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Teaching stories, creating authors: Expanding writing instruction for second-language learners with a school librarian and a professional author

Robert Walldén[a,b,*], Anna Lindholm[c]

[a] Department of Swedish, Linnaeus University, 351 95, Växjö, Sweden
[b] Faculty of Education and Society, Malmö University, 205 06, Malmö, Sweden
[c] Department of Educational Studies, Karlstad University, 651 88, Karlstad, Sweden

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how story writing and writer's identity were negotiated in a Grade 3 book project conducted in collaboration between a school librarian, classroom teachers, and a professional children's author in a linguistically diverse school located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged urban area. Drawing on classroom observations of eight lessons and a book launch event, the study analyzes how adults outside the regular teaching staff shaped writing instruction and students' positioning as writers. The analysis combines social-semiotic perspectives on writing, including the *wheel of writing* and genre theory, with Ivanić's framework for writer's identity and the concept of powerful knowledge. The findings show that the librarian and the author promoted a multifaceted approach to story writing. Both foregrounded narrative macrostructure and reader engagement, while the author emphasized imagination, expressive writing, and creative inspiration, and the librarian focused more strongly on curricular expectations such as story structure and writing conventions. Through modeling, dialogue, and the publication of a collective book, students were invited to develop aspects of a discoursal self, an autobiographical self, and a self as author. The study highlights how collaboration with non-teachers can expand classroom writing practices and provide students with access to disciplinary ways of meaning-making associated with authorship.

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An enduring challenge in the teaching of language and literature is to promote equal opportunities for students to engage in meaningful practices of reading and writing. Efforts to ensure equity often extend beyond the classroom, for example by leveraging school libraries (Kleijnen et al., 2015) and working with professional authors (Rumney, 2016) to bolster the literacy development for second-language learners. However, research has also pointed out that access to such opportunities may be restricted for those students who would benefit the most (Pribesh et al., 2011; Tuck & Holmes, 2016).

Based on troubling reading gaps between student groups (Mullis et al., 2023; OECD, 2023) and reports showing a weak integration of library services into pedagogical activities (The Swedish School Inspectorate, 2018), the Swedish government passed a law in summer 2025 mandating that all schools have staffed libraries. By ensuring students' access to staffed libraries, books, reading-promoting activities and qualified support, the reform was intended to create more equitable conditions for reading development across schools. This provides the context for the current study which examines the teaching of story writing and the promotion of literacy engagement for second-language learners of Swedish in grade 3 in a school located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged urban area. As part of a structured work to promote literacy development and to meet the requirements of the law of staffed school libraries, they had established a physically integrated school library with a librarian who took an active role in planning and conducting literacy-boosting projects and activities.

The aim of the study is to contribute knowledge about how story writing and writer's identity were negotiated in a grade 3 book project conducted by a librarian in collaboration with teachers and a professional author of children's books. The research questions are:

* Corresponding author at: Department of Swedish, Linnaeus University, 351 95, Växjö, Sweden.
E-mail addresses: robert.wallden@lnu.se (R. Walldén), anna.lindholm@kau.se (A. Lindholm).

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1. What properties of stories and story writing were made available as knowledge in the instruction led by the librarian and the author?
2. How were students positioned as writers in relation to this knowledge?

The research questions reflect the fact that the librarian and the author had a more leading role than the teachers in the book project. Thus, the study gives insight into the opportunities for literacy development provided when adults other than teachers take the lead. Our analytical focus is the meanings the adult participants express related to the above questions when they interact with the students.

1. Literature review

In this section, we discuss studies on the teaching of writing relevant for linguistically diverse classrooms and studies that focus specifically on creative writing and involvement of external professionals. By 'linguistically diverse,' we refer to classrooms comprising students with varied first languages, many of whom receive instruction in their second or additional language.

In the Swedish context, there has been a considerable uptake of genre-based literacy programs in the teaching of second-language learners of Swedish (e.g., Varga et al., 2023; Golden & Magnusson, 2019; see Rose & Martin, 2012). This pedagogy was also practiced by teachers in the participating school. Genre-based literacy programs recognize second-language learners as a potentially disadvantaged group and emphasize language-focused literacy approaches to ensure development of both content knowledge and L2 capabilities (Schleppegrell, 2013). This typically entails highly scaffolded writing practices in which the teacher guides students in acquiring metalinguistic knowledge about texts and academic content (Rose & Martin, 2012).

Although several studies have shown that genre-based approaches can foster a close examination of linguistic features and provide both deep engagement with literary language and solid support for writing in highly valued ways (e.g., Moore, 2019; Klingelhofer & Schleppegrell, 2016; Schleppegrell, 2013), Swedish studies conducted in linguistically diverse classrooms indicate a selective emphasis on genre structures and sometimes "linking words" in genre-based teaching practices (Walldén, 2019; Vuorenpää, 2016; Yassin Falk, 2017). Although the building and release of tension is a core component in the genre-theoretical view of narratives (Rose & Martin, 2012), the need for drama and suspense to engage a reader was typically not emphasized by the teachers in these studies.

The findings of the Swedish studies partly contrast with a Norwegian classroom study of genre-based teaching in which the teachers taught story structure in a similar way but used the term "climax" to accentuate that stories build to a dramatic peak (Haugli, 2020). Moreover, the teachers activated students' knowledge of literary texts they were familiar with, such as the Harry Potter and Narnia series, to promote both engagement and learning (Haugli, 2020).

More broadly, investigations into curricula, instructional materials, and classroom discourse regarding writing pedagogy in the Swedish context (e.g., Gourvennec et al., 2020; Liberg et al., 2012; Ridell & Walldén, 2024a; Ridell & Walldén, 2024b; Sturk et al., 2020; Walldén, 2019) indicate that knowledge of genre structure and formal textual conventions—such as orthography and punctuation—are prioritized over the creative, social, and literary dimensions of writing. As Ryan and Barton (2014) noted in their discussion of genre-based teaching in linguistically diverse Australian elementary schools, overly structured and formulaic approaches to writing instruction—with the teacher as the sole intended reader—leave little space for creativity and identity building as part of the writing process. Likewise, Barton et al. (2024) discuss the tensions between creative aspects of writing and the constraints usually put on writing through, for example, standardized testing.

We now turn to studies focusing on creative writing, author visits and other efforts to involve external specialists in the teaching of writing. In their systematic review focused on creative writing practices, Barton et al. (2024) highlighted that development of creative writing capabilities is more likely to occur if students are given the opportunity to be inspired by professionals, such as authors, and allowed to make their own decisions in the writing process – for example, writing about life and cultural experiences. In a recent quasi-experimental study conducted in grade 4 classrooms, Kızıltaş (2026) showed that explicit teaching of creative writing techniques, such as generating ideas based on examples and using imaginative descriptions, supported students' writing fluency while reducing their writing anxiety. The students also received feedback from the teacher and their peers that focused on content development and expressive language rather than surface-level correctness (Kızıltaş, 2026).

Among studies investigating collaboration with professional writers, Coles (2017) found that a partnership between a creative writing organization and an ethnically diverse year 5 class around a garden-themed poetry project had a positive impact on the students' creative writing capabilities, motivation, and self-esteem. Coles (2017) noted that a participating writer's open dialogue with the students and a celebratory end-of-project event were particularly beneficial factors. A study by Rumney et al. (2016) focused on a cross-school project that involved integration play, multimodal activities, visual arts, and creative writing in two different settings: the classroom and a visual arts gallery. For example, the students—of which many had English as their second language—were involved in activities in which they experimented with structure and causality in narrative texts while being supported by images, story openings, guiding questions, and kinesthetic aids. The project entailed both improved literacy attainment and greater confidence and motivation in writing.

