

# Teaching and Learning Modes and Media of H.C. Andersen Fairy Tales

**Nikolaj Elf**

Department of Culture Study, University of Southern Denmark

Odense, 5230 Odense M, Denmark

Email: nfe@sdu.dk.

**Abstract** This article explores how and why Andersen fairy tales could be taught at school in new multimodal ways that reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century networked, digital and popular culture. Based on social semiotic theory and Dewey's understanding of teaching and learning as "doing knowledge," a design model is presented for teaching the multiple modes and media of Andersen's work. It is argued that the model could contribute to a more semiotic rich and inquiry-based approach to Andersen and lead to the development of students' semiotic competence, which may help understanding Andersen in transformative ways. The model was used for designing four experiments in an intervention in four Danish upper-secondary classes. Focusing on an experiment that explores how animated Andersen fairy tales were taught and learned in analytical and creative ways in L1/mother tongue education (MTE), the empirical analysis finds that the experiment challenges teachers' and students' conceptions of how Andersen could be taught and learned at school. However, findings also suggest that a multimodal and inquiry-based approach could expand the dominating understanding of how and why Andersen could be taught in the L1/MTE subject. This finding may have implications for teaching other canonical world literature, such as Shakespeare and Melville.

**Key words** The Great Sea-Serpent; popular culture; multimodality; inquiry-based; semiocy.

**Author** **Nikolaj Elf**, Ph.D, is Associate Professor/Senior Lecturer at Department for the Study of Culture, University of Southern Denmark, and at the National Literacy Centre, University of Stavanger. His main research field is all aspects related to Language 1/L1-education (also known as Mother Tongue Education (MTE)), including literature, writing, media and multilingual education. He is a member of the steering committee and the coordinator of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) within the international Association for Research in L1 Education (ARLE).

The little fish had its own thoughts.  
 “That exceedingly long, thin serpent is perhaps the most wonderful fish in the ocean.  
 I have a feeling it is.”  
 — *The Great Sea-Serpent*, 1871

## Introduction

In 1871, Hans Christian Andersen wrote the fairy tale “The Great Sea-Serpent.” The story is based on a mind-blowing technological event which took place in 1866: The telegraph cable was laid down in the sea connecting New Foundland and Ireland. Andersen uses this event to tell a tale about the wonders of technology, suggesting — through the voice of the little fish, his hero — that the cable is like a mythical great sea-serpent. Some creatures in the ocean fear it, we learn from the story; but the little fish does not. Rather, the cable “is perhaps the most wonderful fish in the ocean.” More broadly, Andersen suggests that new technology represents inventions that are like myths. We should not be afraid of them, but explore them further.

In this article, Andersen’s “The Great Sea-Serpent” serves as an allegoric point of departure for reflecting on how technology may influence the teaching and learning of Andersen worldwide. Nowadays, we know that the telegraph was indeed a wonder that contributed to a technological, cultural, and social modernization. There is a direct line from the invention of the telegraph to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century invention of the internet and a networked digitalized global society, which we still struggle to grasp in all aspects. One thing is for certain, however. The digitalized networked society forces us to rethink all aspects of production, reception, and distribution of texts, including world literature texts, such as the canonical text of Andersen, Shakespeare, Melville, and many others.

More specifically, the goal of the article is to explore how old and new technologies could be integrated in the teaching of Andersen fairy tales in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Broadly speaking, young people are brought up and live in a media-saturated, networked, participatory and multimodal popular culture<sup>1</sup>. American literacy and learning scholar James Paul Gee clarifies the main aspects of popular culture:

We live, then, in an age of convergent media, production, participation, fluid group formation, and cognitive, social, and linguistic complexity — all embedded in contemporary popular culture. Digital tools help create and sustain these features of “modern times,” but they do not stand alone and cannot be studied

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1 See Bezemer and Kress.

in isolation from these features. (14)

When Gee speaks of convergent media, this makes sense in the case of Andersen considering the fact that his work nowadays exists both in the medium of paper and the mode of verbal writing, while at the same time has been reproduced and redistributed into a plethora of modes and media, such as his illustrated fairy tales found in books or the Internet or animations found on DVDs and streaming platforms. In the context of education, Gee's basic point is that teachers should consider such aspects when reflecting on teaching and learning any kind of text in school. Simply, the nature of text has changed, and so have students.

So, considering the teaching of *literature* within schooling, and more specifically an 19<sup>th</sup> century author like Andersen, the broad question is how literature could and should be taught within this 21<sup>st</sup> century context. Is this possible? And if so, how, and why? The literary institution may render Andersen a canonical author, as is the case on a global level. The present special issue on Andersen as world literature illustrates the point. Similarly, the educational institution may set up goals for teaching Andersen in school, as is the case in Denmark in mandatory secondary school; as it is the case with Shakespeare in England, and Melville in the US. But this does not imply that students in a classroom consider Andersen a worthwhile experience, and (would like to) engage in learning his work. Based on Gee's claim, we should probably expect the opposite. On the other hand, it may be that Andersen's work is in fact such a fascinating resource that is easy to ask students to read and engage in at school. This is what this article explores both theoretically and empirically. Based on an empirical research project conducted some years ago, I will explore the following research question: What happens when available modes and media of Andersen fairy tales — such as animations — are taught in L1 classrooms (in some regions termed mother tongue education, or simply MTE), and how can such teaching be justified from a pedagogical and curricular L1 perspective?

From a curricular and pedagogical perspective, the basic question is how it could be justified, and made meaningful for students, in school to teach Andersen — and other canonical authors in the world? This question will be framed in the theoretical section that follows, which presents three claims on teaching Andersen in the L1/MTE subject based on social semiotic theory<sup>1</sup> and an inquiry-based approach to knowledge production<sup>2</sup>.

Empirically, the article presents case-study findings from an intervention into

1 See Bezemer and Kress; Hodge and Kress.

2 See Dewey *Democracy*, Dewey *Art* and Bereiter; Elf.

four Danish L1/MTE classrooms on upper-secondary level in which modes and media of Andersen fairy tales were taught throughout a year (see figure 1a-d for resources used in the four experiments). The analysis focuses on what students did and learned from the fourth of these experiments that focused on animated Andersen-fairy tales, and to what extent it is rendered relevant by students and teachers to learn about Andersen in that way.

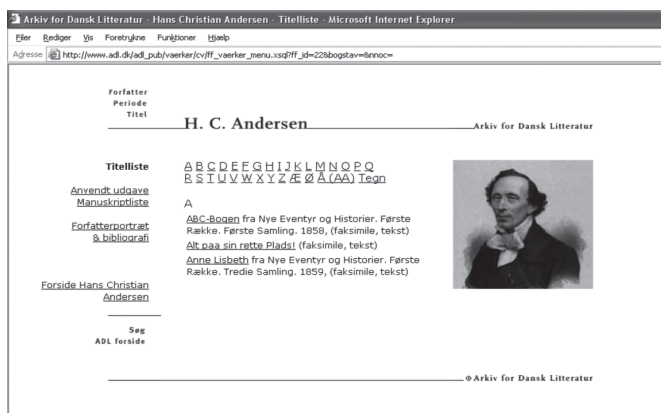


Figure 1a. Cropped screenshot from the homepage *Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur* (www.adl.dk) used in experiment 1 of the intervention.

