n.d.-b, my translation). The students' development of intentional audience-orientation and collective engagement in staging performances is emphasized in the policy documents (Skolverket,

2011d). Students can opt for various theatre courses (e.g., stage role interpretation [equals character work], stage design, masks and costumes, directing, and so on) up to a total of 1,100 credits (Skolverket, n.d.-c).

The current production was a course assignment. The class met twice a week (1,5 + 3 hrs.), plus, from time to time, some extra nights and weekends, especially the month before the première. The production was included in two theatre courses following the national syllabus and grading criteria. Appendix A provides a brief overview of activities in the theatre production and indicates six periods in chronological order. In Study 1 (pp. 202–207), all observed sessions are displayed, including the kind of activities that took place and the extent of the recordings and the fieldnotes.

As noted in the introduction, literary texts, especially drama texts, play a significant role in the subject of theatre. However, they are not assigned the same core status in the policy documents pertaining to the subject of Swedish. According to the syllabus of one theatre course, instruction shall address “ways to adapt . . . fictional texts so as to achieve utmost expression in performance” (Skolverket, 2011d, my translation). In other words, written texts are used as a tool in the preparation for staging a performance. Therefore, it can be assumed that in this use of fictional text (drama text, for example) as a trigger for stage activities, reading will become a social event in which meaning is made, rather than an affair between the text and the individual reader. It can also be assumed that despite the aforementioned post-dramatic development in the professional theatre, in the 2010s upper-secondary school-theatre productions still rely on drama texts (cf. Ahlstrand, 2014).

### 4.3 Accessing activities and ethical concerns in a familiar setting

The choice of the research site is associated with the fact that at the time of observation I taught half time, and the closest school doing theatre productions was situated 100 km away. These circumstances constituted constraints as regards possibilities for ethnographic fieldwork, so I turned to my own school. Negotiating access with the teacher in charge of theatre, Lisen, was conducted against the backdrop of our having been colleagues in the Arts Program for many years, including co-directing a number of productions. It was also conducted against a more general backdrop of theatre rehearsals as almost necessarily closed for outsiders (like an observer) due to the level of intimacy

and trust which is needed to enculture among the members of a production team (Lagercrantz, 1995). Lisen not only provided access to an upcoming production but also opened up a part of her daily work in which a particular kind of closeness and reliance among the ensemble was needed. School principals were involved in the formal side of providing access for research in this particular site.

Lisen decided which of her classes was to be involved. It turned out to be my daughter's class. Having one's own child among the participants constitutes an ethical dilemma. In this case, the dilemma surfaced, for example, in situations of our everyday conversations about school experiences. Now and then she talked about the theatre production. As her father I was engaged in discussing everyday school matters. At the same time, as a researcher I knew that "[t]here must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance' in the relationship with participants" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 90). After consulting my supervisors and the literature on ethics, I dealt with the dilemma as openly and reflectively as possible, including talking about it with my daughter and expanding on it in Study 1.

The participants' informed consent to take part in the research project was obtained stepwise. First, I met the students and outlined the research project orally and emphasized that participation was voluntary, that it was possible to withdraw at any time, and that any publication or other report of this research would withhold actual names and the name of the school.<sup>22</sup> We also talked about the researcher's role as different from that of a teacher. The students got information in print along with a form where to sign to give their informed consent (Study 1, pp. 209–210). Since everybody was well above 16 years of age, parental consent was not required (Vetenskapsrådet n.d. [Swedish Research Council]). A week later, I reiterated the information and answered a few questions on anonymization, confidentiality, and participation related to grading. After that, everybody signed. Traditionally, confidentiality implies that photos and videos are manipulated in some way to reduce possible identification of the individual participants; however, in this case, this clause was modified such that everybody gave their informed consent to the

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<sup>22</sup> Withdrawing would of course not imply a student's withdrawal from the production. However, my access to situations in the production for research purposes would be reduced. For instance, situations with a withdrawn student involved would not be included in the analyses. Since the scenes in the drama involved any number of actors from one to the whole ensemble it would be possible to pursue the research with one student's withdrawal. However, if more students withdrew the research project in its planned design would have to be cancelled.

publication of photos and the showing videoclips for research purposes. Lydia, Lisen and Petra were also informed orally and had a chance to reflect on the informed consent before signing it (Study 1, pp. 211–212).

No one withdrew from participation. Everybody has been informed about the progress of the research during and after the observation period. For example, they have been shown videoclips along with transcripts. I met Lydia and Lisen informally outside class during the observation period and after, at times chatting about ‘the findings’. In other words, access and informed consent were obtained and maintained. However, as the observations commenced, ethical dilemmas emerged.

The ethical issue of an observer’s competing and/or complementary roles in ethnographic fieldwork is well known (Dennis, 2010; Walford & Delamont, 2008). During and after fieldwork, separating the roles of a teacher/colleague, on the one hand, and the role of a researcher, on the other hand, was problematic at times. The participants asked for my opinion on details in the artistic shaping or to help students individually with tricky lines.<sup>23</sup> That was the way Lisen and I used to collaborate and which the students recognized. Especially during the first sessions of observations, I could not refrain from joining discussions even without being addressed. However, after discussions with supervisors and consulting the literature, I brought up the issue of influencing the participants’ creative process both with Lisen and the students. We agreed on ground rules that if I was asked, I would help, but I would refrain (as much as possible) from suggestions about direction and acting. This balance had to do with maintaining rapport. The cornerstone of pursuing this research was the participants’ trust and generosity demonstrated in opening up for observation of the entire production during two semesters.

From a methodological perspective, an insider observer – that is, an observer who is quite familiar with the environment and who participates in situated activities – can provide a range of perspectives that a newcomer or a non-participating outsider has more constrained possibilities to provide (Bjørndal, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Such constraints would be related to less context knowledge and a more distanced relationship with the participants. At the same time, the insider is at risk of taking things for granted due to insufficient distance. In pursuing field studies, the researcher must

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<sup>23</sup> This attitude differs from Lagercrantz’ (1995) observations of theatre production in which the participants drew a clear borderline between themselves and the observer in similar situations.

achieve and sustain the role of 'observer' in the face of various pulls and seductions to participate more fully in unfolding events . . . even periodically 're-mind' themselves of the research goals and priorities in the face of inclusive tendencies. (Pollner & Emerson, 2001, p. 129)

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe a scale of different observer statuses from an absolute insider at one end (e.g., under-cover participation in criminal settings) to a complete outsider on the opposite end (i.e., a positivist ideal observer, not influencing unfolding naturalistic activity). My status on such a scale shifted. For example, activities like substituting onstage for an absent actor, standing behind the back drop, awaiting the entrance cue side by side with actor students and whispering about spatial positioning that was to take place in a moment approach the status of an absolute insider. However, my more typical observer status was that of the silent fieldnotes scribbler, seated far back in the spectator area of the theatre classroom. In all three empirical studies, I have drawn on the insider perspective for general understanding of the activities under study.

In parallel, the fact that the observations were conducted in a familiar setting triggered some further tensions. I had to alienate myself from the well-known, and in a more distanced manner explore central research issues like "What is at stake here? What counts as appropriate actions here? What kind of communicative activities are involved in transformation of drama text into stage text? How do these, to me, well-known people frame the activities?" As Hammersley and Atkinson noted, "it may be necessary to 'fight familiarity'" (2007, p. 81). As a researcher, I had to take a different stance than the one familiar to the participants in the managing of, for example, stage lights, stage design and props, in order to analyze the use of such artifacts as mediational means.

Furthermore, writing about familiar colleagues' teaching performance proved uncomfortable. Such discomfort may be related to an increased focus on student-teacher interaction compared to what was planned for initially. Lisen, Lydia and I talked about this shift underway, so my discomfort might also have been related to something else. Ethnographic literature notes a tension between the researcher's loyalties toward both participants and (ideal) standards of research. Such a tension of loyalties may be sharp if, as in this case, there are close preexisting ties between the participants and the observing researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Murphy & Dingwall, 2001).

## 4.4 Stage interaction represented as data

In this section, I address methodological considerations on different stages of representation of the observed interaction. I discuss data production and analytical work from an iterative angle since data production and tentative analyses were interwoven processes.

### 4.4.1 Generating data interwoven with tentative analyses

A theatre production runs over time, often months, in this case two semesters. To understand the development of any issue in a theatre production, it must be studied over time (Lagercrantz, 1995). From a dialogical perspective, the participants' utterances and nonverbal actions are also made relevant over time through the ways they are picked up and re-used, re-shaped and re-oriented to by other participants (Goodwin, 2007; Linell 1998). For example, an actor's suggestion regarding gestural action might be picked up and elaborated on later in the current encounter – or weeks later. My ethnographic engagement with the production was useful in discerning what was at stake in separate strips of interaction and how that was related to later situations.

All the fieldwork was conducted during Study 1. Most sessions of the theatre production were observed, although not all. I attended theatre classes for a total of approximately 80h on 41 occasions and wrote fieldnotes every time. 30 sessions were video recorded for a total of approximately 49 hours. Sound-only recordings were made on 13 occasions for approximately 18 hours.<sup>24</sup> For an overview, see Appendix B. All observed sessions are listed, along with the extent of the recordings and the fieldnotes in Study 1 (pp. 202–207). In addition to recordings and fieldnotes, I had access to some written documents: the drama text, the adapted drama text, rehearsal schedules, protocols for stage lighting and stage sound, posters and leaflets for the upcoming performances and photos taken by participants.

A typical observation session would start with me alone in the theatre classroom arranging tripods for the video camera and the microphone and checking the equipment, for example, regarding particular light conditions with stage lights projected toward the stage and the spectator seating in semi-darkness (cf. Derry et al., 2010). Early arriving students would assist with the equipment and chat informally.

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<sup>24</sup> Some sessions were both video and audio recorded.

The recordings were copied to a laptop and indexed as soon as possible after observation (Heath et al., 2010). The handwritten fieldnotes were rewritten in a word document. Reflections on fieldnote entries were added in a separate column (Cohen et al., 2011; Delamont, 2008). Such reflections could be of various types; interpretative, categorizing, or reminders of particular incidents that I thought would be important to check in the recordings, or meta-reflections on the research process. The reflections column developed gradually since it was open to extension later (Delamont, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Data production in Study 1 implied several levels of research work, like iteratively going back and forth between indexing videos, linking them to fieldnotes, transcribing strips of interaction, conducting new observations, and shaping preliminary categories based on observed interactional patterns. In other words, the data production was interwoven with the start of analytical work in an abductive process. As presented in Study 1 LeCompte (2000) guided the handling, surveying and categorization of data. LeCompte's ideal model was useful both for the practical arrangement of data, initial analyses, and as a means for methodological reflection.

Since my research relies on video data to a great extent, I think it is important to recognize the limitations of this method. As Heath et al. (2010, p. 5, *my italics*) put it: "Video captures *a version* of an event as it happens." A complete picture of talk and action-in-interaction and material circumstances will never be possible to capture, for example, related to the position of cameras and microphones. Baker, Green and Skukauskaite (2008, p. 82) noted that "a video record of an event represents not the event in its complexity, but rather it is an inscription of how the ethnographer chose to focus the camera."

#### **4.4.2 A reflection on 'naturalistic data'**

The theatre production under study would have taken place even without the present study, as mentioned in the introduction. During the observation period, Lisen planned classes as she usually does, without special requests from my side. These remarks on what seems 'natural' do not imply that data were naturalistic in the sense that no activities were specially arranged for research purposes or that I, the observer, did not influence the course of activities. I arranged more things in the current activities than the presence of a recording device and a fieldnote scribbler, for instance: First, I asked Lydia to join the group and lead

literature talks about the drama text, which she did four times. Ordinarily, the Swedish class teacher arranges such talks, however, this was not possible now. Second, I asked the students to write a few things, for example, a log of their character work and fictional text messages from the 17<sup>th</sup>-century characters to their moms (not appearing in the drama text). The purpose was to gain access to the students' written views of character work. However, the writing turned out too demanding for them in addition to the total workload. The few written pieces that were sent to me have not been used in the analyses. Third, helping to arrange stage lights meant that I staged what was possible to do for the persons who designed the lights and operated the light board in that the spotlights and floodlights were pre-positioned on the lighting grid. Fourth, through a number of informal talks outside scheduled lessons I gained insight into student perspectives, implying that I also influenced the orientation of the conversation in particular directions. Such researcher influence of unfolding informal conversation is illustrated in Study 3.

#### **4.4.3 Representation of data: Transcription and translation**

Transcribing video-recorded social interaction is a matter of adopting a relevant level of detail for the purpose of the study (Heath et al., 2010). In talk, volume, overlaps, pace, emphasis, pauses and other vocal expressions can be included. Bodyliness can also be represented, for example, poses, postures, facial expressions, gaze, gesture, bodily orientation and the use of physical objects (Goodwin, 2018). Often visual conduct is represented through images of some kind. I explored different forms of transcription, for example, by presenting excerpts in seminars, conferences, and supervision and including them in submissions to journals. The response in such situations helped to single out forms corresponding with different analytical interests in the empirical studies.

In a pilot study, I used the transcription notations of Heath et al. (2010, p. 150–154) designed for representation of the sequential organization of talk (and to some extent visual conduct).<sup>25</sup> That level of transcription displayed too much detail regarding verbal interaction, for example, meticulous attention to the length of pauses in conversation, pitch, emphasis, overlaps, and so on. At the same time, the notations were somewhat inadequate in terms of the interplay of several mediational means that constitute actors' projection of characters'

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<sup>25</sup> The model was an adaptation of the Jefferson convention regarding verbal conduct and Goodwin (1980) regarding visual conduct.

manners. Progressing to Study 1, I shifted the form of transcription to a more multimodal orientation, including the participants' use of stage objects, for example, props.

Selecting which situations to transcribe and analyze was an extensive process starting by selecting fieldnote-entries that clearly related to the research interest and searching the videos for the corresponding instance of interaction. Going through a major part of the video recordings in this way created familiarity with the data. In this basic video-mapping, I generated a tentative categorization of activities with respect to text understanding and, in relation to that, a list of strips of interaction for rough transcription to enable further analysis.

Reporting Study 1, three forms of transcription were used. First, a transcript with extralinguistic and paralinguistic information in square brackets interwoven with the representation of unfolding verbal action (e.g., pp. 231–232). Second, an analytically informed narrative with quotations woven into unfolding written text (e.g., pp. 94–95). Third, a model with verbal action shown in parallel with extralinguistic action and paralinguistic action in separate lines/boxes representing an improvised dyadic dialogue in-role (e.g., pp. 226–227). I also explored possibilities for graphical representation, for instance, series of photos displaying the transformations of the enactment of scenes of the drama during the preparation period. However, at this stage I thought that representation through images hardly captured, for example, the sociality of several moving bodies in the shaping of onstage patterns of movement the way video recordings did. Therefore, I decided not to include images in the excerpts of Study 1.

In Study 2, focusing on mediational means used in the fine-grained transitions of text understanding, we employed a three-column model of the excerpts including line drawings and timing (Göthberg, Björck & Mäkitalo, 2018, e.g., pp. 254–255), reminiscent of the excerpts with a multimodal orientation in Goodwin (2013, 2018). The line drawings aimed at highlighting particularities of bodyliness by largely reducing the complexity of a photo. The displayed timing of particular actions illustrated, for example, the length of critical pauses and the time horizons of critical nonverbal actions. 'Critical' here refers to the observable role a specific transition played for the coordination of text understanding.

Shifts between in-role and out-of-role interaction were noted as contributing to the coordination and development of text understanding already in Study 1. In Study 3, I was interested in furthering the investigation of this issue and

focused the analyses on framing and shift in footing. Aligning to such analytical interest, I adopted a simplified Jeffersonian transcription orthography, and included particular markers in bold and italics for scripted lines and ‘scripted’ nonverbal actions (‘scripted’ in the sense of prior rehearsed enactment) (Göthberg, in press, e.g., pp. 21–24). Furthermore, variations of fonts and brackets denoted improvised nonverbal and verbal action, interwoven in the rehearsal of scripted lines. Line drawings were also used in Study 3, for the same purposes as in Study 2.

