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Article abstract

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The Nature of Literacy Instruction in Elementary School History Lessons

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Abstract

This paper examines literacy-related practices existing in elementary history classrooms and asks to what extent these practices are compatible with the ideals of historical literacy, i.e. disciplinary literacy specific to history. A total of 50 hours were spent observing nine Finnish classrooms. Data sources included numeric data, field notes and classroom artifacts. The results show that the most common text type used was the body text of a textbook while primary sources were few. The textbook was typically addressed as a neutral source of information. Teachers used visual texts only briefly and to support an existing narrative. None of the teachers modeled reading strategies specific to history. The teacher profiles suggest diverse approaches to literacy but the practices used by teachers point more to content-area and cultural literacy than disciplinary literacy. Implications for elementary literacy and history instruction are discussed.

Introduction

Disciplinary literacy is an umbrella term that includes different literacies, for example mathematical and musical literacies. Literacy specialists as well as subject area specialists have debated over the role and nature of literacy in subject education (e.g. Downey & Long, 2016; Fang 2012; Faggella-Luby et. al., 2012; Howard et al., 2021; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Moje, 2008; 2015; Nokes, 2010). Revolving mostly around the concepts of disciplinary and content-area literacy, the discussion has introduced differing views about, for example, when and in which way these literacies should be developed. In the present paper we focus on historical literacy, i.e. disciplinary literacy specific to history. Understanding literacy-related debates in the context of history education requires the introduction of yet another literacy, that of cultural literacy because history education has traditionally been a medium for transferring cultural heritage to the next generation (e.g. Cuban, 2016; VanSledright, 2016).

The social practices and habits of mind developed through disciplinary literacy enable students to join a disciplinary community (Moje, 2015) while cultural literacy prepares students to join a national community (see Smith, 2017). Although the benefits of disciplinary literacy may extend to improving adolescent literacy in general or help students meet college literacy demands (Faggella-Luby, 2012), the main objective of disciplinary literacy, from a subject education perspective, is to offer the tools necessary for understanding the world through the knowledge produced by the disciplines (Gardner, 1999).

The value of historical literacy lies in helping us to understand history but it also has wider implications regarding students' agency (Wineburg & Reisman, 2015). Through historical literacy students become active agents rather than recipients of information. Furthermore, texts are used as evidence rather than respected as authorities. In today's hectic textual space young people need historical literacy to detect mis-and disinformation through, for example, considering the origins and reliability of the text and identifying author's bias (see Wineburg, 2018).

We approach the nature of literacy instruction from the viewpoint of history teaching in Finnish elementary school. The National Core Curriculum in Finland 2014 (hereafter the NCC) emphasizes a disciplinary approach to teaching different subjects. Despite disciplinary literacy objectives of the NCC, at classroom level, the emphasis between disciplinary, content-area and cultural literacy can presumably vary. Our main focus is on disciplinary literacy, more specifically on historical literacy due to its prominent role in history education research (e.g. Nokes, 2010; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 1991) and its standing in the NCC. We use the concepts of content-area and cultural literacy as points of reflection when investigating the nature of literacy instruction in Finnish elementary history lesson.

At the elementary level, teachers work with several disciplines and are also responsible for teaching basic reading and writing skills. They may be inclined to pursue multiple literacy aims. Often referred to as the most text-rich school subject after literature (Downey & Long, 2016; Fang, 2012), history provides an interesting setting for investigating the role of different literacies in elementary classrooms. Although historical literacy has been stated as one of the learning objectives in the NCC (2014), research about the ways that Finnish elementary teachers implement the history curriculum in their classrooms has been scarce (see however, Mård, 2020).

In the present paper, we examine what kind of literacy-related practices exist in elementary history classrooms and ask to what extent those practices align with the ideals of disciplinary literacy specific to history, i.e. historical literacy. We define literacy practices to comprise three elements namely the choice of texts, the activities through which texts are addressed and specific literacy strategies. Observation data from nine Finnish elementary classrooms is employed.

The article explores to what extent the observed literacy practices are compatible with the ideals of historical literacy. In order to answer this main question, two auxiliary questions are posed:

- What kind of texts do class teachers use in history lessons and how are the texts used?
- What kind of activities do history lessons contain?

Next, we give a rationale for supporting a disciplinary approach to teaching literacy within a subject-area context. We continue by describing the differences between disciplinary, content-area and cultural literacy and define a specific form of disciplinary literacy, i.e. historical literacy. Before moving on to methods, we summarize the literacy practices essential for teaching historical literacy.

Theoretical Framework

Our work draws on theorists for whom disciplines are at the core of the learning process (e.g. Gardner 1999; Schwab, 1978). In order to "understand the fruits of the disciplines" it is necessary to understand "the structure which produced them" (Schwab, 1978, p. 242). Further, we lean on social realists such as Young (2009) and Bernstein (1999) who claim that the nature and structure of knowledge varies among disciplines, and consequently among school subjects. It follows that pedagogical choices cannot be detached from the epistemological differences that school subjects and their underlying disciplines have (Shulman, 1987). If disciplines are defined as cultures which both use and generate certain types of texts, then "texts read or written in a given disciplinary culture demand particular kinds of literacy practice relevant to the needs, goals and conventions of those purposes and audiences" (Moje, 2015, p. 257).

Disciplinary, Content-area and Cultural literacy

Disciplinary literacy presumes that disciplinary experts have distinct ways to read and write as well as to communicate, produce and use knowledge (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012), a presumption corroborated by studies on expert readers (summarized by Shanahan et al., 2011). Thus, the aim of disciplinary literacy instruction is to teach strategies and habits of mind specific to a given discipline. Teaching disciplinary literacy should also include the social practices and conventions of a discipline (Moje, 2015) because literacy is one medium to enculturate and socialize people into a discipline (Moje, 2008).

