Sleeping Beauty Fairy Tales as Starting Points for Multiliteral Accumulations

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Abstract

Multiliteracy is defined as a new competence in the reformed Finnish National Core Curriculum. It is based on a broad understanding of visual, verbal, kinaesthetic, auditory, numeric, analogue, and digital texts across disciplines (Finnish National Core Curriculum, 2014). We are interested in producing textual interventions of cultural domains (here: fairy tales) that can be understood through intertextual and multiliteral meaning-making. We integrated two courses through fairy tales. For a course entitled Literature in School, a number of students in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Helsinki studied Sleeping Beauty fairy tales and used them as starting points for manuscripts of their own by using the technique of textual intervention. These manuscripts then served as an impetus for another set of students to produce an intertextual painting for an Art Expression course (same department as above).

Keywords: Social creativity, textual intervention, intertextuality, multiliteracy

In the reformed Finnish National Core Curriculum multiliteracy is defined as a new competence that is based on an extended understanding of visual, verbal, kinaesthetic, auditory, numeric, analogue, and digital texts across disciplines (Finnish National Core Curriculum, 2014). In our experiment, multiliteracy is understood intertextually as combining visual, verbal and cultural texts and producing recycled, remixed and new meanings (see Paatela-Nieminen & Itkonen 2015). Our pedagogical context is based on integrating two separate courses at the University of Helsinki (on integrating, see e.g. Kaasinen, Komulainen, Sintonen, Karppinen & Kallunki, 2012; Karppinen, Kallunki, Kairavuori, Komulainen & Sintonen, 2013). One of the courses, for primary school student teachers, was called Literature in School (3 ECTS, taught by K. Komulainen) and the other was Art Expression (5 ECTS, taught by M. Paatela-Nieminen), that was part of an Art Education Minor (25 ECTS) for primary school, kindergarten and textiles teacher students. For the Literature in School course, the students produced written texts in groups of 3-4 persons. First of all, the students read the classical version of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale, and then a "postmodern" version of it, written by the Finnish writer, Jukka Itkonen. The reading was followed by a shared brainstorming session and the writing of the beginning of their fairy tale manuscript. In their manuscripts, the students applied the thoughts that had come up during the initial reading of the fairy tales. The aim was to interpret any changes that had taken place in male/female roles from the past to the present. Students in the Art Expression course integrated these textual interventions with other visual reproductions of

Sleeping Beauties as well as with other intertextually-produced loans from works of art and popular culture. They were also expected to apply their own image/photo taken from the wider theme of humanity into their own paintings. In this article, we first present the theory that was applied in the course Literature in School, and then study how the theory became reflected in the students' paintings for the Art Expression course. Our research questions were: How do the students recycle texts and how can this be seen in their final results: the students' manuscripts for Literature in School and the students' paintings for Art Expression.

Theory and methods

The Literature in School course is based on theories of social creativity: individuals may surpass their own level of creativity when acting in groups. In other words, creativity is not something that only takes place inside peoples' heads, but also during the interaction that happens between a person's thoughts and the sociocultural context. Over the last two decades, it has been underlined that significant creative outputs may be developed in groups and teams in which an individual can diversify his or her working methods, habits and beliefs. So, a product (artefact) that deserves the label "creative" arises "from the synergy of many sources and not only from the mind of a single person" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, pp. 1). Creativity arises from the interaction of three necessary elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who can make creative

changes in the symbolic domain, and a field of experts recognizing and validating the innovation. The cultural domain and the human (experts) field are almost as important as the individual creative person (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, pp. 6-7.)

The methodological tools for our integrative co-operation derive from a textual intervention technique and intertextuality. The starting point for the textual intervention technique, which was used in the Literature in School course, is a verbal text, or a part of it. However, the final outcome can radically differ from the starting point due to the intervention technique (e.g. Pope, 1995). The social theory of creativity has been used in a socio-constructive way so that after reading the two fairy tales, the Literature in School students, in groups of 3-4, wrote a textual intervention (manuscript). The fairy tales were the starting point for the new text, in which the changes in male/female roles have been interpreted and verbally intervented. When comparing the process to Csikszentmihalyi's (1996, p. 6) creativity theory, fairy tales can be seen as an example of a cultural domain, to which the students, as creative agents, give novelty. Finally, we, as teachers, are representatives of a field of recognizing and validating experts.