Similarly, a longitudinal experiment involving grade 2–5 students in a socially disadvantaged area (Hubert et al., 2025) showed that a creative writing workshop led by an external professional significantly improved students' imagination, verbal fluency and emotional stability. The intervention provided opportunities for generating and sharing ideas, studying model texts, and receiving feedback (Hubert et al., 2025). In a study involving linguistically diverse adolescent writers, Mannard (2025) found that two writing mentors at an informal youth center enabled the students to focus on creative expression rather than conventions. Moreover, the mentors encouraged the students to draw on popular culture other funds of knowledge to engage in authentic writing practices and develop writer-identities.

Another kind of collaboration between schools and professionals is author visits. While these are often one-off activities (e.g., Moynihan, 2009), Bergman and Persson (2013) point out that such visits may function as nodes in extended practices, for example, when the visit is prepared and followed up. In a rare study of an extended involvement of a professional author, DeFauw (2018) followed a yearlong collaboration between an elementary school and a children's books author with the overall goal of increasing the students' motivation. The findings show that the author inspired the students by pointing out how the students' processes were similar to their own. Moreover, the teacher followed up on advice given by the author, for example about the importance of establishing the message of the story and following it through. The collaboration was sustained by assemblies focusing on writing

strategies and interaction on a blog in which the students shared their texts.

The present study contributes to the field in several ways. Studies focusing on creative writing pedagogies are generally rare (discussed in Barton et al., 2024) and there is a lack of studies illuminating current efforts to bolster students' engagement, creativity and genre knowledge in story writing activities led by non-teachers in schools located in socially disadvantaged areas. In particular, the study offers detailed insight into teaching activities primarily led by a librarian and a professional author. Moreover, the study is conceptually innovative by utilizing the concept of *powerful knowledge* (Young, 2009), which has not been previously employed in relation to the teaching of writing in primary school. Our operationalization of the concept allows us to consider both the explicit teaching of text features and the possibilities created for the students to engage in creative writing practices and develop their identities as writers. Although scholars tend to agree that these aspects are important in literacy instruction, studies rarely show how they come together as powerful knowledge for the students (see Section 2.1) or otherwise relate to each other in classroom practice.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

To analyze how story writing and writer's identity were negotiated in the project, we draw on three complementary theoretical perspectives. First, the concept of powerful knowledge (Young, 2009, 2013) provides a lens for examining the kinds of disciplinary knowledge about writing that were made available to the students. Second, we conceptualize writing as a semiotically mediated social practice, drawing on the *wheel of writing* (Berge et al., 2016) and selected insights from social-semiotic genre theory (Martin & Rose, 2008). Third, we use Ivanič's (1998) framework of writer's identity to analyze how students were positioned as writers in the instructional activities. In the following sections, we describe these perspectives in greater detail and explain how social semiotics and aspects of writer's identity contribute to our operationalization of powerful knowledge.

2.1. Powerful knowledge

In the theory of powerful knowledge, introduced by Michael Young (2009, 2013), emphasis is placed on all students' right to access specific forms of knowledge in school. This type of knowledge differs from students' everyday experiences and serves as a tool for interpreting and understanding the world in a more nuanced way. It is formulated within academic disciplines and transformed into the content of school subjects. While students' everyday knowledge provides an important foundation for learning, it is often context-bound and limited in its capacity to support abstract or generalizable understandings. Powerful disciplinary knowledge, by contrast, enables students to transcend their immediate experiences, but becomes accessible only when teachers deliberately create bridges between everyday understandings and more disciplinary ways of thinking. Such pedagogical work involves transforming students' intuitive ideas into gateways for engaging with disciplinary concepts, thereby enabling progression from familiar experiences to more coherent and conceptually oriented forms of disciplinary knowledge, supported through engagement in subject-specific practices. By unlocking this knowledge, students are given opportunities to develop new ways of thinking and expressing themselves, as well as access to a conceptual language that enables them to understand and engage with issues beyond their everyday experience. Thus, it clarifies what kinds of subject-specific knowledge empower students to influence their own life conditions (Young, 2009, 2013).

The concept of *epistemic quality* provides a means of examining how powerful knowledge is enacted and made visible in classroom teaching practices. Drawing on Winch's (2013) distinction between *knowledge by acquaintance, knowledge that* and *knowledge how*, Hudson et al. (2023) use the concept of *epistemic quality* to examine the extent to which teaching enables students to move from experience-based familiarity towards more systematic, principled and usable forms of knowledge within school subjects. Since school subjects are linked to different academic disciplines with distinct theoretical traditions, epistemic quality varies across subjects. *Knowledge by acquaintance* involves becoming familiar with events, processes or individuals through experience. *Knowledge that* refers to subject-specific conceptual and propositional understanding, while *knowledge how* concerns the capacity to use subject-specific knowledge in disciplinary practices. It involves not only performing a task, but using concepts, principles and forms of reasoning in ways that are recognized as meaningful within the subject.

Few studies have applied the concept of powerful knowledge to the teaching of writing. Lindholm et al. (2025) demonstrate how writing can serve as a tool for students to process, interpret, and deepen their engagement with literary texts. However, to the best of our knowledge, no research to date has examined writing instruction explicitly through the lens of this theoretical framework.

As a theoretical contribution, we propose a multi-faceted conceptualization of powerful knowledge of story writing in early primary school. Based on social-semiotic and sociocultural theories, we argue that this knowledge encompasses both generalizable conventions for planning, producing and structuring texts and knowledge of writing as a socially embedded and purposeful act (see Section 2.2). In line with Young (2009, 2013), these forms of knowledge are potentially powerful because they involve concepts, conventions, and strategies that can support students in making deliberate choices about content, structure, language, audience, and reader engagement across writing situations. Moreover, we argue that powerful knowledge of writing is also connected to the conditions through which young students may come to see themselves as competent and valued participants in writing practices (Section 2.3). In the coming sections, we elaborate on the theories we draw on in this conceptualization.

2.2. Writing as a semiotically mediated social act

To understand what constitutes powerful knowledge in writing instruction, we draw on the wheel of writing model (Berge et al., 2016). It follows that we view writing as a semiotically mediated communicative act embedded in classroom practices and directed towards various purposes. In the context of schooling, this means that students draw on different semiotic resources, such as graphic means, vocabulary, and grammar to engage in different acts of writing, such as to imagine, describe, reflect, and convince. In a wider social semiotic frame (e.g., Bezemer & Kress, 2016), semiotic resources also include shared cultural references and practices that writers draw upon as funds of knowledge in their writing (Mannard, 2025, cf. Moll et al., 1992).

Writing acts are embedded both in specific classroom practices and in a larger sociocultural context in which textual norms are negotiated (Berge et al., 2016). According to the wheel of writing, the *act* of writing to narrate and imagine typically aligns with the *purpose* of creating textual worlds. However, it is also possible to use narratives for other purposes, such as persuasion or identity formation (Berge et al., 2016). Moreover, writing practices may draw on different acts of writing. In classrooms, it is common to produce writing not only for various recipients (most commonly, teachers) but to support knowledge development and cognitive processes (Berge et al., 2016; Christensen et al., 2014). For example,

writing acts of organizing and structuring content are instrumental in the planning stage of writing stories (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981). In this study, we use the wheel of writing as a lens to understand what aspects of stories and story writing (including writing acts) that are foregrounded by the adults active in the classroom, mainly the librarian and the author, and thus made available as knowledge to the students.

To enable a more fine-grained understanding of the characteristics of stories emphasized in the teaching, we draw inspiration from the conceptualization of the narrative genre provided by social-semiotic genre theory (Martin & Rose, 2008). Drawing on earlier works by Labov and Waletski (1997), Martin and Rose (2008) describe narratives in terms of a generic macrostructure often consisting of an orientation that sets the scene of the story, a complication that introduces obstacle or conflict at the core of the story, an evaluation which increases the narrative tension by suspending events and showing the characters' or writer's attitude to the problem, and a resolution to the problem. Through this structure, it is possible to engage the reader by building and releasing suspense (Martin & Rose, 2008).

In the present study, we view the typical staging of narratives as a potential semiotic resource that students can use to perform writing acts (Berge et al., 2016) and fulfil communicative goals (Martin & Rose, 2008).