Some literacy experts (see Fang, 2012) view disciplinary learning as primarily a linguistic process, focusing on the vocabulary, patterns and structure of language. However, subject-area specialists call for a wider grasp of the discipline and its epistemic base so that students have the means not only to interpret but also construct knowledge (e.g. Downey & Long, 2016; Krajcik & Sutherland, 2010). From this perspective, the role of disciplinary literacy is to introduce both the language (Schleppegrell, 2004) and knowledge construction of the discipline (Downey & Long, 2016).

On the other hand, the basis of content-area literacy is that reading, understanding and interpreting texts demand the same or similar processes, irrespective of the subject area (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). With a set of common strategies such as basic reading skills (e.g. vocabulary), cognitive text processing strategies (e.g.summarizing) and generic learning strategies (e.g. concept mapping) texts from any content area can be understood (Fang, 2012). Proponents of content-area literacy have expressed reservations about introducing disciplinary literacy too early or for those who have difficulties in mastering the basic reading and learning skills even at a later stage (e.g. Faggella-Luby et al. 2012). Others view disciplinary literacy as a misguided attempt to produce disciplinary experts and question teachers' ability or motivation to teach disciplinary literacy at the secondary level (e.g. Heller, 2010).

However, disciplinary literacy advocates argue that a disciplinary approach to literacy does not seek to create mini-historians or mini-mathematicians (Gardner, 1999; Moje, 2011; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015). Instead, students should know how knowledge in different disciplines is produced so that they are able to evaluate that

knowledge and become active knowledge constructors (Hughes, 2021). Yet, students are not expected to construct knowledge for public use but to generate new private understandings (Husbands, 1996).

These two forms of literacy are not mutually exclusive (Howard et al. 2021; Moje, 2011; Reisman, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004). Literacy progression models advocating disciplinary literacy (Fang, 2012; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; VanSledright, 2002) recognize the importance of developing basic reading, writing and comprehension strategies but underscore the importance also introducing disciplinary literacy practices as the latter will benefit the former. Although teaching disciplinary literacy can develop areas of content-area literacy (Reisman, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004), the same does not seem to apply vice versa. Furthermore, teaching both literacies can be beneficial for even those labelled as struggling readers (Learned; 2018). Although it is difficult to define the exact age at which disciplinary literacy can or should be introduced, there is compelling evidence, at least regarding history education, that even elementary students are able to learn discipline-specific literacy (Hughes, 2021; Nokes, 2014; VanSledright, 2002).

The third form of literacy addressed in this paper is cultural literacy. In Hirsch's (1988) original use of the term, a membership in a culture cannot be attained without knowing a set of essential facts. Although later research has reconceptualized cultural literacy, its original meaning holds significance in history education, which has been – and in some cases still is– used for transmitting fixed, unquestioned narratives about nations and cultures (see Smith, 2017; VanSledrigh, 2016). If the predominant type of literacy in history lessons is cultural literacy, history would be embodied as a list of events, people, topics and narratives to be memorized and celebrated in the name of heritage (see VanSledright, 2016). This type of memory-history (Levesque, 2008) aims to create and maintain a collective memory.

Historical Literacy as a Form of Disciplinary Literacy

School subjects are never replicas or simple reductions of their parent disciplines. Instead, they are developed through a recontextualisation process where pressures and aspirations by the surrounding society shape the subject (Bernstein, 1990). However, because school subjects share the epistemic base of their parent discipline, the strategies and habits of mind used by disciplinary experts are relevant to the school subject.

When studying the reading habits of historians, Wineburg (1991) found that historians first evaluate the author and their bias before moving on to the content of the text. They set the text in a wider historical context and compare it with other texts to make inferences about its content and reliability. Wineburg named these reading strategies as sourcing, contextualization and corroboration. VanSledright (2002) identified a set of questions that are essential when approaching a text in the context of history. The questions address the reliability and usability of sources and vary according to the source type. In simple terms, all historical literacy strategies take the author and the author's motives as a starting point, differing thus from some other disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Based on the aforementioned characteristics many history educators emphasize that historical literacy requires abilities which differ from those used in other school subjects or disciplines (Nokes, 2010; Downey & Long, 2016; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 1991).

Historical literacy refers to the ability to use relevant information from various types of resources and not only to possess knowledge, but to build it (Nokes 2010). Developing historical literacy requires students to recognize and use different forms of knowledge. Substantive knowledge refers to the content of history, i.e. names, dates and events set in the past. Procedural knowledge, on the other hand, is concerned with the ways of interpreting the past and is needed, for example, to understand and weigh evidence, gather source materials and compare different accounts (Downey & Long, 2016).

No single classroom activity in itself can be considered a solution or hindrance for developing historical literacy. However, explaining historical content was rated as the least essential teaching practice when high school history teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers defined the core practices for teaching history (Fogo, 2014). Thus, lecturing as a predominant classroom activity can be viewed as incompatible with teaching students to take an active role in knowledge construction, especially if teachers' lectures do not include procedural knowledge.

Developing any disciplinary literacy is dependent on the texts that students engage with. Literacy researchers such as Fang (2012) underscore the importance of introducing "disciplinary texts", i.e. texts produced by disciplinary experts. This definition, however, excludes texts which are not produced but instead used by disciplinary experts. In the context of history these texts are primary sources. To support students' historical literacy, working with primary sources is considered vital (Nokes, 2010; VanSledrigh, 2002; Seixas, 2006; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015), either authentic or as modified (Reisman, 2012). Primary sources can be anything from ancient artefacts to a musical piece, depending on the historical context. Identifying sources as primary (originating from the time in question), secondary (historians' interpretations based on primary sources) and tertiary (e.g. textbooks) helps to develop historical literacy as different questions are posed to different source types (VanSledright, 2002).