The elements of the read fairy tales are also visible in the students' written manuscripts via intertextuality. Intertextuality was familiar to the students who had studied Art Expression as part of an Art Education Minor. The intertextual method, developed for art education (see Paatela-Nieminen, 2000), has been applied in earlier courses and the students knew how to produce relations between different texts. For this reason the

intertextual method per se was not focused on in this course but the idea of intertextuality as traces, recyclings and accumulations was applied to interpret and unveil the way the verbal and visual texts and the theme of humanity and self image produce meanings in the students' paintings of Sleeping Beauty (see Itkonen & Paatela-Nieminen, 2015). The students in the Art Expresion course got to know several visual and verbal versions of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale (in addition to the two versions used in the Literature in School course) and they then picked one manuscript they liked for integrating with other verbal, visual and cultural texts, such as elements from selfies, youth brands, popular culture (illustrations from picture books and toy brands) and art works. They worked their self image into the wider theme of humanity. Finally, they produced paintings in which these intertextual loans were seen as new accumulations, recyclings and remixtures (see Paatela-Nieminen & Keifer-Boyd 2015). The hidden meanings may be detected in the associative traces and rhizomatical offshoots (see Paatela-Nieminen 2000). This is the way the students produced a dialogic space for their logical mind, and remixed it with the emotional, curious, and imaginative – which, in turn, promotes thinking, learning, creating and performing.
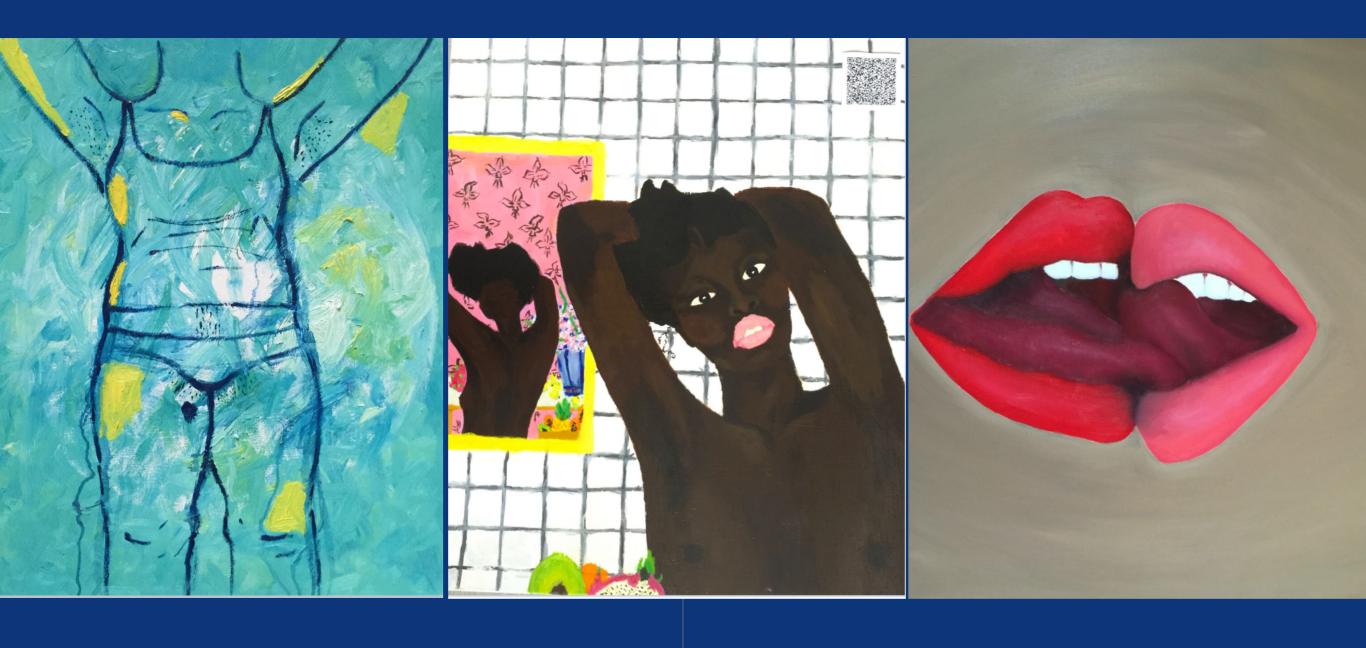
Case