The existence of different transcription forms indicates that there is an analytical side to transcribing. A transcript is not a ‘neutral’ representation of any social situation – rather, analysis is inscribed in transcripts (Cohen et.al., 2011; Linell, 2011). By transcribing I developed the analysis and vice versa. Furthermore, writing up the results I had to revisit the recordings to check the transcripts. I then identified interactional details that led to further analytical consideration and refined transcripts. The overall analytical work, including transcription, hence was conducted over a relatively long time-span in an abductive way (Derry et al., 2010; Goodwin, 2018).

Translation of the participants’ talk in Swedish into English in the transcripts of Studies 2–3 evoked methodological consideration. For example, translating students’ street lingo was delicate work. I consulted a translation agency. Translation of drama-text lines also required particular consideration. A multi-step adaptation of a Swedish translation of Molière’s original work was employed in the production, including the participants’ omitting of characters and lines and their rewriting of some lines to cover up for omissions and, on occasion, simplifying difficult wording. Therefore, I preferred to translate the adapted usage of the lines and stage directions in the version used, Molière and Sjöstrand (1986).

## 4.5 Analytical procedures

The general methodological approach addressed above pays attention to the commonalities of analytical interests, units and procedures among the empirical studies. In the light of progressive research interests, aims, and theoretical and methodological approaches during the thesis project, I will in this section go into the specific analytical interests, units and procedures of Studies 1–3. In the account of Study 1, I focus on the process of categorization of the observations, since that part of the analytical process to a great extent formed the data set

later used in the following studies. In the account of Studies 2–3, attention is primarily paid to selection of strips of interaction for further analysis and reporting in articles.

#### **4.5.1 Categorizing development of text understanding in Study 1**

The analytical interest in Study 1 concerns how multiple semiotic resources are used in the development of text understanding by studying the everyday culture of the theatre production in an educational setting, focusing on the preparations for the upcoming performances of Molière's *The Affected Ladies*. Therefore, the unit of analysis in Study 1 is the theatre production.

During the aforementioned process of going back and forth between fieldnotes and video recordings, I noted the index of particular fieldnote entries in preliminary analytical categories as soon as I became sensitive to a connection to the aim of Study 1. In this way, I shaped eleven analytical categories related to development of text understanding. The categories primarily addressed cultural meaning and ways of communicating. I organized all relevant fieldnote entries in a scheme according to these categories. The general approach was to categorize the observations by searching for similarities and contrasts in the participants' talk- and actions-in-interaction (LeCompte, 2000). The formation of analytical categories was articulated in the following taxonomy: voice, body, theatrical artifacts, negotiation, language, metacommunication, repertoire matching, literary envisionment, teaching, ethnography and text theory. This part of the analytical procedure implied that data which had been produced in a chronological order was re-organized in a thematic order according to research questions and theoretical framework.

The next step in the analytical procedure was to explore potential patterns regarding displays of cultural meaning (e.g., the use of cultural resources in matching of repertoires) and ways of communicating (e.g., the use of metatalk in-role in negotiations about the staging). Similarities, analogies, parallels and recurring series of actions contributed to the formation of patterns. Among the emerging patterns I saw possibilities to bring analytical categories together in larger units in order to make the picture of numerous categories and subcategories more comprehensible for myself as analyst and for future readers. This was done in two ways.

One way was to organize the observed activities in what I interpreted as the three most important units thematically with respect to the development of text understanding. The interpretation was grounded in a combination of previous research, my own experiences from teaching theatre and literature and the ethnographic engagement with the production. The thematic model included *repertoire matching* (see theoretical framework), *artistic shaping* (of audio-spatial properties of the stage text) and *negotiations* (reflecting primarily interaction between students and teachers).

A second way of achieving larger units was to focus on semiotic resources particularly significant in the artistic shaping of the stage text. This part of the analytical work was influenced by methods in the field of performance analysis (Fischer Lichte, 1992; Elam, 2012). Basically, I noted what particular stage-text scenes were about from the participants' perspective, according to what I had learned during the observation period and the described mapping of video-recordings. Then, I analyzed how the presentation onstage was achieved in terms of what mediational means seemed significant. Thereafter I back-traced the artistic shaping of mediational means to see how they were initiated, established and maintained. I took help from Kowzan's and Pfeister's theatre-semiotics schemes, originally developed for performance analyses (Heed, 2002). I re-arranged the analytical categories for my purposes.<sup>26</sup> For example, within the main category of visible mediational means, sub-categories were arranged as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Visual Mediational Means

VISUAL MEDIATIONAL MEANS	Extralinguistic means outside the actor	costume
		makeup
		set design
		props
		stage lights
	Extralinguistic means through the actor	facial expression
		gesture
		locomotion
		spatial positioning

With regard to the three themes of repertoire matching, artistic shaping, and negotiations, I selected particular scenes in the drama and strips of interaction for further analysis. Regarding repertoire matching I chose strips of interaction from scenes spread over the entire drama, illustrating the students' use of

<sup>26</sup> The full adaption of theatre-semiotics schemes is provided in Study 1 (p. 114).

cultural repertoires in the encounter with the cultural context of the more than three-century-old drama text. My focus was on tangible examples of the use of different semiotic resources that could reveal something about development of text understanding. Concerning artistic shaping I selected one scene in the drama that both illustrated the use of a wide range of semiotic resources and that was videoed on as many occasions as possible. The selected scene comprised 3m 30s in the performances, whereas in rehearsal, anything between 10 and 50 minutes could be assigned to explore the selected scene. I had observed the scene on 21 occasions, all but one of which were videoed. I traced how the participants' text understanding evolved as regards use of mediational means for two layers of cultural meaning: the character of the involved characters and a fight between genders and generations to gain dominance. Finally, regarding negotiations, I selected strips of interaction in which negotiations on the specifics of enactment involved both students and teachers. This choice was related to previous research on student-teacher relations in artistic practice and possible didactic implications (e.g., Törnquist, 2006). Communicative aspects in terms of intertwined verbal and nonverbal responses to utterances and embodied actions were highlighted in unfolding interaction. I also focused negotiations in which the shifting of action in-role and out-of-role seemed crucial for the coordination of text understanding.

#### **4.5.2 Selecting strips of interaction focusing coordination and cultivation in Studies 2–3**

In Studies 2–3, the analytical interest, units, and procedures had shifted compared to Study 1. At the same time, they also clearly built on what was achieved there. For example, the selection of strips of interaction for further analysis was based on prior analyses in Study 1. The so-called jester-examples in Study 1 are one instance of data that reappeared and was further analyzed. The jester-situations were improvised in-role interludes in the midst of unfolding ordinary classroom activities. They surfaced as student-initiated role-plays where students meta-commented on their own and each other's actions in rehearsals. They could also display playful forms of trying out characters' mediational means before enacting them 'for real' in a more formal rehearsal situation. In other words, they constituted a play within the play. In Study 1, it was indicated that the jester-examples might play a vital role for the artistic shaping. In Studies 2–3, the argument for further analyses of jester-situations

was related to three points of interest. First, they occurred throughout the preparation period, which indicates that they were significant for the participants. Second, they seemed to incorporate particular learning potentials, although in somewhat unexpected and not so recognized ways, neither among the participants, nor in previous research. Third, they might provide insights into student agency through the students' use of artistic practices in informal situations. Hence, the jester-examples were chosen based on an interest in potentials for learning and scrutinized in more detailed ways by incorporating, more specific analytical tools.

Informed by sociocultural theory we geared the analytical interest in Study 2 toward appropriation of cultural tools in terms of the participants' regulation of emotional expressions in the artistic shaping of culturally recognizable forms (Vygotsky 1971, 1999). The analytical interest was based on a dialogical approach to interaction (Linell, 1998) and observable units of transitions of text understanding. Based on intersubjectivity seen as a dynamic collaborative project underway (Linell, 1998), we were concerned about exploring communicative ways of coordinating text understanding toward joint understandings that would enable stage performances. Therefore, the unit of analysis was communicative projects (see the theoretical framework). By scanning the fieldnotes we classified approximately 30 jester-situations that also were recorded on video. The further selection of jester-situations was oriented to traceability of the 'outcome' of what the students achieved in these situations in relation to subsequent rehearsals and the stage text. Ten jester-examples were analyzed with an interest to scrutinize how the participants gradually developed joint text understanding through particular stages of communicative work. Finally, the analyses of three typical examples, linked by the development of a single character, were reported in an article.

The analytical interest in Study 3 was related to frame theory and how students shift between interaction in-role and out-of-role. It was also related to the participants' use of their experiences and cultural resources. Such an approach to the analytical work can reveal something about learning processes featuring the particular premises of participation in theatre/drama education (Davis, 2015b; Heathcote, 1991; Rönn 2009). In this study, I focused on the cultivation of one of the main characters in *The Affected Ladies*. The selection of strips of interaction and other analytical procedures were theoretically guided by the notion that critical instances of meaning making could be found in improvisations (Duranti & Black, 2011; Sawyer, 2003, 2014, 2015) and Linell's

(1998) approach to dialogue as a matter of dynamic construction of (partly) intersubjective understandings. Therefore, the unit of analysis was improvised talk and action-in-interaction. I scanned the fieldnotes for situations in which the participants worked on ‘deceiver-features’. Viewing corresponding videoclips I searched for strips of interaction in which meaning potentials regarding the deceiver issue were transformed in some sense. Choosing situations in which improvisational elements and frequent shifts in footing seemed to play a significant role in the cultivation work led to ten examples that were roughly transcribed and preliminarily analyzed. The selection of situations for reporting the study in an article was made on the basis of possibilities to demonstrate how a specific character in a particular scene of the drama was cultivated in two clearly different activity types (accordingly, two different primary frameworks).

#### 4.6 An outline of the drama text

To make the drama more salient to the reader, a synopsis of the plot follows.

Two aristocratic suitors look for revenge after being rejected by two young pretentious ladies, cousins Madelon and Cathos, recently settled in Paris. According to the young ladies, the suitors lack the esprit and elegance that they assume characterize the aristocracy. Gorgibus, who is the down-to-earth father of Madelon as well as the uncle of Cathos, thinks the suitors are appropriate and promotes marriage, whereas the young ladies strive for liberty to explore Parisian resources of poetry, gallantry, fashion, and classy gentlemen. The suitors dress up their servants, Mascarille and Jodelet, as hyper-elegant aristocrats and send them on a fake courting mission to the young ladies. The imposters’ (i.e., the dressed-up servants) pretentious nonsense talk impresses the young ladies immensely. Lastly, the first aristocratic suitors return and reveal the fraud.

The drama text can be seen as a pivot for almost all activities during the production. The drama text provided the lines for the actors to use, however there is more than that in transforming drama text into stage text. The crucial ways in which this was pursued is what the present thesis is concerned with.

## 5. Summary of the studies

In this chapter, I present summaries of the empirical studies which were guided by the overarching aim of exploring how text understanding evolved as the participants in the theatre production transformed drama text into stage text. First, some commonalities of the three studies are provided.

### 5.1 Commonalities of the empirical studies

Data were generated during the first study in the form of fieldnotes, video recordings (49 h), audio recordings (18 h), and written documents. The same data set was used in all three studies.

The participants, students aged 18 to 19, and their teachers, worked with the staging of Molière's *The Affected Ladies* during two semesters in a Swedish upper secondary school. The observations covered almost every session from the students' first encounter with the drama text to a shop talk after the last of four one-hour performances. The observations included the students' reading through the drama text collectively, literature talks with a teacher of Swedish and the staging led by a theatre teacher. Most of the time, the participants worked in an all-black theatre classroom with a stage-light system and seating for some 70 spectators – a physical space which clearly signaled the social and material premises for the upcoming event. During classroom work, the students served as performers as well as spectators (when not onstage). The theatre teacher served as a director (occasionally demonstrating directorial suggestions onstage) and could also serve as a spectator. Additional spectators included the observing researcher, a trainee, and randomly appearing guests. Hence, there was always a concrete audience present. At the same time, the future performance audience was also present, although remotely.

The overarching unit of analysis applied to the data is tool-mediated activities (Säljö 2009). It encompasses the participants, their interactions and the tools used. The studies complement each other as the analytical work moved from ethnographic orientation into finer-grained scrutiny of talk- and action-in-interaction. Study 1 was reported in my licentiate thesis, while Studies 2–3 were reported in articles for two different journals.

## 5.2 Summary of Study 1

Göthberg, M. (2015). *Pimpa Texten: En etnografisk studie av gymnasieelevers meningsskapande i dramatext* [Pimping the text: An ethnographic study of upper secondary school students' meaning making in drama text].<sup>27</sup>

The first study is a monograph written in Swedish reporting an ethnographically informed investigation of meaning making in a student theatre production. Particularly, I explored the participants' development of text understanding through their use of a range of semiotic resources. Study 1 is positioned in the field of *literary didactics*, covering an intersection of the school subjects of Swedish and theatre. Drawing on an emerging interest in material aspects of reading, embodied readings and co-creation of fiction (e.g., Elam & Widhe, 2015; Lundström & Olin-Scheller, 2014; Persson, 2015; Tengberg, 2015; Widhe, 2017b) I viewed the participants' engagement with the drama text as an example of embodied and material readings through, for example, gestures, voice, and theatrical artifacts like props. Moreover, I saw the participants' extended engagement with the drama text during the production as a transformation of text in which the staging constituted a form of co-creation of fiction in an educational setting. Transforming something from one mode of expression to another mode implies something more than plain coping, why the transformation here is seen as a creative activity (Molander, 1996; Selander, 2009; Skantz Åberg, 2018). Students' understanding of drama text has been explored in the field of literary didactics (McCormick, 1994; Cowl, 1993; Bergman, 2007) and in theatre/drama education (Ahlstrand, 2014; Edmiston, 2015; Franks, 2015); however, research on text understanding within the educational context of a theatre production is sparse.

A premise for the study was that in order to be able to socially organize actors' appearance and the use of theatrical artifacts the participants needed to negotiate understandings of both the drama text and the upcoming stage text. The conceptual understanding of in-role interaction aiming at stage-text presentation was that the participants needed to establish shared understandings of the characters and of the imaginary physical space to inhabit (Lagercrantz, 1995). Such a premise for the interaction assumedly required particular qualities of intersubjectivity. Therefore, the analytical interest concerned the ways of negotiating intersubjectivity with regard to the

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<sup>27</sup> The title, "Pimping the text," was borrowed from a student who described what they had done in a particular session. Hence, it captures a participant view of the transformation of drama text into stage text.

development of text understanding and the entire theatre production served as the unit of analysis.

From a literary didactics angle, I analyzed negotiations by using McCormick's (1994) concept of *repertoire matching*, in which readers' engagement with a text is understood as an encounter between the text's repertoires (or meaning potentials) and the readers' repertoires (or attitudes). The meaning potentials and attitudes concern, for example, politics, love, and lifestyle. Analytically, I attended to matching by studying the ways participants used mediational means like dance moves, gestures and stage lights, guided by the view that the participants reflect and actualize knowing through practical, embodied action, that is, *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 2003) and *knowing-in-action* (Molander, 1996). In other words, I approached the transformation in terms of social interactions in which negotiations unfold and learning processes evolve.

Learning was conceptualized as ongoing processes, in which the participants *appropriate cultural tools* in social interaction. In terms of observability of appropriation processes, I focused on shifts in how the participants solved situated tasks (Ewing, 2015; Säljö, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky & Bruner, 2004). This *sociocultural view of learning* helped me to focus on how situated staging problems were collaboratively solved, for example, how the ensemble engaged in the effort to synchronize actors' gestures and use of props to depict the characters' alignment to each other. The concept of a *collective ZPD* (Ewing, 2015; Mahn & Marjanovic-Shane, 2002) was relevant as an analytical category when investigating how the participants collaboratively solved staging problems. In the goal-oriented activity of a stage production it can be assumed that the anticipated audience will play an important role in that the participants try to foresee how the audience will interpret onstage presentations (Bruner, 1996; Lagercrantz, 1995; Törnquist, 2006).