Although textbooks may describe the historical context and make links between primary and secondary sources, they can be problematic for the development of historical literacy (Downey & Long, 2016; Nokes, 2010) because of their genre. According to Coffin (1997) history textbooks are written in narrative genres, such as historical accounts and recounts, which present history as over-simplified, mainstream representations. These narrative genres fail to convey the interpretative nature of history, its multiple and often contradictory interpretations. As single narratives are seldom told from the perspective of minorities and marginalized groups, textbook narratives may often strengthen the idea of a superior West (Mikander, 2016). Textbooks have a depersonalized voice, which students interpret as objective and credible (Paxton, 1997). The numerous choices behind producing the texts as well as author's bias remain hidden (Coffin, 1997). The anonymity and perceived objectivity of the textbook lead to authority, which according to Bain (2006) is higher than that of primary sources. Thus, questioning and interrogating a textbook, although possible, becomes less likely.

To summarize the characteristics for instruction aimed at developing historical literacy in elementary school:

- Introducing history-specific literacy strategies: e.g. considering the age, author, author's possible bias and historical context of the source.
- Working with multiple historical sources, emphasis on primary sources, whether written or visual
- Identifying texts as primary and secondary sources
- Introducing multiple perspectives and questioning the authority of single narratives (textbooks, teacher)
- Exposing students to the language of historical knowledge
- Favoring classroom activities requiring students not only to collect information but to construct knowledge
- Providing procedural knowledge

Most of the literacy-related research in history education concerns the secondary level (e.g. Howard al, 2021; Learned 2018; Masuda, 2014; Nokes, 2010; Paxton, 1997; Reisman, 2012, 2015); only a few have focused at the elementary level (Hughes, 2021; Khawaja, 2018; Nokes, 2014; Stolare, 2017; VanSledright, 2002). The focus has mainly been on students' ability to think historically (e.g. Nokes, 2014; Khawaja, 2018; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Rantala & Khawaja, 2018; VanSledright, 2002). These studies show that elementary students are capable of using historical literacy strategies but with considerable differences. Hence, the ability to work with historical texts in a disciplinary way does not develop on its own and students need appropriate guidance.

The existing research on teaching history at the elementary level mostly comprises intervention studies (Nokes, 2014; Stolare; 2017; VanSledright, 2002) or studies about expert teachers (Hughes, 2021). In Stolare's (2017) study an elementary teacher had difficulties incorporating both the concept and the use of sources, even with the support of the intervention project. After the initial stage of the study, the teacher returned to the narrative approach, focusing on substantive knowledge.

In their intervention studies Nokes (2014) and VanSledright (2002) taught elementary students and reported promising results concerning students' approach to disciplinary literacy. Students in both studies changed their views about the nature of history and grasped the difference between primary and tertiary sources such as textbooks. Fewer viewed texts only as neutral sources of information. VanSledright (2002) made the steps of historical inquiry visible to students using a classroom poster. Both authors found it possible to teach historical literacy at the elementary level. However, little is known about whether class teachers working without interventions are able to implement disciplinary literacy in history classrooms.

Method and Materials

Research Context

The context of our study is the Finnish elementary school, where history is taught by class teachers. Students begin to study history usually in the fifth grade, at the age of eleven. History is taught one lesson per week, as opposed to four lessons of Finnish language and literature, which also includes instruction on general literacy strategies.

Class teachers are required to have a Master's degree in education and the majority of in-service teachers are qualified. The five-year teacher education consists of general educational studies as well as short courses on the didactics for each school subject. Teachers can specialize in a school subject by completing half-a-year (25 ECTS) or a full year (60 ECTS) course, the latter qualifies them to teach the subject at lower secondary level as well. However, Finnish class teachers major in general educational sciences, not in any specific school subjects (Rantala & Khawaja, 2021).

All schools are obligated to follow The NCC (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014) which defines the teaching objectives. The NCC for elementary history states that "the pupils focus on critical analysis of information produced by different actors and the dimensions of historical source material". Historical literacy is stated as an instructional aim and defined as "the ability to read and analyze sources produced by actors of the past and to competently interpret their meaning and significance". There are five content areas defined only in broad terms, giving teachers the possibility to select specific topics. For example, content area 4 "The Start of Early Modern Period" is described as "getting acquainted with the changes taking place in science, arts and peoples' beliefs" (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014).

Because there are no national tests or school inspections, Finnish teachers have great autonomy on curricular and pedagogical decisions, including whether to use a textbook. In the observed classrooms, mainly three textbooks were used (see Table 1): Forum (from Latin), Ritari (The Knight) and Mennyt (The Past). The first two are structured in a similar way: the chapters include both body text as well as photographs of artefacts, and at the end of each chapter mostly content related questions are presented. Both textbooks also have some "investigative" spreads. The third, Mennyt, has only body text and illustrations but students use an exercise book for assignments which utilizes historical documents. While Ritari and Forum bring up the interpretative nature of historical knowledge in the beginning of the textbook, Mennyt incorporates the idea in the body text.

Study Design and Participants

We observed nine elementary teachers in eight schools during the autumn of 2018 and the spring of 2019. [1]The first author was the primary observer and the second author observed one lesson by eight teachers. By limiting the number of teachers to nine in the study, we were able to observe each teacher eight to ten times. Although fewer visits would have resulted in a greater number of participants, it might have resulted in a more superficial understanding of each teacher's instruction and increased the risk of observing atypical lessons. Although a single case study could provide a truly in-depth approach (see Hartzler-Miller, 2001) multiple participants may reveal more of the diversity of classroom practices.

Our study design is similar to that described by Nokes (2010). We further developed his observation instrument to suit our research context. The instrument was tested five times in the Helsinki region as well as in an elementary school co-operating with but not participating in the study. This testing process necessitated alterations (the number of categories, the length of the coding period).

[1] We have followed the guidelines stated by the University of Helsinki concerning ethical conduct of research.

All nine participants were selected on the recommendations by teachers and administrative staff. Because our aim was to observe history lessons as typical as possible, we did not seek teachers who were especially likely to promote historical literacy or were known for their unusually advanced history instruction (cf. Hughes, 2021). Instead, the criteria for the participating teachers were a few years' work experience and the locale of school Southern Finland. In addition, we included some teachers who had specialized in history (see Table 1).