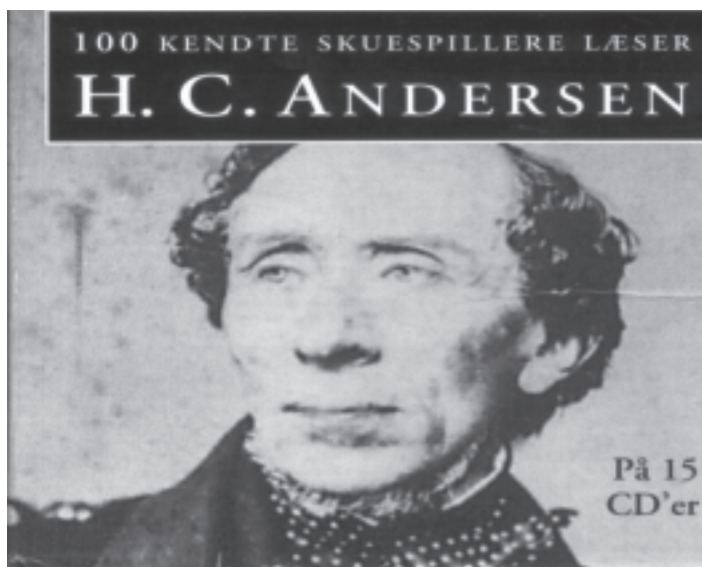


Figure 1b. Scanned cover picture of a collected work of 14 compact discs entitled *100 known actors reading H.C. Andersen* [My translation]. Readings from this and other collections are made available in experiment 2.



Figure 1c. Scanned picture from the fairy tale “Skyggen” (The Shadow) in an illustrated version of Andersen’s fairy tales from 1995 (illustrations by Otto Sten S.). Made available in experiment 3.

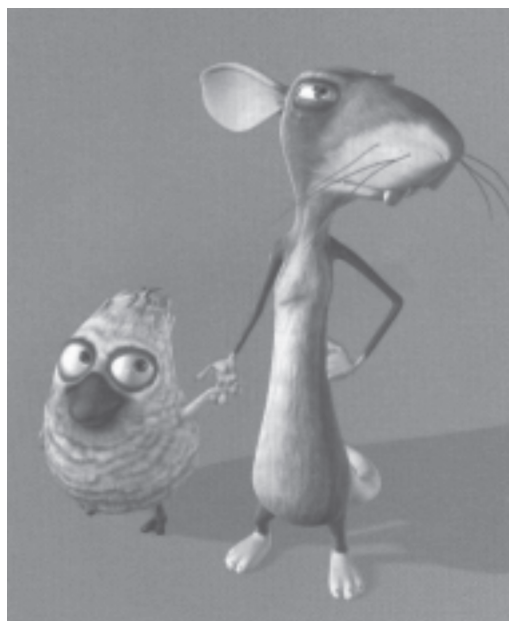


Figure 1d. Picture from pre-released material by the animation production company Egmont Imagination, A-film & Magna Films working on an adaptation of “The Ugly Duckling” (later released as *The Ugly Duckling and Me*, 2006). Made available in experiment 4.

Figure 1a-d. Multimodal Andersen resources used for intervention.

Based on empirical findings, I will argue that when students are asked to design pre-productions for a new animated Andersen fairy tale, this stimulates participation and complex cognitive and social work, which leads to relevant knowledge production, that is, learning, within the context of L1/MTE. Perhaps most interestingly, such a design requires a close reading and analysis of the verbal versions of Andersen fairy tales; student *analysis* becomes a premise for student *creativity* — or to put it the other way around, creativity requires analysis. The case study finds that students engage in such transformative analytical-creative knowledge production processes. Teachers participating in the study, on the other hand, are more reluctant towards such an approach due to their curricular obligations and the traditional ways of teaching L1/MTE as a subject.

For discussion, I will argue that the suggested multimodal and inquiry based approach to Andersen fairy tales and other literary work could be justified in school because it contributes to students' deeper understanding of literary works of art with the broader purpose of contributing to their development in a broad meaning-making, that is, semiotic, sense. The study argues that an inquiry based multimodal approach to Andersen's fairy tales implies a shift in the rationale of L1/MTE — moving from a narrow understanding of *literacy* as the main goal of teaching and learning of L1 to an expanded semiotic understanding of literacy, which we could term *semiocy*. One could argue that if this new goal of L1/MTE was pursued in the future, it would reflect demands of a contemporary media-saturated society like the one sketched by Gee and others. It would reflect the way children and adolescents tend to approach learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because it invites students to learn through networked production and participation. From a literary pedagogical perspective, moving towards such a shift in L1/MTE rationale may also allow literature teachers to reposition students. Instead of positioning students in a traditional, reproductive approach to the teaching of literary works of art, they could be positioned in a more open-ended way of teaching literature which focuses on how literature could be used as an available resource for the production of students' mediated meaning making and identity development.

### **Theoretical Framing: Three Claims**

The theoretical framing of the study is based on three claims. In the following, I will elaborate on these claims. Briefly put, the first claim states that Andersen's fairy tales could and should be understood in a multimodal perspective. The second claim is that modes and media of Andersen fairy tales could and should be taught in school, particularly in the L1/MTE subject. The third claim is that, currently, L1/

MTE teaching is dominated by verbal resources, and that such a practice is a barrier for experimenting with Andersen in multimodal ways.

### First Claim

So, the first claim is that Andersen's fairy tales could be understood in a *multimodal* perspective. This theoretical claim implies that his fairy tales are understood as discourses represented and communicated in modes beyond verbal writing in books or on paper, such as verbally *and/or* visually, graphically, auditorily etc. A multimodal approach would argue further that Andersen's fairy tales are discourses that move across modes and media in a process that could be termed "transduction" as Kress coined. Or, as the so-called New London Group has argued, any semiotic resource, including artistic, could be seen as "Available Designs," which go through processes of "Designing," and are eventually "Re-designed"<sup>1</sup>.

As already suggested, this claim is easy to substantiate in terms of "Available Andersen Designs" in contemporary popular culture. Picturing the multitude of Andersen fairy tales' resources in a global perspective, one quickly visualizes, for example, Andersen's so-called *illustrated* fairy tales (a tradition which Andersen gave birth to himself in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) that combine words and images in complex multimodal ways. At the Hans Christian Andersen Museum in Odense, Denmark, we find a whole collection of illustrated Andersen fairy tales, some of which are made available in digital format online. However, such resources only offer a glimpse of the number of published and non-published illustrated versions of his fairy tales produced and distributed worldwide, including student drawings of his fairy tales on paper and published on the school wall for a couple of weeks, as is common practice in Denmark.

We should also remind ourselves of the many *oral readings* of his work available in audio recordings or produced by students (as in annual competitions in Danish schools). Such readings interpret his writing in multimodal auditory ways, and may also include gesture and other kinds of performative modes. Further, we find, on a global level, the production of *animated* Andersen fairy tales, including Disney's Oscar-winning Silly Symphony version of *The Ugly Duckling* (1938) — which is easily found on YouTube — or the much later animation *The Ugly Duckling and Me* (2006) which draws on a very complex multimodal interplay of several verbal, visual, and auditory modes. And finally, of course, Andersen's verbal stories are available as they are published in books or on digital platforms (such as on the Hans Christian Andersen Centre website) in an abundance of layouts, which co-pro-

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1 See New London Group and also Cope and Kalantzis.



duce the meaning of the text.