Our first case in the Art Expression course is Sonja's oil painting. In her portfolio, she informs us that she finds it interesting to approach the given tasks from the intertextual point of view. For her, it meant several sources of inspiration. She did, however, write that it was annoying in the beginning, but found the elements settling down in their places little by little, as in real life. Sonja chose a textual intervention that deals with consumerism. Sleeping Beauty has been transformed as Rose, who is a popular girl who gets everything she wants. Sonja developed her theme graphically in her portfolio. Sonja's painting deals with over-consumption, and especially its effect on children and women (Image 1). Consumption is bursting through the deep blue doors with red flames and/or waves. The visual texts hidden in her painting come from several works of art: Peter Eisenman (gate), Pipilotti Rist (attitude and perspective), Katsushika Hokusai (waves) and Niko Luoma (postmodern elements such as colours, light and structure).
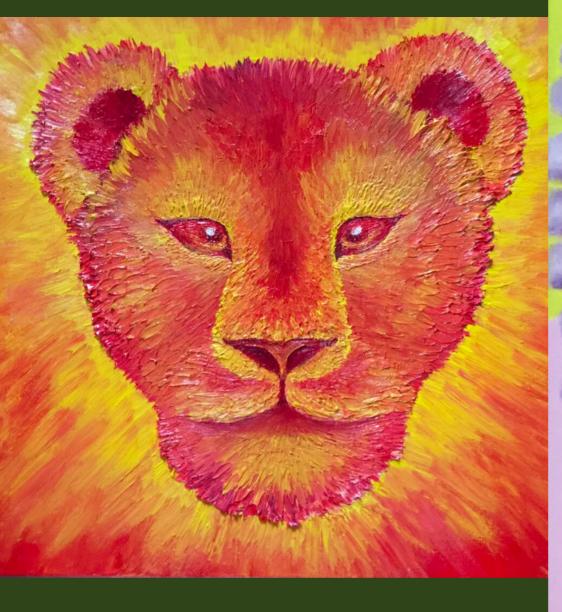
Image 1. Sonja Löfström's painting.

Images 2. Feminity and gender: Miisa Mäkeläinen, Ama Essel, Anna Sivers

The paintings of the other students also applied traces of textual interventions, recycled visual texts and questioning of the original fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty. This is apparent in themes dealing with and examining feminity and gender (Images 2), the empowerment of women (Images 3), sleeping as means of ignoring problems in society (Images 4), and being irresponsible about one's life/immaturity (Image 5).

Images 3. Empowerment: Tinka Ripatti, Johanna Kurikka

Sleep: Elina Määttänen

Sleep: Meiju Perttunen

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Sleep: Heidi Voutilainen

Images 4: Sleep: Elina Määttänen, Meiju Perttunen, Heidi Voutilainen, Soile Kantoluoto

Sleep: Soile Kantoluoto

Image 5. Being irresponsible for one´s life: Lassi Korhonen

Images 6. Images from the pedagogical art exhibition, Sleeping Beauties

Conclusions

The students' analyses show the success of our research questions concerning the recycling of various texts in the final outcomes. Firstly, the manuscripts written by the students on the Literary in School course can be interpreted as strong textual interventions from the original fairy tales. Secondly, the manuscripts were imaginative, playful, and accumulated ideas in a multilateral way. Thirdly, the students from the Art Expression course succeeded in integrating several visual and verbal texts from different cultures, times, places and media. The portfolios depict the students' artistic expressions, processes and reflections. The intertextual meaning-making takes place within the dialogic space as the students' logical mind remixes with the emotional, curious, and imaginative. Each individual painting uniquely integrated the Sleeping Beauties, developing further the theme of humanity, self-image and other visual texts. We were astonished by the richness of the integration. The pedagogical art exhibition assembled all the various levels of the processes and co-operation between the courses, the teachers and the integration of different subjects (Figures 6.).

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