Table 1
The participants of the study

Teacher	Years of teaching experience	Grade level	Degree in education	Extra credits in history	Number of students	Number of observed lessons (minutes observed)	Textbook used by the teacher	Time period studied
Amy	9	6	Master	none	18	9 (410)	Forum	The middle ages in Europe
Brian	6	5	Master	25 ECTS	20	8 (380)	Mennyt (The Past)	Germanic and Nordic tribes in Roman age; the middle ages
Chris	4	6	Bachelor	55 ECTS	24	9 (395)	Forum	European expansion; European culture and science in the early modern period
Daphne	5	6	Master	none	29	7 (320)	Forum	Middle ages in Europe
Eve	17	6	Master	none	25	10 (440)	Ritari (The Knight) + two others	European expansion; Renaissance art; Finland as part of Sweden
Fiona	8	6	Master	60 ECTS	25	8 (365)	Ritari (The Knight)	Reformation; European expansion
George	18	6	Master	120 ECTS	26	7 (305)	Ritari (The Knight)	Crusades; middle ages in Europe
Henry	15	5	Master	none	22	8 (340)	Forum	Ancient Greece and Rome
Ida	7	5	PhD	none	24	8 (370)	Mennyt (The Past)	Ancient Egypt

The nine teachers worked in eight similar-sized schools (500 students on average). Amy and Henry (all names are pseudonyms) were colleagues. In the absence of national tests and because learning outcomes such as end of year grades are not made public, the schools cannot be described for these parameters. Essentially, Finland has a public education system with little differences between schools. The ethnicity of students is not registered by schools, only the number of students who have Finnish as their second language.

Data Sources

The final instrument (Appendix A) consists of three sections: text types, classroom activities and historical literacy heuristics. The first section includes 16 text types. Each text used during the 5-minute period was coded. The category of "textbook" was coded whenever the textbook was used in the classroom. If the use of textbook included other text types than the body text, for example maps and visual texts, they were coded in their own categories but marked as originating from the textbook. This was done in order to capture the use of textbook in as much detail as possible.

The instrument includes ten categories of classroom activities. Unlike with texts, only the most predominant activity was coded. As for teacher-student interaction, we differentiated between direct instruction, discussion, and Initiation-Response-Feedback (from hereafter IRF) interaction. Direct instruction refers to a teacher-centered approach, where teacher conveys information to students (Wells, 1998). The other teacher-centered activity included in the instrument is asking close-ended questions using the IRF structure, where despite student participation they lack opportunities to influence the direction of the dialogue or to take initiative (Lemke, 1990).

We coded interaction as discussion if teachers or students asked open-ended questions. We acknowledge that the definition used here does not meet the criteria for text-based discussion (see Reisman, 2015). However, our field notes enabled us to look into each discussion in more detail and determine their nature and quality afterwards.

We included Wineburg's (1991) heuristics in the instrument and tested whether it could be used to observe literacy strategies. Whilst testing the instrument only few examples of these strategies were found, making it difficult to draw conclusions on the usability of the heuristics. As the data gathering progressed, we found that identifying sourcing, corroboration or contextualization in fast-paced classroom situations would have required a more specialized instrument. Therefore, the heuristics are included in the instrument but not used as such in the analysis.

We made field notes because the observation sheet could not capture the content or tone of discussions or interaction between students and teachers. On average, each lesson generated 1-2 pages of field notes. The focus was on situations with some relevance to historical literacy, such as details about the texts and instructions for reading etc. Teaching materials, excluding student answers, were collected and included in the data. We interviewed each teacher after the observation period, asking questions about specific events in the classrooms and general questions about planning and implementing history lessons. However, because the scope of the present paper does not allow us to utilize the interview data, the findings concerning teacher thinking are published elsewhere.

Data Analysis

The auxiliary questions addressing classroom activities and use of texts were addressed by using a combination of numeric data, field notes and classroom materials. For example, the use of texts was analyzed by first using the observation sheet to identify all the incidences where a text was used for more than five minutes. Those occasions were then traced back in the field notes providing a description of that specific incident.

We analyzed further the nature of the incidences where a text (other than the body text or teacher's notes) was present for more than five minutes. The aim was to uncover incidences containing any sign of strategies or processes related to historical literacy, such as taking into account the origin, author and reliability of sources. In contrast, incidences where attention was paid only to the content of text were not included in history-specific literacy strategies.

In order to answer the main research question, we constructed teacher profiles using five criteria: (1) incidences where texts were present for more than 5 minutes, (2) incidences of procedural knowledge, (3) the use of textbook, (4) teacher-centered activities, direct instruction in particular and (5) high student participation activities, discussion in particular. High numbers in the first two criteria increased the disciplinarity of a profile. First, engaging with texts in a historically meaningful way requires time. Second, students need procedural knowledge to understand how historical knowledge is constructed. High incidences of textbook use contributed towards a less disciplinary profile because we, similar to Nokes (2010, p. 529) consider a dominant role of the textbook counterproductive for learning historical literacy and consistent with forwarding cultural literacy.

Since historical literacy is embedded in the idea that students are active agents in constructing historical interpretations (Bain, 2006; Downey & Long 2016), possibilities for promoting historical literacy diminish if teacher-centered practices prevail. On the other hand, direct instruction can be an appropriate way to impart information (Wells, 1998), which is acknowledged also in the inquiry-based models for history (see Reisman, 2012). Therefore, while recognizing the value of teacher-centered activities, a moderate approach was considered most desirable when constructing the profiles. Because fixed historical narratives are often forwarded through direct instruction, its predominant role was considered an indication of cultural literacy.