Such examples make it clear that Andersen's fairy tales, nowadays, are represented, communicated, and distributed in popular culture in a rich variety of modes and media, which are read, produced and hence re-designed by children and adolescents outside as well as inside school. A few of these resources were used, as indicated above in figure 1a-d, for experiments conducted in the empirical study, which we will explore further later.

## Second Claim

The second claim is that *modes and media of Andersen fairy tales could and should be taught in school, particularly in the L1/MTE subject*. The rationale for doing so is based on not only a multimodal but also an inquiry based approach<sup>1</sup>. Based on Dewey's writings, among others, Bereiter explains the basics of what he terms a liberal inquiry-based pedagogy suited for a 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge society as follows:

The proposal to make knowledge building the principal activity in schooling would mean enlarging liberal education so as to encompass both the grasping of what others have already understood and the sustained, collective effort to extend the boundaries of what is known. (Bereiter 25)

Such an approach would invite students into processes that stimulate them to transform knowledge into *doing knowledge* and *knowing*. This idea of students' active knowledge production resonates very well with the New London Group's notion of design processes (Available Designs, Designing and the Redesigned). In what the New London Group terms a pedagogy of multiliteracies, they further suggest that such processes could be framed in four ways: As situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformative practice. Based on such multimodal and inquiry-based framings for teaching and learning, I developed a model that represents the basic categories and dynamic relations for teaching and learning Andersen fairy tales (based on Elf, *Towards Semiocy*), which you see in figure 2.

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<sup>1</sup> See Dewey *Democracy and Dewey Art*.



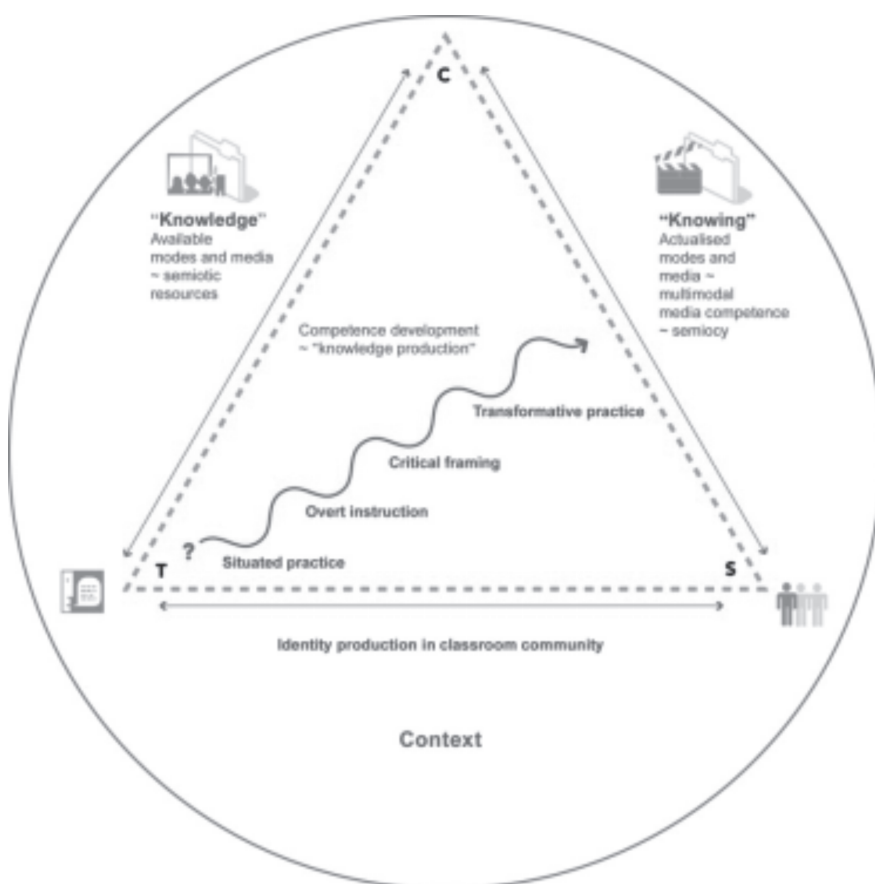


Figure 2. The semiocy model. Sign-codes: “C” stands for content, “T” for teacher, “S” for student, “?” for subject-related question or challenge presented to students.

As you will see in the left corner below, the model places *the teacher* in a central position, requiring reflexive, subject-related, or, as we would term it in a German-Nordic context *Didaktik* thought on how to initiate and carry through the student processes regarding knowledge production. The teacher should be able to organize an inquiry-based, situated, instructive, critical, and transformative activity so as to ensure that the student accentuates productive meaning-making and not mere reproduction of fragmented knowledge. The functional, activity-oriented aspect is therefore stressed. On the other hand, one must remember that knowledge or “content” in school subjects plays an indispensable role in the process of teaching multimodal media. The resources that can be used in what we could term a multimodal media pedagogy within L1/MTE are, in principle, any constellations of modes and

media related to content acknowledged within the subject (the top of the triangle). In the selection of modes and media, the teacher should consider what kinds of resources are found appropriate to the design. This is an instance of an inquiry-based activity that relates to a chosen content and topic. An example of such content could be Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales, seen from a multimodal media pedagogical standpoint. It follows that not all modes/media are continuously relevant. They must reflect interests and demands at several levels. The resources made available should therefore be exercises of complexity that will encourage and stimulate the classroom and individual student in a personal formative identity development process (see line between Teacher and Student), which in a German-Nordic context would be termed *Bildung*<sup>1</sup>. This should at the same time meet the demands of the curriculum in terms of formal teaching. Those two ends might not meet, making teaching in formal schooling an ambiguous and conflicted enterprise.

Note also in the model the portfolios on each side, which signal that any learning resource always contains of a variety of “Available Designs.” This includes, as an example, a text being read and film being watched in class. Correspondingly, on the right-hand side, the students produce a portfolio containing a variety of products, which are “the Redesigned” materials, which may include a film or more modestly, as in the animation experiment which we will focus on later, pre-production notes for a film and reflections on the process of work. Note also the arrows surrounding the triangle running both ways. They signal that content (C) is not a completely stable entity; rather it is constructed by the teacher and the students in a mutual interaction also co-shaped by the context. Content is embedded in context, in which we find agents such as students (S) found in class, whose “identities” co-produces, in discursive processes of negotiation, the conception of content, which the teacher (T) draws on when preparing a specific curriculum design, like in the case of teaching Andersen in a process of four experiments. Obviously, other agents and aspects of content and context influence the teacher’s choices also. Examples are academic research and knowledge, teacher training, the curriculum plan of the L1/MTE subject in a specific country and learning resources available at school. These are affected by, among other things, economy, physical and other constraints and possibilities at school.

The dynamics of knowledge production is thought in a way that progressively enables student acts of understanding, which is represented by the oscillating line in the model — it shapes meaning with and about constellations of modes and media. Modes and media are clustered in what Gee terms “semiotic domains,” which

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1 See Deng and Luke.

students address and actualize due to local, personal and pragmatic perspectives, assisted by their teacher. Different strategies can be conceptualized and adapted when organizing the teaching process, depending on the class and the students. In any process of knowledge production, we should install the demand of a product, represented as a question mark (?) in the model. Such a demand may lead, as termed on the right-hand side, to “actualized modes and media.” Seen from an evaluative point of view, this product gives a hint of what is often referred to as the outcome of the teaching-learning process. However, outcomes can only be inferred indirectly, as the so-called DeSeCo consortium working on a “Definition and Selection of Key Competencies” argues<sup>1</sup>. An outcome can never be measured in instrumental ways. Outcomes are considered to be signs — or we may say Redesigns — of available resources that students produce knowledge from in the process of learning, hence demonstrating semiotic competence related to the specific inquiry with more or less expertise. It follows from this that the proposal for a definition of semiocy within L1/MTE is as follows: Semiocy within L1/MTE (e.g. “Danish”) is a knowledge-based/insightful ability to act, in expedient, expert-like ways on demands related to multimodal media within the constrained formal school domain of L1/MTE (e.g. “Danish”). In short, semiocy is a demonstrated semiotic competence.