Informed by the theoretical interests and premises accounted for above, the aim of Study 1 was to gain insight into the development of text understanding through a longitudinal ethnographic engagement in the cultural practice of a theatre production.

The aim of Study 1 was pursued by asking how do the participants use semiotic resources in developing text understanding with specific regard to

- matching of the drama-text repertoires and the participants' repertoires
- artistic shaping of audio-spatial properties of the stage text
- negotiations.

Within the data set, I chose situations for analysis aiming at providing a thick description of what seemed typical in the cultural practice of the theatre production, focusing on the appropriation of tools for staging the drama text.

The results demonstrated that text understanding was an emergent process that started in the first encounter with the drama text and lasted over the performances. Initially, several students, in various degrees, distanced themselves from the drama by saying that particular scripted lines and the social relations among drama characters were “incomprehensible.” In the literature talks, the participants mainly were oriented toward verbal out-of-role interaction. As more semiotic resources were made available in onstage improvisations, such as nonverbal action in-role and use of theatrical artifacts as props, the nature of the development of text understanding shifted. Eventually the participants displaced early stages of straggling and somewhat contradictory text understanding with more poised understandings.

During the rehearsals of scripted lines, the development of text understanding was related to the upcoming performances in the sense that the participants gradually moved from ‘how I’ or ‘how we’ understand the text to ‘how the audience will understand’ the stage text (paraphrasing Franks, 2014). A narrower scale of suggestions for the onstage presentations surfaced, like engaging with technical aspects in the flow of the upcoming stage text, for instance the arranging of smooth entrances. While a stage text, from the viewers’ perspective, can be described as a polyphonic web (Heed, 2002), the students in this specific learning arrangement were able to single out and cultivate particular threads in that web (i.e., particular means). For example, they oriented toward particularities of facial expressions, which enabled them to sensuously explore the interplay between details and the whole in artistic practice (Saar, 2005; Selander, 2009).

I understood the participants’ interaction in terms of shaping collective ZPDs (Ewing, 2015), in which they collaboratively both learned more about the characters and explored the themes of the drama and the time period when Molière wrote the drama. The collaborative learning process seemed critical for the students’ appropriation of particular means that supported a more coherent presentation in the stage text.

On an overall plane, my analysis made visible the ways the participants moved from a position as newcomers in the drama text to a position of mastering the stage text (Lave, 1993). More specifically, the results show matching of repertoires (McCormick, 1994) across several layers of cultural

meaning in the drama text, like lexical issues, power, gender and family relations. There was a clear link between efforts to match repertoires and the participants' articulated concern for the anticipated viewers' understanding. Such matching was achieved through social interaction over time and with a range of interwoven semiotic resources interplaying. For example, matching could be initiated by a student indicating something in the scripted lines as incomprehensible. Another student could respond by saying 'like this' and demonstrate a character's nonverbal expression. In rehearsals, the teacher and the students collaboratively refined this enactment. Later, working with the stage lights, the students adjusted the color to even better depict their understanding. Modifying the colors, they also explored new meaning potentials in subtle changes in the mix of colors from a cold to warmer glow. Thus, the results illustrate how the duality of giving shape to a particular understanding and, in parallel, producing new understanding, took place in this empirical case (Selander, 2009).

Regarding the shaping of audio-spatial properties of the stage text the findings show that qualitative changes of text understanding took place. For example, development of text understanding was made visible in improvisations without talk, as when all the students simultaneously walked as a specific character and could experience each other's embodied interpretations. This kind of improvisation furthered intersubjective understanding of characters' patterns of moving. The findings also show a special role assigned to props. As soon as props were made available (even as preliminary models) they were seen as physical instantiations of the drama text and were managed as tangible means for further development of text understanding. For example, using a plain cane as a horse enabled the students who played servants to fight in new ways over who is responsible for taking care of the horse. By using this stage object as an incarnation of an item mentioned in the drama text it carried a new semiotic load which supported the students' development of the servants' social status among themselves (cf. Yandell, 2008). The particular use of a cane thus promoted a richer cultural understanding of the characters. I interpreted the participants' interplay with props in terms of reflection-in-action (Schön, 2003). Changes in posture, bodily orientation, gestures and movements played a significant role for establishing new text understanding, which illustrated that knowing was actualized through embodied action (Molander, 1996).

Finally, in terms of nonverbal and verbal negotiations to solve practical production problems the findings show that teachers and students engaged

collaboratively (cf. Törnquist, 2006). The participants employed several semiotic resources besides talk, including tone of voice, gaze and gestures, and also resources like music, costume and set design in the negotiations. Knowing emerged through students' and teachers' collaborative exploration of meaning potentials (Sawyer, 2015; Saar, 2005). Moreover, I observed short, recurrent, student-initiated role-plays which were intertwined with teacher-led activities. Analytically, such role-plays served as spaces for in-role metacommunication about the enactment of scenes and the staging process more generally. This special kind of role-play, which I labeled 'jester-examples', provided an opportunity to explore a form of mediation As-if before trying it 'for real' in the rehearsal of scripted lines. Thus, the appropriation of mediational means for the stage text seemed to continue from the formal situation of teacher-led rehearsal to informal student metacommunication in-role and then fed back into the formal situation (cf. Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2012). Such metacommunication in-role with its special potentials for learning about the drama characters lay the groundwork for furthering particular aspects of it and deepening the analysis in Studies 2–3.

### 5.3 Summary of Study 2

Göthberg, M., Björck, C., & Mäkitalo, Å. (2018). From drama text to stage text: Transitions of text understanding in a student theatre production. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 25(3), 247–262.

In the second study, we took the investigation of how the participants in the theatre production developed text understanding a step further by conducting a fine-grained analysis of the interactional work involved in coordinating understandings. We viewed text understanding as a situated practice, in which the participants conducted a series of transitions by which they eventually transformed drama text into stage text. In a more general sense, the production was understood as the participants' moving from the given circumstances in the drama text (Stanislavski, 2017) via artistic shaping of drama characters in rehearsals (Vygotsky, 1999) through to the stage text (Heed, 2002).

Vygotsky's scholarly interest in the theatre is well known (Grainger Clemson, 2015; Mok, 2017). Vygotsky (1971; 1999) theorized the emotional experiences of a theatre audience and the actor's emotional work, suggesting the emotional expressions the actors project onstage are highly regulated and oriented toward culturally recognizable forms, relying on a set of shared cultural experiences between actors and audience. Recent drama research has drawn on

his legacy by investigating how the actors' special imaginary relation in-role with the environment provides potentials for learning in educational settings (Clarà, 2016a; Edmiston, 2015; Davis, 2015a; Hallgren, 2018). We regarded the coordination of text understanding as a learning process where learning was conceptualized as an emergent property of the activity; a process where *action possibilities expand* (Säljö, 2014, 2017).

Since previous studies indicated a need for further research into the detailed manners of interaction in- and out-of-role in theatre/drama (Davis, 2015a; Hallgren, 2018; Sawyer, 2015) to reveal “patterns of learning” (Franks, 2014, p. 196), our aim was to gain knowledge of how transitions of text understanding took place in the learning context of a student theatre production where the centrality of text was significant. We attended to this aim by studying the use of mediational means in rehearsal interaction.

In pursuing this aim, we employed *sociocultural and dialogical approaches* to meaning making, creativity and learning (Linell, 1998, 2017; Säljö, 2014, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978, 1999, 2004). In a sociocultural tradition, the nature of the educative processes involves individuals' appropriation of cultural and social interactional means. Such appropriation would then, in this case, be related to the particular kind of emotion regulation that, according to Vygotsky (1971, 1999), takes place in the artistic shaping toward cultural forms of emotional expression. By living through emotional struggle in specially created dramatic situations, the participants may reach a wider cultural understanding of the issues at stake, which can be interpreted in terms of the concept of *perezhivanie* (roughly: lived experience) (Davis, 2015a; Hallgren, 2018).<sup>28</sup> *Perezhivanie* is commonly seen to encompass not just the experience of a social situation, but also the process of working through the experience, overcoming the struggle involved, integrating the experience related to previous *perezhivanya*,<sup>29</sup> changing in some way, and reaching a new stage in the personality (Blunden, 2016; Clarà, 2016b). Whereas *perezhivanie* is mainly associated with living through drama in life (Clarà, 2016b; Mok, 2017), we were interested in the special form of *perezhivanie* referred to as living through drama in drama (i.e., in an imaginary space) or *fantasy-based experiencing-as-struggle* (Clarà, 2016a). By conceptualizing *perezhivanie* this way and by using it for interpretative

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<sup>28</sup> On the translation of *perezhivanie*, see, for example, Blunden (2016), Clarà (2016a) and Mok (2017).

<sup>29</sup> *Perezhivanya* is the plural.

purposes, we intended to contribute to knowledge of how participants can develop text understanding by living through experiences as fictional characters.

In line with the dialogical approach, establishing joint understanding of a situation is always dynamic and can be seen as a collaborative project underway (Linell, 1998, 2017). We analyzed the participants' communication in- and out-of-role as *communicative projects* that moved the activity forward (Linell, 1998, 2017).

Informed by this theoretical framework, the aim of Study 2 was pursued by asking the following questions:

- How are transitions of text understanding mediated in- and out-of-role?
- How do these transitions relate to the transformation of drama text into stage text?

Building on Study 1, the jester-examples triggered us to learn more about the participants' way of communicating in such plays within the play. Strikingly many of these role-plays appeared crucial for the development of the presentation of characters in the current and subsequent rehearsals. We selected ten video-recorded jester-examples for further analyses. To render salient the emergent nature of the transformation of text understanding, we focused on transitions related to one particular drama character in three examples.

The results show that transitions of text understanding came about in tangible ways through mediational means such as holding hands, imitating voice, noticing postures, exploring manners, articulating interpretations, providing rationales for characters' actions and by doing things with things.

Moreover, our findings show that the transitions were accomplished collaboratively. For example, in the analysis of how the participants pursued a scene about family relations, we show how non-coordinated text understanding through a process of emotional struggle was resolved collaboratively and the participants established ensemble text understanding. The transition evolved through intertwined communicative projects, where the students – in parallel to teacher instruction – initiated and enacted role-plays linked to the current scene. These side projects (i.e., jester-examples) provided the spaces necessary for appropriation of cultural and social interactional means that the students later re-used in rehearsal of scripted dialogue and in the stage text. We interpreted a student's lived experience of emotional struggle in-role and how it was resolved in terms of the special kind of *perezhivanie* that Clarà (2016a) referred to as *fantasy-based experiencing-as-struggle*. The student moved to a

new stage of text understanding that included a wider cultural understanding of family relations. We understood this process as expanded action possibilities for the individual and for the ensemble to shape the scene.

We concluded that interaction in-role, where students live through experiences, provides educational potential in the field of text understanding. Another conclusion is that the participants in this kind of activity put considerable collective effort into making joint text understanding more explicit. A third conclusion is that expanded action possibilities can be understood in terms of *perezhivanie* as fantasy-based experiencing-as-struggle. This said, the nature of the intertwined layers of communication and ambiguities as regards action in- or out-of-role enticed the first author to address such issues in Study 3.

## 5.4 Summary of Study 3

Göthberg, M. (in press). Cultivation of a deceiver – the emergence of a stage character in a student theatre production. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*.

In the third study, I continued the investigation of how the participants developed text understanding in a new way. Based on previous research (Bergman Blix, 2010; Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015a; Franks, 2014) and Studies 1–2 regarding ambiguities of action in- and out-of-role, I was interested in deepening insights into shifts between action in- and out-of-role in rehearsals. Another analytical interest was how students' use of cultural resources might realize meaning potentials regarding a specific character born in a drama text several centuries ago. I assumed that by focusing the fine-grained communicative work of the participants' character work the investigation could contribute to knowledge about such issues. Thereby, we would understand more of collaborative learning in theatre/drama (cf. Franks, 2014; Sawyer, 2015).

Previous research on the cultivation of stage characters illuminated affect, embodiment and the multimodality of theatre performance (e.g., Davis, 2014; Franks, 2014). The actor's emotional work and the relation between the actor and the character were often addressed (Bergman Blix, 2010; Hetzler, 2012; Vygotsky, 1999). The concept of double agency seemed central to understanding the cultivation process (Bergman Blix, 2010). Double agency encompasses the capacity of inhabiting an imaginary space and the 'real world' simultaneously and is associated with particular potentials for meaning making

and regulating appearance (Bergman Blix, 2010; Boal, 1995; Edmiston, 2015; Ferholt, 2015; Fleer 2017; Hallgren, 2018; Schechner, 1985). In the field of drama education, the literature often illustrated how participants collaboratively draw on available cultural resources, for example, contemporary media, in the cultivation of characters (Franks 2014; Davis, 2015b), which attunes to Vygotsky's (1999) view of stage acting.

Scrutinizing the detailed manners of students' interaction, I drew on sociocultural and dialogical approaches to meaning making, creativity and learning (Linell, 1998; Säljö, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978, 1999, 2004). Studies of moment-by-moment social interaction have shown that interactants' contributions, while interdependent, still do not build on each other in straightforward and predictable ways (Linell, 1998). Since such interdependence may surface in tangible forms in theatre improvisations (Duranti & Black, 2011; Sawyer, 2003, 2015) I analyzed situations where the element of improvisation seemed productive in the cultivation process. I employed Goffman's frame theory (1981, 1986) to explore the participants' sensemaking of what was going on in social encounters in theatre activities. The concept of framing concerns how participants establish a mutual activity that is perceived as a certain type of social situation. Such framings shift during any social encounters as prosody, posture, gesture and so on are taken as shifts in stance toward the topic at hand. Continuous re-framing is accordingly a property of social interaction (Goffman, 1981, 1986; Goodwin, 2007; Linell, 1998). When it comes to the enactment of re-framing a social situation

[a] *shift in footing* implies a change in the alignments we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance. A change in footing is another way to talk about a change in our frame for events. (Goffman, 1981, p. 128, my italics)

Goffman located shifts in footing mainly in speakers' utterances while Goodwin (2007) also highlighted other interactional achievements that generate shifts in footing. For example, listeners may modify their embodied displays of alignment to the speaker's unfolding utterances; thus, the speaker and listener(s) can shift footing collaboratively. Worth noting is that bodyliness may contribute to, or even constitute, framing. Resonating with Goodwin (2007) and Franks (2014), Buchbinder (2008, p. 154) asserted that participants "negotiate shifts in frame not only with linguistic markers, but also through embodied action."

Heathcote (1991) views action in-role as a ‘drama framework’. Within such a framework a certain role distance provides the participant-in-role with safe spaces in which they experience less accountability for their actions and greater freedom to explore new meaning potentials and understandings of issues at stake. The framing of taking on a (drama) role can be viewed as laminated (Linell & Persson Thunquist, 2003; Heathcote, 1991; Rönn, 2009). As in any social situation, a speaker draws on someone else’s words in the role of *animator*, or “the sounding box in use,” more than the role of *author* of what is said (Goffman, 1981, p. 144). Furthermore, Goffman’s notion of a *figure* refers to someone “who belongs to the world spoken about” (p. 147) (i.e., not the world where the communication takes place). Accordingly, the pronoun *I* may represent a figure more than the speaker who utters “I”, which is why multiple worlds can appear simultaneously. The point here is that their embedded actions constitute a laminated structure of talk- and action-in-interaction (Goodwin, 2013)

Informed by this theoretical framework, my aim was to provide further insight into patterns of creative and collaborative learning in cultivating a particular (i.e. culturally recognizable) character in a drama-text-based student theatre production. This aim was pursued by asking in what ways interactional work develop meaning potentials for the character through

- the use of cultural resources and
- the framing of activities.