For reliability, we compared observations sheets from lessons, where both authors were present. With texts, a point-by-point comparison was made for each row (i.e. text type, see Appendix A), where at least one observer had coded texts. Rows that had been left empty by both observers were not taken into account. The comparison revealed an 87% agreement on texts. As for activities, instead of comparing rows, we compared each column (i.e. each 5-minute period, see Appendix A) as only the most predominant activity was coded. The comparison revealed an 84% agreement on activities**.**

In what follows, we present the findings of the study by first answering the auxiliary questions concerning the use of texts, activities and literacy strategies. We

then move on to answer the main research question by constructing teacher profiles describing the nature of each teachers' literacy instruction.

Findings

Texts

Textbooks were by far the most used resource in the observed classrooms (Table 2). Teachers used textbooks on an average 45% of the time, with a considerable variation between teachers (30%–56%). Although the textbook number includes all text types originating from the textbook (maps, visual texts etc.), the use of textbook mostly consisted of reading the body text. Most of the visual texts, maps, statistics and non-fiction texts (i.e. all texts other than the body text and teacher's notes) originated from the textbook or the teacher's guide. Fiona and George were exceptions as the visual texts, maps, statistics and non-fiction texts in their lessons originated (84% and 70% respectively) from resources other than the textbook. Generally, the most typical non-textbook texts were videos and visual texts retrieved from the internet through Google search.

Table 2

Texts and activities observed in the classrooms in relation to the total time.

	Teacher								
	Amy	Brian	Chris	Daphne	Eve	Fiona	George	Henry	Ida
Texts (%)									
textbook	43,9	35,5	49,3	50,0	55,7	30,1	47,5	55,9	33,8
Teacher's notes	20,0	14,4	13,9	1,6	7,0	38,3	39,3	22,1	19,0
non-fiction text	1,2	10,5	8,8	3,1	2,3	6,8	36,0	0	22,0
newspaper	0	0	1,3	0	0	0	0	0	5,4
administrative document	0	1,3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
photograph	3,6	0	0	0	3,5	12,3	13,1	1,5	2,7
painting or drawing	4,8	15,7	12,7	9,3	14,0	21,9	37,8	13,2	20,0
lyrics	4,9	2,6	0	9,3	0	0	26,2	0	0
maps	6,0	10,4	1,3	1,6	16,0	9,6	13,1	10,3	2,7
statistics	0	0	0	3,1	0	0	1,6	0	5,4
video	3,6	0	13,9	4,7	14,0	11,0	11,5	0	5,4
buildings and artefacts	4,8	0	6,3	4,7	8,1	9,6	27,9	11,8	8,1
other	0	0	0	6,3	11,0	0	6,6	0	14,0
No texts	30,4	30,2	17,7	26,6	26,1	24,6	18,0	25,0	20,3
Activities (%)									
direct instruction	7,3	22,4	17,7	3,1	33,0	35,6	13,1	13,2	13,5
IRF	13,4	14,5	12,7	28,1	10,2	11,0	0,0	11,8	5,4
giving instructions	8,5	15,8	11,4	17,2	12,5	15,1	16,4	19,1	13,5
reading	14,6	9,2	11,4	15,6	4,5	6,8	0,0	11,8	1,4
discussion	15,9	14,5	5,1	0,0	4,5	2,7	0,0	11,8	2,7
group work	8,5	10,5	17,7	7,8	6,8	8,2	0,0	8,8	9,5
individual work	19,5	2,6	6,3	9,4	12,5	9,6	54,1	8,8	33,8
video	3,7	0,0	10,1	3,1	4,5	5,5	11,5	0,0	5,4
other	0,0	2,6	3,8	6,3	2,3	4,1	1,6	4,4	2,7
no activity	8,5	7,9	3,8	9,4	9,1	1,4	3,3	10,3	12,2
activities in total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: *We coded all texts used in the classroom during the 5-minute coding period. Because there were coding periods with multiple texts, the sum total of percentages does not add up to 100. The corresponding figures for the activities do add up to 100 because only the most predominant activity (at least three minutes) was coded.*

Although textbooks dominated the textual space of the classrooms, we found some exceptions. Fiona relied mainly on her PowerPoint presentations. Therefore, her numbers concerning the use of textbook are relatively low. Brian and Ida on the other hand spent comparatively less time with the body text than other teachers but did utilize many other text types from the textbook. Only Chris (twice) and Ida (once) used newspaper articles in their lesson. Brian was the only one who visited a digitized archive web page and showed a historical source from the archive.

The most common primary sources were pictures of artefacts and buildings as well as paintings and drawings. Written primary sources were introduced only rarely and they originated from the textbook materials. The only teachers to use written primary sources were Brian and Ida, whose textbook provided these sources. Apart from Brian's visit to a digitized archive, teachers did not use written primary sources that did not originate from the textbook, which further underlines the importance of textbook as a resource.

Use of Texts

Generally, teachers addressed textbooks as neutral sources of information. Neither the choice of topics nor the interpretations presented by the authors received any attention or criticism. Out of all nine teachers, only Henry made a critical remark in the classroom concerning the textbook when he objected to the way the textbook's narrative blurred the passage of time. The vocabulary in the texts was addressed by most teachers when encountering unfamiliar nouns such as 'propaganda'. However, words or expressions carrying historical controversy (voyages of discovery), were discussed only by Brian, Chris and Eve. Teachers did not reflect on the choice of verbs (e.g. to invade vs. explore America).

Because the teachers introduced different types of visual texts in the lessons, the textual makeup of the lessons could be described as versatile. However, most of the texts other than textbook or teachers' notes, were used only for a very short time thus making the textual atmosphere hectic (Table 3). The following excerpt from the field notes describes part of a five- minute period where Fiona is teaching about the European invasion of America:

> Photo of a present day Inca as well as some kind of drawing. A photo of Machu Pichu.
>
> All texts so far part of a PowerPoint presentation made by the teacher. Some of texts might be primary sources but students won't be aware of it because teacher doesn't tell anything about the texts. The slides don't have anything written in small print, which would help me to trace the sources.
>
> New drawing, about the Incas, origin not told. Visible for about 10 seconds
>
> New drawing, about Atahualpa and Pizarro, origin not told. Visible for about 15 seconds.