The model, which I will refer to as the semiocy model, served as a point of departure for designing the four interventions, that is, for the planning, realization, and evaluation of the four experiments conducted in the empirical study. After presenting the third and last claim, I will illustrate how the model was used in analysis, focusing on the “animated fairy tales experiment.”

### Third Claim

The third claim is a more critical one, arguing that currently L1/MTE teaching is dominated by verbal resources and the teaching of language and literature — not a plethora of semiotic rich texts (Elf et al.). For example, the teaching of Andersen fairy tales, particularly within upper-secondary education, is dominated by a pedagogy of monomodality that would highlight the *literary analysis* — of verbal reproductions of his work. Of course, this offers students many important insights based on well-proved literary disciplines adopted to school teaching, such as historical readings, new criticism, reception aesthetics etc. However, one could challenge such an approach nonetheless if one wishes to enable students to explore Andersen’s work in a more semiotic rich and inquiry-based way, as sketched above. Currently, the dominance of monomodal verbal resources for teaching and learning implies

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1 See Rychen and Salganik.

that there is little access to a multimodal approach to the teaching and learning of Andersen fairy tales, and more broadly other literary works of art which have gone through similar processes of transduction and “popularization,” as in the case of Shakespeare and Melville.

From a curricular and epistemological point of view, the dominating practice implies that suggesting a multimodal and inquiry-based approach towards Andersen is indeed something that will challenge the dominating culture of school in general and L1/MTE subjects and teachers in particular. Consequently, the four experiments in the empirical study were indeed interventions — transgressing the limits of the subject. They challenged basic assumptions, norms and beliefs amongst teachers and students on the “hows,” “whys” and “whats” of teaching L1/MTE and teaching Andersen. In other words, the intervention was expected to challenge the basic rationale of the subject, or “what counts as knowledge” in the school subject, which is the fundamental curriculum question<sup>1</sup>.

The disciplinary practices and cultures of a given school subject such as L1/MTE reflect, I will argue, a Western model of classroom teaching, which includes a particular view on the use of technology based on classroom teaching using blackboard, speech, pen, and paper, and the reproduction of knowledge. Such technological practices operate on century-large time-scales and are not easily altered as they reflect deeply embedded paradigms of the subject and schooling. Considering L1/MTE practices in particular, Sawyer and van de Ven argue that *four* paradigms have emerged in L1 teaching, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century: An academic, developmental, communicative, and utilitarian paradigm. The theory of L1 paradigms is a helpful tool for analyzing, on a deep paradigmatic level, the why’s, what’s, and how’s of L1/MTE. Sawyer and van de Ven’s basic argument is that the field of L1/MTE can now “...be accurately characterized as polyparadigmatic...” (Sawyer and van de Ven 2006), and that the contents, methods, and justifications of the subject are contested. In other words, the four paradigms are found in contemporary L1/MTE discourse and practice across the world. What does *not* dominate, however, is a technologically rich multimodal inquiry-based approach towards L1/MTE. Nonetheless, based on the semiocy model and preparing the empirical intervention I sketched out a potential *techno-semiotic rationale* for teaching the subject that could be summarized as demonstrated in table 1 below.

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1 See Deng and Luke.

Table 1.

Time / Century	Paradigm and tradition	Legitimacy: Why?	Topics: What?	Teaching-learning: How?	Knowledge regime	Agents
21 <sup>st</sup> century	Technosemiotic paradigm; rethinking a communicative, humanistic tradition.	Access and contribution to semiotic society functioning receptively and creatively, and individually and socially, within and across national borders.	Semiotic resources and their meaning-making potentials, with some emphasis, particularly in primary school, on verbal modes and their interaction with other modes and media.	Dialogic: Competence-oriented teaching in reflexive <i>Bil-dung</i> -oriented way integrating conceptual learning and practical production going through phases of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformative practice.	Knowledge as process and result; Socio-cognitive constructivism	Didacticists, teachers, some policy makers, students (particularly super users), market representatives

I should stress that the techno-semiotic paradigm is a potential rationale for teaching L1/MTE, not a dominating paradigm. It did, however, inform the empirical intervention focusing on teaching modes and media of Andersen. We shall now look deeper into how it was adapted to practice and what teachers and students did when confronted with this rationale.

### Analyses of Design-Based Experiments

Before moving into empirical analysis, I should note that the study was designed as a qualitative intervention, or more specifically as a Design-Based Research project (DBR)<sup>1</sup>. The study involved four Danish-teachers at four upper-secondary education schools. The teachers taught one class each comprising around 24 students age group around 16-18. Data were collected from 2005-6. This does offer a somewhat distanced context for exploring the research question empirically. However, practices are still, to a large extent, prevailing. As argued above, L1/MTE practices and paradigms are quite stable. Consequently, empirical findings may still be very much relevant for theorizing how Andersen could be taught and learned in school worldwide.

In the analytic section, I will focus on presenting findings from the experiment that was named “Animations that move adaptations.” The experiment was the fourth and last part of the larger intervention. First, I will introduce the rationale of the experiment, as it was explained, more or less directly, to teachers and students. Then I

1 See Barad and Squire; and also Elf.

will foreground aspects of the design-processes emphasizing findings from the Re-designed phase.

### **The Rationale of the Experiment**

Animations are one of the most promising areas of growth on today's entertainment market. Every kid grows up with animations in contemporary childhood. Along with videogames, often converging with animation, it is one of the components of the so-called creative economy that is receiving a lot of attention these years from politicians, businessmen, programmers, education researchers, teachers, students etc. This experiment addresses such macro- and meso-developments in contemporary culture by adapting Andersen fairy tales-as-animations from Disney's 1938 version of "The Ugly Duckling" to recent productions, including student productions. The hypothesis is that when allowing students to explore such resources both analytically and creatively this may develop what Burn and Parker term "moving image literacy," or what I would characterize as aspects of their development of semiotic competences, i.e. semiocy. On a more theoretical level, I wanted to explore whether the experiment would challenge paradigmatic theories for teaching L1/MTE in general and, more specifically, teaching Andersen within the subject on upper-secondary level.

### **Available Designs**

Considering Available Designs of the "Animations that move adaptations" curriculum program, one of the questions to consider when approaching Andersen's work would be: *Which* animations to choose and *where from*? A large number of animated Andersen fairy tales are available on the market, in libraries and, not the least, in networked open access learning sites. These are both old and new, produced in Denmark and globally. In the design of the experiment, it was chosen to focus on two DVDs released in 2005 with new Andersen fairy tale animations (funded, in part, by the Hans Christian Andersen (HCA) 2005 Foundation, see vignette in figure 3) were made available.