2.3. Aspects of writer's identity

While the social-semiotic perspective outline different resources and communicative acts connected to stories and story writing, we also take an interest in the students' opportunities to become recognized as someone who can participate in story writing practices. As suggested by Berge et al. (2016), identity formation is a possible purpose of engaging in writing. Moreover, it is a core element in literacy teaching (Gee, 2015), particularly in classrooms with second-language learners (e.g., Cummins & Early, 2011)

In this study, we focus on the students' possibilities to develop their identities as *writers* inspired by Ivanić (1998). Although Ivanić (1998) is primarily concerned with mature writers and academic writing, her discussion of different aspects of writer's identity is applicable also to younger writers. According to Ivanić, the *autobiographical self* is associated with the identity that students bring with them to writing ("their roots … where they are coming from", see Ivanić, 1998, p. 24). Teaching attuned to the students' biographical selves is in line with Cummins and Early's (2011) view of identity-affirming and culturally relevant pedagogy that connects with the students' lives and experiences to foster their learning and identity formation as writers (see also Mannard, 2025; Moll et al., 1992). Moreover, Ivanić describes the *discoursal self* as connected to the characteristics of the written text and the writer's particular voice. While the students' individual texts are not analyzed in the present study, we will consider how the students are supported in developing ideas, content, and styles for their writing as potential features of a discoursal self. Finally, Ivanić identifies the aspect *self as author*. This concerns the extent to which the writers see themselves as authors which, as Ivanić (1998) points out, is connected to the autobiographical self – for example, the writer's life history as a source of ideas. The teaching of writing can, to a greater or lesser degree, support the students in developing an image of *self as author*.

In our utilization of Ivanić's framework, we cannot draw conclusions about the identities actually adopted by the students. Instead, we use Ivanić's concepts to discern how the students were positioned as writers in the instruction led by the librarian and the author. In the analysis, we relate aspects of writer's identity to powerful knowledge (see Section 3.1).

3. Method and material

The study, conducted in late 2024, is part of a larger research initiative focusing on schools facing major challenges. This guided our choice of the participating school which is located in a multilingual urban area that can be described as socially disadvantaged. According to statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education (2026), close to 90 % of the students at the participating school had a foreign background, defined as being born abroad or born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents, in the 2024/25 school year. According to the principal of the school, all the students in the school were second-language learners of Swedish. Moreover, the school provided mother tongue instruction in more than a dozen languages. Common first languages of the students were Arabic (the largest group), Bosnian-Croation-Serbian, Somali, Dari, Albanian and Kurdish.

We established contact with the school, including the participating librarian, through the researchers' professional network. Like many schools with a high proportion of second-language learners (e.g., Varga et al., 2023), the school had adopted language-focused teaching practices, including genre-based pedagogy, to support the literacy development of the students. Furthermore, the school had worked proactively to align with the policy of staffed libraries to be implemented in 2025. This meant well-developed forms of collaboration between teachers and the school librarian.

The focus of the study was a book project in which the students produced individual one-page narrative texts that were compiled and printed in a book. In the project, a school librarian cooperated with two classroom teachers and invited an author of children's books to inspire the students' writing.

Inspired by ethnographic methods of data collection (Andersson-Levitt, 2006), the first author conducted observations of eight lessons (60 min each, eight hours in total) over a period of four weeks. They took place in two grade 3 classrooms with about 15 students in one classroom (A) and 14 students in the other (B). The nature of the observed lessons is described below:

- Lesson 1 (A): Introduction of the book project and story writing, held by the librarian
- Lesson 2 (A) and Lesson 1 (B): an author shared "writing tips" for good stories and engaged the students in creative writing
- Lesson 3–5 (A) and 2–3 (B): individual writing to finish the stories, sometimes accompanied by instructions provided by the librarian

These lessons were documented by audio recordings and supplementary field notes with the researcher as participant observer. Moreover, the first author also observed a book launch event that took place in the following spring while taking field notes. The audio recordings were manually transcribed with a focus on instances of whole-class interaction (in total 17 324 words).

The school librarian had no teaching background, but several years of previous experience of working with adolescents in schools and recreation centers. At the time of the study, she had worked at the school for 2.5 years. As previously mentioned, the students had Swedish as their second language and were diverse in terms of their first languages. The two student groups were led by two qualified teachers, but they rarely participated in the whole-class interaction that occurred in the observed lessons. However, in our observation, we found that both the teachers and the students used metalanguage for narrative texts associated with genre-based instruction. Also participating in the study is an author of Swedish children's books who was invited by the librarian to lead an inspirational workshop. She had previous experiences of visiting the school and the area, but the students included in the present study met her for the first time.

Prior to the observations, the first author had explained his role as a researcher and his interest in documenting literacy teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms to all the participants. During the observations, the researcher was largely seated at the back of the classroom focused on the interaction between the adults and the students. However, to build trust and rapport with the participants and gain a better contextual understanding (Andersson-Levitt, 2006), the researcher also interacted with the participants before and after the classes, and when students wished to show their writing or ask questions. This role, with an explicit research agenda and relatively limited interactions during a short time span, aligns with what Tracy (2025, p. 146–147) describes as a *focused witness*. As noted by Tracy (2025), this focused role is less likely to draw on participants' own interpretations and revealed identities. Instead, the researcher's interpretations drew on a theoretical understanding of the field and practical experience of being a second-language teacher.

The study has been approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (ref. 2024– 02,300-01) and followed the guidelines of good research practice according to the Swedish Research Council (Swedish Research Council, 2024). Participants gave their informed consent before the study was conducted, including consent from the students' caregivers to observe the teaching and record classroom communication. Since our primary focus was on the adults, we followed the principle of data minimization and did not collect detailed information about individual students.

Since our thematic analysis focused on participants' expressed meanings rather than the linguistic form of their utterances, we conducted transcriptions according to the standards of written language (Nikander, 2008), as features such as pauses, prosody, and other interactional details were not central to the analysis. Selected excerpts were translated from Swedish to English by the first author. These translations were supported by Gemini Generative AI. To ensure confidentiality, we use pseudonyms in all data excerpts. This also applies to specific didactic models used by the participants, such as *Tess Express.*

In the transcripts, we use *italics* for clear emphasis. Moreover, we use "…" to mark brief pauses in the discourse and "/…/" for omitted discourse.

3.1. Analysis

The analysis was inspired by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020) and characterized by an abductive (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) process in which themes were developed through an interplay with theoretical perspectives. The themes address aspects of the observed lessons and activities that were relevant to our aim and research questions, with a primary focus on the participating librarian's and author's contributions. In response to RQ1, the social-semiotic theoretical underpinnings enabled us to identify how the participants prioritized different properties of stories and story writing. This included semiotic resources that the students were encouraged to use in their written communication, such as structure, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, cultural references, and prescribed themes. Since our conceptualization of powerful knowledge includes knowledge of writing as a socially embedded and purposeful act (Berge et al., 2016; Martin & Rose, 2008), we also considered the extent to which the participants stressed the functional aspects of using these semiotic resources in writing. This social-semiotic perspective guided the development of themes 2–4 (see below).

In the abductive and reflexive process of moving between data and theoretical concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2020), we discovered the need for additional theoretical perspectives and took inspiration from Ivanić (1998) to interrogate dimensions of writer's identity that the students were pedagogically offered by the adult participants (RQ2). Since Ivanić is primarily concerned with mature writers (rather than emerging writers) and connect identity formation to text creation (rather than writing instruction), we adapted Ivanić's aspects of writer's identity by connecting it to powerful knowledge.

Self as author relates to access to legitimized participation in a knowledge practice (Young, 2009), while *discoursal self* is associated with access to disciplinary ways of meaning-making (see Hudson et al., 2023), involving metalinguistic knowledge about stories (Martin & Rose, 2008), writing acts (Berge et al., 2016) and practices of creative writing (Barton, 2024). Finally, we connect *autobiographical self* to possibilities to bridge everyday and specialized knowledge as a way to develop powerful knowledge (Young, 2009) while affirming existing knowledges, experiences, and identities (Cummins & Early, 2011; Mannard, 2025; Moll et al., 1992). We included these aspects in the formation of all the themes to discern how the students were positioned as writers (RQ2).

Our analysis followed the steps of data familiarization, generating initial codes, and searching for potential themes that are reviewed and finalized (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020). In our familiarization of the data, we identified activities and interactions relating to properties of stories and story writing (RQ1) and how the students were positioned as writers (RQ2). In relation to RQ1, we utilized codes related to acts and purposes of story writing as well as semiotic resources (Berge et al., 2016) such as text structure (see also Martin & Rose, 2008), graphic means (e.g., punctuation and typeface), vocabulary and cultural references. These aspects also relate to developing students' discoursal selves as competent story writers (Ivanić, 1998). Regarding the other aspects of writer's identity (Ivanić, 1998), we utilized codes related to instances in which the adults sought to connect to the students' interests and experiences and explicitly positioned them as writers. Examples of preliminary categories or themes that we developed based on these codes were "Identity-formation as a writer", "Writing as an author", "Thematic content", "Structure and cohesion", "Spelling and punctuation" and "Imagining":

The finalized themes we developed in dialogue with theoretical perspectives are as follows:

1. Supporting students' self-image as authors.
2. Writing as an author: creating textual worlds through imagining.
3. Using macrostructure and cohesion to address reader expectations.
4. Different views on the negotiation of textual form.

The first theme mainly addresses RQ2 while the themes 2–4 answer both RQ's, although with different emphases. When these themes had been finalized, we employed the concept of epistemic quality (Hudson et al., 2023) to further analyze the forms of knowledge that were made available to the students (i.e., *knowledge by acquaintance*, *knowledge that*, and *knowledge how*) and whether the teaching enabled movement from experience-based familiarity towards more systematic, principled and usable knowledge about literary writing.

4. Findings

As shown in Section 3.1, we developed four themes that capture how story writing and writer's identity were negotiated in the project. The first theme (Section 4.1) concerns how the students were positioned as authors through the organization and framing of the book project. The second (Section 4.2) examines how the participants modeled creative strategies for imagining and constructing narrative worlds. The third (Section 4.3) addresses the emphasis on narrative macrostructure and cohesion in relation to

reader expectations. The final theme (Section 4.4) focuses on how textual form, including conventions of spelling and punctuation, was negotiated in the teaching.

4.1. Supporting students' self-image as authors

In following the project, we observed several instances in which the students were invited to view themselves as writers and authors. For example, during the first observed lesson, the school librarian underscored that all the students would experience writing a book and have a claim to the title of author (Excerpt 1):

Excerpt 1, Lesson 1A

Librarian: Yes! You're going to write a *book. All of you* will get to be part of writing a book. Isn't that pretty cool? I mean, there are lots of adults who never get to, or never manage to, write a book. But when we've done this, you'll all be able to say, I'm an *author. I've* actually written a *book.* And not many people can say that. *I* can't say that. [teacher's name], have you written a book?

Teacher: No. Not yet. [laughs]

Librarian: No, we're not authors. But all of *you* will be *authors*.

As evident in the excerpt, the librarian used exclamations, emphasis, and evaluative language ("pretty cool") and drew comparison with adults (including herself and the teacher) who could not claim authorhood – unlike the students when they had finished their stories. Moreover, she underscored that their stories would result in a "*real* book" available in the library (not shown in the excerpt). The students were also reminded about the book when engaged in pre-writing activities. For example, after an activity in which the students wrote down information about the main character of their story, the librarian enthused that "So this is going to be such a great and exciting book! I can't wait to have it in my hands and read all the stories" (Lesson 1A). This enthusiasm for the students' ideas invites an image of a discoursal self, involving the capacity to engage readers (Ivanič, 1998).

When the author visited the groups, she described herself as "crazy about writing", in one of the groups (Lesson 1B) as a "writing geek", with other relatable examples of what "geek" could mean (e.g., "football geek"). She also invited discussions about what an author is and does. For example, based on students' suggestions, she acknowledged that some authors illustrate their stories but told them that other people do this for her. Instead, she emphasized the creation of ideas and stories as her core work. After such an introduction to what it means to be an author, she referred to the upcoming publication of the book by saying that the students were "*also* going to create stories", Moreover, she promised sharing "exactly how … *I* write stories" (Lesson 2A). Throughout the lesson, she also continually invited the students to see her as a model for writing. This is evident in the way she engaged the students by expressing her enthusiasm for reading and writing and sharing her "tools of the trade" for creating good stories (Excerpt 2):

Excerpt 2, Lesson 2A

Author: Do you know what happens when I sit down and read a book then? [*gasps*] *Completely* inside that story [*whispers*]. And do you know what happens then? I forget *everything* else! And that is so wonderful. And *that* is what people who read your stories will do too. When you have written them. They will be completely inside *your* stories and just [*gasp*]. But there *are* some tips one can keep in mind.

When the author assured the students that they would be able to engross their readers, she invited the students' discoursal self as capable authors of stories. This foreshadowed the more concrete writing techniques she demonstrated in the later part of the lesson (see Sections 4.2–4.4).

The following lessons in which the librarian supported their writing did not emphasize the identity work in the same way. However, it was salient in the concluding launch of the book which occurred at the city library some distance from the school. The launching event gathered third-grade students from all three schools participating in the book project. Also present were four school librarians and an author. We observed that the students were led past a table displaying printed versions of their books and were seated on chairs in front of a stage and were praised by the librarians as they took turns in commenting on the achievement. For example, one librarian stressed that the "now you are writers" while another mentioned how the stories moved her in different ways, for example that she got afraid when she had to move through a dark forest and sad when she read a story about bullying. Moreover, the author remarked that the students were authors "just like her". She also commented appreciatively on different themes in the stories, mentioned several of their titles and finally read three selected stories. Overall, the launch event was geared towards shaping the students' identity as authors by encouraging the students to view themselves as author and by affirming their accomplishment of enaging readers through their writing as part of their discoursal selves.

In relation to epistemic quality, the author visit and the launch event introduced the students to *knowledge by acquaintance*, since they received first-hand experience of meeting an author and launching a book. Moreover, the activities offered students potential access to *knowledge that* of story writing as a social and purposeful practice that invokes responses in the reader. As shown in Sections 4.2–4.4, this was reinforced repeatedly as the librarian and the author continually emphasized reader engagement when they taught various aspects of story writing.

4.2. Writing as an author: creating textual worlds through imagining

As indicated in Section 4.1, another prominent theme, particularly during the author-led session, was "tools of the trade" for writing as an author. She specifically highlighted five tips for writing and dramatically held off the final (and best) tip until the very end of the lesson – thus also modeling the suspense of a story (Excerpt 3):

Excerpt 3, Lesson 1B:

Author: And this is something we absolutely *must not* forget when we write.

If you do this, then [teacher's name], when she reads your stories, will go, "Uhhh… [takes a dramatic breath] what's going on in 3A? Woo! Wow! I can't stop reading! It's so good! It's amazing!" If you do this when you write. So, *if* I happen to forget before we leave today […] you have to remind me. Okay?

She labelled her tips quite provocatively by proposing "lying" and "stealing" as key advice for writing. She accompanied these tips with examples and amendments, for example in Lesson 2A, by recounting how she unexpectedly saw the King and Queen of Sweden on the school parking lot who were also accompanied by the football star Zlatan. She rounded this off by asserting: "In stories, I can meet as many Zlatans as I want, invite him for a kebab, throw a cake in the face or have a dance with the King … in stories *anything* can happen." (Lesson 2A).

Through the notion of "lying", the author illustrated the creation of textual words by playfully drawing on real-world persons and concepts. Drawing on Harry Potter, she similarly exemplified the strategy of "lying" by saying that she could not write about "a

boy going to wizard school" but perhaps a girl going to a falafel school (Excerpt 4):

Excerpt 4, Lesson 2A

Author: But I could write about a girl who goes to a… what kind of school should we have? A falafel school.

Student: Falafel!

Author: So, the next book I write will be about a girl who goes to a falafel school. And you'd have *no idea* that I was actually thinking about Harry Potter to begin with.

By provocative labels, evaluative language, and an interactive stance, the author engaged the students in a practice of imagining and thinking like an author, which is connected to developing a discoursal self. Moreover, she drew on cultural references, both general ones (the King and Queen of Sweden, Harry Potter) and those particularly connected to suburban areas, such as Zlatan Ibrahimović (a widely recognized Swedish football star from a multicultural urban neighborhood) and eating falafel (a popular Middle Eastern dish associated with similar areas).Thus, she introduced culturally recognizable figures as semiotic resources for authorial imagining, allowing students to mobilize shared cultural associations in their writing while also accentuating their presumed autobiographical self in their identity formation as authors.

The librarian's approach differed somewhat from the author with respect to "stealing" and "lying" as tools for writers. Before writing a short text with the students, she explicitly discouraged them from incorporating real characters in their stories. This is illustrated in Excerpt 5:

Excerpt 5, Lesson 1A

Librarian: And now we're going to come up with our own main character. We're going to make a short little story. So now I want everyone to think quietly to themselves. No talking. Think of a name—it can be anyone, but it shouldn't be a real person. No celebrities, no Mbappé, no Ronaldo, no, I don't know… Billie Eilish. [Many students start talking, some about Billie Eilish. The librarian hushes them.] It has to be a made-up person. So now we're quiet and think to ourselves. Think of a name—a made-up name.

By closing down the possibilities of recontextualizing popular culture references as semiotic resources, the librarian, in this particular instruction, associated authorial imagining with coming up with fictional characters with unique identities and names.

While the author did not create a whole text with the students, she performed a short writing activity to spur their imagination. The students were asked to write sentences starting with "I wish …" and include a color in the sentences. After discouraging "boring" examples such as "I wish for a new iPhone", she gave examples such as "I wish that it's raining green elephants" and "I wish for a purple diamond car". This engaged the students in writing acts of narrating and imagining. Moreover, she read sentences from different students and commented on them, for example, "'I wish I could take the Blue King's place.' Oh, here's a story: someone pushes the Blue King off his throne and takes over the kingdom. *Amazing*." (Lesson 2A, Lesson 1B). The author demonstrated how the students' creative examples piqued her curiosity and wish to read their texts. Thus, she once again focused on their collective capacity as writers and the formation of their discoursal selves.

As previously mentioned, the author concluded the lesson by giving her *top tip*. She admitted her relief that she still had the time to give the advice and warned that their teacher would "practically faint with joy when she reads [their] stories." She then explained the notion of expressive (show don't tell) writing, by encouraging the students to describe what characters *do* when they are feeling or experiencing something. In this phase of the lesson, the teacher also drew a figure on the whiteboard with exaggerated ears and eyes along with a large nose, mouth, and hand. She playfully named it *Tess Express* and explained the value of using sensory descriptions as semiotic resources in expressive writing. This was also followed by an example of a character (Gary) attending a disco (Excerpt 6):

Excerpt 6, Lesson 1B

Author: I wouldn't just write "Gary is at a disco" [speaks in a flat voice]. I want life! I want feeling! Gary dances so hard the floor shakes! [stomps] He *smells* the popcorn. He *grabs* a handful. It crunches between his teeth. The music pounds in his ears. He goes up and asks a hottie to dance. His stomach *flutters*. There are so many feelings! So much happens in stories—and then you also want to know what it *feels like.* Sometimes you're face to face with a *monster*. Then I don't just want to read "there's a monster." I need to know what it *feels like* to meet one! Maybe your heart is pounding like crazy! [beats chest quickly] You're sweating! It's alive—all the time!

While the other activities of imagining focused on what happens in the story, modeling of expressive writing focused on imagining the emotive and perceptive processes of the characters. Notably, these creative processes potentially aimed at developing the students' voices and discoursal selves were mostly modeled during the session with the author. While the librarian also prompted the students to generate content in stories, for example in joint writing activities, they were mostly focused on establishing background information about characters that could be used in the story. For example, the librarian gave a "character sheet" to the students for noting down where the character lives, their fondest wish, what they enjoy doing, and what they are afraid of. This exercise actualized writing acts of storing information which could later be used in their narratives to create textual worlds.

As will be illuminated in Section 4.3, the librarian foregrounded features concerning the generic shape of texts, such as schematic structure and basic writing conventions. However, she also expressed expectations for themes to include in the texts, which relates more closely to the specific textual worlds created by the students. In the introductory lesson (Lesson 1A), she showed examples of themes on a presentation slide which the students were asked to read: love and friendship, fear and bravery, and loneliness and togetherness. She encouraged the students to take inspiration from these themes and use them as semiotic resources in their writing.

As the students wrote their stories, the librarian expressed to the researcher that she should have been clearer about including these themes, since several did not include positive relationships in their stories. In one of the final lessons, the librarian reminded the students to include such relationships (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7, Lesson 4A

Librarian: Do you remember that we had a *theme* for the texts? A theme about *friendship* and relationships? So, if you've written, for example… If I've written about a girl named *Joanna*, then maybe I write something like this: "Joanna is a girl who lives in [city]. And she woke up. And then she went to work. And then she got scared of a *spider*. And then she went home and then she went to sleep." And that's fine, but are there any friends in it? Are there any friendship relationships in it? No. So you read through your text and you think: *Is* this about *friendship* in any way? That's what you should think about when you read through your texts. And if it's *not*, that's totally okay. Then you can *add* it. You can *squeeze* it into the text. So, if I've written that she wakes up and goes to school and then goes home

and goes to bed, then I can add: "On the way home Joanna met a friend named, uh, Mohammed."

Student: Mohammed?

Librarian: And they started talking about *spiders*. And he was *also* afraid of spiders. And that's how you can *add* things. That's what's so great about writing and about being an *author*—you get to decide everything yourself.

In the exchange, the librarian gave an example of a story lacking the desired element and modeled how the students – who were close to finishing their texts—could revise their stories ("squeeze it in") to connect to the theme of friendship. She concluded by underscoring the author's freedom in revising the text ("you get to decide everything yourself"). However, this freedom of creating textual worlds still involved adhering to expectations which in this case relate to the common values of the Swedish national curriculum.

In relation to epistemic quality, both the author and the librarian provided experiences conducive to developing *knowledge by acquaintance* for writing stories by connecting to students' prior knowledge and experiences. On the part of the author, this involved addressing the students' presumed autobiographical selves by acknowledging popular and urban culture as relevant inspiration for creative writing. While the librarian discouraged the students from using real people in their writing, she referred to common values and themes, such as friendship, and everyday situations and common fears as inspiration for writing, opening possibilities for knowledge by acquaintance. Moreover, both the librarian and the author made aspects of story writing pedagogically available as *knowledge that*. This involved specialized resources and strategies for literary writing. The librarian focused on the concept of character and engaged the students in the writing act of storing information in the planning phase of the writing, while the author emphasized and modeled different strategies for creative writing, such as "lying", using cultural references and writing expressively. In this sense, the project opened possibilities for epistemic quality by connecting students' experiences and imagination with more specialized resources valued within literary writing practices.

4.3. Using macrostructure and cohesion to address reader expectations

Across the dataset, there was a considerable focus on modeling the macrostructure of narrative texts. This is exemplified in Excerpt 8 from the first lesson, in which the librarian highlighted "things that are good to keep in mind when you're writing a story".

Excerpt 8, Lesson 1A

Librarian: There are a few things that are good to keep in mind when you're writing a story. Things we'll be thinking about a bit today, too. [shows a picture] When you write a story, you need a *beginning*. What's a beginning? When does it come? What is a beginning, and where do you think it should go?

Teacher: It's what we call the *orientation*.

Librarian: Ah, orientation. And where should that be in the story?

Student: At the top.

Librarian: Yes, at the top. [gestures] First you have the *title*, and then comes the *start* of the story, right? Up there. That's exactly right. If you have a story, it starts up there—at the *beginning*. And then comes the *events*—what happens, the action—in the middle, right? And then?

Student: The ending.

Librarian: The ending. And when it's the ending, you have to write in a way that makes the reader *understand* that it's the end, right? If I'm reading a text and it just keeps going and going and suddenly stops—you shouldn't be super surprised, like, "Oh, it ended already?" It should *feel* like, "*Now* the story's over."

In the dialogue, the librarian highlights the macrostructure as a resource for organizing narrative meaning in a way that mirrors the National Curriculum for Swedish as a second language (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022): that students in Grade 3 should learn that stories can be organized with an introduction, a chain of events, and an ending. Regarding *beginning*, the classroom teacher clarified "it's what we call *orientation"*. This term is commonly used in the pedagogical metalanguage of genre-based literacy programs (see Rose & Martin, 2012) which has gained traction in Sweden (e.g., Varga et al., 2023; Walldén, 2019). As seen in the above excerpt, the librarian stressed the *function* of the ending to guide the reader to the story's conclusion: "*Now*, the story's over".

In her first lesson in group A, the teacher guided the students through a short joint construction of a story. In this process, she asked the students to generate ideas about a character and exposing it to a *problem*. She stressed that "something a bit *bothersome*" needs to happen. This resulted in a story about the character Mahida who had a conflict with a friend during a football training session. In Excerpt 9, the librarian guides the students towards the ending of the story.

Excerpt 9, Lesson 1A

Librarian: Her best friend Sara. She's said really nasty things — maybe even laid into her. And the coach saw everything, and rode home. And now she's just lying there on the sofa, waiting to be told off by her mum and dad. And that they're going to be really angry when they hear what she's said and done. How do you think she's feeling? What does it feel like? How do you think it feels in her stomach? What do you say?

Student: Nervous and scared.

Librarian: She's nervous and scared. Yes—very good. She feels nervous and scared.

Student: My stomach's fluttering.

Librarian: Yes, what did you say? Your stomach's fluttering. Is that in a good way or a bad way?

Student: Bad way.

Librarian: It might hurt a bit in the stomach. Right? /…/

Student: She feels guilty.

Librarian: She feels guilty. Very good. Feeling guilty. Oh dear. Now it's really hard. Now it's really tough for Mahida, right? We've got a big problem. Now we have to solve this problem. Now we have to write a solution. How are we going to solve Mahida's problem? How are we going to solve Mahida's problem? How can we make everything okay again in the story? /…/ Think about how we should do to solve it.

Through the dialogue, the librarian underscored the feelings of the character as a way to build suspense before the resolution. She asked the students repeated questions about how Mahida was feeling and used evaluative language ("How do you think it feels in her stomach?", "Now, it's really tough") in order to prepare for the solution. This indicates how the modeling of the librarian focused on both the events as they happen to main character of the story and the inner life of the character as the story progressed.

The macrostructure of stories was also modeled by the author. While she did not attempt to write a complete story with the students, she outlined the following main parts of a story: "character", "problem", "solution" and "ending" and sketched students' suggestions on the whiteboard. The difference was that she equipped the character with a plan. In Lesson 1B, she combined two different suggestions of plans: that the character would "go and save the world" and also "go and become a football player". The following exchange about moving the story forward is displayed in Excerpt 10:

Excerpt 10, Lesson 1(B)

Author: Look. *Problem*. [writes] Because when you add that, the story becomes much more exciting. Stephen is going to save the world. He runs into a problem. What happens to him?

Student: He's playing football. He injures something.

Author: Oh no! And he was supposed to save the world! He's hurt! Oh no, oh no! [writes: Problem – injured] Now we've given the reader a problem. Now we need to give the reader—or the character—a solution. How does he solve it?

Student: He had magical powers and heals himself!

Author: Ah, that's exactly the feeling you should have when you write! [writes: Solution – powers] /…/ He's got powers within him! Wonderful! I think we're almost done! But actually—we don't really *know*. We don't yet know how the story ends. The plan, after all, is that he'll become a football player and save the world. So far, we only know that he solves his injury problem. He brings out his powers. But what are we missing here?

Student: Ending.

Author: Very good. Ending.

Student: Orientation.

Author: I can tell you recognize this.

Student: Have we done an orientation?

Author: The orientation is "Stephen is going to save the world." /…/ [more students talking] Exciting! So how does it end? Does he manage to save the world?

Like the librarian, the author emphasized the function of incorporating the story elements ("when you add [a problem], the story becomes much more exciting … we've given the reader a problem"). In preparing the students' suggestions for an ending, she refers to the plan of the character and points out that they are still missing something. Echoing the teacher in the librarian-led deconstruction of the text, a student suggests – and wonders if they have done – "an orientation". The author acknowledged the students' background knowledge of story structure but appeared to make a different interpretation of its meaning by connecting it to the character's motivation rather than the introduction. In group 2, the author had a similar modeling session and commented enthusiastically when a student used the term "solution": "That really makes me happy to hear. It means you're working exactly the way authors do."

After having modeled the macrostructure, the author drew a figure displaying a dramatic curve marked by "beginning", "middle", and "end". She pointed out that the structure should follow this curve and "be the most exciting around the middle of the hill". She also warned them about not dedicating enough time to conclude the story. Reminding the students about the constraint of writing a one-page story, she asked the students how it would feel to read a story that stops "when it's at its *absolute* most exciting" and used her eraser to demonstrate how the curve is cut off by a lack of proper ending.

Moreover, the author sketched another line arching over the curve and called it a "red thing" that she wished the students to name. A student promptly chimed in "red thread" – a common metaphor for text-level cohesion in Swedish classrooms – and explained it with "everything should hang together". The author confirmed this and sketched an example of a story without a "red thread" (Excerpt 11).

Excerpt 11, Lesson 1B

Author: And you know, sometimes when I come to school, I read stories. And they start off so nicely. "Stephen is going to save the world." Oh, he got hurt. And then you kind of *get into it* when you start writing about the *problem*. He was hurt. He went to a *café* instead. Oh, how lovely! There he meets a little *monkey*. Oh, we're going to the U.S.! No, wait, Trump's in charge there. That doesn't sound very nice. Let's go to *Paris* instead! And now they're sitting in a little park eating kebab. [sketching events and a winding thread on the whiteboard]

Student: Kebab wrap.

Author: Ah! But wait a minute here. I mean, what? The reader's sitting there thinking: I was supposed to read a story about Stephen, who was going to save the *world*. What's he doing in a park in Paris eating kebab? Do you see what's happened to the red thread? Do you see? [points] The red thread is supposed to run all the way through the story to the end—and where is it now? *Way* off in the middle of nowhere! And then the reader's thinking: I was going to read about Stephen saving the world! You can't have *too* many problems and *too* many events, okay? Because then you'll never make it to the ending.

Once again, the author refers both to the reader's expectations for a complete story and to the need to plan the genre according to these genre conventions. Moreover, she draws on world knowledge (Donald Trump) and, once again, popular urban streetfood (kebab wrap) to engage the students. Thus, her modeling of genre structure sought to connect with the students' autobiographical selves.

In summary, both the author and the librarian foregrounded generic macrostructure and, in different ways, guided the students in the process of creating or outlining a narrative text. Moreover, both of them expressed a functional view by framing the genre conventions in terms of addressing readers' expectations of enjoying a complete text. Thus, the structure was not suggested as an end in itself but as part of a discoursal competence to create stories that engage readers. While the librarian wrote a short text together with the students, the author placed a greater emphasis on the process of planning the story and aligning the structure with a dramatic curve, thus ensuring a "red thread". Moreover, she continued to incorporate urban culture or more general references playfully to engage the students and connect with their autobiographical selves.

In relation to epistemic quality, the analyses show how the project made textual macrostructure and cohesion visible as resources for addressing reader expectations. Through concepts relating to structure and dramaturgy, the teaching held potential of introducing students to *knowledge that* about how stories can be organized and made both coherent and exciting for readers. As also evident in Section 4.2, the teaching opened possibilities for epistemic quality by connecting knowledge by acquaintance, such as relatable feelings, contexts and cultural references, with more specialized understandings of how literary texts are structured, connected and shaped for an audience.

4.4. Different views on the negotiation of textual form

In our observations of the teaching, we also noted expectations relating to surface-level characteristics of the text. For example, when speaking about the dramatic curve, the author pointed out that the students needed to write an exciting story that was concluded on one page (Lesson 1B). Similarly, in the lesson in which the students were supposed to finish their texts (Lesson 5A), the librarian pointed out that they were supposed to write exactly one page: "If you've written too little, you need to add a bit more, and if you've written too much, you need to shorten it a little!" Moreover, in the lesson following the author's presentation, when the students started to write their own stories, the librarian guided the students in the process of opening a blank document and changing the page format from A4 to A5 in the online word processor. This required successful navigation of several menus and settings which she acknowledged was "really hard" even for herself.

Another example of negotiating textual form was the correct use of punctuation and capitalization. The librarian stressed this in the first lesson, right after guiding the students through the expected macrostructure (Excerpt 12).

Excerpt 12, Lesson 1A

Librarian: And then when we write, we always start with…

Student: A capital letter.

Librarian: Exactly. And we end with…

Student: A full stop.

Librarian: A full stop or…

Student: A question mark.

Librarian: Or here it should also say ex–?

Student: -clamation mark.

Librarian: Exclamation mark.

Student: Yes, an exclamation mark. And we also think about the spelling.

The librarian elicits metalinguistic terms from the students that relate to expectations in the National Curriculum for Swedish as a second language for students in grade 3 to know basic writing conventions, including lower and uppercase letters, the most common punctuation marks, and the spelling of frequently occurring words. In the lessons devoted to finishing the stories, the librarian also reminded the students about, for example, capitalization of the name of the school and the need to add a space after using full stop: "When you write a full stop, it means you take a tiny little pause when you read … there should be a *space*." (Lesson 4A). In her explanation, the librarian also sketched a short text without any full stops and remarked that "this becomes really hard to read" and that "you have to use full stops pretty often [to] get a little break". Since she conveyed how semiotic resources connected to basic writing conventions support the reader in engaging with the text, she established a connection between form and function.

The author's approach to textual form was quite different. Very early in the lesson, she proclaimed an "eraser ban". This appeared to surprise the students, since they asked what would happen if they wrote incorrectly and questioned why they were under an eraser ban. The author responded in the following way (Excerpt 13):

Excerpt 13, Lesson B1

Author: Everyone's head in here is full of smart, wonderful, strange, funny thoughts and feelings. We can be completely sure of that. But when you *write*, there can be quite a lot to *think* about. You know that, [name], since you're a teacher, right? And you all know it too. Sometimes you need a full stop, sometimes a comma, capital letters, lowercase letters. /…/ Just thinking about it makes me exhausted. And what do you think happens? Here I am with the best idea in the world in my head, and I'm just about to start writing. What do you think happens if, at that exact moment, I start *thinking* too much, like: "Is this good? Is this bad? Should it be a full stop? Should it be a comma?" What happens to the idea? It…?

Student: You forget.

Author: Ah, I forget it! Exactly! It disappears! And this is really important. Everyone listen *one hundred* percent now. It's always *what* you write that matters when you write stories. Never *how*. You can be the worst speller in the whole world and still be the best author ever. You can have the worst handwriting in the world and still be the best author. Think about it—there are even people who can't hold a pen. Or type on a computer. Maybe they don't have *hands*. But they can still have the best ideas in the world. So this thing about neat handwriting and full stops and commas—that's just technique. They're two completely different things. Are you with me? This thing with full stops and that kind of stuff—those are things you practice at school. And of course you should keep doing that, because you want to get better and better and better. But when you're writing a story for the first time, you should just get your idea out.

In both groups, the author stressed that aspects of spelling and punctuation are secondary to the generation of ideas and building of textual worlds. She also mentioned that authors "don't have to write that neatly", that she knew an author who could barely write legibly, and that she had *other* people to help her check spelling and punctuation. The author framed textual form—at least regarding basic writing conventions—as something you "practice at school" but not something connected with a writer's identity, a discoursal self, or self as author. In this aspect, there was a great discrepancy between the guidance provided by the librarian and what they were offered by the author.

In relation to epistemic quality, the analysis shows how basic writing conventions were negotiated as part of literary writing. The librarian made formal expectations visible as *knowledge that* by eliciting terms such as capital letter, full stop, question mark and exclamation mark, while also connecting punctuation to readability and the reader's need for pauses. The author, in contrast, foregrounded idea generation and textual worlds, thus positioning spelling and punctuation as techniques that can be addressed later. Together, the excerpts indicate epistemic quality as the teaching offered both conventions that support reader expectations and broader understandings of the authorial task of creating meaningful stories.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to contribute knowledge about how story writing and writer's identity were negotiated in a grade 3 book project conducted by a librarian in collaboration with teachers and a professional author. The findings revealed that the librarian and the author led a multifaceted practice of writing instruction with sometimes contradictory priorities.

In relation to RQ1, "What properties of stories and story writing were made available as knowledge by the librarian and the author", both the librarian and the author emphasized that the students should apply a beginning-event-ending structure as a semiotic resource that corresponds to the Swedish National Curriculum. It is notable that both the librarian and the author underscored that the inclusion of a problem (not just events) makes the story

exciting to read and asked questions which elicited the students' thoughts about how the characters in the stories felt. This partly contrasts prior studies on early writing instruction in the Swedish context that indicate limited attention to such interpersonal aspects (see Ridell & Walldén, 2024b; Walldén, 2019; Vuorenpää, 2016, Yassin Falk, 2017), as has also been highlighted in international contexts (Ryan & Barton, 2014).

A functional and reader-centric view on genre structure was further evident when the librarian pointed out that the story must signal to the reader that it is finished. Moreover, the author elaborated on the genre structure by putting it in relation to a dramatic curve that showed both the necessity of a climax, in line with Haugli (2020), and the need to plan the writing to include a proper conclusion. Thus, the teaching elaborated significantly and functionally on the sparse description of story structures in the Swedish national curriculum (see Ridell & Walldén, 2024a) in a way that can support students in performing writing acts of narrating and imagining to construct textual words (see Berge et al., 2016).

In the teaching, we also observed how the author and librarian focused on strategies for creative writing. The author underscored strategies of engaging the reader when she praised students' "I wish …" sentences, which included unexpected additions of color, and also when she modeled strategies for expressive writing. As shown by Kızıltaş (2026) and Hubert et al. (2025), such strategies may support students' writing fluency and reduce their anxiety in writing. Furthermore, both the librarian and the author focused on strategies for planning the writing of the stories, for example, by focusing on a character's goals and keeping them in mind during the writing. In the scaffolding process led by the librarian, the students were engaged in the writing act of storing information about characters that would later be used in narrating writing acts. To differing degrees, the librarian and the author also acknowledged the spatial constraints of the book project and the proper use of semiotic resources in choosing page format, restricting the text to one page and using a standardized font. This indicates a contextually embedded practice of writing instruction that went beyond typical school writing practices in which the teacher is the sole reader (see Ryan & Barton, 2014).

There were also some differences in the librarian's and the author's approaches. For example, the librarian underscored that the stories should adhere to common values and—in contrast to the author—basic writing conventions involving proper use of punctuation and other graphic means. This underscores the teaching role adopted by the librarian that included attention to several aspects of the national curriculum. However, contrary to expectations of genre-based literacy programs (Rose & Martin, 2012), her teaching did not contain the explicit modeling of linguistic resources necessary to write stories. The inclusion of such potentially powerful metalinguistic knowledge was beyond the scope of the teaching observed, which is not surprising since it requires specialized knowledge that may be seen as the exclusive realm of teachers.

Overall, the study shows a practice of writing instruction that included but also transcended the formal textual conventions underscored in the Swedish national curriculum (Gourvennec et al., 2020; Liberg et al., 2012; Ridell & Walldén, 2024a; Sturk et al., 2020) and also more generally in language arts curricula (Barton et al., 2024; Gourvennec, 2020). In particular, a social and reader-centric view on writing was salient both in the overall framing of the project and in specific teaching activities focused on, for example, genre structure, basic writing conventions, planning and techniques for creative writing. In relation to epistemic quality, the focus on strategies for engaging the reader, adhering to expected genre structure and planning the writing process (see Flower & Hayes, 1981) shows how the teaching made specialized knowledge about stories and story writing visible to the students. The nature of this specialized knowledge aligns with our conceptualization of powerful knowledge, comprising both knowledge of generalizable conventions for planning, producing and structuring texts and knowledge of writing as a socially embedded and purposeful act.

In relation to RQ2, "How were students positioned as writers in relation to this knowledge?", the findings reveal that the act of writing stories also entailed negotiation of different aspects of writer's identity. The prevalent focus on textual properties and practices associated with stories and the process of writing offered opportunities for the students to develop their discoursal selves as capable writers of stories. This dimension can be understood in relation to epistemic quality, as the teaching offered students access to subject-specific discourses, genres, and linguistic resources associated with story writing. (Hudson et al., 2023; Young, 2009, 2013; Lindholm et al., 2025). The potential for the students' development of a discoursal self appeared particularly strong when the author validated their existing knowledge about story structure and commented on how authors use the same concepts and processes. The one-off nature of the occasion, and the constraints of doing several activities in one hour, did not leave much room for the kind of open-ended dialogue between students and professionals noted by Coles (2017), but the participating author clearly had an appreciative and supportive stance in efforts to bolster the students' discoursal selves. This can be understood in relation to epistemic quality, as the teaching made subject-specific discourses, genres, and linguistic resources associated with story writing available to students. Such knowledge may be seen as potentially powerful, since it can support students' access to more specialized ways of meaning-making within literary writing practices.

Moreover, on repeated occasions, the participating author sought to establish connections with the students' autobiographical selves by cultural references, both to popular culture and urban culture, that the students were encouraged to use as semiotic resources in their writing. Unlike the librarian, who asked the students not to include Billy Eilish and other known persons in their stories, the author invited the students to take inspiration and "steal" from stories and living persons they were familiar with as part of a legitimate creative practice. This aligns with Mannard's (2025) findings of writing mentors encouraging students to draw on popular culture and other funds of knowledge in their writing processes. In relation to powerful knowledge (Hudson et. al., 2023; Young, 2009), such efforts may serve as a bridge between everyday and specialized knowledge related to story writing, as also noted by Haugli's findings (2020).

Regarding whether the references to aspects of urban culture, such as popular street food and personages, actually engaged the students, we can only account for what was pedagogically offered. Certainly, there is a risk of stereotyping minoritized students according to superficial cultural traits (e.g., Sleeter, 2012). However, throughout the lesson, the author voiced a positive and affirmative stance in relation to the school and its surrounding area which shapes our interpretation that she genuinely sought to connect with the students while communicating high expectations of them forming a discoursal self for narrating stories.

Finally, on several occasions the book project invited the students to view themselves as writers. By giving the students access to disciplinary ways of meaning-making associated with authorship—through interactions with a professional author, engagement in a structured and authentic writing process, and participation in a public book launch—the project offered opportunities beyond ordinary school-based practices, thereby potentially elevating the status of the knowledge of writing they were offered and provided access to potentially powerful knowledge (Young, 2009, 2013).

The self-as-writer aspect was particularly apparent at the beginning of the study, when the students were introduced to the project and visited by the author. It was also reinforced in a potentially powerful way in the concluding book launch when they were complimented on their achievement by an author and received a printed version of the book. As noted in Coles' study (2017), a celebratory end-of-project event can be powerful for developing motivation and self-esteem. Although the author's classroom visit was a one-off occasion—as is often the case (Moynihan, 2009)—the study exemplifies that such visits can be a node in an extended practice (see Bergman & Persson, 2013) which, in this case, was sustained by the continual involvement of the librarian and the book launch in which a different author took part. It also appears possible that the involvement of several different schools may have added significance to the project for the students.

In relation to prior studies, there were also limitations in what the book project and author visit offered the students. Both Hubert et al. (2025) and Rumney et al. (2016) underscore the value of repeated and spaced sessions with external professionals to boost students' writing capabilities. The author visit in itself was a one-off activity which limited the students' opportunities to engage in open dialogue with a professional (cf. Coles, 2017). Moreover, as shown by Kızıltaş (2026), peer feedback is an important resource for writing development which was not utilized in the observed teaching. While the analysis showed that the teaching made aspects of *knowledge by acquaintance* and *knowledge that* visible to the students, the lack of opportunities for feedback from the author and their peers potentially limited the epistemic quality of the teaching with respect to *knowledge how* (see Hudson et al., 2023).

6. Conclusions and implications

In a context where Swedish schools are now mandated to have staffed libraries, the findings show how integrated libraries can be conceptualized not only as access points to books but as pedagogical actors in literacy development for linguistically diverse groups of students in socially disadvantaged areas. Moreover, the study gives a concrete portrayal of non-teachers as carriers of powerful knowledge. In the book project, the librarian and the author maintained high expectations for the students to engage in writing practices and build their identities as writers. At the same time, they offered support by a combined focus on macrostructure and creative modeling.

The study also indicates that genre-based teaching in the Swedish context may move beyond formulaic interpretations (e.g., Gourvennec et al., 2020; Liberg et al., 2012; Sturk et al., 2020; Walldén, 2019) by connecting macrostructure to reader expectations, modeling creative techniques, and integrating aspects such as planning, expressive writing, and intertextuality. At the same time, the study exposes possible tensions when the students are presented with differing views of the importance of textual conventions and practices of "stealing" by taking inspiration from real-world phenomena and other texts. While this may be tricky for the students to navigate, tensions such as these can also be viewed as productive since the students are exposed to different perspectives on writing that expand the concept beyond the narrow representation in the current national curriculum (Ridell & Walldén, 2024a). Awareness of how expectations on writing vary not only according to genre (e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012) but also depending on aspects such as context, writer, recipient, aim, and available semiotic resources (see Berge et al., 2016; Bezemer & Kress, 2016) can be powerful knowledge that could be fostered in writing projects such as the one reported in the current study.

However, the findings present of the present study is highly contextualized in the sense that we focused on whole-class discussions throughout eight lessons led by one librarian and one professional author. While we cannot make general claims based on such limited data, the empirical descriptions and theoretically grounded analyses can be analytically and naturalistically transferred (e.g., Tracy, 2025, p. 300), for example, by comparisons with collaboration and writing instruction in other contexts. Based on the findings, we wish to stress that schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas should not treat author visits as isolated motivational events but as structured identity-building literacy practices. Further research could take a longitudinal perspective and trace possibilities for reading and writing development across different projects. Moreover, research could investigate projects in which teachers engage more substantially together with other professionals in teaching practices. In the current study, the librarian appeared to shoulder many of the responsibilities normally held by teachers, including addressing curricular expectations in standardized tests.

Furthermore, future research should explore what professional teachers contribute when they collaborate closely with professionals, for example with respect to linguistic scaffolding, adherence to curricular goals, and potential discussions with the students on how expectations on writing differ according to context. Finally, we encourage studies that de-center the adults in literacy projects involving professionals and instead focus on how the students experience the activities and identities they are offered in the teaching. Such research could further build on the theoretical contribution we make in the current study by connecting writing instruction and writer's identity to the notion of powerful knowledge (Hudson et al., 2023; Young, 2009; Lindholm et al., 2025).

Statement regarding generative AI tools

During the preparation of this work the authors used Google Gemini and Chat GPT in order to translate data excerpts and, occasionally, to improve language use in the manuscript. After using these services, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Robert Walldén: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Anna Lindholm:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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