New drawing about gold. Visible for about 5 seconds.

Back to Atahualpa

Fiona's example is an extreme one regarding its fast pace. However, the phenomenon where texts functioned more as fast visual stimuli rather than as sources to be interpreted was discernible in other classrooms as well. As Table 3 shows, incidences where a text was looked at for more than five minutes were relatively few. Brian, Ida and Eve have higher numbers than the average but differ significantly when we examine the agency of those engaged with texts. While all Brian's incidences are related to situations where he alone or together with the students worked with the text, Ida has more incidences where students were given time to work with the texts.

Visual texts were most often used for illustrating a point or for supporting a narrative presented by the teacher or the textbook. Notably, when visual texts were shown as part of a PowerPoint presentation (Fiona and Henry) the origin, purpose and historical context of the texts were omitted.

When and where texts were addressed for more than 5-minutes, history-specific strategies were used rarely (see Table 3). On these occasions, teachers mentioned the age, author or the reliability of the text in passing. Alternatively, the textbook assignment expected students to use history-specific strategies. One of our main findings however is, that none of the nine teachers gave explicit instructions nor modelled how to interpret texts employing historical literacy strategies. Moreover, texts were not consistently identified as primary or secondary sources. Instead, explicit instructions were given on constructing mind maps, structuring longer answers, making PowerPoint-presentations and writing notes, i.e. strategies associated with content-area literacy. An excerpt from the field notes shows how Henry makes use of bolded text in the textbook: "Philip II of Macedonia is written in plain font in the body text, not bolded. Who among the two [Philip or Alexander the Great bolded] was more important?"

Table 3

Incidences where texts were used for durations longer than five minutes and incidences of introducing procedural knowledge*

	Amy	Brian	Chris	Daphne	Eve	Fiona	George	Henry	Ida
Incidences where a text was addressed for more than 5 minutes									
by the teacher	3	8	2	2	6	4	2	2	4
by the students	3	0	0	1	2	0	5	0	7
In total	6	8	2	3	8	4	7	2	11
Out of which incidences with any historical literacy strategy	3	3	1	0	2	0	2	1	4
Incidences of procedural knowledge	7	12	2	1	7	2	2	3	11

**other than the textbook or teachers' notes*

Classroom Activities

The extent of teacher-centered activities (direct instruction, IRF-interaction and giving instructions) varied considerably among teachers (Table 2). Direct instruction was the dominant activity only in two classrooms. Five teachers had a moderate approach to direct instruction (on an average 16% of the time). Amy and Daphne gave direct instruction only 8% and 3% of the time respectively.

A closer look at teachers' talk reveals that the content varied in relation to the type of knowledge that they imparted with. Table 3 shows incidences when procedural knowledge was addressed in some way. Amy, Brian, Eve and Ida introduced elements of procedural knowledge many times more frequently than the other teachers. In general, the incidences of procedural knowledge lasted only for a minute or two. Eve was an exception: she had the longest continuous period when procedural knowledge was addressed. However, out of the total time of observation period, averaging 330 minutes, the proportion spent on procedural knowledge, even in the case of Amy, Brian, Eve and Ida becomes marginal compared with that devoted to substantive knowledge.

Most teachers practiced more IRF interaction than whole class discussion. IRF interaction was used mostly for ensuring that students had comprehended a paragraph or a chapter in the textbook. The questions in IRF sequences were about the recollection of names, dates and the meaning of concepts used in the textbook. Whereas Amy, Daphne and Henry used IRF during or immediately after reading a textbook chapter, Eve used IRF for revising previous lessons' content.

The more a discussion prompted justified interpretations rather than personal opinions, the more relevant it was considered for historical literacy. Daphne and George did not facilitate any discussions. Other teachers' discussions could roughly be divided into three groups: those lacking historical context (Amy and Henry), with some historical relevance (Chris and Fiona) and high historical relevance (Brian, Eve and Ida). However, none of the discussions were structured or long-lasting. Generally, discussions did not last for more than 5 minutes.

What Kind of Literacy?

A profile of each teacher describes the varying role of historical literacy in their instruction. In addition, the role of other literacies in their instruction is described. The profiles start from the teacher with an approach least compatible with the ideals of historical literacy and end with the teacher with most history-specific literacy practices.

Daphne: Going through the textbook chapters. Content-area literacy was strongly present in Daphne's classroom. Typically, students read the chapter out loud and answered questions in the textbook, which was used about 50% of total time. These questions required only reading comprehension as the answers could be found in the text as such. Daphne's numbers for whole class reading (16%) and IRF interaction (28%) are the highest among all nine teachers. The lessons did not contain any procedural knowledge.

Fiona: Teaching history as stories. Direct instruction (36%) and other teacher-centered activities dominated Fiona's lessons but discussion (3%) was almost non-existent. She typically told a historical narrative with the help of PowerPoint slides, where visual texts functioned as illustrations of the narrative. Complemented with

quizzes and copying notes her instruction suggests an emphasis on cultural literacy. There were no incidences of approaching texts in a historically literate way

Henry: Activating students through discussion. Henry regularly encouraged discussions (12%) but the views that students expressed were personal opinions rather than justified inferences and lacked the historical context. The discussions and the infrequent use of fixed narratives decreased the role of cultural literacy although textbook was read frequently (56%). Henry asked about comprehension of concepts more often than other teachers. There was only one incident of a historically literate encounter with a text.

Chris: Versatile texts and group work. Chris was one of two teachers to use texts such as newspaper and music. Video materials (10%) were also present in his lessons. Students actively participated in group work (18%), which however mostly required retrieving information for presentations. Only content-area literacy strategies were utilized. The discussions, although rare (5%), were text-based and stayed within the historical context. Incidences of imparting procedural knowledge and engaging with texts for more than five minutes were rare.