Based on the unit of analysis – improvised talk- and action-in-interaction – I viewed videoclips that corresponded with ‘deceiver-issues’, searching for strips of interaction where transformation of text understanding came to the fore. I chose situations in which improvisational elements and frequent shifts in footing seemed to play a significant role for the cultivation work. Ten examples were roughly transcribed and preliminarily analyzed. The selection of situations for deeper analysis and for writing up an article, was conducted to demonstrate how a specific character in a particular scene of the drama was cultivated in two different activity types. The main activity in the first situation was a shop talk about characters, partly in-role. The other situation took place a week later and encompassed the students and the teacher/director rehearsing scripted dialogue of the scene that was discussed in the first situation.

The analysis of the first situation shows that the students explored the meaning potentials in the deceiver Mascarille, and the deceived characters

around him, by depicting him as a fashion-blogger in a lengthy shop-talk improvisation. The deceiver was in charge and gradually the participation framework (Goffman, 1981; 1986; Goodwin, 2007) expanded as the remaining students were enrolled in the improvisation as if they were other Molièorean characters operating in the blogosphere. The other characters were portrayed as naive blog-followers. Thus, a number of characters from the 17<sup>th</sup> century were demonstrated as if they were characters recognizable from the students' contemporary media culture. Such findings show the participants' bridging issues from Molière's time to contemporary cultural resources as crucial for how meaning potentials of the characters evolved.

The findings also illustrated multi-layered interaction. For example, the students mixed street lingo and drama-text wording in informal situations. They used a tone of voice as a cliché of contemporary media figures while gestures and bodily orientation more reminded of the Molièorean characters they enacted in rehearsals. Moreover, the students whose characters were depicted as blog-followers followed tongue-tied a smart, improvised and frisky speech by the witty one in charge of unfolding action. In other words, the students also incarnated characters' manners through their interactional patterns as students (not as drama characters).

I concluded that laminated interaction, including interactive footing (Goodwin, 2007) and animation of culturally recognizable figures (Goffman, 1981) contributed to collaborative realization of meaning potentials in somewhat hybrid forms regarding several characters. The participants displayed considerable competence in maneuvering the quick, frequent, and on occasion ambiguous shifts in footing. They managed the extraordinary complexity of framing in knowledgeable ways. Main activities and sub-activities blended, in- and out-of-role blended into hybrid forms, description and demonstration blended, and the Molièorean drama text blended with contemporary culture, which the analytical tools made possible to see, along with the particular ways in which it was done. In the light of hybridity illustrated in the article, a contribution to knowledge was that the oftentimes assumed clear-cut distinction between in-role and out-of-role (regarding drama-roles) may appear more intertwined than clear. Furthermore, the intriguing lamination of roles and resources highlighted in Study 3 seemed productive with respect to the goals of the activity as well as seeming meaningful with respect to the students. I suggested that the expanding social interaction can be seen as

productive for the situated collaborative learning of the character of the character.



## 6. Discussion and implications

As the title of the present dissertation indicates, I have investigated interacting actors' coordination of text understanding in a student theatre production. The overarching aim has been to explore how text understanding evolved as the participants in the studied theatre production transformed drama text into stage text. This aim has been pursued by asking the following overarching research question: How did the student actors and the teacher/director coordinate text understanding during the preparations for the upcoming performances of Molière's *The Affected Ladies*, and by what interactional and cultural means did they pursue their objective?

In this chapter, I address the general research question by presenting six claims based on findings in the empirical studies. Thereafter, I approach the general aim of the thesis by discussing how we can understand the claims taken together. Thereupon, I reflect on potential educational implications in relation to this dissertation. Finally, I put forward a few suggestions for further research.

This undertaking of research into the creative and collaborative work achieved in and through theatre education has been realized against a background of heated debates on two issues. First, the role of arts education in the neoliberal educational landscape of the Western world favoring measurable effects of education on the level of individuals. The dominant educational discourse is reluctant regarding inclusion of expansive learning and artistic practices in school (Bornemark, 2018; Ewing, 2015; Sawyer, 2015). For example, in Sweden, in the summer of 2018, a majority in the parliament voted against a reinstatement of compulsory arts education in upper secondary school from where it was removed in 2011 (Riksdagen, 2018). Within overly structured education with little room for the kind of explorative learning that theatre education may offer the role of student agency is at stake (cf. Williams et al., 2018). Second, quite extensive efforts, financially, educationally and otherwise, have been assigned to projects that supposedly encourage young peoples' desire to read, and are designed to promote democracy, academic achievement and personal growth (SOU 2012:10).

## 6.1 Dynamic text understanding *astir*

The first claim concerns the dynamic nature of the situated text understanding. Although the theatre production was highly dependent on a particular drama text, what was ‘given’ in the ‘given circumstances’ of the drama text was often negotiated and re-negotiated from the students’ first encounter with the drama text through to the performances (i.e., during two semesters). Gradually and collaboratively, through considerable collective effort, the participants explored and established joint text understandings that included interpretations of the drama text and how to enact scenes. Specifically, I have addressed relationships between short-term transitions of text understanding and the long-term transformation of drama text into stage text.

Aggregating my line of reasoning, I want to introduce a metaphor hinted at in Study 1 (pp. 191–192). It is a metaphor for the participants’ development of text understanding that highlights its dynamic and laminated features. In Figure 2, a meaning-making space ‘in-between’ is illustrated in which the situated text understanding was – metaphorically speaking – *astir*.<sup>30</sup> The focus of Figure 2 is precisely the space ‘in-between’ in which the participants, by interactional and cultural means, coordinated their text understanding in ways that developed meaning potentials for the incarnation of characters leading to the goal of the activity: the staging of a drama. The arrangement in Figure 2 with left-hand and right-hand columns displays a range of concepts, notions and terms that the reader has met throughout this thesis. In other words, the figure is a new form of representation of previously addressed processes of coordinating text understanding.

I am aware that the concepts, notions and terms refer to different entities of meaning, social practices, premises, circumstances and phenomena involved in coordination of text understanding, and that they may overlap. It may seem a bit precarious to include them in the same figure. However, the heterogeneity lends itself to illustrating the laminated complexity of the activity under study. It sheds light on the multiplicity of layers in talk- and action-in-interaction that were involved in, for example, forms of coordinating transitions of text understanding (Study 2) and framing of action in hybrid forms of role-taking (Study 3).

For instance, the space ‘in-between’ the terms *out-of-role* (to the left) and *in-role* (to the right) illustrates at least two issues. First, the actors’ mobility

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<sup>30</sup> The term *astir* suggests vivid, often playful qualities of text understanding underway.

between being holistically involved in an imaginary relationship with the environment and distancing from it. Second, the suggested alternative view to discrete positions on the issue of role-taking, as in the binary distinction of in-role *or* out-of-role (expanded on below in a section on ambiguous framing). Likewise, the space between the terms formal (to the left) and informal (to the right) indicates a space for appropriation of relevant skills and practices *across* contexts, for example, situations of formal teacher-led rehearsal and informal playful student improvisations.

The particular dynamics of text understanding *astir* in this research project generated new meaning potentials for the staging. Gradually realizing the meaning potentials in the cultivation of characters, over months of rehearsals, the participants shaped text understanding sufficiently coordinated for stage text presentation. At times, the movement ‘in-between’ was achieved through the transgression of the norms of a teacher-led rehearsal, as noted in the analysis of jester-examples (Studies 1–3). It was also achieved through hybrid communicative projects, in which new local discourse was established (Studies 2–3).

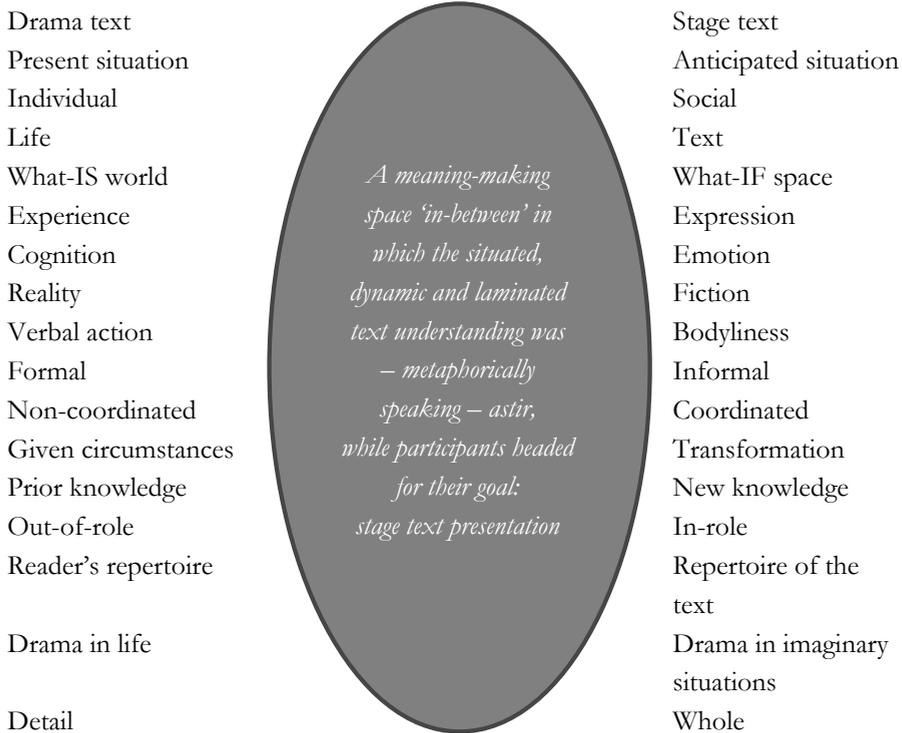


Figure 2. Illustrating dynamic text understanding *astir*.

Finally, it can be noted that the claim that text understanding was at its best in a theatre context resonates with Vygotskian wording on the mobility of literary formulations and emotional expressions in a theatre context:

The actor creates on the stage infinite sensations, feelings, or emotions that become the emotions of the whole theatrical audience. Before they became the subject of the actor's embodiment, they were given a literary formulation, they were borne in the air, in social consciousness. (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 241)

The significance of the present study is that it contributes to knowledge in terms of the particular ways a similar dynamicity was shaped by the interacting actors. Another contribution concerns expansive learning which was linked to the dynamics of text understanding by its material and sensory anchoring.

## 6.2 Material and sensory anchoring

The second claim concerns one of the "blind spots" in the field of literature education (Persson, 2015, p. 33, my translation), namely the sensory and material aspects of engaging with literature in school. Out of many examples in the material, the situation with the golden canes can be recounted since it captures learning potentials of anchoring text understanding in the physical world (Study 1, p. 154). The students playing the aristocrats in the production had integrated golden canes (which they had crafted and painted themselves) in their onstage movements in-role during a number of rehearsals. Some weeks ahead of the première, the golden canes were suddenly missing and substitutes had to be used. After the rehearsal, one of the students claimed that without the "real" canes they lost the "power-feeling" of aristocrats that they usually experienced (Study 1, p. 154). The substitute of floorball sticks did not make up for the loss. The students could not mediate the embodied kind of text understanding that they had appropriated the skills for, namely, a particular practice of depicting the aristocrats. For example, the culturally recognizable aristocratic manners of strolling, emphasizing certain phrases, and spanking servants with a golden cane were no longer possible to enact. The analysis of loss of a particular tool indicates that appropriating the skill of handling the tool in relevant (i.e., more aristocratic) ways had taken place and that a physical

object had been crucial in the appropriation process (Goodwin, 2018; Säljö, 2017).

Another example of the role of the students' embodied relationship with stage objects included a big plant, symbolizing the drama-father's garden. This example was addressed in Study 1 with further analysis in Study 2 (pp. 251–254). In different ways, the peers of the student named Erik reminded him of the given circumstances of the drama text while furnishing the stage before a rehearsal. They explicitly noted the physical circumstances, they demonstrated posture and they actualized previously shared knowledge with regard to the particular plant care that Erik's character was supposed to conduct. Before the rehearsal even started, these initiatives triggered Erik to use the voice of the character in talking with his peers. He then continued on his own to act *as* the character in fictitious treatment of the plant, without interruption for a relatively long period of time. No one else in the room acted in-role concurrently. Hence, first through collaborative learning and then on his own, Erik refined and regulated the character's appearance. In other words, the social was incorporated with the individual (Vygotsky, 1998).

Student agency can also be highlighted in these examples. Students were clearly involved in the formation of the learning processes by the material anchoring of the drama text. Thus, the significance of material anchoring concerns not only text understanding but also student agency.

In Study 2, by studying talk- and action-in-interaction (Goodwin, 2007), we were able to illustrate how transitions came about through holding hands, imitating voice, noticing postures, exploring manners, articulating interpretations, and doing things with things. Several transitions similar to the plant-example showed the micro-genesis of specific text understanding. Taken together, such transitions eventually transformed the drama text into stage text. Stretched-out over two semesters, such micro transitions form salient examples of emergent learning (cf. Säljö, 2017). Following this line of reasoning, it can be claimed that anchoring learning in experiences in the material world expanded the actors' action possibilities and added new perspectives to their text understandings (cf. Edmiston, 2015; Yandell, 2008). The thesis contributes to knowledge of how working with a literary text by engaging with material objects and bodyliness, may expand students' text understanding.

### 6.3 Repertoire matching

The third claim concerns bridging the students' repertoires and the repertoires of the drama text (McCormick, 1994). The students engaged in intense interactional work of matching repertoires through for example, intertextual referencing to contemporary popular culture (e.g., social media, film and music) enacted in a range of mediational means, including theatrical artifacts. The analysis of one example was reported in Study 3, in which the students explored the meaning potentials in the character Mascarille, a deceiver, and the deceived characters around him, by depicting him as a fashion-blogger in a lengthy shop-talk improvisation without the teacher present. The deceiver was in charge and gradually the participation framework (Goffman, 1981, 1986; Goodwin, 2007) expanded as the remaining students were enrolled in the improvisation as if they were other Molièorean characters operating in the blogosphere. The other characters were portrayed as naive blog-followers. Thus, a number of characters from the 17<sup>th</sup> century were being portrayed as if they were characters recognizable from the students' contemporary media culture. An aspect of the repertoire matching was the role of bodyliness for mediating text understanding, which was illustrated in several instances of the material. For example, in Study 1 the students' plans for mediating the deceivers' success in a project of seduction was addressed. They explored different gestures and decided to use a fist bump – a semiotic resource related to their contemporary culture. They fulfilled the particular mediation in a playful way by fist-bumping in the midst of 17<sup>th</sup>-century design as regards costume, makeup, music and wigs. In this kind of bridging of cultural understanding, the participants opened new perspectives in understanding the text. They depicted culturally recognizable forms that clearly resonated with the contemporary peers in the audience – a creative act of combining the old and the contemporary in a new arrangement (Vygotsky, 1999, 2004). In other words, repertoire matching, using multiple mediational means, was productive for the appropriation of relevant skills and practices in the production context. The matching also provided yet other examples of the role of student agency in the current cultural practice. The students' own cultural and bodily life experiences constituted a significant resource in this particular learning arrangement.

These findings on repertoire matching contribute to the body of theatre/drama research on linking bodyliness to the collaborative use of cultural resources in learning processes (cf. Davis 2015a; Franks, 2014; Yandell, 2008).

As mentioned in the research review, Yandell speaks about assigning the words of an old drama text “a denser semiotic load” (p. 54) by incarnating its themes in drama. In a similar way, the results of the present thesis show shifts in the ‘semiotic load’ of the words of the old Molièorean text in terms of bodily mediational means for repertoire matching. Hence, we now know more about how embodied repertoire matching was interactionally achieved.

In addition, the particular use of McCormick’s concept of repertoire matching in this thesis contributes to methodological development, that is, I highlight the dimension of bodyliness as a vital element of how the matching was pursued. Such a methodological step expands the concept in a different way than achieved by Asplund (2010) or Ullström (2002) (see Chapter 2).