Figure 3. Cover of DVD with Den grimme Ælling/The Ugly Duckling

In addition, an older Disney production of “The Ugly Duckling” (1938) was also distributed in the classroom groups. The HCA 2005 co-funded animations were produced, in part, by an upcoming and very successful Danish animation company called “A. Film.” This company was preparing a cartoon movie called “The Ugly Duckling and Me” (A. Film). Students would know the company and probably find the experiment ‘situated’ (cf. the semiocyc model, fig. 2) due to this reference. As one might guess from the front cover of the HCA 2005 DVD (fig. 3), these animations are produced for a children’s audience, not the age group in upper-secondary education. They were broadcasted, among other places, on television during 2005, as part of the popular 6 PM children’s programming. The DVDs contain two animations each, approximately 20 minutes long, plus extra material (such as storyboards). One of the animations was “Den Grimme Ælling” ([The ugly Duckling], Nordisk Film). Analysing it as an adaptation of Andersen’s original fairy tale, we could briefly claim that there are commonalities and also dramatic differences in terms of the *content* (such as plot, and lines), *form* (such as modal expression) and *function* (such as perception and distribution).

In order to contrast this contemporary Danish adaptation of Andersen fairy tales, both in terms of technology, aesthetics and cultural and historical context of production and distribution, it would be interesting to make available The Walt Dis-



ney Company animation “The Ugly Duckling” from 1938, which was available on YouTube — and still is (see figure 4). As a transduction of Andersen’s verbal fairy tale, this 5-minute version is *without* speech, but *with* classical music. Indeed, this plays a dominating role in that it changes the content, form and function of Andersen’s ugly duckling discourse as dramatically as the HCA 2005 version.



Figure 4. The Ugly Duckling on YouTube.

Considering the experiment’s epistemological commitments, that is, the content-oriented *what to teach and learn*-question of any teaching session, it was interesting to observe the teachers’ view on this particular experiment and how they co-constructed the topic and resources made available. Three of the four participating teachers were relatively positive towards an animated approach to Andersen’s words. However, the teacher Karen expressed utter skepticism as she distinguished, in an interview, between “the Mouton-Rothschild [a renowned French *chateau*] of verbal Andersen fairy tales, and Disney dishwasher”! In other words, initially, Karen was clearly *not* in favor of teaching Andersen animations as she felt that it compromised the quality of his original work. Based on Karen’s skepticism, we should clearly scrutinize and ask: Is there *any* epistemological potential in teaching Andersen animations, be it by Disney or any other producer?

One point of departure for offering a positive answer to that question would be to refer to a multimodal understanding of teaching and learning, which I did when talking to the teachers about the rationale of the experiment. In addition, I referred to the so-called Media Literacy Movement across the world, supported by UNESCO

among others. For more than half a century, strong arguments have been made about teaching multimodal media, consumed through new electronic technologies, as they serve as vital, everyday-entertainment configurations of social order and personal meaning-making that, arguably, should be addressed in school.

The Media Literacy Movement goes back to several prominent literacy scholars, including Marshal McLuhan's visionary speech in 1959 on "Electronic Revolution: Revolutionary Effects of New Media" in front of a live audience of mother tongue teachers. In the speech, he argues that "just as print profoundly altered the structure of the phonetic alphabet and repatterned the educational processes of the Western world, so did the telegraph reshape print as did the movie and radio and television. These structural changes in media myth coexist in an ever-live model of the learning and teaching process." (6) While the semiocycle-model strikes out new paths in this sphere of media literacy research, it is obvious that McLuhan must be seen as one of the forefathers of the approach. His arguments about the impact of new media on education, including new teacher and student roles, are breathtakingly contemporary.

One important difference, however, between McLuhan and contemporary theory on multimodal media pedagogy and media literacy, is the objection to McLuhan's techno-deterministic belief in the quick impact of new mediating technology on "our" social realities. We now know that McLuhan's determinism was overstated, at least in the context of formal schooling; it is definitely not confirmed by findings in the experiments analysed here nor is it confirmed on a contemporary global level. Nevertheless, McLuhan has a point when arguing that the L1/MTE subject is a proper school subject for starting to address the influence of multimodal media amongst students in popular culture. As this school subject is compulsory in most countries, *every student* would get the opportunity to meet and deal with aspects of the complexity of popular 'electronic' and otherwise technological multimodal mediated genres. This makes it possible to deal better with this kind of complex moving image meaning-making, receptively, productively, personally, collectively publicly and privately.

The more specific question that teachers would be interested in on a daily basis, however, is how one might be able to adapt this speculative argument to concrete practices. This brings us to questions of the experiment's pedagogical and social commitments, or more simply the *how to do it*-questions in teaching. Theoretically speaking, the experiment is informed by the semiocycle model and the different aspects it outlines for processes of knowledge production (cf. fig. 2). Thus, the challenge would be to *situate* the practice of animation, offering *overt instruction*

about it, enabling processes of *critical framing* and making *transformative student practice* possible. Practically speaking, the experiment was explained through a number of “steps” (see table 2) supplemented with a number of tools produced and introduced by me as a designer-researcher.

So, in step 1 of the experiment, the explicitly stated commitment was signaled, among other places, in the title of the poster presented to students: “Animated Andersen Fairy Tales” accompanied by a logo. Another tool to be presented by the teachers explained that students were going to develop their ability to handle the complexity of Andersen animations and animations in general. It was stressed from the beginning that the experiment would be explorative in the sense that students and teachers would be striving to understand how this kind of phenomenon could be understood and addressed productively and receptively. Class would have 9-10 lessons (of approx. 1 hour) for the experiment.

The class would be split up into *animation groups* working collaboratively with the challenge of understanding animations in a process going from production to reception to production, hence following the product-oriented “transformative practice” principle proposed in the semiocy model. “Production” would not imply the finished production of an animation. As explained in one of the tools made available, a “real” process of media production runs through three stages: 1) Pre-production, 2) Production, 3) Post-production. The animation groups would only be asked to finish the pre-production phase, presenting and delivering a document about their pre-production plans in a draft version and a final version. In other words, students were asked to visualize a multimodal product in predominantly monomodal ways, that is, in words. In the process of doing this they would necessarily have to consider historical, sociological, aesthetical and practical-productive aspects of multimodal media making in interrelating conceptual and practice-oriented ways.

In order to make their pre-production *knowledge based* — hence following the logic of the semiocy model — animation groups would at an early point have to produce, present, and upload a document containing knowledge about animation. The point of step 2 was precisely to raise the collective level of knowledge based reflection in class — both among students and the teacher. To gain knowledge about animation was in itself addressed as a challenge. Compared to other constellations of modes and media, animation is a new and quite unexplored phenomenon. In this sense, students and teachers were in the same boat, exploring a new phenomenon at different levels. Researching available knowledge about animation, it was found that this kind of knowledge is decentralized and networked. Experts are people in animation ‘affinity groups’ found in specialized contexts, such as web communities