*George: Strong student participation without providing interpretational tools***.** George's concept of the study unit was to let students work independently (54%). Although this gave time for students to interact with texts, the absence of discussion (0%) and group work (0%) did not provide exchange of views. The nature of assignments and lack of procedural knowledge led students to mostly collect and relocate information, thus using mostly content-area literacy strategies. The fact that George used other texts almost as often as the textbook broadened the textual scope of the lessons.

Eve: Tentative interpretation of texts but by the teacher. Eve had a teacher-centered approach, where direct instruction was the dominant activity (33%) and the textbook was the main text (56%). Procedural knowledge was introduced relatively often, and texts were present for long periods. However, most often it was the teacher, not the students who interpreted the texts. Cultural literacy was prominent when Eve lectured about many topics from a Finnish perspective and emphasized the importance of remembering key dates.

Amy: Depending upon textbook chapters but teaching to question other texts. The textual routines of Amy, such as asking students to copy keywords and notes from the teacher's guide, suggests a focus on content-area literacy. However, she used several exercises that touched upon historically literate themes. She welcomed discussions (15%) by asking open-ended questions, but the discussions prompted mostly personal opinions. Procedural knowledge was introduced occasionally (7 incidences).

Brian: providing some disciplinary tools. Brian's lessons were traditional in their structure as reading comprehension was monitored by IRF-interaction (15%) and by other content-area-literacy practices. Although the lessons contained procedural knowledge (12 incidences) and extended periods spent with texts (8 incidences), students were not given many opportunities to interpret texts. The textbook was used for understanding the historical context, but moderately (36%) and discussions (12%) were often of high-level.

Ida: giving time to texts. Ida gave time to all types of texts, including visual texts, more so than any other teacher. Further, students were the ones working with texts. Strategies specific to history were applied on four occasions. Ida introduced both substantive and procedural knowledge (11 incidences) through direct instruction (14%). The textbook (34%) did not have a dominant position as Ida used versatile texts. Ida's activities were high in student participation (47%), but discussion was rare (3%). Nevertheless, most assignments required text comprehension and collecting information.

The profiles suggest that none of the nine teachers' instruction was compatible with the ideals of historical literacy stated in the NCC and described by history educators. Even Brian and Ida, who had the most disciplinary approach could not be described as focusing on disciplinary literacy. History-specific strategies, although present, were an additional, not the main ingredient. In all nine classrooms content-area literacy strategies were employed more than history-specific ones. Choice of activities seem to emphasize text comprehension (whole class reading) and memorization of facts (IRF) instead of introducing multiple views through discussion. Choice of texts (textbook's predominant role in many classrooms) suggests an emphasis on a single, adoptable narrative rather than investigating history through primary sources. Thus, literacy practices as a whole focus more on content-area and cultural literacy than disciplinary literacy.

Teachers with extra credits in history (Brian, Chris, Fiona, George) did not use more history-specific literacy practices than the five other teachers. In fact, Brian who had the least number of history credits among the four (see Table 1) had the most disciplinary approach. Students' grade level did not play a significant role in the results as sixth grade teachers did not have more history-specific practices than the fifth-grade teachers. In contrast, low incident numbers for "introducing procedural knowledge" and "working with texts for more than 5-mitues" (Table 3) appear to be associated with extremely high (Fiona) or low (Daphne) numbers in direct instruction (Table 2).

Discussion

Our findings on literacy practices (i.e. use of texts, activities and strategies) at elementary level are consistent with earlier studies at the secondary level where teachers have emphasized narratives rather than historical literacy (e.g. Nokes, 2010; Hartzler-Miller, 2001). Furthermore, our results corroborate those of Neugebauer and Blair (2020, p. 324), who found that middle school teachers across disciplines used mainly authoritative texts using content-area literacy: students perceived literacy as a "generic or transactional process focused on decoding and searching for information". This emphasis on content-area literacy has been detected also among secondary preservice teachers (Masuda, 2014). However, observation studies at the elementary level that focus on literacy practices are scarce and are single case studies (e.g. Hughes, 2021; Stolare, 2017). To this end the present study is able to offer some new insights.

One of our main findings is that textbooks have a predominant role in history instruction. Similar results have been reported previously but on social studies (e.g. Hintz, 2014; Kon, 1995). These studies together raise questions about the influence of textbooks. In the present study, the Mennyt textbook was the only one pointing out the uncertainty of historical knowledge and introducing multiple perspectives in the body

text. It thus differs from the traditional genre of textbooks (see Coffin, 1997). Our results raise questions about textbook influence. Whereas Hintz's (2014) case study indicates that teachers' beliefs affect the way they utilize a textbook, we suggest the reverse; textbooks might affect teachers' views on what history is about, especially as teachers may work with the same material for many years. It appears that traditional textbooks presenting history as simplified recounts might promote mainly content-area- and cultural literacy. While materials are always subjected to pedagogical decision making, teachers may adopt textbook's perception of history.

In addition to the frequency of using textbooks we examined the way different text types in the textbooks were addressed during the lessons. In general, any text type other than the body text in the textbook received little time. Visual texts originated mostly from the textbooks and teachers' notes and did not function as sources to be worked with, but rather as curiosities or in support of a narrative. Moreover, the instruction included only a few incidences of procedural knowledge and explicit reading instructions concerned general strategies such as constructing mind maps. These results differ from those of Hughes (2021) where an expert elementary teacher intentionally chose visual texts for practicing historical interpretation.