## 6.4 Playful side-projects

The fourth claim concerns playful communicative side-projects of student-initiated short role-plays, termed jester-situations. The nature of these interludes – humorous, emotionally charged and transgressive, yet contributory to the common goal – allowed a student to briefly, in the midst of unfolding scripted lines in a formal rehearsal, to add a meta-comment in-role. For example, by using the current characters’ accent and gestural manners but improvising advice to peers on how to enact a particular move or how to animate a particular line a student demonstrated new perspectives. In a sense, the fictional framing of the activity was maintained, however it was rendered ambiguous for a moment, though without causing any major obstacle for the flow of the main activity (the formal rehearsal). Such metacommunication in-role could also serve as an interpretation of the current situation related to themes in the whole drama. In Study 1, I noted jester-examples that furthered the cultivation of stage characters through bodyliness (without talk) on the outskirts of the stage floor where teacher-led activity unfolded. For example, during a particular run-through onstage, actors waiting for their entrance – off-stage, but visible – role-played in silence. Once, an aristocrat holding his horse was standing beside his servant. The aristocrat dropped his horse (a hobby horse of approximately 1m in length) to the floor. Instead of picking it up as a student, the aristocrat-actor pointed at it with a demanding facial expression directed at his servant, thus initiating a little play-within-the-play. The servant responded by bowing as would be expected of a servant, bent down, picked up the horse, handed it over to the aristocrat and then bowed in a servile manner again, before attending to

their ‘proper’ entrance in the play. Such action provided opportunities for the students to develop interpersonal relatedness with fictional characters and to further explore social relationships. In other words, the in-role cultivation of characters took place across formal and informal situations.

In Study 2, we found the following stages to be recurrent in the establishment of text understanding. In the first two stages preliminary text understanding was suggested and jointly recognized, then jointly and temporarily achieved. In the third stage, the participants made fairly explicit interpretations of the scene or entire production and the joint understanding was maintained as an ensemble understanding. We also found that transitions of text understanding unfolded in rehearsal interaction through embedded layers of communicative projects (Linell, 1998). For example, a joyful role-play quarrel was intriguingly embedded in directorial suggestions. Improvised jester-situations and teacher-led parts interplayed in a productive way to make interpretations of central themes in the drama text fairly explicit. These communicative side-projects seemed to provide a space ‘in-between’ and of importance in the students’ learning.

Through student initiatives in the vicinity of commencing or closing class, or simply by claiming space for a communicative side-project concurrent to an ongoing teacher-led activity, such situations provided spaces ‘in-between’ to ludically try out characters’ appearances before trying them out in a more formal way in rehearsal of scripted lines.

I viewed the jester-situations as safe spaces in Heathcote’s (1991) sense (cf. Ewing, 2015; Hallgren, 2018; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002), often construed as embedded in rehearsal framing. In a sense, the jester-situations could also be seen as providing an interactional space for reflection-in-action in Schön’s terminology. They provided a possibility to back away a bit from the ongoing activity for momentary distancing. The findings in analyzing the jester-examples show that the students opened an interstice for a particular kind of swiftly inserted and purposeful meta-discussion in-role.

From an everyday perspective it would be fair to say that the students conducted some improvisations for pure entertainment, perhaps even just fooling around. From an analytical view, however, they could be seen as serving the function of depicting and making more explicit characters’ manners as well as themes in the whole drama. For example, it was difficult to see any conscious artistic shaping in an improvised fight over a book, which the students conducted in a 5-second animated scuffle in an interlude of unfolding

directorial instruction (Study 1). However, this improvisation served the function of giving birth to a particular choreography, which I was able to trace to this specific situation through analyses of the current scene in later rehearsals. The methodological approach of combining analysis of micro-genetic appropriation of skills and practices with more longitudinal ones made it possible to gain insight into such development of text understanding.

In other words, the jester-examples not only constituted productive forms of appropriating skills and practices relevant for the upcoming performances but also displayed a kind of student agency which sometimes can be seen as ‘fooling-around’, though maybe it should be regarded otherwise (cf. Williams et al., 2018). The fact that the ways in which the jester-examples were realized (including meta-communication in-role) and their contribution to the development of text understanding rarely have been addressed in research suggests that these findings contribute to knowledge in the field of arts education.

## 6.5 Ambiguous framing

The fifth claim concerns the role of expanding and laminated social interaction. The empirical studies illustrated that the students’ realization of the particular possibilities of learning associated with taking on drama roles was productive for the development of text-understanding. At the same time, it was shown that the notions of in-role and out-of-role could blur into hybrid forms. The students’ framing of some of the social situations proved extraordinarily complex related to intriguingly multi-layered interaction (cf. Goodwin, 2013; Linell, 2011; Linell & Thunquist, 2003; Rönn, 2009). Frequent shifts in footing (Goffman, 1981) and even shifts between a multitude of roles enacted by the same student contributed to the complexity. The complexity featured the blending of main activities and sub-activities, of in- and out-of-role, of description and demonstration, and of the Molièorean script and contemporary culture, as shown in Study 3 (foremost). An example would be the multi-layered interaction in which one layer was description with the speaker as author (Goffman, 1981), where street lingo was intertwined with animation of script wording. Another layer was demonstration, or quotation (Clark & Gerrig, 1990), with the same speaker as animator of contemporary fictitious social media figures (Goffman, 1981). A third layer housed the cultivation of characters in a different sense. In subtle forms, the interactants incarnated

particular characters' manners in their own interactional patterns. For instance, speechless 'followers' followed a witty improvisation by the witty one who was in charge. In the third layer, the complementarity of the 'how' and 'what' of text understanding blended as the students 'became' what they were learning (i.e., enacted drama roles in unexpected framings). Worth noting is that this took place in an informal social situation of a laid-back shop-talk quite far from the framing of presenting scripted lines onstage.

Similar informal instantiations of the manners of drama characters were shown in all three studies, with students frequently shifting footing by taking on different roles and, on occasion, doing so in ambiguous ways. The laminated interaction (Goodwin, 2013) in these situations appeared as relevant to the students. Moreover, the students seemed truly capable, in fact quite knowledgeable, in maneuvering the extraordinary complexity of framing. The hybridity in-/out-of-role supported collaborative realizations of meaning potentials in a habituation process of characters' manners. Suggestions on the staging that surfaced in such hybridity were frequently adopted (and further elaborated) in the continued rehearsal process and thus proved productive in the situated appropriation of relevant skills and practices. The results regarding laminated interaction and ambiguous framing contributes to knowledge about ways of learning in theatre/drama education. The concept of taking on a drama role can be understood in a more dynamic way than through binary distinctions such as playing/playing at, or in-/out-of-role.

## 6.6 Extended intersubjectivity

Finally, the sixth claim concerns the role of anticipating intersubjectivity with the future audience as a critical aspect of the learning context. At stake for the participants was the presentation of coherent performances, why they had to develop what we termed explicit ensemble text understanding (Study 2). Such explicit ensemble text understanding served a particular purpose, namely to trigger the theatrical event. The participants' anticipation of a particular quality of the upcoming event implied that they arranged the stage text in specific ways, assuming the arrangements would lead to some mutual understanding with the audience (Franks, 2014; cf. Sauter, 2008 on eventness). There were several observations which lent themselves to such a characterization.

One might say that in coordinating ensemble text understanding, the nature of intersubjectivity surfaced on two levels.<sup>31</sup> First, the communicative work of sharing understanding of the present activity sufficiently to move on. Second, an extended form of relatively explicit future orientation toward the coming audience. Such extension of the participatory framework of intersubjectivity was always underway and shared sufficiently to, step by step, artistically (re)shape scenes and eventually the entire stage text. The role of extended intersubjectivity, in my view, contributed to knowledge sharing in the coordination of text understanding and I suggest that the goal orientation of the activity supported learning.

Now that we know more about how the participants used a multitude of semiotic resources in developing text understanding (Study 1), how (micro) transitions of text understanding took place through interaction in- and out-of-role in the process of transforming drama text into stage text (Study 2), and how expanding social interaction contributed to the situated collaborative learning of the character of the character (Study 3), an interesting discussion remains: How can we understand the six claims above taken together? For example, some activities seem particularly productive in achieving coordinated text understanding and appropriating skills and practices necessary for moving from page to stage.

## 6.7 Ergo

In this final section of the thesis, I address the general aim of the thesis by discussing two ways to understand the six claims above taken together. Thereafter, I reflect on some educational implications of the findings and suggestions for further research.

### 6.7.1 Addressing the general thesis aim

Against the backdrop of previous research on learning in and through theatre/drama (see Chapter 2), the results support the view that in-role interaction provides particular features of learning. The main contribution to knowledge concerns the specific ways these features were created through social interaction *in situ*. In the empirical studies, using different analytical approaches, I have shown the relationship between such features and how the

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<sup>31</sup> Intersubjectivity is addressed in the theoretical framework; cf. Rommetveit (1974) and others.

participants developed text understanding collaboratively. At the core of my argumentation were dual affective planes serving as a key to understand the actors' meaning making in in-betweenness, where meaning potentials can be explored and realized and then, at a later stage, if judged relevant by the participants, be used, refined and demonstrated to spectators of the theatre performance. On a general level, the potentials of similar but not identical notions like double-sided subjectivity, double agency, metaxis, and what-IF spaces regarding meaning making, character work, and appropriation of relevant skills and practices are well-known (Edmiston, 2003, 2015; Heathcote, 1991; Schechner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1999, and others, see Chapters 2–3). The significance of the present investigation is the findings regarding the particular interactional dynamics that made the coordination of text understanding productive.

In discussing the current text understanding in-the-making, the notion of in-betweenness refers not only to the well-known potentials provided by taking on a drama role. I have suggested a metaphor of a meaning-making space 'in-between' in which the development of text understanding was at its. The metaphor, visually represented in Figure 2, encompasses a number of premises, circumstances and phenomena involved in the participants' coordination of text understanding. By highlighting the space 'in-between', the significance of understandings underway and artistic shaping in-the-making are made visible. The notion of 'in-between' also points to the hybrid and ambiguous forms of drama roles (still linked to the current drama text) which in this case enabled the dynamic development of text understanding. Associated with hybrid role-taking is the metacommunication in-role in which the students nuanced text understanding by creating distance to their fictional characters. Likewise, the 'in-between' space indicates appropriation of skills and practices by moving between formal and informal contexts, for example, through talk and action-in-interaction in the jester-examples. The metaphor furthermore makes it possible to highlight lamination of social situations in the theatre production since some of the layers in intriguingly laminated interaction are represented in Figure 2. Finally, moving between cultural repertoires of the drama text and of the participants (i.e., repertoire matching) can be considered a property of text understanding in-the-making. The results show that such matching helped the students to open a diversity of perspectives on the drama text and its staging.

Judged from the different levels of the analytical work in the thesis<sup>32</sup> I suggest that the particular features of learning described and analyzed in the theatre production (addressed in the metaphor above) provide a key to understand both the micro-genesis of appropriation and meaning making in the overarching transformation of drama text into stage text. Hence, the in-betweenness and text understanding *astir* can explain what I understand as productive in appropriating the skills and practices necessary for moving from page to stage.

A complementary suggestion would be – complementarity. Above I have addressed analyses of situations in which complementarity of various kinds seemed to contribute to the development of text understanding, for example, dialogical issues of making communication move on and complementarity in pushing intersubjectivity forward and in solving practical staging problems. On occasion it was as if a collective mind was operating (cf. Vossoughi, 2011), as in the animated discussion of how to swap characters' costumes onstage (Study 1) or in the *perezhivanie*-episode of the teacher's and the peers' intense support of a student in embarrassment and discomfort over the enactment of a particular scene (Study 2), or in the micro-interludes of regulating other characters' appearance while the rehearsal of scripted lines unfolded (analyzed as lamination in Study 3). Typically, the way of moving forward toward joint text understanding in these and further situations, relied on collaborative situated problem solving. According to Mahn & John-Steiner (2002) (and others, see Chapter 3), complementarity is an essential feature of a collective ZPD. Other studies have shown that in a school stage-production, in which the goal-orientation is obvious, collaborative problem solving may generate collective explorative learning and student agency (Törnquist, 2006). The present thesis confirms the view that co-creativity and shared goal-orientation contribute to building collective learning potentials.

Playfulness and unpredictability also contributed to shaping collective learning, not least shown in the jester-situations. The playfulness opened safe spaces for common appropriation of cultural tools. The playful metacommunication in-role in interludes of the regular classroom activities were able to both enhance and rely on the kind of mutual trust that promotes complementarity (cf. Ewing, 2015; Heathcote, 1991; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002). The jester-examples bore witness of mutual trust and playfulness in safe

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<sup>32</sup> With respect to an entry point of an ethnographically informed investigation encompassing a range of text understanding aspects to relatively fine-granular interaction analyses.

spaces, where the participants' contributions complemented one another in developing the stage text. The jester-examples can also be seen as promoting student agency in learning arrangements.

The relationship between play (especially children's play) and development is profoundly established within the sociocultural tradition. However, as Williams et al. (2018, p. 190) noted in an editorial account of Study 2, playfulness is also important to young adult/late adolescent students (and their experienced teachers, one might add), to push limits and gain new perspectives, further pointing out that

the significance here is the claim that such episodes can be educationally fruitful, perhaps essential. But then, surely there are wider lessons for education, where playfulness of classrooms, even in the early years, is almost everywhere in jeopardy to the imposition of formal pedagogies.

This view contrasts with the prevailing all-too structured educative processes in which the individual – in measurable form – is expected to figure out what a specific text means. In times of measurable achievements for the individual student and a supreme view of knowledge as reduceable to what is possible to describe through detailed units of knowledge objectives, there is presumably something to gain from initiating, establishing and maintaining classroom activities in which collaborative, creative and expansive learning comes to the fore. Perchance the jesters will open up the door to a different educational discourse.

Considering the results of the present dissertation and the account by Williams et al. (2018) above, it is important to discuss some educational implications and further research which is needed in educational contexts.

### **6.7.2 Educational implications**

Since the research reported in the present thesis concerns both theatre didactics and literature didactics, I address both these fields regarding educational implications. However, first I approach implications on a more general level.

In the light of this research, reducing learning arrangements to what seems efficient in order to reach measurable goals for the individual seems not simply ill-judged – it may also put student agency at risk. If education seeks to promote student agency, the arrangements in school must support collaborative, creative, explorative, and transgressive forms of learning. In my view, after living through this thesis project and based on previous research in relevant

fields, Arts education represents a way to enhance student agency. In a similar vein, if we take notice of the contribution to knowledge provided here regarding lamination and text understanding *astir*, another educational implication would be that we may better discern nuances in students' appropriation processes. We may also attend more to the role of communicative details in talk- and action-in-interaction. Likewise, the role of jester-situations and-the-like in class, in which productive forms of student agency may unfold, has been undervalued in didactical discussions and practice.

Concerning theatre didactics, one lesson to be drawn from the current research is the importance of considering and highlighting communicative and cultural layers of character work. The significance of laminated interaction and actors' use of cultural resources in artistic shaping of a stage text can be addressed when working with staging projects. For example, appropriation across formal and informal contexts can be highlighted in talks with students. As shown, metatalk about the artistic shaping is productive and I think it does not necessarily have to be in-role – but it might help. Moreover, since we now know more about the communicative work that forms productive learning processes in the goal-oriented activity of a stage production there seem to be good arguments for emphasizing productions among the practices of theatre education.

Concerning literature didactics, I want to highlight the students' coordination of joint understandings over time. Teachers of Swedish seldom spend class time on substantial re-readings of the same literary text the way it typically is done in a drama-text-based theatre production. My dissertation indicates the learning potentials of substantial re-readings, for example, in the way they surfaced in the issue of the given circumstances of a drama text. What was given had to be negotiated again and again in order to establish a sufficiently shared text understanding in terms of being able to enact it coherently. The results showed that the students' text understanding shifted continuously in the sense of revisions of interpretations and emergence of new perspectives on issues at stake in the text. Considering the current findings, it might be productive in literature education to engage students in substantial re-readings, particularly if attention is given to materially and sensorially anchored readings. There seems to be good reasons for *doing* more things with literary texts than 'just' reading them in order to explore their inherent dynamics as layers of cultural meaning. Doing so may reduce space for simple answers to intricate questions and promote views that text understanding relies on resources at

hand in situated social interaction. Furthermore, when literature reading takes an explorative route and students' own life experiences become valued resources, it can be assumed to support student agency.

### **6.7.3 Suggestions for further research**

The relationship between the deeply collective organization of learning in a theatre production and individual students' agency when appropriating cultural tools for stage-acting and developing text understanding, is an issue to be explored in further research. Associated with such a research interest would be to further investigate links between *perezhivanie* and the widening of cultural understanding and expanded action possibilities by taking on drama roles. I attune to the research voices that argue there is scope for developing the legacy of *perezhivanie* in educational contexts.

In this thesis, the learning arrangement of a clearly goal-oriented activity has been scrutinized. There was something at stake for the participants in the sense that producing convincing onstage presentation in the upcoming performances really mattered. They had a mutual task to solve; they displayed appreciation of each other's contributions; and they indicated trust in each other, underpinned, perhaps, by a notion of a collective accountability for the stage text. Yet, the goal-orientation was combined with explorative and expanding activities for learning with an unpredictable goal in terms of the form of the staging. Recurrent re-negotiations of solutions of how to understand a particular scene and how to stage it took place. It might look like a contradiction with, on the one hand, a clear goal-orientation and, on the other hand, unpredictable, explorative and collaborative learning. However, the goal-orientation and expansive learning served as twin pillars. In fact, the strong relationship between these two phenomena, expressed through the metaphor of twin pillars, helps explain their contribution in making interaction productive with respect to learning and stage performance. Further research on the 'twin-pillar issue' may shed light on whether such a relationship is related to features of theatre education, or wider; related to features of arts education, or even wider; whether the twin-pillars circumstance can contribute to productive interaction in other school subjects.

## 7. Summary in Swedish

### 7.1 Syfte och utgångspunkter

Avhandlingens övergripande syfte har varit att undersöka hur textförståelse utvecklades då studiens deltagare omvandlade dramatekst till scentext i en teaterproduktion. Jag intresserade mig för hur eleverna och lärarna på det aktuella gymnasiet under två terminer koordinerade textförståelse inom ramen för både litteratursamtal (Asplund, 2010; Tengberg, 2011) och konstnärliga arbetsmetoder (Lindstrand & Selander, 2009; Saar, 2005) med en specifik dramatekst som utgångspunkt. De konstnärliga metoderna i teaterproduktionen rörde kollektiv gestaltning av dramatexten med hjälp av mångtaliga semiotiska resurser. Deltagarna arbetade med en uppsättning av Molières *De löjliga preciöserna*. Deras projekt gick ut på att skapa teaterföreställningar för publik. Mitt projekt gick ut på att analysera kommunikation och lärande i produktionen.

Till studiens bakgrund hör den rådande neoliberal utbildningsideologins upptagenhet av att mäta individens skolprestationer kopplade till förutbestämda mål som förmodas uppnås via genomstrukturerad undervisning (Bornemark, 2018; Elam & Widhe, 2015; Ewing, 2015). Estetiska ämnen har typiskt associerats med kollaborativa, explorativa, kreativa och gränsöverskridande lärandeformer. I såväl internationellt som svenskt perspektiv har forskning visat att den neoliberal utbildningsideologin, iscensatt i såväl policy som praxis, sällan prioriterar lärande i och genom konstnärliga uttrycksformer (Bamford, 2009; Lindgren, 2013; Williams et al., 2018). Inte minst kan noteras att Sveriges Riksdag så sent som sommaren 2018 avvisade ett utredningsförslag om att återinföra estetiska kurser för alla elever på gymnasiet efter att möjligheten att delta i sådana kurser starkt begränsats i gymnasiereformen 2011 (Riksdagen, 2018). Forskare har uppmärksammat en pågående avestetisering av skolan (t.ex. Ewing, 2015; Hansson Stenhammar, 2015; Widhe, 2017b) såväl som specifika lärandepotentialer genom deltagande i konstnärlig praktik (Bamford, 2009; Lindstrand & Selander, 2009; Saar, 2005). En problematisk implikation av att reducera eller undanhålla möjligheter till lärande i och genom konstnärliga uttryck rör alla ungas rätt att delta i konstnärliga praktiker. Parallellt har också ungas läsning av litterära texter diskuterats (Carlsson & Johannisson, 2012),

bland annat i termer av estetisk läsning kontra instrumentell läsning (Tengberg, 2011; Dahlbäck, 2017). Inte minst inom litteraturdidaktisk forskning märks intresse för sinnligt och materiellt förankrade läsningar (Elam & Widhe, 2015; Fatheddine, 2018; Persson, 2015). Ungas engagemang i fiktiva världar genom litterära texter liksom de estiska ämnenas roll i skolan har diskuterats i termer av demokratiutveckling, personlig utveckling och studieprestationer (SOU 2012:10).

Mot denna samhälleliga, utbildningspolitiska och forskningsmässiga bakgrund är det angeläget att undersöka lärande i och genom konstnärliga uttryck *in situ* relaterat till läsningar av litterär text och teater. Ett antal tidigare studier har också indikerat behovet av detaljerad interaktionsanalys av sociala situationer karakteriserade av växlingar mellan agerande i- och ur-roll (Davis, 2015a; Franks, 2014; Hallgren, 2018; Sawyer, 2014, 2015).

Avhandlingsprojekt har utspelats i ett gränsland mellan skolämnenas svenska och teater. Jag undersökte lärande såväl i litteratursamtal som i gestaltningsarbetets transformation av Molièretexten till scentext genom att observera lektioner från första mötet med dramatexten till ett informellt avrundande samtal efter den sista av entimmesföreläsningarna. Data har alltså skapats i en konstnärlig kontext där explorativt, kollektivt lärande kan förväntas (Törnquist, 2006), varför analys av den situerade sociala interaktionen har stått i centrum. Således förstås koordinering av textförståelse i relation till den sociokulturella praktik där den utspelar sig, nämligen teaterproduktionen.

## 7.2 Teoretiska och metodologiska angreppssätt

Avhandlingens teoretiska ramverk har byggt på tre premisser som alla relaterar till de sociokulturella och dialogiska traditionerna. För det första, den överordnade premissen om lärande som en följd av och inbäddat i meningskapande i kommunikation inom kulturella praktiker (Linell, 1998; Rommetveit, 1974; Säljö, 2014, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). En grundläggande princip i Vygotskijs arbeten är att kunnande primärt uppstår och synliggörs i mellanmänsklig kommunikation vilket innebär att vi i social interaktion kan ta del av andras erfarenheter som i nästa steg kan approprieras och blir del av vår egen agens i sociala praktiker (Wertsch, 1998). För det andra, premissen om specifika lärandepotentialer genom skådespelarens (drama)rolltagande. Teater/drama-aktiviteter i-roll skapar en speciell imaginär relation till scenens sociala situation (Davis, 2015a; Schechner, 1985; Vygotsky, 1971, 1999).

Därigenom kan deltagarna utveckla meningspotentialer av skilda slag inom en trygg zon med begränsad möjlighet att ställas till svars för rollens handlingar i den upprättade imaginära situationen (Heathcote, 1991). För det tredje, premissen om läsning och textförståelse som interaktion mellan läsare och text där texten ses erbjuda en struktur av meningspotentialer som läsaren realiserar på olika sätt (Iser, 1978). Läsaren skapar mening exempelvis genom att fylla ut textens luckor, vilket är av specifikt intresse i fråga om dramatext (McCormick, 1994; Sörlin, 2008). Vanligen är dramatexten nämligen skriven i syfte att gestaltas sceniskt och präglas av tomrum utöver sina repliker – ”en text full av hål”, menar Heed (2002, s. 29). I Vygotskijs terminologi innebär den kollektiva och kreativa process där dramatext omformas till scentext att deltagarna ”måste utveckla en ny litterär text” (1995, s. 83). Skolans läspraktik kring dramatexter aktualiserar möten mellan texten och elevernas erfarenhetsvärld vari begreppet repertoarmatchning är av intresse (McCormick, 1994). I läsakten anses ett matchningsarbete mellan textens respektive läsarens repertoarer i form av föreställningar och attityder inom områden som sociala praktiker, litterära konventioner och politik förklara ett pågående meningsskapande. Utifrån detta teoretiska ramverk har jag använt specifika analytiska verktyg<sup>33</sup> i de empiriska studierna.

Datamaterialet genererades under etnografiskt inriktad observation i form av videoinspelningar (49h), ljudinspelningar (18h) och skriftliga dokument, bland annat den bearbetade dramatexten. Därmed kom datamaterialet att innehålla gemensam högläsning av dramatexten, litteratursamtal, hela iscensättningsarbetet och föreställningar.

Metodologiskt sett följer av studiens syfte, teoretiska ingångar och empiriska förhållanden att avhandlingens analysenhet omfattar den sociala interaktionens bruk av tillgängliga semiotiska- och kulturella resurser. Därför utgjorde redskapsmedierad aktivitet (Säljö, 2009) analysenhet på ett övergripande plan, och delstudiernas specifika analysenheter rymdes inom denna. På så sätt kunde det situerade bruket av för teaterns centrala resurser som tal, röstkvalitet, mimik, gestik, kroppsorientering, rörelse i rummet samt teaterartefakter (t.ex. rekvisita, kostym och scenljus) inrymmas i analysen av deltagarnas koordinering av textförståelse. Eftersom det i viss mening multimodalt inriktade forskningsintresset omfattade ett brett spektrum av semiotiska resurser kom videoinspelningarna att dominera analysarbetet. Att använda videodata är väl

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<sup>33</sup> De analytiska verktygen tas upp i anslutning till respektives studie nedan.

etablerat inom utbildningsvetenskaplig forskning (Derry et al., 2010; Heath et al., 2010) och medför en rad fördelar. Inte minst viktigt i detta fall var att det går i linje med sociokulturella och dialogiska traditioners syn på meningsskapande då video möjliggör analys av sådana “fine details of conduct, both talk and bodily comportment” (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002, p. 8) som bidrar till förståelsen av den situerade sociokulturella praktiken som studeras.

När det gäller studiens institutionella och materiella inramning kan noteras att teaterproduktionen ägde rum inom estetiska programmet åk 3. Inom både svenskämnet och teaterämnet utgör arbete med dramatekst viktiga inslag (Skolverket, 2011a–d; Skolverket, n.d. a–c). Huvudsakligen arbetade deltagarna i en teatersal som med sin helsvarta interiör, gradängar, fondkuliss och ljusanläggning signalerade de socio-materiella förutsättningarna för verksamheten. Eleverna utgjorde ensemblens aktörer. Under förberedelserna hade de även rollen som åskådare i scener de inte medverkade i. Teaterläraren, tillika regissören, placerade sig ofta bland åskådarna under repetitionerna tillsammans med en praktikant, observatören och tillfälliga gäster. Det fanns således alltid en konkret publik på plats. Samtidig fanns föreställningspubliken påtagligt närvarande – i anteciperad status.

## 7.3 Tre empiriska studier

De empiriska studier som summeras i detta avsnitt kompletterar varandra genom att samma datamaterial har analyserats med start i en etnografisk ansats och sedan har analysen rört sig vidare mot alltmer detaljerad granskning av tal och annat agerande. På ett övergripande plan kan sägas att analysen av observationerna därmed kunde illustrera en approprieringsprocess där eleverna förflyttade sig från positionen som nykomlingar i dramatexten till positionen som mästare i scentexten (Lave, 1993). Den första studien rapporterades i min licentiatuppsats. De följande studierna, varav en samförfattad med handledare, rapporterades genom artiklar i två olika tidskrifter.

### 7.3.1 Studie 1

Göthberg, M. (2015). *Pimpa Texten: En etnografisk studie av gymnasieelevers meningsskapande i dramatekst*.

Den första studien positionerades inom ett litteraturdidaktiskt gränsland mellan svenskämnet och teaterämnet. I linje med ett växande intresse för litteraturläsningens sinnliga och materiella dimensioner (t.ex. Elam & Widhe,

2015; Fatheddine, 2018; Persson, 2015; Tengberg, 2015; Widhe, 2017a) och medskapande i fiktiva världar där läsaren uppträder som prosument (Lundström & Olin-Scheller, 2014) såg jag deltagarnas aktiviteter bland annat som exempel på kroppsliga läsningar.

Studiens syfte var att förstå meningskapande då gymnasielever arbetade med dramatext, närmare bestämt mening som skapades genom utveckling av textförståelse i en kontext där litteratursamtal och konstnärliga arbetsmetoder användes.

En konceptuell förståelse av textförståelse i det aktuella sammanhanget var att deltagarna behövde etablera intersubjektiv förståelse av dramats karaktärer och den fiktiva fysiska plats där de vistas för att nå det gemensamma målet att spela föreställningar för publik. Därför riktades det analytiska intresset mot hur sådan intersubjektivitet förhandlades och analysenheten utgjordes av hela teaterproduktionen.

McCormicks (1994) begrepp repertoarmatchning utgjorde en av de teoretiska utgångspunkterna för analys av observationerna. Jag fokuserade på deltagarnas bruk av flera semiotiska resurser i matchningen, såsom tal, dans, gestik och scenljus. Därvid vägledades jag av synen att vi aktualiserar kunskande och reflekterar i praktisk handling genom reflektion-i-handling (Schön, 2003) och kunskap-i-handling (Molander, 1996). Således närmade jag mig textförståelse i termer av social interaktion där förhandlingar och lärande utvecklas genom ett görande med texten.

Lärande sågs som gradvisa förändringar av deltagarnas sätt att delta i de specifika teateraktiviteterna i termer av appropriering av kulturella redskap (Ewing, 2015; Säljö, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky & Bruner, 2004). Jag fokuserade på förändring av sätt att lösa situerade gestaltningsfrågor. Denna sociokulturella syn på lärande hjälpte mig att rikta analysen mot kollaborativa aktiviteter i iscensättningen, exempelvis hur två karaktärer skulle gestalta sitt kompanjonskap genom synkroniserad gestik. Det kunde antas att i den målorienterade scenproduktionen skulle den anteciperade publiken spela en betydelsefull roll i läroprocessen (Bruner, 1996; Lagercrantz, 1995; Törnquist 2006).

Den ovan skissade teoretiska förståelsen av verksamheten och studiens syfte mynnade ut i följande forskningsfrågor:

Hur konstruerar deltagarna textförståelse genom användning av semiotiska resurser

- med fokus på repertoarmatchning?

- med fokus på gestaltungsarbete?
- med fokus på förhandlingar?

Med avsikt att möjliggöra en etnografisk redogörelse för deltagarnas vardagliga verksamhet inom teaterproduktionen valde jag att analysera situationer typiska för textförståelseutvecklingen. Scentext kan ses som en polyfon väv av uttryck (Heed, 2002) och studien analyserade elevernas gestaltning av enskilda trådar innan de vävdes samman.

Resultateten visar på ett övergripande plan att fler och fler semiotiska resurser erbjöds eleverna längs vägen (t.ex. teaterkostym och scenljus). I takt med att fler resurser sattes i spel ändrades arten av textförståelseutveckling. Gradvis ersattes icke-koordinerad och motsägelsefull textförståelse med mer artikulerat samlad förståelse. Rörelsen kan beskrivas från hur 'jag' förstår texten via hur 'vi' förstår till hur 'de' (d.v.s. publiken) kommer att förstå det vi presenterar (Franks, 2014). Lärandearrangemanget erbjöd sensorisk erfarenhet av hur delen samspelar med helheten i konstnärlig praktik (Saar, 2005; Selander, 2009). Jag tolkade den sociala interaktionen som en kollektiv ZPD (Ewing, 2015) där eleverna lärde sig mer om karaktärerna och teman i dramat och om kulturen den tid då Molière skrev det. Den kollaborativa i lärprocessen verkade avgörande för möjligheten att appropriera sådana medierande verktyg som banade väg till produktmålet.

Repertoarmatchning illustrerades inom och flera skikt av kulturell mening, som lexikala betydelser, maktförhållanden, genus och familjerelationer. Matchningen skapades över tid med mångtaliga semiotiska resurser i samspel. Ett exempel: En elev sa att en replik i dramatexten var obegriplig. En annan elev svarade "så här" och visade karaktären icke-verbalt. I repetitioner hjälptes sedan regissör och andra elever åt att utveckla och finputsa den ickeverbala gestaltningen. Under ljussättningen justerades färger i syfte att än bättre illustrera den textförståelse som successivt arbetats fram av repliken som från början tedde sig obegriplig. Genom subtila förändringar av ljusets styrka och färger utvecklade eleverna samtidigt nya meningspotentialer. På så sätt visar resultaten en konkretisering av den teoretiska förståelsen av lärande genom konstnärliga uttrycksformer, nämligen att i görandet kommer man till insikt (Selander, 2009).

När det gäller gestaltungspektivet visar resultaten exempelvis hur textförståelse utvecklades under improvisationer utan tal, som när alla eleverna ombads att samtidigt gå som en av karaktärerna. Då kunde alla ta del av

varandras kroppsliga tolkningar av karaktären och det blev tydligt hur detaljer i rörelsemönstret koordinerades mellan eleverna. Det kan ses som att intersubjektiv förståelse av karaktären utvecklades i tystnad och rörelse.

Bland teaterartefakterna framstod rekvisita som särskilt betydelsefull för textförståelsen. Så snart rekvisita fanns tillgänglig (även som övningsobjekt) användes den som om den vore ett objekt inkarnerat ur dramatexten. En enkel käpp fungerade exempelvis som en häst vars skötsel två betjänter grälade om. Käppen utgjorde en ny resurs för elevernas utveckling av statusrelationen mellan betjänterna. Den specifika användningen av objektet bidrog till utveckling kulturell förståelse av karaktärerna genom ny semiotisk laddning i karaktärernas interaktion (Yandell, 2009) och kan ses som ett exempel på reflektion-i-handling (Schön, 2003). Ändringar i kroppsorientering och rörelser hade stor betydelse för hur textförståelse utvecklades och etablerades vilket kan förstås i termer av kunskap-i-handling (Molander, 1996).

När det gäller förhandlingar för att lösa praktiska produktionsfrågor illustrerar resultaten hur dessa skedde i samverkan mellan verbala och icke-verbala former. Förhandlingarna var tydligt orienterade mot produktmålet och som i andra studier av scenisk produktion i skolmiljö framstod förhandlingarna som ett kollaborativt åtagande lärare och elever emellan (Törnquist, 2006). Traditionella lärar-elev-hierarkier utjämnades när gemensamt utforskande av iscensättningen stod i förgrunden (Saar, 2005). Resultaten visar även en speciell form av förhandlingar genom återkommande elevinitierade sido-projekt, en metakommunikation i-roll men utan dramatextens repliker och ofta i lekfulla former. Dessa improvisationer uppträdde lite vid sidan av den formella lektionsinramningen såsom en didaktikens gycklare. Och liksom gycklaren lockar till skratt och säger sanningar som annars inte sägs ut, lockade sidoprojekten till skratt och gav tillfälle att prova förståelser som annars inte bleve utsagda. I gycklar-situationerna skapade eleverna möjligheter att pröva gestaltningar lekfullt elevinitierat innan de prövades i läroledd repetition. Således tycktes appropriering av medierande uttryck befinna sig i rörelse mellan formella och informella aktiviteter (Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2012). Aktiviteterna befruktade varandra. Gycklarsituationernas speciella potential för lärande av relevanta förmågor i den aktuella kulturella praktiken väckte mitt intresse att fördjupa analysen av denna kommunikationsform i studie 2 och 3.

### 7.3.2 Studie 2

Göthberg, M., Björck, C., & Mäkitalo, Å. (2018). From drama text to stage text: Transitions of text understanding in a student theatre production. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 25(3), 247–262. doi: 10.1080/10749039.2018.1480633

I studie 2 fördjupade vi undersökningen av hur deltagarna koordinerade textförståelse genom en detaljerad analys av det kommunikativa arbetet i (mikro)förändringar av textförståelse. På ett övergripande plan såg vi produktionen som en rörelse från dramats givna omständigheter (Stanislavski, 2017) via konstnärlig gestaltning (Vygotsky, 1999) till scentext (Heed, 2002). Skådespelares sceniska gestaltning vilar, enligt Vygotsky (1971; 1999) på en grund av publikens och skådespelarens delade sociokulturella erfarenheter. Därför reglerar skådespelaren sina emotionella uttryck i riktning mot det kulturellt igenkännbara.

Senare forskning har undersökt lärandepotentialer i skådespelarens speciella imaginära relation till scenens sociala situation genom aktiviteter i-roll (Clarà, 2016a; Edmiston, 2015; Davis, 2015a; Hallgren, 2018). Vi förstod koordineringen av textförståelse som en pågående läroprocess där skådespelarnas handlingsmöjligheter kunde växa (Säljö, 2014; 2017).

Studiens syfte var att bidra till kunskap om hur små övergångar inom textförståelseutveckling ägde rum inom teaterproduktionen som lärmiljö.

För att nå syftet utgick vi från sociokulturell och dialogisk teori avseende meningsskapande, kreativitet och lärande (Linell, 1998, 2017; Säljö, 2014; 2017; Vygotsky, 1978; 1999; 2004). Genom den sociokulturella teorin orienterade vi analysen mot appropriering av kulturella verktyg som förändrade deltagarnas sätt att handla i och tala om situerade aktiviteter. I vårt specifika fall relaterades approprieringen till den reglering av emotionella uttryck som ägde rum i en scenisk gestaltningsprocess i syfte att skapa kulturellt igenkännbara former (Vygotsky, 1971; 1999). Att genomleva emotionellt laddade situationer i speciellt arrangerade dramatiska situationer kan hjälpa deltagarna att nå en bredare kulturell insikt i de frågor som står i centrum för aktiviteten (Davis, 2015a; Hallgren, 2018). Detta kan tolkas i termer av det sociokulturella begreppet *perezhivanie* (ungefär: levd erfarenhet<sup>34</sup>) (Ferholt, 2015; Flear, Gonzalez Rey & Veresov, 2017). *Perezhivanie* omfattar erfarenhet och bearbetning av en emotionellt laddad social situation, integrering av erfarenheten i relation till tidigare *perezhivania*, förändring i någon mening till

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<sup>34</sup> Ang. översättning av *perezhivanie*, se t.ex. Blunden (2016); Clarà (2016a); Mok (2017).

ett nytt stadium av personlig utveckling (Blunden, 2016; Clarà, 2016b). Medan perezhivanie vanligen associeras med att genomleva vardagliga dramatiska situationer (Clarà, 2016b; Mok, 2017), intresserade vi oss för drama i imaginära situationer. Sådan perezhivanie har konceptualiserats som erfارande av emotionella utmaningar i imaginära situationer (Clara, 2016a).

I en dialogisk ansats ses intersubjektiv förståelse som dynamisk, som ett kollaborativt projekt, alltid på väg (Linell, 1998, 2011). Vi konceptualiserade deltagarnas kommunikation i-roll och ur-roll som en serie kommunikativa projekt som förde aktiviteten framåt (Linell, 1998, 2011). Inom ett sådant projekt försöker deltagarna ”lösa en kommunikativ uppgift under ett moment eller ett skede av interaktion” (Linell, 2011, p. 98). Inom ramen för denna definition utgjorde kommunikativa projekt studiens analysenhet.

Den ovan tecknade teoretiska förståelsen av den aktuella verksamheten och studiens syfte mynnade ut i följande forskningsfrågor:

- hur medieras övergångar av textförståelse i- och ur-roll?
- hur relaterar dessa övergångar till omvandlingen av dramatext till scentext?

Utifrån resultaten i studie 1 angående didaktikens gycklare var vi intresserade av att få mer kunskap om elevernas kommunikation i sådana rollspel inom spelet. Påfallande många av sidoprojekten tycktes centrala för textförståelseutvecklingen i både den aktuella repetitionen och de kommande, varför vi valde tio gycklar-situationer för fördjupad analys. Tre av dessa visade särskilt tydligt utvecklingen över tid i rollarbetet med en av karaktärerna och ingick därför i artikeln som rapporterade undersökningen.

Resultaten visar att övergångar av textförståelse medierades genom en sammanflätning av uttryck som exempelvis att hålla varandras händer, imitera röst, uppmärksamma kroppshållning, utforska manér, artikulera tolkningar, argumentera för logiken i ett visst beteende och genom att göra saker med fysiska objekt. Exempelvis illustrerade vi hur deltagarna kämpade med gestaltningen av en scen om familjerelationer och förflyttade en initialt tämligen icke-koordinerad förståelse av scenen till åtskilligt mer koordinerad förståelse. Förändringen var förknippad med emotionella utmaningar och utvecklingen av situationen tolkades i termer av perezhivanie som erfارande i imaginära situationer (Clarà, 2016a). Koordineringen av textförståelse innebar en vidgad kulturell förståelse av familjerelationer. Vi uppfattade den aktuella lärprocessen som en illustration av hur skådespelarna utökade sina handlingsmöjligheter i

gestaltungsarbetet (Säljö, 2014, 2017). Vidare visade resultaten att övergångarna skapades kollaborativt i överlappande kommunikativa projekt.

Bland slutsatserna kan nämnas att vi såg tydlig lärandepotential inom området textförståelse i att eleverna genomlevde sinnliga erfarenheter av texten. Vi noterade också att deltagarna lade stor energi på att etablera gemensam textförståelse. Ytterligare en slutsats var att utökade handlingsmöjligheter kan förstås i termer av perezhivanie så som erfارande av emotionella utmaningar i imaginära situationer (Clara, 2016a). Ett kunskapsbidrag rör de kollaborativa, kommunikativa sidoprojektens roll i det situerade lärandet. Ett annat kunskapsbidrag handlar om textförståelsekoordinations väg från små övergångar av textförståelse (micro-genes) inom specifika situationer till den longitudinella transformationen av dramatext till scentext. Genom studien vet vi mer om interaktionens natur i gycklarsituationerna och deras potential för lärande av relevanta förmågor i den aktuella kulturella praktiken.

Med detta sagt lockade mig de sammanvävda skikten av kommunikation och tvetydigheter i fråga om rolltagande, att fördjupa analysen i en tredje studie.

### 7.3.3 Studie 3

Göthberg, M. (in press). Cultivation of a deceiver – the emergence of a stage character in a student theatre production. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*.

I den tredje studien närmade jag mig utveckling av textförståelse på nytt sätt. Två frågor som berörts i studie 1–2 intresserade mig särskilt. Den första handlade om tvetydigheter i inramning av agerande i-roll. Utifrån tidigare forskning (Bergman Blix, 2010; Bundy, Piazzoli & Dunn, 2015; Franks, 2014) var jag intresserad av att fördjupa kunskapen om skiften mellan agerande i-roll och ur-roll. Den andra frågan handlade om hur elevernas bruk av kulturella resurser kunde bidra i rollarbetet med en specifik karaktär född i en dramatext flera sekler bakåt i tiden. Tidigare forskning om rollarbete har lyft fram betydelsen av affekt, teaterns multimodala natur och användande av tillgängliga kulturella resurser (t.ex. Davis, 2014; Franks, 2014). Särskilt har man betonat en potential för meningsskapande via den reglering av attityd och uttryck som möjliggörs genom skådespelarens imaginära relation till scenens sociala sammanhang (Bergman Blix, 2010; Boal, 1995; Edmiston, 2015; Ferholt, 2015; Fleer, 2017; Schechner, 1985). I likhet med Sawyer (2015) menade jag att fördjupad förståelse av kollaborativt lärande i rollarbete kunde nås genom att analysera deltagarnas kommunikativa arbete på detaljnivå. Studiens syfte var att

bidra med kunskap om kollaborativt rollarbete kring en specifik karaktär i en dramatextgrundad teaterproduktion på gymnasiet.

För att nå syftet utgick jag från sociokulturell och dialogisk teori avseende meningsskapande, kreativitet och lärande (Linell, 1998, 2017; Säljö, 2014, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978, 1999, 2004). I dialogisk teori bygger deltagares kommunikativa bidrag i social interaktion på och är inflätade i varandra. Dock utvecklas kommunikationen sällan i helt förutsägbara former (Linell, 1998). Sådan oförutsägbarhet verkar med fördel kunna studeras i konstnärlig improvisation (Duranti & Black, 2011; Sawyer, 2003, 2015). Vidare använde jag Goffmans ramteori (1981, 1986) i analysen av hur den sociala interaktionen förde rollarbetet framåt. Inramning rör hur deltagare etablerar gemensamma aktiviteter såsom en viss typ av social situation. Inramning är en oundgänglig del av alla sociala möten och deltagarnas inramningar är dynamiska (Goffman, 1981, 1986; Goodwin, 2007; Linell, 1998). Goffman (1981, s. 128) konceptualiserar ramskiften som byten av *footing*:

[a] shift in footing implies a change in the alignments we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance. A change in footing is another way to talk about a change in our frame for events.

Medan Goffman huvudsakligen förlägger byten av *footing* till en deltagares verbala yttringar så betonar Goodwin (2007) det interaktionella arbetet där parterna tillsammans byter *footing*. I linje med Goodwin (2007) och Franks (2014) lyfter Buchbinder (2008, s. 154) fram kroppsliga semiotiska resursers betydelse för inramningsarbetet; deltagarna “negotiate shifts in frame not only with linguistic markers, but also through embodied action.” I fråga om (drama)rolltagande i sociala situationer ser Heathcote (1991) detta som en specifik drama-inramning vilken erbjuder deltagarna en trygg zon med reducerade möjligheter att ställas till svars för rollens handlingar. Zonen ger frihet att sinnligt pröva meningspotentialer. Rolltagande i teater/drama har ibland diskuterats som komplext laminerat, med flera parallella inramningar på kommunikativa och kulturella plan (Linell & Persson Thunquist, 2003; Heathcote, 1991; Rönn, 2009). Exempelvis möjliggörs multipla subjekt inom ramen för samma sociala situation där ”jag” kan representera såväl rollfigur-jaget som talar-jaget. Goffman (1981) har utvecklat ett system med beteckningar som *author*, *animator*, *figure* (m.m.) vilket erbjuder analytiska verktyg vid undersökning av laminerad interaktion.

Vägledad av detta teoretiska resonemang avgränsade jag analysenheten till teaterproduktionens improviserade tal och agerande. Den ovan tecknade teoretiska förståelsen av verksamheten och studiens syfte mynnade ut i följande forskningsfrågor:

På vilka sätt utvecklade det kommunikativa arbetet karaktärernas meningspotentialer genom:

- användning av kulturella resurser?
- inramning av aktiviteterna?

Jag begränsade situationer att analysera till tillfällen då deltagarna tydligt arbetade med den specifika karaktären och till att byte av footing verkade spela stor roll för rollarbetet. Tio exempel grovtranskriberades och analyserades översiktligt. I artikeln som rapporterade studien återgavs en fördjupad analys av två exempel som fick representera två olika och vanligt förekommande verksamhetstyper inom rollarbetet. Ena exemplet illustrerade informellt elevsamtal (inkluderande visst rolltagande), om en specifik scen i dramat medan det andra exemplet rörde en lärarledd repetition av samma scen.

Resultaten visar att elevernas bruk av samtida kulturella resurser överbyggde det kulturella gapet till Molière-tidens kultur i dramatexten och hur detta åstadkoms i det kommunikativa arbetet – en process som på avgörande sätt bidrog i rollarbetet. Den valda karaktären animerades bland annat som en typisk figur i bloggofären. Resultaten illustrerade också komplext flerskiktad interaktion. Analysen tydliggjorde bland annat: a) ungdomsslang laminerad med dramatextfraser; b) improviserade animeringar av ett flertal fiktiva socialamediafigurer sammanvävda med elevers vardagsinteraktion; c) repetitionskontextens imaginära värld närvarande inom det informella samtalets ram och d) ett iscensättande av karaktärens karaktär i elevers vardagliga interaktion utan tydligt rolltagande. Exempelvis framträdde de elever vars dramakaraktärer av eleverna själva beskrevs som passiva följare som just passiva följare och den som beskrevs som en slug, munvig bedragare improviserade sig fyndigt fram genom den analyserade situationen med kontroll över följarna.

Studiens kunskapsbidrag rör främst två områden. Det ena handlar om hybriditet i rolltagandet vilken kompletterar en etablerad binär uppfattning, nämligen agerande inom teater/drama-verksamhet såsom *antingen* i-roll *eller* ur-roll. Det andra handlar om den komplext laminerade interaktionen som framstod som produktiv avseende verksamhetens mål och kollaborativt situerat

lärande. Därmed vet vi nu mer om hur elever på ett kompetent sätt manövrerade täta skiften av footing och hybrida former av rolltagande.

## 7.5 Diskussion

Avhandlingens titel signalerar att dess kunskapsbidrag rör interagerande aktörers utveckling av textförståelse i en teaterproduktion på gymnasiet. Utifrån syftet att nå kunskap om sådan utveckling då deltagarna transformerade dramatekst till scentext presenteras i detta avsnitt sex områden där avhandlingen bidrar med kunskap. Avsnittet innehåller också en avslutande syntetisering av de sex områdena.

Det första av kunskapsbidragen handlar om textförståelsens dynamiska och situerade natur. Även om teaterproduktionen var tydligt textbaserad i bemärkelsen att de flesta aktiviteterna utgick från en specifik dramatekst visade det sig att förståelsen av densamma och av scentexten som producerades kontinuerligt omförhandlades. Avhandlingen visar specifikt hur mångtliga skikt av kulturella och semiotiska resurser på ett intrikat laminerat vis sattes i spel av deltagarna på väg mot en alltmer koordinerad och artikulerad textförståelse. Detta har noterats från mikrogenes av ny förståelse till longitudinell transformation av dramatekst till scentext. Deltagarnas lärande i den konstnärliga processen kan förstås som ett omfattande kollaborativt utvecklande och explicitgörande av intersubjektiv förståelse. Avhandlingen ger oss mer kunskap om det kommunikativa arbete – innefattande rolltagande – som drev processen framåt såväl i enskilda sociala situationer som i den övergripande verksamheten med produktmålet att framföra teaterföreställningar.

Med hjälp av ett metaforiskt uttryck kan deltagarnas konstnärliga och kommunikativa arbete sägas ha rört sig i ett meningsskapande mellanrum, såsom i mellanrum mellan formella och informella kontexter, mellan tidigare erfarenheter och situerade erfarenheter, mellan interaktion i- och ur-roll och mellan läsande av text och gestaltning av text. Metaforen illustreras grafiskt i kapitel 6 med syfte att betona textförståelsens dynamiska och laminerade natur.

Avhandlingens bidrag i detta hänseende visar således släktskap med Vygotskijs dynamiska syn på litterära och emotionella uttryck inom en teaterkontext:

The actor creates on the stage infinite sensations, feelings, or emotions that become the emotions of the whole theatrical audience. Before they became

the subject of the actor's embodiment, they were given a literary formulation, they were borne in the air, in social consciousness. (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 241)

Det andra kunskapsbidraget handlar om sensoriskt och materiell förankrad textförståelse. En rad exempel har illustrerat hur sådan textförståelseutveckling initierades, nyanserades och fann sin scentextform genom kroppsligt görande och användning av symboliska fysiska artefakter. Även inom denna aspekt av hur textförståelse koordinerades har avhandlingen tydliggjort utveckling från detalj till helhet (d.v.s. hur en serie övergångar på mikrogenes-planet bidrog till den longitudinella transformationen av dramatext till scentext). Den två terminer långa produktionstiden sedd som ett arrangemang för lärande illustrerar således lärande som "emergent processes occasioned by human activities and capacities for appropriating and externalizing experiences" (Säljö, 2017, p. 19). Slutligen, den materiellt-sensoriska förankringen inte bara stödde textförståelseutveckling utan kunde också kopplas till elevers agens i utformningen av lärprocessen.

Det tredje bidraget hör samman med matchning mellan elevernas och dramatextens repertoarer (McCormick, 1994). Avhandlingen bidrar till den del av teater/dramaforskningsfältet som intresserar sig för samverkan mellan kroppsliga semiotiska resurser och kulturella resurser i lärande (Franks, 2014). I ett av Yandells empiriska exempel talas det om att orden i en månghundraårig dramatext fick "a denser semiotic load" (2008, p. 54) genom att elever gestaltade ett visst tema genom rolltagande i korta improviserade scener. Mina resultat visar hur repertoarmatchning genom kroppslig gestaltning nyanserade textförståelsen. Exempelvis användes resurser relaterade till elevernas samtida populärkultur bland annat i form av en så kallad fist-bump. Avhandlingens speciella användning av repertoarmatchning som analytiskt verktyg kan därtill ses som ett metodologiskt bidrag genom fokuseringen av kroppsliga semiotiska resurser i matchningsarbetet.

I centrum för det fjärde bidraget står didaktikens gycklare, det vill säga elevernas lekfulla kommunikativa sidoprojekt. Dessa humoristiskt och/eller emotionellt laddade kommunikativa projekt som vävdes in som ett speciellt skikt i den pågående (laminerade) lektionsinteraktionen visade sig produktiva i gestaltningsarbetet och lärprocessen. Den informella och gränsöverskridande karaktären hos didaktikens gycklare framstod som en tillgång för lärandet. Detta kan relateras till att sociala situationer där didaktikens gycklare tog sig utrymme kan förstås genom begreppet trygga zoner i rolltagandet (Heathcote, 1991).

Inom sådana zoner kunde nya meningspotentialer för karaktärernas relationer prövas informellt och lekfullt innan de prövades i lärarstrukturerade repetitionsaktiviteter. Ur ett vardagsperspektiv skulle didaktikens gycklare kunna uppfattas som förströelse vid sidan om kärnaktiviteten eller som störmoment (Williams et al., 2018). Ur ett analytiskt perspektiv fungerade gycklar-situationerna som tillfällen att initiera och nyansera till exempel karaktärens uttryck. Med andra ord kan didaktikens gycklare beskrivas som produktiva instanser av appropriering av kulturella redskap relevanta för att lösa specifika uppgifter. Dessutom gav de uttryck för hög grad av elevagens i gestaltungsprocessen och autonomi i lärprocessen.

Femte kunskapsbidraget är kopplat till Goffmans (1981; 1984) inramningsteori och laminerad interaktion (Goodwin, 2013) i konstnärlig kontext (Linell, 2011). Resultaten visar att begreppet rolltagande kan nyanseras utöver den binära distinktionen i-roll respektive ur-roll. Hybrida former användes ofta både i samtal och i gestaltungsarbetet. Rollhybriditeten tillsammans med frekventa byten av footing bidrog till att skapa en komplext laminerad kommunikation. Stundom kunde samma elev ikläda sig flera olika roller i tät följd varav vissa sammanföll med dramarollerna medan andra avvek mer eller mindre. Komplexiteten kännetecknades av att gränser blev diffusa mellan kärnaktiviteter och subaktiviteter, mellan beskrivning och gestaltning samt mellan Molièretexten och samtidskulturen. Det i ett analytiskt perspektiv 'diffusa' visade ett annat ansikte i elevperspektiv – eleverna agerande som mycket kompetenta interaktanter i sådan interaktion. Komplexiteten och hybriditeten tycktes utgöra en produktiv kommunikativ resurs i koordineringen av textförståelse. Genom resultaten kring hybrida former av rolltagande och (ytterligt) komplex inramning av teaterrepetitioner i utbildningskontext bidrar avhandlingen till kunskap om lärande inom teater/drama.

Det sjätte bidraget handlar om anteciperad intersubjektivitet i lärprocessen. Att skapa välspelade teaterföreställningar var vad som stod på spel för deltagarna (jfr. Lagercrantz, 1995). Analyserna av deltagarnas interaktion visade att det lades ner åtskilligt arbete på att skapa, nyansera och artikulera en kollektivt omfattad textförståelse. Detta hade samband med produktionens tydliga målorientering, vilken innefattade att den tänkta publiken skulle uppfatta föreställningarna så som elever och lärare planerat. Därmed kan man tala om anteciperad intersubjektivitet, eller ett slags publikorientering som genomsyrade teaterlektionerna hela observationsperioden. Publikorienteringen märktes på mikronivå i yttranden och kroppslig gestaltning, i det konstnärliga utformandet

av enskilda scener och det kännetecknade scentexten. En slutsats inom avhandlingen är att textförståelseutveckling måste förstås i ett situerat perspektiv som verktyg för att lösa gemensamma uppgifter, i detta fall relaterat till anteciperad intersubjektivitet med den framtida publiken. Således kan sägas att teaterproduktionens tydliga publika mål gav stöd till och triggade läroprocessen vidare under närmare två terminers arbete med samma litterära text.

Till sist adresserar jag en möjlig syntetisering av avhandlingens kunskapsbidrag och relaterar denna till den samhälls- och utbildningspolitiska bakgrund som skissades i inledningskapitlet.

Jag ser rolltagandets speciella imaginära relation till omgivningen som central för att förstå utvecklingen av textförståelse. På ett allmänt plan stöder avhandlingen den etablerade uppfattning inom teater/dramaforskning att rolltagande erbjuder särskild potential för lärande genom kraften i upplevelsen av att delta i-roll i dramatisk gestaltning. Grunden för denna kraft ligger i att handlingen utförs av deltagarna själva, vilket ”på det mest näraliggande, påtagliga och omedelbara vis binder samman det konstnärliga skapandet med den personliga upplevelsen” (Vygotskij, 1995, s. 81). Avhandlingen har illustrerat och diskuterat rolltagandets estetiska dubbling, med tillgång till multipla subjekt i drama som-om värld, vilket sågs som att deltagarna öppnade ett speciellt meningsskapande mellanrum. Genom sitt kommunikativa arbete i konstnärliga former i ’mellanrummet’ satte deltagarna textförståelse i rörelse på väg mot nya horisonter av intersubjektivitet. Dynamiken visade sig produktiv för koordination av förståelser såväl på ett mikroplan inom specifika sociala situationer som longitudinellt i transformationen av dramatext till scentext.

Den situerade estetiska dubblingen och ’mellanrummets’ dynamik har bäring på flera centrala frågor i avhandlingen, bland annat:

- komplext laminerad social interaktion
- hybrida former av rolltagande
- appropriering av relevanta kulturella verktyg i rörelse mellan formella och informella kontexter
- matchning av kulturella repertoarer

När det gäller syntetisering av kunskapsbidragen vill jag slutligen understryka kollektiva dimensioner av lärande som centrala för att förstå den situerade utvecklingen av textförståelse. Avhandlingen har visat konkreta exempel på att tänkande ”kan vara en kollektiv process, något som äger rum *mellan* människor

likaväl som *inom dem*” (Säljö, 2014, s. 108, kursiv i original). Lärares och elevers gemensamma orientering mot kommande föreställningar kunde ses som viktig förutsättning för en kollektiv ZPD. Lekfullhet, explorativt lärande, orientering mot gemensamt produktmål och kollektivt problemlösande karakteriserade den sociala interaktionen. Detta skapade ett slags trygga zoner där kollaborativ kreativitet stod i centrum snarare än individuella prestationer. Analysen av det kommunikativa arbetets detaljer visade en produktiv lärmiljö av den arten.

Emellertid, som Williams et al., noterar, även om omfattande forskning, inklusive delar av föreliggande avhandling, visar att denna typ av lärande kan vara fruktbart så hamnar det ”almost everywhere in jeopardy to the imposition of formal pedagogies” (2018, s. 190). När den rådande utbildningsdiskursen begränsar synen på kunnande till mätbara kunskapsfragment i den enskilda elevens prestationer inte bara kringkärs elevers agens utan unga riskerar att i skolan stängas ute från de didaktiska möjligheter som erbjuds inom ett oförutsägbart, kollaborativt och kreativt lärande. Kanhända didaktikens gycklare öppnar dörren till en annan diskurs.



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# Appendix

**Appendix A:** Overview of six periods in chronological order related to activities during the theatre production

Period	Time	Forms of preparation and performance
1	October–November	Collective reading of four drama texts, students' choice to stage <i>The Affected Ladies</i> , repeated collective readings of the chosen drama text, literature talks.
2	November–December	Improvisations before roles were distributed, adaption of the drama text, discussing distribution of roles.
3	January–March	Rehearsals with script in hand, some new semiotic resources available, e.g., preliminary props and stage design like furniture.
4	March–April	Rehearsals without script in hand, new semiotic resources available, e.g., costume (to some extent) music and stage lighting (to some extent), proper props.
5	April–May	Run-throughs, dress rehearsal, interim audience, final additions to and exchanges of props, costume, music, stage design, light design, make up.
6	May	Performances, closing and evaluative talks, packing up equipment.

INTERACTING

**Appendix B:** All observed sessions

Date	Fieldnotes	Video	Sound	Main activities
1007	X	X	-	Reading of drama texts. Talk about staging ideas.
1014	X	X	X	Reading of drama texts. Talk about staging ideas.
1015	X	X	X	Reading of drama text. Decision what to stage.
1021	X	X	X	Re-reading of <i>The Affected Ladies</i> . Literature talk with Swedish teacher.
1104	X	-	X	Re-reading of <i>The Affected Ladies</i> . Literature talk with Swedish teacher.
1112	X	X	X	Improvisation based on previous reading.
1125	X	X	X	Improvisation. Text adaptation.
1216	X	X	X	Improvisation. Preliminary blocking.
0113	X	-	-	Improvisation.
0121	X	X	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal. Talk about father-daughter relations.
0127	X	X	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal.
0128	X	X	-	Improvisation. Dance. Rehearsal.
0131	X	-	X	Rehearsal. Costume planning.
0207	X	-	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal.
0209	X	X	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal.
0210	X	X	-	Dance. Check of blocking so far. Rehearsal.
0217	X	X	-	Rehearsal.
0218	X	X	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal. Arrangement of costume and props.
0304	X	X	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal.
0310	X	X	-	Improvisation. Rehearsal.
0317	X	X	-	Rehearsal (run-through of first scenes).
0318	X	X	X	Dance. Rehearsal (run-through of a number of scenes, visiting spectators). Costume and set design planning.
0319	X	X	-	Arrangement of set design. Rehearsal.
0324	X	X	X	Run-through.
0325	X	-	X	Debriefing after run-through (e.g., what do we want to tell the audience).
0331	X	-	-	Individual tasks.
0401	X	-	-	Individual tasks.
0404	X	-	-	Acting techniques.
0407	X	X	X	Rehearsal.
0408	X	X	-	Run-through (visiting spectators).
0414	X	-	-	Rehearsal.
0415	X	X	X	Rehearsal. Costume and props arrangement.
0428	X	-	-	Rehearsal. Stage lights.
0429	X	-	-	Rehearsal.
0505	X	X	-	Run-through.
0506	X	X	-	Dress-rehearsal 1 (a handful spectators).
0507	X	X	-	Performance-like dress-rehearsal (full house).
0508	X	X	-	Performance.
0509	X	X	-	Performance.
0510	X	X	-	Performance.
0512	X	-	-	Shop-talk, summing up the production.

## PART II – Empirical studies

### Study 1

Göthberg, M. (2015). *Pimpa Texten. En etnografisk studie av gymnasieelevers meningsskapande i dramatext* [Pimping the text. An ethnographic study of upper secondary school students' meaning making in drama text]. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/41363>

### Study 2

Göthberg, M., Björck, C., & Mäkitalo, Å. (2018). From drama text to stage text: Transitions of text understanding in a student theatre production

This is an accepted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 25(3), 247–262, published online 26 June 2018, available online:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10749039.2018.1480633>

### Study 3

Göthberg, M. (in press). Cultivation of a deceiver – the emergence of a stage character in a student theatre production. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*.