**Table 2. Steps of the experiment Animated Andersen Fairy tales.**

Step	Name	Social Activity	Pedagogy	Curricular Knowledge Production
1	Goal and content	Plenary work in classroom.	Situated practice, overt instruction.	Intro by the teacher referring to tools available. Groups established.
2	Gain knowledge about animation	Group work presented, in closing, in plenum and on LMS.	Overt instruction, critical framing.	Groups search for and produce a document with knowledge about animation useful for step 3. If possible, the class visits The Danish Film Institute or The Animation Work Shop as part of this step.
3	Production I	Group work uploaded, in closing, on LMS and presented in plenum.	Critical framing, transformative practice.	Animation groups begin their work with a pre-production. Continues in step 5.
4	Analysis of animated Andersen fairy tales	Plenary work.	Critical framing, overt instruction.	The teacher shows and presents an analysis of animated fairy tales, leading to classroom discussion.
5	Production II	Group work uploaded, in closing, on LMS.	Critical framing, transformative practice.	Animation groups finish their work with a pre-production.
6	Student presentation	Plenary work.	Critical framing, Situated practice	Animation groups present their work. Each presentation is evaluated: what was good, what was less good? Would it be realistic to actually produce the pre-productions?
7	Evaluation	Plenary work, individual work and focus group interview with researcher.	Critical framing, transformative practice.	Taking plenary discussion as the point of departure, students evaluate the whole intervention project, the majority writing an individual essay and 4 students being selected, by the class, for a focus group interview with the researcher.

on the Internet, private animation schools (such as The Animation Work Shop located in Denmark), and, expectedly, in power student user groups in classrooms. The design of the experiment attempts to reflect this seemingly new knowledge reality, establishing what we might term *open* knowledge producing contexts with links to the internet in step 2 and later steps. Thus, students are asked to construct knowledge about animation in groups uploading their findings on the Learning Management System (LMS) available for all in class. A visit to an extramural learning site such as *The Danish Film Institute*, which offers courses on animation, is a part of this knowledge-producing element, which was, in fact, taken up by two of the participating teachers — Karen and Peter — while the teachers from the other two school cases chose to draw on other available resources on the internet and

amongst students.

### Analysis of the Redesigned

As suggested earlier, I will not highlight the complex processes of *Designing* that went on in this experiment in the four school cases. In this section, I will focus on the Redesigned, that is, the material produced by students as a result of the Available Designs and the Designing processes following steps 1-7 (cf. table 2 above). Specifically, I will focus on the redesigned work of student *Sven*'s group, and then compare this group's work with findings inferred from observing and analysing all other groups in the four cases.

As we recall from the description of Available Designs, students in animation groups were asked to produce a group presentation and a pre-production plan in two versions. A pre-production would approximately take up the space of two pages. There are approximately five animation groups in each class, hence producing a total of 30-40 pages of written data. Taking the teacher *Jean*'s class (case 2) and the animation group in which the student *Sven* was a member as the point of departure, it will be demonstrated that the genre of student pre-productions is quite rich, even innovative, in terms of subject-related knowledge production. Subject-related practices regarding what social semioticians Kress and Hodge term *genre regimes*, *production regimes* and *reception regimes* of the traditional mother tongue subject are indeed contested in this integrative creative-analytical work. This finding in case 2 is more or less invariant in all four cases. Thus, case 2 represents an exemplifying case<sup>1</sup>.

*Sven* was part of an animation group composed of five boys, including the student *Al*, who positioned himself as quite critical. From a superficial product-oriented point of view, the material they produced, complies only to some extent with the specific demands in the curriculum programme: No first edition of the pre-production is delivered and uploaded; the group did not comply with the processual working method and, hence, did not think collaboratively; the group only filled in some of the categories in the genre of a pre-production, taking only 1½ page of space. On the other hand, the group proposes a *title*, the *genre*, the Andersen *source* used for adaptation, the *idea*, the *plot* and *public relations*, as asked for. In their work, no material is found responding to other categories asked for: nothing about *characters*, no suggestions for *manuscript lines*, no *storyboard*, no *drawings of the main character*. An upper-secondary L1/MTE teacher might object that "Really, this is not enough!" — using quantity as a parameter for competence.

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1 See Bryman.

Quantity, however, is not necessarily the only parameter for judging quality of the Redesigned. Qualitative categories might be better. If we start using them, we begin to acknowledge the knowledge producing potential of their work.

The *title* suggested is “The Ugly Bitch” [in Danish: Den grimme kælling; my translation here and in the following]. Native language users familiar with Danish will know that this title plays, intertextually, with the Andersen fairy tale “Den grimme ælling,” or in English: “The Ugly Duckling,” which was indeed indicated, by the group, as the source for adaptation. Fewer people, including a teacher perhaps, would consider that the title echoes vernacular youth language, particularly the kind of raw slang, with a sip of parody, found in favourite youth movies. Being a bitch might be interpreted as being cool. And then there is the formal word play, impossible to translate: Ælling/Kælling, which is producing rhyme and is quite clever. Simply through the title, the students are demonstrating multimodal media competence in multi-layered ways which draws on both verbal “high” culture resources and “low” culture resources dominated by modes other than words.

The pre-production also reflects *genre* competence. The group writes that the genre they have chosen is a “documentary,” which is an interesting transformative choice, in contrast to the genre of the Disney version of the “Ugly Duckling” that students had watched and analysed with Jean in class. However, the choice of genre is related to the *idea* and the rather unexpected suggestion about *public relations*. The idea, as the groups states it, is the following: “A modern interpretation of the Ugly Duckling with an ethnic approach — treating people’s perception of immigrants in Denmark.” And the suggestion by the group for public relations and the type of audience is this:

The film is to be presented as school material with support from The Danish Immigration Service or some similar institution. It sets the stage for debate among pupils in the country, whereby the film is widely publicized. By launching the film as a cinema event, it would be a total fiasco, since people do not want to pay to see such an animation in that it is more polemic than entertainment *per se* among the audience.

The students clarify that by documentary they mean a *polemic* film. This is not entertainment; on the contrary, they argue that it is important for the classes/pupils to consider the film carefully afterwards, which would be supported by a specially designed homepage. At the same time the homepage will answer many of the questions which create a division between Danes and new-Danes — why are Muslim

immigrants not allowed to eat pork and what are the most important opinions in the Koran.

It is quite interesting to observe how these students combine, at a rather sophisticated, competent level, reflections about how animation may be combined with a homepage to develop what Buckingham has termed “civic preparedness”<sup>1</sup> (2003). In this sense, they suggest a negotiating approach towards multimodal media use which curriculum researchers interested in interculturally oriented education hope for<sup>2</sup>. The group wants to engage in *identity politics* using the aesthetic genre of animation in an educative context. The personal drama of Andersen’s fairy tale — often interpreted as a social and historical drama — is re-interpreted as a cultural and identity conflict which should be addressed in democratic society, among other places in the L1/MTE classroom that has a long and problematic tradition of ethnocentric nation-building, for which the life and work of Andersen has often been misused in a Danish L1/MTE context. So, on a deep meaning-making and critical literacy level<sup>3</sup>, students actually suggest a *cultural turn* in the adaptation of Andersen in L1/MTE.

This becomes even clearer when we analyze the *plot* suggested by the group. The story should describe “...how difficult it is for the ugly duckling — an immigrant girl — to be accepted in Danish society.” Like in Andersen’s original story this leads to a happy ending, however in a cultural sense. The plot continues like this (in terms of cohesion, the text has some problems):

...what she does to be accepted and the difficult process it is to attain acceptance among the Danes, but when she gains their trust things begin to change quickly, since they come to understand her and her beautiful soul. They learn to disregard the great differences in culture and background.

This almost sounds like a Disney ending, that is, a *didactical* ending in the old sense of the word — meaning a “lecturing” or moralizing ending. However, the ironic tone and the critical, even self-critical, implications of the plot and the whole idea described by this group of five white Danes makes the pre-production seem authentic and convincing, also when presented in class.

The close analysis of the work by the group shows that, in general, the group

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1 See Buckingham, 2003.

2 See Banks.

3 See Janks.



is very interested in the social impact of animations, not only from an economical, but also from a critical, or even *ethical* perspective. In terms of demonstrating animation literacy in the shape of a pre-production, we may judge that the work by the group is not fully completed. On the other hand, working with animations productively, in the sense that they should fill in a clearly defined pre-production genre, has been done both creatively and analytically. These students are able, in expert ways, to analyze, reflect and productively actualize some of the potential uses of animation, suggesting, literally, that the genre could be developed, not only in terms of entertainment, but also for broader purposes related to identity development in a formal schooling context.

Moreover, these students understand that the curriculum programme focusing on animated Andersen fairy tales is indeed testing the limits of the school subject — L1/MTE, here Danish — through the genre of animation. By allowing students to work with animation in class in a semiocytic-oriented way emphasizing student-based authority, they get the chance of contesting dominating practices found not only within the local meso-context of the mother tongue subject being practiced at their school, but also in a broader macro-perspective going beyond the semiotic domain of the classroom and into the academic domain of Danish as a subject and more general public domains where cultural production is being discussed. If the animation they are suggesting was in fact produced, it would probably not make any money and would not become a blockbuster. But it would raise important cultural and educational questions concerning personal and collective identity related to national history and global society — and how Andersen could contribute to such vital discussions. In the pre-production, this group clearly questioned nationalizing tendencies and cultural hegemony. The group asks, indirectly, what it means, to be(-come) a Dane. In this sense, the pre-production actualizes one of Kress' suggestions for topics dealt with in future L1/MTE: National identity should be put on the agenda in a denaturalizing sense<sup>1</sup>. Taking animated Andersen fairy tales as a point of departure seems useful for this purpose, the analysis of the work in Sven's group suggests. Findings in case 2 in general and in the other cases seem to support this conclusion:

In the classroom context where Sven's group presented its pre-production, a few so-called "ethnic" Danes with migrant background are found among students. The teacher *Susanne's* class, located in a different region in Denmark, had a similar make up: 2-3 Danes from first or second-generation immigrant families with roots in Southern European countries (France, Ex-Yugoslavia, Turkey) were found. In teachers *Karen's* and *Peter's* classes similar patterns were found. Generally, the

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1 See Kress, *A Curriculum*.

ethnic perspective did not dominate the pre-productions in any of the four cases; rather ethnicity was addressed as one potential aspect of a larger interpretative optic, namely the dynamics of *youth culture*, including mass media culture.

When Buckingham, Burn and Parker and other media literacy theorists emphasize the cultural dimension in media education they certainly have a point compared to this experiment. Particularly students in case 2 catalysed the complexity and ambiguity of youth culture in productive work enacting their imaginative, creative, non-authoritarian desires. *Porno, drugs, race, class, global popular culture*, including Oprah and Paris Hilton (which were quite hot, in many ways, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century), *product placement* and a rich variety of *vernacular language use* spanning from serious lines in the manuscript to *parody, irony and raw slang* was used as adapting elements in the pre-production work of these groups. Andersen fairy tales in case 2 were rephrased into titles like: “The Little Zippo Lighter Girl” (drawing on Andersen’s “The Little Match Girl,” about a hallucinating girl on drugs Christmas Eve), “Lada-Hans” (drawing on “Clumsy Hans” and his billy goat replaced, in this adaptation, by the former Eastern European car brand Lada), or, as found in case 3 (Susanne’s class) “The Pusher on Crack” (drawing on “Princess on the Pea,” see figure 5 for main characters used in their storyboard, remixed from the Internet). It is difficult not to find these pre-productions funny and slightly scary! The target group, clearly, is youth in general and class peers in particular. Students use the pre-production genre for reflexive identity building processes narrating their personal experiences, trying to reinterpret them in the light of Andersen’s fairy tales.



Pusher Keld



Bodyguard



Opral Winfrey

Figure 5. Material from a pre-production in Jean’s case 3 drawing on Andersen’s “Princess on the Pea.”

In terms of filling out all the sub-genres and working multimodally, Sven’s group was in fact not representative of the dominating pattern. On the contrary, groups in all four cases produced an abundance of storyboards, character drawings, manuscript

lines and new identities inventing production company names in a processual way that would respect collective working processes, shifting back and forth between conceptual work and practices, as hoped for in theory. Some animation groups respected the original text to a large extent, speaking of genres like “*Bildung* text,” “comedy” or simply “fairy tale.” These adaptations were generally acknowledged as better than the wilder, modernising, contemporary versions, such as the polemic documentary by Sven’s group. Some students found contemporary versions disrespectful over-interpretations. From a cultural study point of view, however, there is (almost) no such thing as an over-interpretation. There is only meaning making from a pragmatic, local, community-based perspective. If this meaning making is reflected in relation to subject-related aspects and the specific topic and content outlined by the teacher, we might even consider it to be valid knowledge production within a particular subject in the school curriculum, that is, in this case, L1/MTE.

### Conclusion and Implications: Andersen in a Curriculum for the Future

The analysis of this particular experiment set off with a hypothesis: The teaching of Andersen animations could create impact on local classroom levels and also lead to broader theorization on a macro-level related to the paradigmatic understanding of teaching Andersen in L1/MTE, or even teaching L1/MTE as such. Moreover, it was suggested that the experiment would meet and reflect the challenges of global popular culture with its emerging creative economy and potentially lead to students’ development of semiocy in certain aspects. In table 3 below, I have summarized the findings of the experiment.

**Table 3**

Experiment	Local Impact	Theoretical Work
Animations that move adaptations	<p>Teachers learn that animations do move adaptation in terms of reconfiguring subject-related knowledge production.</p> <p>Teachers increased their understanding of, among other things, the fact that the role of the teacher changes when teaching complex new multimodal media.</p> <p>Students seem engaged in learning about “new media,” such as animations. In some cases, teachers acknowledge the knowledge producing potentials of practical student production based on experiences with authentic learning sites outside school.</p>	<p>Exploring the subject-related didactic relevance of teaching multimodal digitally mediated Andersen animations not only as a means but also as a goal, legitimised, among other reasons, by the so-called creative industries economy, popular culture, and identity processes in adolescence.</p>

As the table suggests, the empirical experiment did confirm, at least to some extent, the hypothesis. The four participating teachers acknowledged that animations move classroom practices in terms of reconfiguring subject-related knowledge production. They acknowledged that available Andersen resources are relatively easy to integrate into a dynamic multimodal, inquiry-oriented curriculum programme. Findings from the Designing and the Redesigned phases indicate that the commitments intending to develop student multimodal mediated animation competence can be actualised at a meso- and micro-discursive level given the right circumstances.

It should be noted, though, that constraints are also found. Among others, constraints at the meso-level of school administration are found in terms of offering the necessary technological and educative resources for integrating an animation approach to Andersen in Danish as a subject. Also, teacher and student conceptions related to the macro-ideology, practices and paradigms of the “traditional” L1/MTE subject across schools around the world are found to be impeding factors. Well-known production regimes, reception regimes, genre regimes and knowledge production regimes, stressing the teaching of language and literature in verbal ways, are reproduced. Indirectly, these regimes lead to many micro-processes of counterproductive knowledge production processes in the observed classrooms.

Another interesting finding concerns the expected *change in roles* due to the proposed semiocry model. Although McLuhan argued more than 40 years ago, that roles are rapidly changing in terms of students being more informed than teachers about new media, one may conclude based on the experiment that the *teachers’* epistemological and curricular level of reflection, in terms of foreseeing future potentials of teaching animations, was higher than the student level of reflection. This is a general finding in all four experiments in the intervention. The teacher, I conclude, is an indispensable prerequisite for adopting an inquiry-based and multimodal approach to the teaching of Andersen, or any other resource for that matter.

Having said that, all four teachers argue that they were forced into teaching something new beyond their actual knowledge level and professional competence. All of them valorise this as positive, at least in principle. The teachers suggest an interesting strategy when trying to adapt a relatively new, modern, mediated multimodal phenomenon like animated Andersen adaptations: The teacher should not feel obliged to know everything about the topic in advance. Rather, the teacher should teach students that they too have a great responsibility in terms of co-producing knowledge, in *doing knowledge*, and that provisional role-shifting should be expected when needed. Students too should learn that their role is not simply

to re-produce available knowledge. Students too should learn that a competence-oriented goal like collecting knowledge about animation and producing a pre-production can be complied with in numerous serious and, at the same time, creative ways and that it is their student-responsibility to fulfil this goal.

Based on this intervention, what are the implications then, in a future perspective, related to the teaching of modes and media of H.C. Andersen? Hopefully, the findings presented here will challenge, or even change, the automatic, yet paradoxical resistance towards teaching popular genres like adaptations-as-animations in relation to Andersen's work, specifically, and literature more generally. In my view, there is no authentic, legitimate curricular reason for continuing to teach Andersen the traditional verbal way as the only way. From a common sense point of view, it is quite uncontroversial to claim that a popular — perhaps *the* most popular — way of getting to know literary classics, is by watching adaptations, such as animations, sometimes in the shape of computer games. We do it all the time: Children, increasingly of all ages, watch animations and adaptations of literary classics. Likewise, young people and adults have for decades watched motion pictures or theatre plays, which might also be adaptations — say, Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet* (1996), along with any other movie or non-movie watched in a cinema or at home, in the “tele” or on the laptop (soon to become the same thing). Think of the enormous success of The Walt Disney Company's *The Little Mermaid* (1989) based on Andersen's fairy tale (1837), produced and distributed side by side with hundreds and thousands of other cartoons going in or out, in multimodal ways, of the eyes and ears of people not really knowing or paying any attention to the cultural resources they draw on originally. In fact, the very notion of originality is becoming problematic.

The paradox is, then, that when we focus on the teaching of the mother tongue subject in school, this kind of over-whelming informal experiences with and knowledge of massively distributed, digitally produced, mediated multimodal texts is not valorised as a valuable ‘situated practice’ for teaching about cultural sense making, but is instead marginalized. Karen, the teacher in case 1, expressed the excluding point of view claiming that the Disney version of *The Little Mermaid* does not have the Mouton-Rotschild quality of literary originals. Her evaluative debriefings after the experiment show that she still valorises literature higher than animations, albeit with growing uncertainty because she acknowledges how students engaged in and learned from the experiment. Jean, the teacher of case 2 reflected, before the experiment sparked off, that she was a Danish teacher not educated to teach multimodal media, “so how was she to teach this?” Her concern was quite

understandable. Teachers are trained at university to marginalize the animation genre and more broadly popular multimodal media; and the protocols for final exams, that have great control upon what is taught and how, does not encourage experiments moving towards animation literacy or semiocy. On the other hand, the experiment that went on in Jean's class demonstrated that she actually could teach an animated approach to Andersen — with inspiring results, as in the case of the work of Sven's group. So, although resistance and scepticism is found in teacher attitudes towards animations integrated with the teaching of Andersen, optimism and even curiosity regarding a further exploration of an animation approach — and more broadly a semiocy approach — is also found amongst teachers.

The discrepancy between what is being experienced inside and outside school is well-known and not surprising seen from the point of view of international education research, even in the case of teaching Andersen. Jenny Grahame, a British media education researcher and also a teacher for many years, knows the sceptical attitude very well. In an article from 1991 that discusses how a fairy tale adaptation such as *The Little Mermaid* subjected to “the full Disney treatment,” including merchandizing, could be taught from a media pedagogical view within English as a subject, she argues that adaptations are generally used by English teachers as a means for making the “original text more accessible.” Media pedagogy then was simply a way of promoting “the real thing,” that is the teaching, or rather the transmission, of literature. That was then — and to some extent, that is also now. Implicitly, problematic distinctions and hierarchies between literature-as-originals and movies-as-copies, between works of art and disposable cultural artefacts, between sacred individual artists and unimportant anonymous producers, between high and low culture, and between using adaptations as a pedagogical means for something else instead of seeing it as a goal in itself are still very dominant in formal teaching. What Grahame finds, focusing on the teaching of adaptations, is general themes discussed in cultural theory for decades, which one should expect had been demolished due to the advent of cultural studies, media literacy and multimodality. In school, this is hardly the case. The excuse, in Buckingham's (2003) interpretation, is a discriminating and elitist argument about the missing “quality” of animations and other popular resources, claiming that students do not learn anything from this kind of material, or the pragmatic reasoning that it takes too long to teach animations and films, particularly if we are to let students work with the genre productively. Present findings in this intervention suggest that both excuses are invalid — tainted by and repeating a dominant, constraining knowledge regime focusing on “traditional Danish,” rooted in a 19<sup>th</sup> century paradigm of L1/MTE.

More broadly, ambiguous perceptions about popular mediated multimodal texts and particularly towards adaptations of literary classics pile up. The ambiguity becomes clear when one asks the participating teachers whether they have any personal experiences with animations in their private lives. Obviously, they do. Jean, in her late thirties, having two kids, explained that her children and husband love animations and that the family sits together Friday night watching them together. She also admitted that she is a bit tired of the traditional text hierarchy in school, not only in Danish, but also in the other language school subject she taught, Spanish. Jean suggests that there is a fundamental lack of authenticity and relevance in the relationship between what is going on inside and outside school.

One of my observations in her class confirmed this perception. What I observed was a boy named Gilbert sitting for himself on the back row, downloading software during class, when he was supposed to work with the curriculum programme. He explained to me, discretely, that it was software for producing animated videogames. Quite fascinating — and thought provoking: Within the knowledge regime of Danish as a subject, this kind of activity would not be accepted. Gilbert's discrete specialised semiotic competence is not allowed, nor acknowledged, within the curricular regime of Danish. Gilbert was not one of the well-performing students in this class. Rather, he was hiding, anonymously, in one of the groups — which is *his* problem, not the problem of the school subject seen from the point of view of official schooling. The question is whether we can afford to marginalize these kinds of multimodal media competencies and their related genres any longer in mother tongue classrooms in Western societies. Macro policies and steering documents actually argue that we cannot.

After the Danish upper-secondary education system was reformed in 2005, the curriculum speaks of “innovation,” “creativity” and “globalisation.” Similar notions and related curriculum goals, such as so-called *21<sup>st</sup> Century Goals*, are found in most Western curricula as they reflect broad conceptions of what it would take to survive in a future digital knowledge society. Hence, the competent ability to act on the basis of knowledge about digital animations is *hot* and knowledge about monomodal literary classics is *not*. Gilbert's technology and product-oriented interests and competencies have potentials. Yet, very little of such interests is actualised in current classroom practice. However, teaching Andersen and other world literature in new ways rupturing traditional classroom teaching and literary pedagogy could alter this in profound ways.



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