There are reports that expert teachers and researchers are able to teach disciplinary literacy in elementary school by providing procedural knowledge and introducing domain- specific literacy strategies (Nokes, 2014; Hughes, 2021; VanSledright, 2002). We, however, found that history teaching carried out without support from researchers or intervention projects included only few incidences of procedural knowledge. In addition, explicit reading instructions concerned only general, not history-specific, strategies. On the whole, the literacy practices of nine teachers from eight different schools emphasized more content-area- and cultural literacy than disciplinary literacy. For students this emphasis means that they may learn to decode, summarize and memorize texts but not to construct knowledge through disciplinary practices and principles (e.g. Hughes, 2021; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). In the context of history, without a disciplinary gaze students' possibilities to evaluate the reliability of texts and historical claims is compromised. Next, we reflect on the possible causes behind the minor role of disciplinary literacy in the observed classrooms.

The Finnish educational context allows us to rule out some of the reasons proposed previously as hindering factors for implementing disciplinary literacy in classrooms. As mentioned earlier, there are no standardized tests in Finland (cf. VanSledright, 2014), teachers have full pedagogical autonomy and elementary teachers are highly educated. Because general literacy strategies are taught in the lessons on Finnish language and literature, teachers are expected to focus on disciplinary literacy in various subject areas (cf. Moje, 2008). Yet, as our results suggest, literacy instruction by most teachers in history lessons did not have a disciplinary approach. Why, then, did the teachers seem pressed for time, trying to cover as many textbook chapters as possible?

While acknowledging the complexity and variety of possible explanatory factors, we suggest that the idea of cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1988) may play an important role. Although the NCC does not require extensive content coverage, the tradition of teaching memory-history (e.g. Levesque, 2008) seems to be strong. In a

recent study (Authors, 2021), the majority of Finnish student-teachers in the sample viewed that the goal of teaching history was to familiarize students with general knowledge about historical events and people, i.e. a cultural canon. If passing on a cultural canon takes precedence over disciplinary literacy among prospective teachers, the same might apply to in-service teachers. Our findings imply that content-area- and cultural literacy can and often do coexist in history classrooms. The partnership of these literacies is a logical one: cultural literacy requires remembering information believed to be true and valuable in order to access a given culture (Hirsch, 1988), and content-area literacy is considered an efficient approach for remembering the content of any subject (Faggella-Luby, 2012).

The nature of literacy instruction in classrooms conveys to students how school subjects are perceived: as platforms on which to practice reading and writing, as collections of "facts" or ways of thinking about the world. Although content-area literacy may provide tools to remember events and dates (but cf. VanSledright, 2014) it does little to help to construct and evaluate historical knowledge. Cultural literacy on the other hand may be viewed as a by-product: "such [cultural] literacy should come as a result of probing important issues and learning how to think about them in a disciplined way–not as a consequence of mastering fifty or five hundred predetermined topics each year" (Gardner, 1999, p. 24).

Literacy strategies and approaches, whether content-area or disciplinary, can successfully be used as "not a means unto themselves" but in the service of disciplinary learning (Learned 2018, p. 202). Hence, instead of addressing literacy as something to be "inserted" or "integrated" into subject-area lessons (see Howard et al. 2021; Orr et al., 2014), we view it as an inseparable part of understanding any subject-area.

Teaching disciplinary literacy has been opposed by arguing that it is enough, for example in history, to "be familiar with the biggest of the big ideas" (Heller, 2010). However, from a disciplinary perspective, picking "the fruits of the discipline" (Schwab, 1978) without an understanding of the discipline does not result in "a big picture" but may paradoxically enhance fragmentation of knowledge. Knowing things about history is profoundly different from knowing what history is about.

Conclusions and Implications

The role of textbooks was a predominant one in nearly all the classrooms observed and the use of written primary sources was rare. Teachers used visual texts only briefly and mostly to support an existing narrative. Reading across primary sources to answer historical questions was absent in all classrooms. Three of the nine teachers had more student-centered rather than teacher-centered activities. The majority of teachers included procedural knowledge in their instruction only few times and as a result substantive knowledge was emphasized in teachers' talk. The teacher profiles suggest that elementary teachers had diverse approaches to literacy but all of them employed more content-area- than disciplinary literacy strategies. However, there were substantial differences in literacy practices among teachers using the least and most disciplinary approaches. Most teachers incorporated cultural literacy into their lessons either in the form of single narratives or a list of facts to be memorized.

Based on these findings we suggest that teacher education should underscore the role of procedural knowledge and introduce domain-specific reading strategies

along with and perhaps over and above general ones. As prospective elementary teachers learn about general reading and writing strategies in Finnish language didactics courses, we find it important that the possibilities of disciplinary strategies and ways of thinking are emphasized in other courses included in the elementary teacher programme. In addition, prospective teachers need awareness of the pitfalls related to the narrative genres used in history textbooks. However, merely the knowledge about teaching historical literacy is not sufficient: textbooks should provide a comprehensive set of primary sources for elementary teachers who may lack both the time and the expertise to find historical sources.

More research is needed to understand how teachers' disciplinary literacy is addressed initially in teacher education and developed further while working as teachers. Apart from history, does disciplinary literacy have only a minor role in other school subjects in the elementary context? How does the teacher community in schools affect teachers' views on literacy? Observation studies focusing on these questions would help to give contextual meaning to the present study and to underscore the areas where disciplinary literacy needs to be supported.

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Appendix A

Observation sheet

Teacher _____
Lesson _____
Date _____
Observer _____

Circle if the text originates from a textbook	Time used (5 min)	In total

textbook																	
teacher's notes																	
other non-fiction text																	
administrative document																	
biography																	
caricature																	
newspaper																	
photograph																	
painting or drawing																	
fiction																	
poetry/lyrics																	
map																	
statistics																	
video																	
music																	
other																	

Classroom activities

direct instruction																	
classroom discussion																	
IRF-interaction																	
pair or group work																	
reading																	
instructions from the teacher																	
individual work																	
video																	
other																	
no activity																	

Teacher provides specific instructions and examples on how to read and interpret sources, or the assignment orients students towards practicing historical literacy skills.

sourcing																	
corroboration																	
contextualization																	
close reading																	

Additional information about the materials

textbook, pages and individual assignments/exercises:

digital platform:

additional materials: