

JYU DISSERTATIONS 144

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**Crister Nyberg**

# Philosophical Investigations on Fiction and Communication

New Insights into Understanding, Learning,  
and Communication

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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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**Philosophical Investigations on  
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## ABSTRACT

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Diss.

This dissertation develops a theory for solving philosophical problems of fiction. Truth and reference are problematic concepts in relation to fictive characters and to fictional objects in general. The solution offered is from the point of view of the deflationary conception of truth, and the use a theory of meaning following Paul Horwich and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The resulting theory, the minimalist theory of fiction (MTF), is applicable to different areas of communication since it is based on general theories of meaning and truth. For this reason, the dissertation consists not only of a philosophical theory on fiction but also of practical applications of this theory. Through this interdisciplinary approach, besides giving new insights into several philosophical and practical problems of different dimensions of communication, MTF indirectly shows arguments in favour of its background theories. This approach means that this dissertation is not particularly about defending the use theory of meaning and minimal theory of truth, but rather showing the benefits of using them to offer solutions to different dimensions of communication.

These dimensions are investigated in five articles. One is solely about the philosophical problems of fiction. The second concerns special education and drama education. The third investigates the use of the concept of truth in literary theory, whereas the fourth and fifth articles discuss the philosophical grounds of the psychological theory of integrative complexity, and its practical application, the IC Thinking method.

Keywords: fiction, fictional objects, abstract objects, use theory of meaning, language games, truth, minimalism, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Paul Horwich, Integrative Complexity

## TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Nyberg, Crister

Filosofisia tutkimuksia fiktiosta ja kommunikaatiosta. Uusia näkökulmia kielen ymmärtämiseen, oppimiseen ja kommunikaatioon.

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Diss.

Tässä väitöskirjassa kehitetään teoria fiktioihin liittyvien filosofisten ongelmien ratkaisemiseksi. Totuuden ja viittaamisen käsitteet ovat ongelmallisia suhteessaan fiktiivisiin hahmoihin ja yleensäkin fiktiivisiin objekteihin ylipäättään. Tutkimuksessa esitettävä ratkaisu nojaa olennaisesti deflationariseen käsitykseen totuudesta ja merkityksen käyttöteoriaan (Use theory of meaning) Paul Horwichiä ja Ludwig Wittgensteinia seuraten. Tuloksena oleva teoria, minimalistinen teoria fiktiosta (The minimalist theory of fiction, MTF), esittää aiempiin ratkaisuehdotuksiin verrattuna radikaalisti erilaisen lähestymistavan. Teoria on myös sovellettavissa erilaisille kommunikaation muodoille, koska se perustuu yleisiin teorioihin merkityksen ja totuuden käsitteistä. Tästä syystä väitöskirjassa ei keskitytä pelkästään fiktion filosofiseen ongelmaan vaan osoitetaan kehitetyn teorian toimivuutta myös muilla käytännöllisemmällä aloilla.

Teorian perusteita ja käytännön sovelluksia käsitellään viidessä artikkelissa. Ensimmäinen käsittelee puhtaasti fiktion filosofisia ongelmia ja esitettävää ratkaisua MTF teorian pohjalta. Toinen keskittyy teorian tuomiin näkökulmiin erityisopetuksessa ja draamakasvatuksessa. Kolmannessa artikkelissa painopiste on totuuden käsitteen käytössä kirjallisuustieteessä. Neljäs ja viides artikkeli tarkastelevat psykologista teoriaa, integratiivista kompleksisuutta ja sen käytännön sovellusta IC Thinking menetelmää minimalistisen fiktiteorian näkökulmasta. Keskeiseksi näkökulmaksi nousee ajattelun rakenteiden ja kielenkäytön tarkastelu kielipelien ja niiden välisten suhteiden kautta.

Keywords: fiktio, fiktiiviset objektit, abstraktit objektit, merkityksen käyttöteoria, kielipelit, totuus, minimalismi, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Paul Horwich, Integratiivinen kompleksisuus

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ABSTRACT

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

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ORIGINAL PAPERS



# 1 INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I develop a theory that provides a method for dealing with the philosophical problem of fiction. Since the resulting Minimalist Theory of Fiction (MTF) simultaneously also takes account of all communication, it is fruitful for different purposes. MTF is essentially based on the deflationary (or minimalist) conception of truth, and the use theory of meaning following Ludwig Wittgenstein and Paul Horwich. These views have been widely discussed during the last few decades and have both influential supporters and opponents.<sup>1</sup> My purpose is not to concentrate on taking part in that discussion. My support for the use theory of meaning, minimal theory of truth and the idea of language games is given by showing how well they work in explaining philosophical problems of fiction and various phenomena of communication.

The majority of this dissertation is dedicated to showing how the MTF can be applied. The origin of this work lies in the very traditional problems of analytic philosophy: truth, meaning and reference. The work begun from exploring the historical development of Polish logic in order to find the key ideas leading to Alfred Tarski's (1944) semantic conception of truth. My interest was mainly in the concept of truth, and I gradually started to consider the history of logic to be too formal and unfruitful for understanding Tarski. I changed the focus from logic to theories of truth. There is a trait in interpreting Tarski that leads to considering him as a promoter of the deflationary conception of truth and that led me to investigate different forms of deflationism.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Tarski's ideas were essential for the development of model theory (Niiniluoto

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<sup>1</sup> Deflationary conception of truth may also be called "minimalism", "disquotationalism" or "redundancy theory of truth". Among the early advocates of deflationism were Gottlob Frege (1956), F. P. Ramsey (1931) and A. J. Ayer (1936). Later deflationists are e.g. W. V. Quine (1970), Hartry Field (1989, 2001) and Paul Horwich (1998a). Objections to deflationism have offered e.g. Hilary Putnam (1972, 1983), Donald Davidson (1990) Crispin Wright (1992).

<sup>2</sup> According to traditional correspondence theories, a sentence *p* is true if and only if it corresponds to reality. Deflationary views on truth replace the clause "corresponds with reality" with *p*. For example, W.V.O. Quine said that the following is expected to exhaust all that can be said about the truth of a single sentence: "Snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white (Quine 1970, 12).

1993<sup>3</sup>). Tarski was a formalist but he realised that natural languages were beyond his theory, since it is applicable only to fully interpreted languages, i.e. formal languages. It is an extremely useful theory but not applicable to natural languages. So I started to pay attention to deflationary theories of truth. I thought that they seemed to have better possibilities of dealing with natural languages. A decisive step in this direction was an attempt to investigate Meinongian<sup>4</sup> theories on abstract objects. Alexius Meinong's (1905) theory and its further applications such as Edward Zalta's (1983, 2003) and Terence Parson's (1980, 2000) theories are impressive attempts to describe how we are actually thinking. The following explicates this.

It is common for us to have beliefs about fictional objects which happen to be true. For example the following facts can be stated: "Sherlock Holmes inspires many novelists," or "the Ancient Romans worshipped Jupiter". In addition, we report our experiences in a similar manner: "The ghost in my dream was scary". It is also possible to reason in a valid way about fictional objects. Consider the following example:

"Augustus worshipped Jupiter. Jupiter is a mythical character. Mythical characters don't exist. Therefore Augustus worshipped something that doesn't exist."<sup>5</sup>

So-called Meinongians try to address these uses of fictional objects by claiming that there is always something that our thoughts are about. Our thinking is thus assumed to be intentional. In order to be convincing, the theory should somehow admit that from an ontological point of view there is a difference between Mickey Mouse and Winston Churchill. And what about mathematical objects? Or impossible objects such as a 'round square'? The ontological questions seem to be crucial. These considerations were decisive for me in choosing the final target of my thesis. The thrilling question was in what way should we handle words referring to my childhood hero, Sherlock Holmes?

This was still in the very core of analytic philosophy. How should we use the concept of truth in the case of fiction? The early and classical theories of Bertrand Russell (1905) and Gottlob Frege (1960) were signs of attempts to draw demarcation lines between nonsense and truth. Their accounts were essentially focusing on arguing with Meinong. According to Russell, statements concerning

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<sup>3</sup> Ilkka Niiniluoto describes Tarski's early work on truth before the mature model theory as a middle position between the conception of language as the universal medium and language as calculus. Universality means the view that we cannot have a meta-language for our colloquial language and thus there is only one language and one world. Language as calculus assumes that we can reinterpret language-world relations and thus we can construct many languages and many possible worlds. The middle position Tarski holds acknowledges many languages but recognises only one world. (Niiniluoto 1993, 55.) This distinction is developed by Jaakko Hintikka (Hintikka 1997) based on Jean van Heijenoort's (van Heijenoort 1967) idea of two ways of looking at logic. Hintikka extended it to ways of looking at language in general.

<sup>4</sup> Meinong's theory of objects has been considered controversial because it admits non-existent and impossible objects (e.g. "round square"). Characteristic elements of a Meinongian theory are a large ontology and a complicated set of distinctions and doctrines about existence and predication (Linsky & Zalta 1991).

<sup>5</sup> This example is from Zalta 2004. <https://mally.stanford.edu/objectives.html>

fictional objects are false because they contain existential claims concerning alleged fictional objects. The statement that “the King of France is bald” is false because it has no denotation. It thus actually states that there exists a person who is the present king of France. (Russell 1905, 483-484). Frege in turn claimed that statements concerning fictional objects are empty. They do not have truth value at all because there are no objects that the statements are about.

However, Russell’s and Frege’s answers are not exhaustive. What was the address of Sherlock Holmes? In a quiz one should answer 221B Baker Street. Is this answer false because there was no such detective in the real world? Or is it just nonsense, a statement lacking real meaning? ‘Intuitively’, the correct answer is that Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street. ‘Intuitively’ we very likely think that people answering 221B Baker Street are aware that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character. Thus the concept of ‘intuition’ means enlightened guess in this case<sup>6</sup>. There is thus some knowledge behind the intuition. According to Russell and Frege the truth value of the right answer in this case cannot be ‘true’. Are we dealing with some other conception of truth here? “Truth in fiction” is a common answer.<sup>7</sup> One essential mistake in finding a solution to this problem is to assume that there is a clear difference between fiction and reality. Allegedly fictional novels are in practice complicated collections of endless references to reality, other fiction and generally all kinds of texts. Although ‘Sherlock Holmes’ has no real-life referent, many names in the stories, such as ‘London’, have real-life referents. That is not all, since actually, for example understanding Sherlock Holmes stories means a constant interplay with fiction and reality. Recognising some scientific facts in a story might be essential in order to understand the leading ideas of the story. In reading fiction it is thus essential to recognise different contexts (language games<sup>8</sup>) that are available in a story. One could argue that it does not matter whether parts of fiction are true in reality or not. This is partly true, since understanding meanings and stories is always a process in which it is a matter of degree as to how well one understands all the possible meanings. From the point of view of literary theory, all this is obvious. Following, for example, Julia Kristeva (1980) we may say that all texts are implicit or explicit references to other works of art. The same sentence can refer to multiple other sentences or texts. There is thus no one correct or ultimate interpretation.

What is often lacking from the literary theorists’ views is the concept of truth. There seems to be a temptation to think that the realm of imagination is free of truth. However, in all understanding we rest on background information. For example, science fiction is fascinating because in it happens something that cannot yet happen in our society. It is illuminating to say that reading is a process

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<sup>6</sup> From the point of view of Minimalist Theory of Fiction, this means recognising the language game where the sentence “Sherlock Holmes lived in Baker Street 221B” is true. However, we cannot be certain whether people are aware of the fact that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character. In everyday use of language, we do not explicitly describe the rules of the alleged language game, and that is the route for confusions and misunderstandings. In this example there is an implicit assumption that the language game being played stems from the novels of Arthur Conan Doyle.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Lewis 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein 1999.

of moving between texts and the reader is supposed to trace those relations (Kalogirou & Economopoulou 2012, 180). Of course, all these processes in reading are not explicit. We are both consciously and unconsciously processing the information we receive. What is needed to fulfil this picture is an account that unites all texts, i.e. fiction, everyday uses of language, scientific discourses, informational texts and all kind of uses of language in general. From the beginning of starting this investigation, my practical experiences in the area of special education have been crucial. They have shown how theoretical philosophical speculations can become out of date if they are not regularly connected to empirical research.

If we turn our attention to language and the way we actually use it, we can realise that reality and fiction are not separate areas. The use of language is similar whether the objects of our thoughts exist or not and, most crucially, the concept of truth is compatible with that. This does not mean giving up objectivity or scientific inquiry. Following Wittgenstein (1999), language can be seen as a game that is played in different contexts with constantly changing meanings and rules. One feature of this view is that in ordinary language or in practices like drama, poetry or science fiction there are multiple interpretations available. This phenomenon of intertextuality (Bakhtin, Kristeva 1980, Orr 2003, Still & Worton 1991) is always present, although scientific inquiry aims at accurate language. For a philosopher who seeks one verifiable truth in the spirit of a correspondence theory of truth, this approach is problematic. Previous attempts rely on one objective truth and do not take into account intertextuality and the constant interplay between different contexts. These considerations lead to very up-to-date problems of politics and our mutual understanding. This dimension is explored in connection with the theory of Integrative Complexity (Suedfeld, Tetlock & Ramirez 1977) and the IC Thinking method following the theory.

My project started from investigating truth in scientific context, i.e. circumstances where it is allegedly essential to make a difference between truth and falsehood. It evolved in my practical experiences in working with children with various learning difficulties. In particular, difficulties in learning language put me think of the ways in which we actually think when we deal with fiction, mathematics, literature, games, plays, films, art, etc. Russell and Frege were pioneers in creating new scientific ways of thinking capable of explaining the success of physics, etc. Logical positivism was an ultimate manifestation of this goal of demarcation between what can be true and what is just entertaining and non-serious use of language. Their efforts were successful in the light of science, but they left a great deal of the world unexplored because of being afraid of fiction. My view changed when I discovered the phenomenon that we use language similarly in the case of both fiction and other contexts. Letting go of the correspondence view of truth and binary thinking are the keys to redemption without falling into relativism<sup>9</sup>. The answer lies in the minimalist theory of truth

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<sup>9</sup> According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy relativism about truth is explained in what follows: "Relativism about truth, or *alethic relativism*, at its simplest, is the claim that what is true for one individual or social group may not be true for another, and there is no

and its necessary ally, the use theory of meaning. In order to solve the problem of fiction, something else is also needed to get the full picture. This is achieved by a theory uniting these theories in such a way that the concepts of make-believe (pretence), possible worlds or intentionality are no longer needed. These concepts are still useful in some contexts, but in many ways they are restricting our capability to see solutions to both philosophical and practical problems.

Many of the traditional attempts to solve problems concerning truth and meaning follow the principle of intentionality. When we think that our thoughts are about something, we are easily repeating the Aristotelian (Aristotle 1984) view of truth, i.e. "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true". While this is interpreted as stating truth as a relational property between sentences and objects, we are committing ourselves to an ontology that insists that objects have the property of existence. In addition, it is often assumed that the judgement has to follow two-valued logics. Thus there are two major problems: intentionality and binary thinking. These lead to far-reaching restrictions in interpreting texts. For example, it is not possible to deal with the phenomenon of intertextuality and the ideas of language as a source of oppression, expression of identity and other points made by Julia Kristeva (1980). Besides this, Kristeva's philosophical points are a challenge for views on language in general and also for research trying to find theories allowing for multiple angles. The theory I have developed, the Minimalist Theory of Fiction, uses the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>10</sup> and Julia Kristeva<sup>11</sup> to give an account of language that rejects binary thinking and is able to deal with the phenomenon of multiple perspectives. The theory is applied to drama education, literary theory, special education and the psychological theory of Integrative Complexity and its practical application, the IC Thinking method. IC Thinking includes educational methods, educational programmes and professional practices that have been developed to reduce and prevent destructive conflict. The interventions aim at increasing cognitive complexity management amongst those

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context-independent vantage point to adjudicate the matter. What is true or false is always relative to a conceptual, cultural, or linguistic framework (Baghrarian, M. Baghrarian, C and Carter J. A. 2018). "MTF allows different conceptual systems but they are not relativistic in the sense of describing the same reality. This is because MTF is free of ontological commitments. Meanings are constituted in use, and further, meaning is use. In MTF different conceptual systems i.e. language games (or macro language games) have different rules, and by showing this e.g. scientific language games may be saved as language games following the rules of scientific inquiry. From this it follows e.g. that e.g. W.V.O Quine does not belong to this category despite his being an important mediator between analytic philosophy and post-structuralism. That is because Quine does make ontological commitments. From the point of view of MTF, it is not adequate to say that truth is relative to a language game, since truth as such is not relativistic. What is true in some particular language game is based on following the right rules of the game, but this does not make truth relativistic. The sentence "snow is white" is true in a language game if and only if snow is white.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Horwich's (1998b) account of Wittgenstein's (1999) Use theory of meaning is in essential position.

<sup>11</sup> Kristeva's account of Intertextuality has been influential but the idea originates with Bakhtin and has been developed further by many others. See e.g. Still & Worton (1991).

going through the intervention. The MTF gives an analysis of the method that shows how interventions make it possible to keep multiple perspectives and avoid binary thinking without falling into relativism. The key to this lies in rejecting the idea of truth being a complex property with some hidden structure.

The traditional theories of truth, namely correspondence theory, coherence theory and pragmatist theory assume truth to have some substantial structure and be a device for solving fundamental philosophical problems. The minimal theory of truth (or deflationary theories) claims that there is nothing to discover. The idea is simply that there is no difference in saying that it is a fact or a truth that “dogs bark” or simply saying that dogs bark. This approach makes truth independent of metaphysical questions by avoiding terms such as fact and reality. However, the deflationary approach to the concept of truth has many things to explain. One of the crucial characteristics of truth that is in need of an explanation is its usefulness. Generally, deflationists save the usefulness of truth by showing its important logical role. Quine shows how the predicate “true” makes it possible to express, besides infinite disjunctions and conjunctions, sentences with indirect speech (Quine 1970, 10-13). In my theory and also in general the deflationary views of truth are closely connected to pragmatics. From the point of view of the use theory of meaning (and MTF) “...we have a disposition to assert ‘that is red’ in the presence of red things, we have the disposition to assert ‘Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character’ in the context where the term ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is involved” (Nyberg 2016, 42).

The steps to language games and contexts mean thus pragmatic steps. The actual use of language is in an essential position, since meanings are ultimately constructed in particular uses of language i.e. (contexts) language games. This also means that the truth of a sentence is dependent on the rules of the game played. Relativism is an obvious threat, but once we recognise that following the context-dependent rules we may for example make a difference between scientific language game and a religious language game, we may thus save our own conceptions, but the price to pay might be the recognition of failure to play the alleged game. Relativism is thus present in a way that truth is dependent on the language game played but that can also imply that the meaning is different because the rules of right use of the words are different.<sup>12</sup>

Although the MTF is about fiction, it can be applied to different areas. In a way, it deflates fiction and shows how language works similarly in many practically useful areas. This study as a whole is thus partly interdisciplinary, despite at its core being about very traditional problems of theoretical philosophy. The applications of MTF are supposed to show how the theory offers a fruitful philosophical background and new insights into various fields. For this purpose, I have chosen topics that are close to my background: literary theory, drama education, psychology and special education.

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<sup>12</sup> It is not, however relativism in relation to alleged reality, since MTF makes no ontological commitments. Quine makes ontological commitments and it is questionable whether his solution follows from his disquotational theory of truth. Quine’s holism and rejection of analytic-synthetic distinction is a step towards losing the grip on absolute truths.

The philosophical ground is developed in the article “Fiction, Truth and Reference. Minimalist Theory of Fiction”. In this study, I concentrate on fiction, truth and reference, applying the MTF. I observe that some, if not most, of the influential theories trying to solve the philosophical problems surrounding fiction consider reference and truth as relations between language and extra-linguistic entities. Moreover, the idea of ‘make-believe’ as a central practice in understanding fiction is widespread. With such presuppositions, many apparently true statements appear false or meaningless. The account offered, inspired by the work of Paul Horwich (1998a, 1998b) and Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1999), is based on the use theory of meaning and the deflationary theory of truth. This MTF takes fictional, scientific and everyday use of language as language games and contexts where ontological questions are not decisive. Mastering the uses of words and recognising contexts and language games for successful participation are the crucial features.

The second article “Fiction in Drama Education Offers Learning Opportunities for All - Philosophical Perspectives in Drama Education” is about learning and using Drama Education for developing meta-cognitive skills. The basic idea is that using the concept of truth in recognising different language games requires meta-cognitive skills. Drama Educational practices can be built in such a way that understanding different dimensions of the stories comes into focus. The skill to use words differently in different contexts is one to be developed, since that means recognition of context-dependent elements of language. Meta-cognitive abilities can be more systematically developed when different perspectives and contexts are more explicit in a learning process. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in particular is an area where this kind of method is needed, because people with ASD typically have difficulties in facing changing contexts with changing meanings. Unlike what the traditional theories of fiction claim, the make-believe element is not decisive. The understanding precedes make-believe and then follows when contexts are recognised. Drama Education is an especially useful method since it allows multiple ways of interpretation with a large scale of difficulty, and these dimensions make it possible for everybody to participate in their individual way. It thus encourages inclusive practices.

The third article deals with the conception of truth and understanding in the field of literary theory. In literary theory, it is popular to use expressions such as ‘being transported by a story’ or immersed in a story. We are travelling to distant worlds of imagination where truth in its traditional sense seems to be irrelevant. The standard ways of dealing with the world of stories are using the ideas of narrative or possible worlds. The concept of immersion highlights the process that happens when we are totally enjoying a film and are ‘lost’ in the story. These feelings are inevitable but they do not explain how our understanding of the story is actually happening. By considering the narrative or possible world as something separate and independent, we are doing the same as in the case of the traditional correspondence theory of truth. We suppose there is some set of objects and events that we are capable of judging in a similar

manner as with objects and events of reality. The concept of intertextuality and all the endless problems of interpretation are present, but the correspondence intuition is still keeping control. The only difference is that the objects and events are considered fictional. However, as we know, there is much in the stories that is not actually fictional, and nothing is yet solved. Instead of holding onto these restrictions, MTF takes fiction and all other uses of language as language games where the use of the words is decisive, not the references made by the words or the ontology. As in the other applications of MTF, it is shown that the concepts of pretence and make-believe are not needed, and the same applies to narrative and possible worlds.

Applying MTF to literary theory gives a method of uniting philosophical theories of meaning and truth with literary criticism. The narrative and possible worlds are rejected because fiction is essentially about recognising the constant interplay between different texts and contexts. Another major difference from standard conceptions in literary criticism is that understanding a story makes interpretations possible, not vice versa. Understanding a story is a matter of degree, as is understanding meanings of words. This idea stems from the use theory of meaning (Wittgenstein 1999, Horwich 1998b). Meaning is use, and thus it is a skill with varieties. Better understanding makes different interpretations possible.<sup>13</sup>

The fourth article is about the philosophical foundations of the theory of Integrative Complexity (IC). IC is a psychological theory about our less-than-conscious thinking style. It is about our natural reactions and ways of acting when we process information, solve problems, make decisions and face difference or disagreement. (e.g. Boyd-MacMillan 2016). IC includes an empirical measurement framework which gives an 'IC score'. A rigid and closed thinking style which does not recognise or respect different dimensions gets a low score and such a thinking style predicts destructive conflict or violence. A high IC indicates complex thinking, an ability to differentiate and then integrate different dimensions. Such thinking recognises others' perspectives and is able link them, and this predicts more peaceful outcomes to conflicts<sup>14</sup>. The Minimalist Theory of Fiction offers a philosophical background that can explain the key points of IC. Recognising different viewpoints is an essential skill in mastering meanings of words. MTF describes how the theory of IC and IC Thinking management can take into account language games and use them in order to develop an understanding of differentiation and integration and improve the score. MTF stresses the impact of language. Contextual elements take an essential position and thus there are situations where it is necessary to avoid complicated vocabulary and even avoid language. These elements are investigated in the article and some ideas for future research are introduced.

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<sup>13</sup> This view on understanding and interpretation questions poststructuralist views, since it privileges understanding. However it is still compatible with poststructuralist views concerning meanings, readings, etc. See e.g. Nealon (2007).

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Boyd-MacMillan 2016.



The fifth article, “Minimalist Theory of Fiction and IC Thinking as a Background for New Insights into Autism” questions some general beliefs on the use of language in Autism Spectrum Disorder. Following the ideas of use theory of meaning and language games, it demonstrates that the difficulties in understanding that are usually linked to abstract thinking can be considered as stemming from skills in using words. Meanings are constituted in contexts, some concepts are used differently in different contexts and some concepts are more rigid in their uses. The concepts of mathematics are more rigid in their uses and that can explain why people with ASD are often capable of doing mathematics. From this it follows that it could be skill in using words that matters, not the level of abstraction. This further implies that the famous indicators of ASD may be questionable, since they are possibly based on incorrect assumptions. They do not take into account that the difficulty might be in the ability to use language. Instead, it is assumed that people with ASD fail in tests such as the Sally-Anne test because they lack metacognition and thus fail to meta-represent. Rather than interpreting the result of the test as indicating that people with ASD lack theory of mind, we could adjust the test to take into account possible difficulties in using language. This is not to say that the conception concerning theory of mind in the case of ASD is wrong, but it makes the picture more complex. Taking language use abilities into account offers new insights into rehabilitation practices.

From Tarski’s semantic conception of truth, I ended up investigating whether Sherlock Holmes solved the Riddle of the Speckled Band. The theory that is the result of this journey is the Minimalist Theory of Fiction (MTF). Despite its name, it is not meant as solely an answer to the problem of fiction. It describes a way of looking at language in a way that gives possibilities for developing its application in different areas. Thus, this dissertation expanded into an interdisciplinary project that, besides a purely philosophical part, also includes applications with philosophical underpinnings in special education, drama education, literary theory and psychology. The direction in the thesis is towards educational practices and methods that give us tools to improve our thinking and use of language in a way that improves cohesion and mutual understanding while encouraging multiple perspectives and analyticity. All the applications of the MTF contain ideas for further developments, and these will be introduced in chapters dedicated to each article and in the summary.

## **1.1 The Background of the Minimalist Theory of Fiction**

The first article, “Fiction, Truth and Reference. Minimalist Theory of Fiction” deals with the philosophical problem of fiction. MTF is scrutinised together with rival theories. The widely accepted pretence/make-believe-theories come under particular investigation. Here I am focusing on describing the assumptions and background of the MTF.

Keeping the focus in ontological matters rules out certain essential characteristics of language. Using the MTF, I aim to show how truth works in

different contexts, including fictional and scientific dialogues. The minimalist theory of truth takes an essential position in the MTF. It makes it possible to recognise different language games and take meta-representational positions. Minimalism on truth is not credible without the use theory of meaning, which works as a general philosophical background to the MTF.

The use theory of meaning shows how the theory of meaning does not need objects of thinking as counterparts. A third important part of the theory is the concept of the language game. Following Wittgenstein (1999), by language games we mean the implication of the use theory of meaning that meanings are ultimately constructed in particular situations where language is used and some particular rules are followed. Language games thus work as mediators between language and alleged reality. Words have their “basic acceptance properties” (Horwich 1998b), and when a language user has good language skills, they are able to use words differently in different contexts. Children’s games and poetry are good examples of this, and they plus several other examples are scrutinised in all the articles.

Wittgenstein’s and Horwich’s accounts of meaning are very much about avoiding ontological problems. This makes them important mediators between analytic philosophy and poststructuralist views, or so I argue. This is not explicitly reasoned in the articles except in showing that all the previous theories of fiction are unable to deal with the concept of intertextuality. Intertextuality has been further developed by Julia Kristeva (1974) and several others<sup>15</sup> but originated with Mihail Bakhtin (1981). Intertextuality is one symptom of a conception of language that avoids permanent meanings and homogenous interpretations. One of my crucial motives in developing the MTF is to obtain a system that is able to deal with philosophical problems from the perspective of the actual use of language. Poetry and children’s games have been chosen as examples because they contain some essential elements of poststructuralist philosophy. One leading figure of this thinking for me has been Luce Irigaray (e.g. Irigaray 1982, 1885). Irigaray’s criticism is focused on Western, male-dominated discourse which excludes the possibility of the feminine. Following Lacan’s (1977) interpretation of Freud, Irigaray sees the feminine as impossible in the logic of male-dominated language. Irigaray is of course not alone in bringing up this critique of binary thinking, but her well-articulated critique against scientific thinking explains that appealing to the objectivity of natural laws excludes the possibility of divergent thinking (Irigaray 1982).

Kristeva, Derrida, Lacan, etc., the poststructuralists or representatives of French feminism, are among those behind the argument of the insufficiency of previous attempts to solve the philosophical problem of fiction. The idea of intertextuality is enough to show that relying on one correct meaning of a word is misleading. This is not to say that correct meanings cannot be found. There are correct meanings, but they are relative to language games. From the point of view of the analytic tradition, poststructuralist ideas on meanings can at best be taken into account by theories taking a holistic approach to meanings, and especially,

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<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Still & Worton 1991.

and I think necessarily, rejecting ontological commitments by the deflated concept of truth. Thus such philosophers as W.V.O. Quine (1948, 1951, 1954, 1960, 1961, 1969, 1970, 1986) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1999) are possible good mediators between continental or poststructuralist philosophy and analytic philosophy. For example, Quine's rejection of analytic-synthetic distinction and his thoughts about the impossibility of meta-perspectives<sup>16</sup> and 'first philosophy' are decisive in seeing him as an analytic philosopher who is questioning the same foundations of philosophy, and especially meanings, as poststructuralist philosophers (see e.g. Koskinen 2002). However, Quine saves ontological commitments in his logic as in his famous phrase "A theory is committed to those and only those entities to which the bound variables of the theory must be capable of referring in order that the affirmations made in the theory be true" (1948: 33) Quine's version of the deflationary conception of truth, namely his 'disquotationalism', explicates well some essential functions of deflated truth but his further steps into naturalism and ontological questions are not compatible with MTF. Being free of ontological suppositions is a key feature of MTF.

As a description of differences and possible compatibilities between these very different philosophical starting points, it is useful to investigate the position of Luce Irigaray (1985, 1991, 1996, 1999) in comparison with Quine. Following for example Saussure (2014) and Lacan (1977), language works through binary oppositions. From Irigaray's perspective, such a use of language rules out the possibility of feminine expression because of the necessity to find essentiality. It can be justly said that for Irigaray being feminine is a bodily way of being at the intersection of anatomy, biology, culture and symbolic (Parvikko 1993, 57). More simply put, meanings are not exhausted by binary oppositions and two-valued logic, but rather escape all definitions and attempts to find essentials. For Saussure and Lacan, representing masculinity or femininity is the production of the logic of language. The apriority of gender is thus ruled out. Irigaray is not willing to adapt to distinctions of biological and social gender, since they are

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<sup>16</sup> Meta-perspectives can be considered as a possibility to model theories or possible worlds where the set of objects is fully interpreted. This view has been described as belonging to the conception of 'language as calculus'. On the other hand, they can be thought of as meta-languages inside language. The way I consider the use of truth in the MTF follows Tarski's (1944, 1956) expression of the usefulness of the predicate true. In the *meta-language/object-language distinction*, truth is a tool for quantifying sentences. Tarski defined the truth-predicate separately for each language  $L_1$ ,  $L_2$ ,  $L_3$  etc. and for this a meta-language, which is *essentially richer* than the object language, is needed. According to Tarski, the meta-language must contain the object language as a part and the usefulness of truth is saved by the hierarchy of language. Tarski created this solution to avoid paradoxes. In the MTF, language games are in a somewhat similar position to Tarski's hierarchical languages. They are not fully interpreted like in model theory because that is not possible in natural languages. The distinction between meta-language and object language works in natural languages only with the minimalist conception of truth. This latter view implies the so-called 'universality of language' (Kusch 1988, 1989) (See also Hintikka 1997) in which we cannot step outside language as the model theory supposes. We can only operate inside language. The use theory of meaning is committed to the universality of language, i.e. language as a universal medium. This categorisation of philosophical perspectives is questionable, because there are no many how clearly belong to either one. (Kusch & Hintikka 1988, Kusch 1989.) My view can be taken to be committed to universality of language, following Wittgenstein (1999).

already productions of the phallogentric conception of sex. Irigaray's strategy is to use the method of deconstruction following Jacques Derrida (1978). From the perspective of meaning construction, the crucial part is questioning the binary oppositions. The purpose is to seek new ways of representing in language. Irigaray is dealing with representing the feminine, but her deconstruction of Freud's, Lacan's, etc., views makes visible the restrictions of what is called symbolic order, i.e. phallogentric language. As Irigaray brought up, for example, in Lacan's psychoanalytic theory gender is a symbolic construction in language and culture. Thus from my point of view they escape the traditional theories of truth as correspondence with reality. Lacan criticises the traditional subject-object distinction and in fact gets close to Wittgenstein in his view on learning language; "to learn a language is to learn a set of rules or laws for the use and combination of words" (Sharpe 1995).<sup>17</sup> All this is of course part of the endless debate on questioning, scientific objectivity, for example, and the critique comes from both poststructuralists and inside the analytic tradition. The best reason for choosing Quine and Wittgenstein for the role of mediators is their holistic approach to meanings and deflationary views on truth. Quine rejects the analytic-synthetic distinction for the same reason as Wittgenstein; the impossibility of meta-perspectives. This is very close to poststructuralist views on meanings. However Irigaray's critique takes things further when questioning binary oppositions. From the point of view of the deflationary conception of truth combined with the use theory of meaning and language games there is a possibility to leave the restrictions of binary oppositions. There can be language games with different rules. Thus there remains the possibility of the alleged scientific use of language plus various other games such as those of fiction.

However, in the use of language, the difference between reality and fiction is not clear. Theoretical physics is a good example of a scientific context where we deal with matters whose alleged ontological status is vague. Similarly, we can question the ontological status of mathematical objects. Against mathematical Platonism,<sup>18</sup> mathematical fictionalism<sup>19</sup> is a credible alternative. According to mathematical fictionalism, mathematical sentences are false or untrue because there are no such as mathematical objects. They are just useful fictions. This is close to what Russell and Frege, for example, thought about non-existent objects, but it is not necessary to treat mathematical objects and other fiction similarly. However, this also underlines my thesis, since it is problematic to put fictive objects into different categories and treat them differently. My thinking takes as a starting point that all use of language is similar in the sense that it is the correct use of words that counts not the ontology of objects. Recognising contexts and different uses of words turns out to be crucial. The MTF is a theory that explains this. The theory is based on the minimal theory of truth (Horwich 1998a) and the use theory of meaning (Wittgenstein 1999, Horwich 1998b). The idea of language games (Wittgenstein 1999) as a practice of constructing contextual meanings is

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.iep.utm.edu/lacweb/#H3>

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Putnam (1967), Zalta (1988), Gödel (1944, 1964), Linsky & Zalta (1995).

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Field (1980) and Yablo (2001).

also decisive. A sentence is not true because it corresponds to a fact but because it is used in the correct way in certain circumstances. Calling a sentence 'true' does not differ from just repeating the sentence. The sentence "snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white.

Using words in the correct way is a skill and thus a matter of degree. Understanding is thus also a matter of degree (Horwich 1998b). The more we have relevant knowledge and master the language and words in question, the better we understand the alleged reality. For example in the context of physics, it is a physicist who has the best knowledge of the use of the word 'quark'. It is a particular language game where rules are introduced following the scientific inquiry of physics. This means also that physicists are implicitly in a process of constructing the correct ways to use words in certain contexts. Each language game constructs its rules about the correct use of words in certain contexts. Some language games have their experts, as in the case of physics. In the MTF, language games are further categorised into macro and micro language games: micro language games are parts of larger games; macro games (Nyberg 2018). If a language game is a macro language game, it has language games as its fragments.<sup>20</sup> Those fragments are micro language games in relation to macro language games. Thus, for example, in physics a particular use of language is part of the larger game of physics that in turn belongs to the language game of science.

The MTF is constructed out of three major parts: the minimal theory of truth, the use theory of meaning and the idea of language games. The minimal theory of truth is an alternative theory for more traditional theories of truth such as correspondence, pragmatic or coherence theories of truth. The minimal theory of truth is not credible without the use theory of meaning, and thus they go hand-in-hand. The use theory of meaning is ipso facto essential in the MTF, and language games are also of equal importance. This dissertation is not focusing on stating particular arguments for the minimal theory of truth, the use theory of meaning or language games. However, many benefits of those theories are introduced and thus the MTF as a whole can be thought of as an argument for favouring them. They are the essential elements in constructing a theory that offers solutions to the philosophical problem of fiction and several useful practical applications. In order to justify the decision to favour them, a few basic arguments in the context of analytic philosophy are still needed.

The tradition of correspondence theory starting from Aristotle<sup>21</sup> has claimed that there has to be something in the world that makes a sentence true. Following Aristotle, Tarski makes the same point in his material adequacy condition for theories of truth. Every adequate theory of truth should fulfil the following condition: The sentence 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white (Tarski 1944). This condition can be interpreted in the spirit of correspondence theory when it says that in reality the snow has to be white in order for this sentence to be true. On the other hand, one can consider removing

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<sup>20</sup> See page 18 on Tarski and meta-languages. The idea is more or less similar.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle's definition of truth has been leading theories of truth to the modern day.

the word 'true' and repeating the sentence. Removing the quotes and repeating the sentence is thus all there is to say about truth.<sup>22</sup> The key lies in leaving out the ontological questions. If we change our focus from ontology to use of language, everything looks different.

In philosophy of mathematics, the ontological questions have long been under dispute. However, the problems are similar. Mathematical fictionalism has received wide acceptance. Of course it is just one of many answers to the questions of the philosophy of mathematics, but it has proved useful. In short, the idea is that mathematical objects are not Platonic objects of investigation but only useful fictions (See e.g. Field 1980, Yablo 2001). Thus, they are only products of our imagination, we merely make-believe them. Their justification comes from their usefulness.

This idea of make-believe (especially Walton's (1990) version) is of importance but Currie (1990) and Evans (1982) have also come to a standard answer to the problem of fiction. It is not the only answer with wider acceptance. The Meinongians are among the most influential ones but possible or narrative worlds are also well-known. Alfred Tarski was one of the important advocates of possible worlds, and the possible world approach has evolved in different forms. For example David Lewis's (1978) account of truth in fiction is an application of possible worlds.

Now there is a possibility of an approach which better underlines the way we actually use language. All previous approaches take it for granted that truth is a relation between sentences and reality or another counterpart. They consider it necessary for there to be a counterpart to the sentences whose truth is at stake. Wittgenstein's famous phrase was that philosophy is about correcting the confusions made by language. The confusion here is that all these attempts to solve the problem confuse meaning and ontology. A word is just a word, no matter whether it is used in a context of reality or fiction. Intentionality is another concept expressing more or less the same paradigm.

If one considers truth as a substantial notion, the strategy in dealing with the problem of fiction is to treat 'fictional' or abstract 'non-referring' names as referring to imagined objects, objects in possible worlds or abstract objects of thoughts having some sort of existence (following e.g. Edward Zalta's Meinongian theory). These attempts hold on to the traditional correspondence view of truth, which in this case means problematic ontological commitments.

I consider the Meinongians to overcome the preceding problems better than most of the rival theories. This is because they try to follow the way in which we actually think, and following the idea of intentionality seems at first intuitively acceptable. Meinong's theory of objects (1905) postulates a realm of all objects. It

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<sup>22</sup> There are different versions of deflationism theories promoting that deflated truth may still be useful. They usually go under the titles 'minimalism' or 'disquotationalism'. Redundancy theories of truth (or disappearance theory of truth) (e.g. Frege 1956, Ramsey 1931, Ayer 1936) state that truth is fully redundant. The common feature for all deflationary theories is that truth is considered to add nothing substantial to sentences. Every sentence specifies its own condition for being true. In the MTF it is highlighted that these conditions are always context-dependent because they are part of some particular language game.

distinguishes subsistence and existence. Subsistence is a broad category that contains both concrete and abstract objects. Thus, in the realm of objects are material objects that both subsist and exist. There are also abstract objects that subsist but do not exist. In addition, there are non-existent possible objects and also impossible objects. The actuality of an object does not affect the status of an object, and thus all objects have a reality independent of actuality. According to, for example, Quine, such views pose a problem of identity because there is no non-trivial criterion of identity (Quine 1948). However, the Meinongians have suggested solutions to this problem. For example, Terence Parsons presents a view of the genuine indeterminacy of identity in the world as opposed to views that the problem is with language (Parsons 2000). If non-existent proper names are accepted as objects along with existent ones, we may specify the truth conditions for such a language and use Alfred Tarski's definition of truth (Zalta 2003).

Edward Zalta and Terence Parsons have developed the two leading Meinongian theories. An essential task of these theories is to offer solutions to Russell's objections to Meinong. Russell claimed that Meinong's theory implies assertions which are contrary to facts, contrary to the laws of geometry, and contrary to the laws of logic. Zalta's and Parsons' theories try to show that the disturbing characteristics of Meinong's theory can be avoided. For example the problematic assertion that there is an existing golden mountain can be avoided by stipulating existence as different kind of property which does not belong to the nuclear properties of an object. Furthermore, the laws of geometry are restricted to possible objects in order to avoid paradoxical assertions.

A central component of Edward Zalta's (1983) theory of abstract objects is the principle of encoding. Meinong's student Ernst Mally (1912) originally developed this principle. Mally made a distinction between exemplifying and encoding a property. This idea can be represented by the following formulas. The formula ' $Fx$ ' stands for  $x$  exemplifies  $F$  and the formula ' $xF$ ' stands for  $x$  encodes  $F$ . The purpose of this method is to show that there is some sense of being for which it is true to say that "Sherlock Holmes is a detective". Thus, in this case, Sherlock Holmes encodes the property of being a detective, while a real detective would exemplify this property.

Terence Parsons in turn distinguishes nuclear and extra-nuclear properties. All ordinary properties like being a detective, being blue or having been hit by Mike Tyson belong to the category of nuclear properties. Properties considered ontological such as existence, modal properties, intentional properties and being fictional belong to the group of extra-nuclear properties. Properties that are not considered to be ordinary properties of individuals are located in this group. According to Parsons, fictional objects that have their origin in some fictional story have exactly those nuclear properties they have according to the story. If the story attaches impossible properties to the character, this is not a problem, since they have no real existence.

The minimalist theory of truth gives an account of truth that is metaphysically neutral. Truth is deflated in a way that it is no longer considered

a relational property. It simply makes no difference in saying that it is true that 'dogs bark' or simply saying that dogs bark. To say that 'snow is white' is true, is equivalent to saying simply that snow is white. What these words and sentences ultimately mean is defined in the context where they are uttered. Terms such as fact and reality are not needed because truth is not a relation between, for example, sentences and facts. Choosing the minimalist view of truth has far-reaching consequences. The meaning of the word true is constituted implicitly by its use. The minimalist conception of truth is thus committed to the use theory of meaning (Wittgenstein 1999, Horwich 1998b).

The minimalist theory of truth belongs to the group of deflationary conceptions of truth. A common feature of all deflationary theories is that calling a sentence true is considered to add nothing substantial to sentences. Basically this principle is sufficient, but I favour Paul Horwich's version, which he calls minimal theory of truth. Horwich has elaborated and defended minimalism successfully. He has also taken seriously the implications of the use-theoretic definition of truth. The function of the predicate 'true' is defined implicitly by its use, which means that the minimalist theory of truth is not credible without the use theory of meaning. The use theory of meaning can be traced to Wittgenstein (1996), and Horwich has given an exhaustive account of it (Horwich 1998b).

In short, the use theory of meaning states that the meaning property of a word is reduced to its use regularities. Understanding a word or a sentence is a skill and thus a form of knowing how instead of knowing that. A member of a language community knows implicitly a word's meaning when their use of the word stems from word's having a certain use property in the communal language. (Horwich 1998b, 44-45.) A crucial feature of considering meaning as use is that our skills in using words differ and we can improve our skills. Understanding meanings is thus a matter of degree, ranging from minimal understanding to expert full knowledge (actually it is questionable whether it is possible to fully understand anything) (Horwich 1998, 16-18). From these considerations, the focus is set on applications of the theory and the result very much hinges on rejecting the famous pretence or make-believe theories. Thus they are in a central position in investigating the possibilities of the MTF in drama education and literary theory.

## **1.2 The Applications of the Theory and their Contexts**

### **1.2.1 Fiction in Drama Education Offers Learning Opportunities for All - Philosophical Perspectives in Drama Education**

My personal experiences as a special education teacher and generally in the field of education have had great importance in my thinking and developing on the MTF. Finding pedagogical solutions that take into account different learning abilities has been a particular goal. In this article, I describe my approach from the perspectives of inclusion and universal design for learning. Inclusion turned



out to be problematic to define due to its widespread use. I summarise it using Ainscow's<sup>23</sup> view that it is about organising the school to be responsive to the needs of all its pupils. This is quite close to the universal design for learning (and accessibility in general<sup>24</sup>) which in practice is something like Rose (2001, 66) describes as maximising the learning opportunities for all the students by developing the flexibility of the materials and methods used in classrooms. With these educational values as a background, I bring up an example which includes wide opportunities for taking into account different learning abilities and special difficulties. Autism Spectrum Disorder is introduced as one example of learning abilities that can be taken into account by combining drama education and a philosophical theory, the MTF.

The reasons for choosing drama education as an example for the fruitful application of the MTF are well-articulated by Toivanen (2012): “[drama educational] processes aid personal and social development, as well as the development of self-concept, self-discrepancy and a role-taking ability. Pupils who take drama classes enjoy school activities more, are much more willing to participate in them, are better at problem solving and better at coping with stress.<sup>25</sup> They have significantly more tolerance towards other people”. In addition, Toivanen highlights the potential complexity and diversity of creative processes, which can be seen as an answer to the challenges of the postmodern knowledge culture. These characteristics of drama education are at the core of the MTF and my purpose is to make the use of these great possibilities more systematic. The same ideas are highlighted in connection with the theory of Integrative Complexity. Making complexity and diversity visible with language games makes a more systematic approach to understanding and learning possible.

Meta-cognitive abilities and strategies are crucial to learning and understanding. By meta-cognitive abilities I mean the skills to think about one's own thinking.<sup>26</sup> From a philosophical point of view, this is linked to meta-representation, meta-perspectives and meta-languages. The concept of truth has been problematic in the context of fiction. The idea of the MTF is to use the concept of truth in constructing our understanding of fiction, and that goes hand-

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<sup>23</sup> Ainscow, M & Sandill, A. 2010.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations: Article 9 – Accessibility “1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.”  
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html>

<sup>25</sup> These are quite similar goals to those of IC Thinking practices. By acknowledging the benefits of the MTF, drama education and IC Thinking and combining their practices we may find numerous new ways to expand their audience and use.

<sup>26</sup> See for example Flavell (1976, 232): “Metacognition refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes or anything related to them, e.g., the learning-relevant properties of information or data. For example, I am engaging in metacognition if I notice that I am having more trouble learning A than B; if it strikes me that I should double check C before accepting it as fact.”

in-hand with meta-cognitive skills. What makes fiction especially useful for developing meta-cognitive skills and strategies is the way it is connected to reality. In fact, this characterisation is ill-formed, since my purpose is to question the difference between fiction and reality. What is even more important than recognising the difference between fiction and reality is recognising different language games. This feature is relevant in all our communication, besides the reading of fiction. In the context of drama education, the point is to use this characteristic of language in order to consciously take all learners into account. Differences in language skills, background knowledge, learning abilities, abstract thinking skills, etc., make it challenging to pursue the same learning goals for everyone. Using drama educational methods and acknowledging the multiple intertextual links and function of the concept of truth gives us great possibilities for inclusive practices. Taking into account the individual basis of understanding is a key factor to successful learning. In my thinking, it is crucial to promote educational methods in which possibilities for everyone are built in. This is the most effective way to learn, plus it saves time in comparison to methods where individuals are educated separately.<sup>27</sup>

Since the main theme in the article is the development of meta-cognitive skills, the individual learning process is considered to involve the use of meta-cognitive strategies or meta-cognitive regulation (Brown, 1987). Following the MTF, the process of understanding a text is always a matter of degree. Finding new language games and intertextual links means having better understanding. The goal in the process of developing meta-cognitive skills is in practice better self-regulation. Self-regulation is described (Berk 2003) as a process of continuously monitoring progress towards a goal, checking outcomes and redirecting unsuccessful efforts. In drama education, playing different parts that show various points of view at different levels of difficulty is a way to a more conscious understanding of a text.<sup>28</sup> Recognising different language games and using the concept of truth in order to find context-dependent meanings and truths are thus essential elements of self-regulation.

A great deal of the arguments supporting the use of the MTF in the context of drama education rest on the findings about the way people with ASD use language. Difficulty pretending is considered a central characteristic of ASD, and turns out to be a source of several misinterpretations concerning understanding autism, or so I argue. In general, people with ASD are considered to have difficulties in meta-representation (Baron-Cohen, Leslie & Firth 1985) and this is taken to imply difficulties in pretending (Leslie 1987). I offer an alternative interpretation which rests on the way words are used in different contexts. If we look for concepts that are generally thought of as abstract and not belonging to set of real existing objects, we find mathematical objects as such. Thus we might consider that operating with mathematical objects requires pretending and

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<sup>27</sup> It is still important to notice that in the field of education there are always exceptions and thus individual solutions should always be possible.

<sup>28</sup> By text I mean, besides all sorts of written texts (fiction, informational texts, scientific texts, etc.), also plays, games, all forms of art and thus all communication.

imagination. However, people with ASD do not have special difficulties in mathematics compared to their performances in other uses of language despite their alleged problems with pretending. According to the MTF, the solution to these contradictory conceptions lies in the skill in using language.

An essential matter to stress from my point of view is that we should not talk about cognitive differences as deficits. We all have our individual ways of thinking. This does not mean that we should not pay attention to difficulties in learning. Quite the opposite. The point is in changing the focus to practices that take into account the different ways of learning. ASD works here as an example that shows the deficits in our philosophical considerations and in educational practices.

Many philosophical theories on fiction plus many considerations on psychological phenomena make assumptions concerning the ontological status of objects. The MTF takes a different point of view. According to use theory of meaning, it is the correct use of the words that matters. If we think about the use of mathematical terms, their uses are quite similar in different contexts. The use of philosophically loaded expressions is more 'rigid'<sup>29</sup> than, for example, ordinary language words. Thus their use is easier for people with ASD. According to the MTF, the meanings of words are constituted in language games and in many games the meanings differ from their 'basic acceptance properties' (Horwich 1998). This is a challenge for people with ASD. The key lies in recognising the rules of the game, which requires meta-representation. In language games there are rules for adequate use of words, and these uses resemble uses in other contexts. This creates intertextual relations. Reading being considered as a process of moving between texts challenges readings that assume binary thinking and rigid meanings. When mathematical terms are in question, their uses are quite similar despite changing contexts. This rigidity in their use can explain why for example children with ASD are often capable of engaging in mathematics. If we compare the use of mathematical terms to all kinds of everyday situations of the use of language, we can see that what is missing is the need to understand all the contextual cues forming the rules for the correct uses of words. In children's plays, irony, sarcasm, comedy, etc., it is clearly the context that offers rules for better understanding of the language games that are going on. In mathematics, the use does not change.

According to traditional theories of fiction, the ontology of objects is decisive whether pretence is involved or not. The so-called 'pretence theories'<sup>30</sup> have some differences in their emphasis but the key idea is that representational works function as props in games of make-believe in a similar way to how as toys like dolls, etc., serve as props in children's games. We are thus merely pretending the truth of the sentences where such objects are involved. Similarly, in philosophy of mathematics, mathematical objects are either Platonic concepts or fictions. All these are problematic from the point of view of ASD. When it comes to mathematics, people with ASD are invited to do both abstract thinking and

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<sup>29</sup> Kripke's rigid designator. Kripke (1980).

<sup>30</sup> Walton (1990), Currie (1992), Evans (1982).

pretending, which are generally considered difficult tasks for them. Using the MTF to investigate the use of language in the case of ASD reveals hidden ontological assumptions in dealing with fiction, and that opens new possibilities for educational practices, of which drama education works as a good example. By questioning previous assumptions, new insights are available.

By concentrating on use of language rather than ontological questions, we may find new ways to train meta-representation and meta-cognitive skills in general. It is important to bear in mind that improving meta-cognitive skills is crucial in all learning, not only in the case of ASD. Paying attention to different ways of learning and in some cases to special difficulties opens up new ways of thinking and improves inclusive methods and educational solutions. Drama education is an example of a method which has great potential for learning interdisciplinary topics. When we are dealing with topics with multiple dimensions, it is underlined how it is always a matter of degree how variously we grasp the possible interpretations. Fiction differs from informational texts in its larger possibilities for interpretations, and it thus offers challenges for everyone, special needs or not.

The 'intentionality paradigm',<sup>31</sup> which is the reason why previous philosophical theories about fiction fail, also restricts the psychological theories and investigation concerning ASD. In practice, this means, for example, seeing deficits in theory of mind, which excludes the possibility to see other solutions. Changing the point of view to the use of language puts alleged deficits into a larger context and thus widens the possibility of solutions. Gernsbacher, M.A., & Pripas-Kapit, S. (2012) are representatives of this changing paradigm when compared to, for example, Happé (1995). The present article focuses on combining philosophical theory of using the concept of truth for semantical ascent i.e. taking meta-representative positions in reading. These ideas can be used for developing new ways to improve meta-cognitive skills, for example in the case of ASD. The article "Minimalist Theory of Fiction and IC Thinking as a Background for New Insights into Autism" takes these considerations further by combining them with the theory of Integrative Complexity and its practical application, IC Thinking.

### 1.2.2 Truth in Fiction Reconsidered

This article scrutinises the philosophical problem of fiction in the context of literary theory. Many examples in the philosophical literature concerning fiction use examples from various classical novels such as *Anna Karenina*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, etc. An obvious problem arising is the problem of 'interpenetration of reality and myth'. For example, historical novels contain characters who really walked the Earth. Thus, some parts of the story are true in reality. However, philosophers and literary theorists tend to have different

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<sup>31</sup> E.g. in the article "Understanding Minds and Metaphors: Insights from the Study of Figurative Language in Autism"; "the case of autism demonstrates the crucial role of the understanding of intentions in normal human communication, both "literal" and figurative" (Happé 1995, 275).

perspectives on this problem, or so I argue. Using MTF, I offer a solution which unites these different perspectives and shows a new way to analyse texts.

Two background assumptions in literary theory cause misunderstandings between literary theorists and philosophers. Firstly, many of them share the assumption that literary worlds are something separate and we just pretend the events of stories. Secondly, literary theorists tend to underestimate the role of truth in fiction. The focus is more on the process of immersion, i.e. how we get transported by a narrative. Thus there is a confusion between the psychological process of immersion and the process of understanding. However, the ultimate problem is the confusion arising from considering truth and meaning as dependent on ontology and the corresponding structures of language and reality.

I change the focus from pretending to understanding. From my point of view, getting immersed in a story is in the end dependent on our personal experiences and our abilities to experience empathy and physiologically feel the emotions linked to the events of narratives.<sup>32</sup> It is not about ontological questions on the existence of the objects of our thoughts. Our understanding of a narrative is a matter of knowing the correct uses of words in particular contexts, i.e. in language games. As in the other articles, the usefulness of truth is highlighted by emphasising its role in semantic ascent and meta-representation. Complicated ontologies, narrative or possible worlds and pretence or make-believe as necessary elements are no longer needed.

Understanding fiction is described by relying on research on narrative comprehension. One of the central arguments for favouring the MTF is that it can deal with the phenomenon of intertextuality. Several points involved with narrative comprehension support the idea that intertextuality is a necessary feature of understanding fiction (and other texts). Firstly, knowledge in a given domain facilitates the acquisition of new domain information (Gerrig 1993, 41). Secondly, after hearing a narrative, high-knowledge subjects recall more information and more relevant details. Thirdly, enhanced knowledge enables the reader to direct attention to the more informative aspects of a narrative.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the better understanding of a word one has, the more relevant associations one gets connected to the text in question. Just like the word 'hammer' becomes available when the word 'nail' is in a text, the name Julius Caesar is available when the name Cleopatra is mentioned. All this, of course, depends on knowledge of the meanings of words. Since meaning is the same thing as the use of the word, it is all about skills in mastering the language. This is in accordance with the use theory of meaning (Horwich 1998b, Wittgenstein 1999).

The function of the MTF is a combination of philosophical theories of meaning, truth and language games. In addition, it is built on the rejection of some traditional conceptions about pretence. In this I follow research on developmental psychology and the early stages of learning language. The emergence of pretence in children's behaviour is generally considered puzzling

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<sup>32</sup> E.g. Gerrig (1993, 6-7) explains how mental images, situation models, etc., can describe the psychological process in reading both fictional and informational text.

<sup>33</sup> See the resemblance with Integrative Complexity.

because of its very early appearance during the second year of life, when children are learning to construct their own concept of the world and reality (Randell & Nielsen 2007). In this context, by pretending is meant “acting in a way that is contrary to how the world is” and by definition it (e.g. Garvey 1990) requires acting symbolically or non-literally with objects in a way that is contrary to reality. Alternatively, Lillard (1993) defines it as consciously projecting a mental representation onto reality.

The MTF changes the focus from the pretence-reality distinction to language games. In this article, I argue that in order to successfully play a language game, one need not be aware of the possible contradictions with alleged reality. Language games concerning ‘reality’ in a scientific sense are language games among others. Acknowledging that the use of words in some children’s play or games is different than in other language games is a matter of meta-cognitive abilities. Thus, mere successful variation of words’ use does not mean that one is consciously acting in a way that is contrary to reality. This explains how children are able to seemingly pretend at such an early stage. This is supported by the fact that it is not until four years of age that children seem to understand that one can believe a false proposition to be true of a situation in reality (Wellman, Cross & Watson 2001).

My account thus suggests that being able to successfully participate in language games that contain statements that are contrary to reality does not require meta-level thinking showing conscious thinking that is contrary to reality. Mastering the uses of words makes it possible to better recognise how and when they should be used, and meta-cognitive abilities help to recognise and compare different contexts and language games. Following Horwich (1998b), I argue that mastering words’ acceptance properties means understanding. Understanding together with meta-cognitive skills make different interpretations possible because of recognising intertextual links.

Rejecting pretence as a necessary feature in dealing with the philosophical problem of fiction means arguing against the leading theories of Kendall Walton (1990) and Gregory Currie (1993). Pretence as a phenomenon might be involved, but it is not decisive, because the focus is on understanding language games. It is not a matter of ontology to know about the use of the name Sherlock Holmes that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character. Someone who knows this has a better knowledge of the use of the name Sherlock Holmes than someone who thinks Sherlock Holmes was a real-life person. The same principle applies to all matters related to the problem of ‘interpenetration of reality and myth’. Recognising different uses of words in a text or in a conversation means recognising conflicting language games. Since we are now dealing with different uses of words, we are not restricted to fiction. Thus the idea of the MTF can be applied to all texts and communication. In the following, the principles of the MTF are applied to the psychological theory of Integrative Complexity.

### 1.2.3 Philosophical Investigations on Integrative Complexity

Although the MTF was originally formulated for solving the problem of fiction, it is a theory that can be used to explain and explore our use of language in constantly changing contexts: language games. The philosophy of language in the MTF follows Wittgenstein's (1999) ideas elaborated by Paul Horwich (1998a, 1998b). The concept of the language game originates with Wittgenstein, but for some reason systematic accounts of it are still missing. The MTF scrutinises language games together with the concept of intertextuality. This opens up a holistic view of texts and communication where meanings are connected by resemblances in use. Better skills in mastering the uses of words together with semantic ascents and meta-perspectives with the aid of the concept of truth open up a scenario where language games are divided into micro and macro language games depending on their mutual relations.

My first acquaintance with the theory of Integrative Complexity happened through a project in the Education Department of the City of Helsinki. The City of Helsinki started co-operating with the University of Cambridge in order to develop an IC Thinking intervention for the Finnish context. The purpose of the project was to bring in new tools for preventing violent extremism and polarisation in society. Schools were thought to be important partners in the project and I was involved as a representative of the Education Department. I was lucky enough to be a participant in the first two pilot versions, which were following the sessions planned for the British context. Being part of the project has been extremely useful, not only because of my work in the Education Department but also from the point of view of my PhD project. The IC Thinking method consists essentially of developing our ability to think from multiple perspectives. As the research concerning Integrative Complexity suggests, preventing violence is more about how you think than what you think. Seeing the world in black and white mode and considering one's own perspective as the only valid one are indicators predicting violence.<sup>34</sup> These core ideas of IC-Thinking very much resembled what I had been thinking about and developing in, for example, my article concerning drama education and the MTF. The aims of drama educational sessions are in many ways similar to IC Thinking: experiencing new points of view and learning to recognise multiple perspectives or dimensions and solving conflicts.

Based on these considerations plus the findings concerning the use of language in the case of Autism Spectrum Disorder,<sup>35</sup> I started to outline the philosophical background of Integrative Complexity. Work started together with Amanda Ptolomey concerning the use of the MTF together with IC Thinking in finding new insights into autism. During this investigation, the focus expanded to address the whole theory of Integrative Complexity. As a result, separate articles were written concerning the philosophical foundations of Integrative Complexity and the MTF and IC Thinking as a background for new insights into

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<sup>34</sup> Basics on IC Thinking and a list of publications are available at <https://icthinking.org/>

<sup>35</sup> Nyberg (2015).

autism. The insights and help of Dr Eolene Boyd-Macmillan and Dr Sara Savage have been extremely useful in investigating the fundamentals of Integrative Complexity.

Integrative Complexity theory traces back to political psychology research (Suedfeld & Rank 1976, Suedfeld & Tetlock 1977, Suedfeld, Tetlock & Ramirez 1977, Suedfeld, Tetlock & Streufert 1992). The theory is a measure of the way we process social information and this is the link to philosophy of language I am promoting. I am more or less talking about the skills of using language, and the theory of Integrative Complexity is essentially about the complexity of the less-than-conscious structure of thinking. These features overlap and my purpose is to make some parts concerning the use of language in Integrative Complexity more visible. That makes it possible to further develop the underlying theory in order to minimise the problems caused by language. The hypothesis based on the MTF is that the use of language can be very deceiving. According to the Integrative Complexity theory, we might use very simple language to convey a very complex structure of thought, or vice versa, we might use very complex language but convey a very simple structure of thought. The MTF brings in new dimensions that need to be considered.

Integrative Complexity is scored on a 1–7 scale. The basis for this scale for the Integrative Complexity of written or oral communication is described exhaustively in the coding manual (Baker-Brown et al. 1992). ‘Low IC’ indicates a thinking style that is rigid and closed, a ‘tunnel vision’ unable to recognise different perspectives. Thus a score of 1 indicates no evidence of either differentiation or integration. An increasingly complex thinking style means the capability to see the gestalt, to differentiate and then integrate different perspectives on topics, plus finding links between them. Further up the scale, for example, a score of 5 indicates moderate to high differentiation and moderate integration. It means recognising conceptual connections between differentiated dimensions of judgement. Getting a score of 7 means high differentiation and high integration.

IC Thinking is an intervention method developed by a research group based in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cambridge, and a social profit company. They describe their aims as helping “people see their world and conflicts in more complex ways in order to prevent violence and promote community. We do this through a variety of approaches that cultivate life skills such as meta-awareness, values affirmations, active listening, emotion regulation, and critical thinking”.<sup>36</sup> Finland has been among the piloted contexts and with the co-operation of the City of Helsinki and the IC Thinking Research Group in Cambridge, the goal is to implement it in all elementary schools, upper secondary schools and vocational institutes under the management of the Education Division of the City of Helsinki. Besides Helsinki, the IC Thinking intervention method has been piloted and assessed in a wide variety of conflict contexts, e.g. in the UK, Kenya, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Pakistan.

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<sup>36</sup> <https://icthinking.org/>



The heart of the method lies in measuring changes in Integrative Complexity. This is a measure of the structure, not the content, of thinking. So far the results both in Finland<sup>37</sup> and in other piloted contexts find that participants consistently show increased cognitive complexity and resilience after the intervention. According to the theory of Integrative Complexity, that means they are less likely to turn to violence, and more equipped to deal with conflict constructively.

Being involved in developing an intervention method more suitable for the Finnish context caused me to think about some of the fundamental parts of the underlying psychological theory. The scoring system that shows the level of Integrative Complexity particularly attracted my attention. The theory is very much about using language and understanding concepts, although the focus is on the structure of thinking. Some parts of the scoring system seemed to need adjusting. In addition, one of the most crucial aspects in interventions is to recognise alternative ways to see and understand communication. There is no obligation to change one's opinions as a result of the interventions. What happens is that one is better able to see and understand others' viewpoints. Thus one fundamental principle seems to be the rejection of ultimate truths. However, this is a somewhat problematic conclusion in the light of Western scientific thinking. What could represent a philosophy behind Integrative Complexity?

The MTF already contains the feature of multiple context-dependent truths. This does not mean that there are no, for example, scientific truths. The point is that one needs to recognise the language games being played and thus there is a possibility that conflicting views are not using the concepts according to the same rules. They are not playing the same game. It is still of course possible to be wrong inside a language game, i.e. claiming something that is not true in the game. This raises a further question concerning the scoring system. Does it take into account the possibility that people might be playing different language games and confusing the use of concepts? The scoring system seems to allow high scores for differentiation regardless of whether the points of view are irrelevant. This makes acknowledging the contexts sometimes extremely important.

How, then, should we improve the theory and scoring system in such a way that language skills do not have too much impact? The focus should be on the structure not the content. With the aid of the MTF, the effects of the used languages become more visible and thus tools could be sourced to eliminate the downsides. The importance of recognising the contexts is very well-acknowledged by the theory of Integrative Complexity and IC Thinking interventions. All interventions are carefully planned to suit the particular purpose. However, recognising different language games being played at the same time is not the same as recognising the context. The context may be one of the language games being played, being a micro or macro language game, but it is just a platform for the multiple games. This complexity of understanding meanings of words is not systematically taken into account by IC theory or the intervention method.

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<sup>37</sup> Forthcoming.

In short, recognising different points of view requires, despite the alleged thinking style, a structure of thinking that enables one to, in addition to leaving behind black and white thinking, recognise the multiple ways words may be used. Using the idea of intertextuality, as texts are collections of endless citations, one should recognise both the relevant and also more distant but still meaningful interpretations of a text. This reminds us of the first phase of the IC process, i.e. differentiation. The second phase is integration, and from the point of view of the MTF, this means recognising resemblances between uses of words in different contexts. That helps one to see the big picture. The MTF thus offers a philosophical background, a philosophy of language that explains the communicative platform that is in use by our unconscious structure of thinking. Since the skills in using language and reading contextual cues in order to follow particular context-dependent rules for the correct use of words are always present, the coding system needs to be refined for the better recognition of differences in language skills and meta-cognitive abilities. In practice, this means better recognition of individuals' and groups' starting points and methods which, if needed, minimise the use of language and rely on alternative communication. Low-threshold non-verbal methods are needed for many interventions, and the scoring system can and should be adjusted to score changes in behaviour rather than in written or spoken language. The structure of thinking still remains the same. Our article with Amanda Ptolomey demonstrates what this could mean in the case of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

#### **1.2.4 Minimalist theory of fiction and ICthinking© as a Background for New Insights to Autism**

Working on the IC Thinking project raised questions concerning groups with special needs. Many learning difficulties are connected to the use of language. Since my background is in the field of special education, it has come naturally to me to take into account the possible disorders. However, my thinking has changed from thinking about different learning difficulties to considering the ways we could use language in a way that is more accessible for everyone. From that point of view, alleged disorders are crucial in order to find out how we actually think and use language. Special learning difficulties are usually such that all of us have them to some extent and thus their effect is a matter of degree. Thus, taking them into account in educational and pedagogical practices is for everybody's good.

Difficulties connected to the power of expression by speech, writing, or comprehension of spoken or written language and communication in general give invaluable points of view for looking at our thinking. They have been crucial for my way of looking at philosophical problems, and Wittgenstein's ideas have been epochal in changing the focus of our actual use of language and meanings. For example, the concept of the language game is extremely useful when investigating our learning of language. Most of the theories the MTF criticises are incapable of dealing with the basics of how our language skills develop. For

example, in our normal perception of speech, both hearing and visual perception are crucial. Our normal learning of speech is thus bimodal, a combination of hearing and visual perception (Lonka & Linkola 2011). Even babies at a few weeks old perceive movements of faces and copy them (Meltzoff & Moore 1977). Based on psychological research and philosophical arguments concerning our use of language in the case of fiction, the MTF relies strongly on use theory of meaning and the way in which meanings are context-dependent. Autism Spectrum Disorder was from the beginning of this PhD project one of the examples that in my opinion shows that many philosophical and psychological suppositions are ill-formed. Amanda Ptolomey is a member of the ICThinking© Scotland group and has also been working with children with ASD. Our shared observation is that, using elements of the MTF, ICThinking© interventions could be developed to match the needs of people with ASD.

The crucial observations are the following. One common claim concerning ASD is that autistic children lack 'theory of mind' because of an inability to meta-represent. What is claimed in this project is that the skills to use language are underestimated. The failure in tests concerning theory of mind could be a result of an incapability of using words differently in different contexts. Thus, the failure in recognising different uses of words gives the impression of an inability to meta-represent or imagine. This point of view has already been developed in Nyberg (2015) but is taken further here. Another point of view on this same phenomenon is that difficulties in using concepts in ASD are often described by the distinction abstract vs. concrete thinking. This distinction has proved its usefulness, but something is missing. The meanings of words often change when they are applied to different contexts. Some concepts like those of mathematics are more rigid in their uses. People with ASD are usually capable of engaging with mathematics but often have difficulties with, for example, figurative language, in situations where words are used differently than usually. It is thus not necessarily a matter of abstract or concrete thinking but the ability to use words differently in different contexts. From these assumptions, it is easier to understand why everyday uses of words can be problematic. Understanding meanings in everyday life often consists of following context-dependent rules and social cues, which are provably difficult for people with ASD.

Combining these new insights with IC Thinking offers a practical tool for improving language skills and meta-cognitive abilities. IC coding is about finding differentiation and integration. The key to differentiation lies in finding language users making different uses of words. Since people with ASD presumably have difficulties in recognising different uses of words, interventions could pay special attention to that. It may be the case that people with ASD demonstrate a different IC profile, including the demonstration of more high elaborative complexity than dialectical complexity. This means, for example, the capability of using the same language rule in a game to describe the many features of one theory with a complex range of language but an inability to see any validity in any other view. This also brings up the possibility that a higher IC score is possible in situations where a participant is confusing language games

and introduces irrelevant points of view. In other words, people with ASD could benefit from concentrating on dialectical complexity. By acknowledging these dimensions, there is a possibility of new insights and a paradigm shift in research and pedagogical practices concerning ASD. Using inclusive solutions in the case of ASD is a case-by-case matter.<sup>38</sup> Our conclusion at this point is that it is worth investigating the possibilities of developing special interventions for the needs of people with ASD.

### 1.3 Conclusive Remarks and Further Research

This combination of articles introduces a philosophical theory for solving some classical philosophical problems of fiction. Due to my background in the field of education and orientation to literary theory and poststructuralism, the research expanded into areas into which I thought the developed Minimalist Theory of Fiction could bring new insights and practical solutions. The structure is bipolar. The philosophical theory addresses philosophical problems and its usefulness is proved by practical applications in the fields of drama education, literary theory, psychology and special education. The applications in turn support the theory, linking it to empirical research and thus to our actual ways of thinking and using language.

The principal idea is that using language is free of ontological suppositions, and language games constitute a net of texts where the concept of truth works as a marker of varying micro and macro language games. Acknowledging elements of this gestalt opens up new insights into all activities linked to communication and learning language. Maybe first of all it is a philosophical theory about understanding. The crucial ideas are not new. The main points owe much to Ludwig Wittgenstein, Paul Horwich and Julia Kristeva. What is new is the combination in which the elements are put together and how empirical research supports philosophical theory. Probably the most up-to-date applications of the theory are those concerning the theory of Integrative Complexity. These highlight the importance of understanding different points of view, questioning binary thinking, stressing integration while reserving justification for individual truths and scientific objectivity.

Preparing this PhD has engendered further projects. A conference in Arezzo, Italy in December 2016 led to the writing of an article "Who is the Author of Existence?" concerning the formation of concepts in physics. Preparing the article "Philosophical Investigations on Integrative Complexity" included workshops in the Psychology Department of the University of Cambridge. This work with the theory of Integrative complexity continues. The project with Amanda Ptolomey in Scotland continues by developing an ICThinking© intervention model for

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<sup>38</sup> In the case of autism, it is typical that some strange behaviour models are learnt from the everyday environment but desired behaviour models seem to need systematic training (Kerola 2011, 176). Whether IC Intervention is planned especially for children with ASD it is constructed from children's individual needs.

people with ASD. The philosophical part concerning the problem of fiction has been further elaborated to address proper names in fiction. The preliminary ideas were presented in May 2019 in International Conference on Philosophy of Language and Linguistics, PhiLang 2019 and an article is under preparation.

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## SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Tämä artikkeliväitöskirja esittää teorian fiktion liittyvien filosofisten ongelmien ratkaisemiseksi. Syntynyt teoria, Minimalistinen teoria fiktioista (MTF), käsittelee käytännössä yleisemminkin kommunikaatiota ja siihen läheisesti liittyviä asioita kuten ymmärtämistä ja oppimista. Fiktion ongelmaan esitetyn ratkaisun lisäksi väitöskirja koostuu artikkeleista, jotka soveltavat teoriaa kirjallisuustieteen, psykologian ja pedagogiikan alueille. Teorian kokonaisvaltaista toimivuutta esitetään siis sen sovellusmahdollisuuksien avulla. Taustana teorialle toimivat minimalistinen käsitys totuudesta erityisesti Paul Horwichin näkemystä seuraten sekä Ludvig Wittgensteinin luoma ja Horwichin edelleen kehittämä ”merkityksen käyttöteoria”. Lisäksi keskeisenä ideoina toimivat Wittgensteinin kehittämä ajatus kielipeleistä sekä kirjallisuustieteestä tuttu intertekstuaalisuuden käsite. Näiden pohjalta muodostetun teorian avulla fiktion liittyviä filosofisia ongelmia lähestytään radikaalisti toisenlaisesta näkökulmasta kuin aiemmin. Aiemmat ratkaisuehdotukset kuten mahdollisten maailmojen teorit, Alexius Meinongia seuraavat teorit abstrakteista objekteista sekä ns. teeskentely ja uskottelu – teorit (pretence ja make believe –teorit) nojaavat perinteiseen ajatukseen, että totuus on kielen ja sen ulkoisten objektien välinen suhde. Tämä lähtökohta ajattelun intentionaalisuudesta pakottaa jollakin tavalla postuloimaan niiden objektien olemassaolo, joihin ajattelu kohdistuu. Tähän fiktion ontologian ongelmaan mainitut aiemmat teorit tarjoavat erilaisia ratkaisuja. Minimalistiseen teoriaan fiktion liittyä keskeisesti ajatus ontologisesta neutraaliudesta.

MTF teorian mukaan fiktion liittyvien filosofisten ongelmien ratkaisemisessa olennaista ei ole fiktion ja todellisuuden välinen erottelu vaan kielipeliin ja niiden keskinäisten suhteiden ymmärtäminen. Kielipeliin ymmärtäminen edellyttää taitoa käyttää sanoja oikein kussakin kielipelissä. Eri kielipeliin erottaminen ja vertailu edellyttävät lisäksi metakielen käyttämistä, mikä oppimisen ja psykologian näkökulmasta vaatii metakognitiivisia taitoja. Tämä lähestymistapa on hedelmällinen pedagogiikan kannalta ja erityisesti silloin kun kyky kielen käyttöön on rajoittunut, kuten esimerkiksi autismin kirjon häiriöissä. MTF teorian mukaan merkitysten muodostuminen eri kielenkäyttötilanteissa tarkoittaa totuuden riippuvaisuutta kielipelistä. Koska kielipelin sisällä voi olla useita samaan aikaan pelattavia kielipelejä, voi ns. binaarinen ajattelu olla tällöin virheellistä. Nämä kielipeliin väliset suhteet liittyvät jälkistrukturalistisessa filosofiassa esiin tuotuun intertekstuaalisuuden käsitteeseen. Mitä parempi on ymmärrys sanojen käytöstä kielipelissä, sitä paremmin voi tunnistaa toisiinsa liittyviä kielipelejä. Nämä saattavat olla keskenään ristiriitaisia, mutta silti olennaisia laajemman kielipelin oikean ymmärtämisen kannalta. Näiden ajatusten pohjalta väitöskirjan artikkeleissa hahmotellaan teoria ja osoitetaan käytännön sovelluksia.

Artikkelissa ”Fiction, Truth and Reference” esitellään teorian keskeiset osat ja osoitetaan, kuinka sen avulla ratkaistaan fiktion liittyviä filosofisia ongelmia sekä lähestymistavasta johtuen vältetään jotkin ongelmat kokonaan. Esimerkiksi ”pretence” ja ”make believe” teorioiden lähestymistavan

argumentoidaan epäonnistuvan ongelmien ratkaisussa väärin lähtökohtien takia. Toinen artikkeli "Fiction in Drama Education Offers Learning Opportunities for All - Philosophical Perspectives in Drama Education" käsittelee oppimista ja draama kasvatuksen hyödyntämistä metakognitiivisten taitojen kehittämisessä. Artikkelissa esitetään, että kun kielipelejä erotetaan toisistaan, totuuden käsitteen käyttäminen edellyttää metakognitiivisia taitoja. Tätä voidaan hyödyntää draamakasvatuksessa siten, että painotetaan tarinoiden eri ulottuvuuksien merkitystä. Autismin kirjon häiriön ollessa kyseessä on systemaattinen sanojen merkitysten vaihtumisen harjoittelu erityisen hyödyllistä, koska tämä taito on autismissa kaventunut. Kolmas artikkeli "Truth in Fiction Reconsidered" painottuu totuuden ja ymmärtämisen käsitteisiin kirjallisuustieteessä ja siinä argumentoidaan erityisesti mahdollisten maailmojen lähestymistapaa vastaan. Kirjallisuustieteessä on suosittua käyttää ilmaisia, kuten 'joutua tarinan vietäväksi' tai 'uppoutua tarinaan'. Tästä syntyy helposti käsitys erillisestä maailmasta, jonne tarina vie. Se antaa kuitenkin harhaanjohtavan käsityksen tarinan ymmärtämisestä. Kirjallisuustieteessä korostuu etenkin intertekstuaalisuuden käsite ja ymmärtämisen lisääntyminen selitetään artikkelissa MTF teoriaa seuraten kielipeliä tunnistamisena. Mitä paremmin tekstin ymmärtää, sitä enemmän tunnistaa linkkejä muihin teksteihin ja pystyy tekemään erilaisia tulkintoja. Kyse ei ole MTF teorian mukaan silloin erillisistä maailmoista vaan kielipeleistä ja niiden välisistä suhteista.

Neljäs artikkeli "Philosophical investigations on integrative complexity" on tutkielma, joka tarkastelee integratiivisen kompleksisuuden (Integrative Complexity, IC) teoriaa MTF teorian kautta. Integratiivinen kompleksisuus on psykologinen teoria meidän tiedostamattomasta tavastamme ajatella ja reagoida. Se kertoo meidän luonnollisista reaktioistamme, päätöksenteosta, ongelmienratkaisusta ja erilaisuuden sekä ristiriitojen kohtaamisesta. Teoriaan kuuluu menetelmä, jolla kielenkäytöstä voidaan mitata IC pisteet. Joustamaton ja sulkeutunut ajattelutapa, joka ei tunnista tai kunnioita muita ulottuvuuksia saa alhaiset pisteet ja hyvin alhaiset pisteet ennustavat konfliktia tai väkivaltaa. Korkea pistemäärä merkitsee kompleksista ajattelua, kykyä erottaa näkökulmia sekä löytää yhtäläisyyksiä niiden väliltä. Tällainen ajattelu ennustaa rauhallisempaa lopputulosta. Soveltamalla MTF teoriaa integratiivisen kompleksisuuden teorian tarkasteluun, kyky tunnistaa erilaisia näkökulmia näyttäytyy taitona käyttää sanoja eri tavoin eri tilanteissa ja kykynä tunnistaa eri kielipelejä ja löytää yhtäläisyyksiä niiden väliltä.

Viides artikkeli, "Minimalist Theory of Fiction and ICThinking© as a Background for New Insights into Autism" asettaa uuteen valoon joitakin keskeisiä uskomuksia autismin kirjon häiriöitä omaavien tavasta käyttää kieltä. Artikkelin on kirjoittanut yhdessä Amanda Ptolomeyn kanssa. Vaikeudet kielen ymmärtämisessä, jotka yleisesti on yhdistetty abstraktiin ajatteluun, voi ajatella johtuvan puutteista taidoissa käyttää sanoja eri tilanteissa. Merkitykset muodostuvat konteksteissa ja samat sanat saavat näin erilaisia merkityksiä eri konteksteissa. Sanojen käyttöjen joustavuudessa on eroja ja erityisesti matemaattiset käsitteet ovat yleensä joustamattomia käytössään. Näin

esimerkiksi autismin kirjon häiriöissä tavattu sujuvuus matemaattisten käsitteiden käytössä viittaisikin pulmiin sanojen käytön soveltamisessa eri tilanteisiin sen sijaan, että kyse olisi perinteisesti vaikeudet kuvittelussa ja abstraktissa ajattelussa. Eri kielipelien samanaikainen käyttö olisi tämän ajattelutavan perusteella autismin kirjon häiriöissä vaikeaa. Tässä valossa perinteisesti autismiin liitetyn mielenteorian puuttumiseen käytetty Sally-Anne testi jättää huomiotta mahdollisuuden, että vaikeudet johtuisivat sanojen käytön soveltamisen ongelmista. Kyse voi toki olla esimerkiksi molemmista, mutta MTF:n avulla nämä uudet näkökulmat tulevat tutkimisen arvoiseksi. Yhdistämällä nämä analyysit integratiivisen kompleksisuuden teoriaan ja sen pohjalta kehitettyyn ICThinking menetelmään voidaan kehittää uusia menetelmiä autismin yhteydessä metakognitiivisten taitojen kehittämiseksi ja uusiin tilanteisiin sopeutumiseksi. Kielipelien tunnistaminen ja yhdisteleminen edellyttää metakognitiivisia taitoja ja vaikeudet niissä johtavat epäonnistumisiin metarepresentaatiossa. Kokonaisuutena minimalistinen teoria fiktiosta esittää siis ratkaisun fiktion filosofisiin ongelmiin, mutta koska tuloksena on kaikkea kielenkäyttöä koskeva näkemys, voi fiktion ongelmaan kehitettyä argumentointia ja näkökulmia hyödyntää useille alueille. Pedagogiset ja kuntouttavat menetelmät sekä psykologiaan liittyvät avaukset ovat konkreettisia tutkimuskohteita, joihin on syytä yhdistää empiiristä tutkimusta. Filosofian ja kirjallisuustieteen näkökulmasta MTF edellyttää vahvaa edelleen kehittämistä, koska taustateoriat ovat laajasti keskusteltuja ja sisältävät monia kiistanalaisia kohtia. MTF:n kannalta erityisesti kielipelien tarkastelua pitää vahvasti systematisoida.



## **ORIGINAL PAPERS**

### **I**

#### **FICTION, TRUTH AND REFERENCE. MINIMALIST THEORY OF FICTION.**

by

Nyberg, Crister, 2016

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## II

### **FICTION IN DRAMA EDUCATION OFFERS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL, PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN DRAMA EDUCATION.**

by

Nyberg, Crister, 2015

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## Fiction in Drama Education Offers Learning Opportunities for All - Philosophical Perspectives in Drama Education

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### Abstract

In philosophy fiction poses deep problems. The existence of fictional objects is questionable and that makes it difficult to use the concept of truth in fiction. How can we understand fiction if we cannot make reasonable judgments about it? The philosophical theory I develop in my PhD research suggests that understanding fiction rests essentially on our ability to use words differently in different contexts. This means that fiction offers multiple ways to read with large scale of difficulty. In education it is a challenge to find a method that takes into account the different learning abilities of the pupils, especially of pupils with special needs. My goal is to show that using fiction in drama education helps in developing metacognitive skills in a way that takes into account all learners. Using the concept of truth in constructing understanding of fiction is in essential position. The fact that supports the conclusions of the present study is that people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have difficulties in understanding fictional stories and in pretending. Pretense is often considered as a central characteristic of understanding fiction but people with ASD can engage in fiction when meanings are rigid like in mathematics. Thus it is not pretending but metarepresentation that is required. The scale of understanding fiction ranges from rigid understanding of meanings based on personal experiences to very abstract poetic use of language with endless references to other texts. Drama educational practices can offer all these and metacognitive abilities are in essential position.

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**Keywords:** Drama Education; Fiction; Truth; Understanding; Use Theory of Meaning; Inclusion.

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## **1. Understanding fiction**

The purpose of this research is twofold. Firstly I aim to show that my philosophical theory on understanding fiction (Nyberg 2015) has practical implications. Secondly I am searching a method for educational purposes that takes into account all learners. My personal experiences on special education and the theory on fiction I develop have produced an idea that drama educational practices have the right elements for being such a method. By the aid of philosophical analysis and empirical research on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) I argue that this is the case. Thus in short, my goal is to show that using fiction in drama education is a method which helps in developing metacognitive skills in a way that takes into account all learners.

Fictional discourse raises philosophical problems because of names like 'Sherlock Holmes' which have no real life referent. Some of the names like 'London' in Sherlock Holmes stories have real life referents and thus the text consists in constant interplay with fiction and reality. In reading fiction it is thus useful to distinguish between different contexts. For example some of the things said in a science fiction are scientifically accurate. This means the need of metarepresentation and metacognitive skills. By metarepresentation I mean second-order presentation of first order cognitive contents (Proust 2007). Using fiction, truth and drama education, offer large scale of simultaneous tasks with multiple degrees of difficulty. This practice helps in promoting inclusive values in social contexts like classrooms. In social contexts the challenge is to create such a learning environment that helps all the students feel more included while the individual learning processes are still at focus. From the point of view of special education this means taking into account individual differences and possible disabilities in learning. Inclusive practices give better learning possibilities for all students no matter what the level of their performance is. It is worth noting that the central ideas presented in this paper are applicable despite the controversiality of the philosophical ideas of my theory. As an example of different abilities in learning I use studies on autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Although some of the results of those studies support my theory I want to emphasize that the point is in different cognitive starting points of learners not in deficits. The goal is in developing such pedagogical practices that gives good learning possibilities for all.

### *1.1. Inclusion*

My experiences on special education and teaching pupils with special needs support the idea that educational practices should be inclusive. However the notion of inclusion is problematic since it seems to be impossible to give its universal definition. There is no mutual understanding of the use and meaning of the word inclusion. For the present purposes it is illuminating to refer Ainscow's (2010) view that inclusion is about organizing the school to be responsive to the needs of all its pupils. These characterizations come close to the idea of accessibility and especially universal design for learning (UDL). Rose (2001, 66) describes UDL as injecting flexibility into the materials and methods used in the classroom. This means maximizing the learning opportunities for all the students. Rose acknowledges that there is great challenge for a teacher in choosing suitable materials and methods since flexibility can be obtained in numerous ways. My task is to show that drama education together with my theory on the function of the concept of truth in fiction offers tools for inclusive pedagogical practices. Drama education is exceptional practice for learning interdisciplinary topics. When we are dealing with interdisciplinary topic it is a matter of a degree how variously we grasp its multiple dimensions. Developing our ability to recognize these dimensions is crucial for better learning and understanding for all, special needs or not.

## *1.2. Truth in Fiction*

What are the philosophical challenges of understanding fiction? The philosophical problems in dealing with fiction are much about truth. The motivation for the minimal theory of truth (Horwich 1998a) and the use theory of meaning (1998b) comes from the difficulties that theories of substantial reference and truth pose to understanding fiction. The minimal theory of truth together with the use theory of meaning can avoid those difficulties. Both theories are equally important for my theory. My account of understanding fiction relies in general from empirical point of view, on metacognitive strategies and loosely on constructivist theories of learning because I stress learner's personal history and knowledge. The complexity connected to full or better understanding of a fictional text or some other form of representational art requires metacognitive abilities i.e. skills to think one's own thinking. In any mental activity or knowledge domain, metacognition is a tool of wide application for solving various problems (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 2002). One of my central claims is that using the concept of truth is important in constructing understanding of fiction and that is when both metacognitive skills and our personal prior knowledge are essential. Understanding is a matter of a degree and the more we have relevant knowledge and master the language and words in question, the better we understand the text and work of art in question.

The classical philosophical attempts of Russell (1905), Frege (1892), Meinong (1905), Zalta (1983) Walton (1990) etc. to solve the problems of understanding fiction fail or so I argue (Nyberg 2016). This is because of the confusion of considering truth and meaning as dependent on worldly entities or corresponding structures of language and world. Minimal theory of truth and the use theory of meaning resist taking meanings or words as directed to the world. Use theory meaning accepts that the word 'dog' is used in a right way if it is used in the presence of a dog but this is strictly speaking not to say that the word 'dog' is about a dog (Horwich 1998b, 16-17).

The minimal theory of truth claims that it makes no difference in saying that it is a truth that "dogs bark" or simply saying that, dogs bark. To say that 'snow is white' is true, or that it is true that snow is white, is equivalent to saying simply that snow is white. (Horwich 1998b, 103-104) I take as an implication of this that when a sentence is uttered our natural disposition is to consider the sentence as it says, as true. It is the use of the words and our prior knowledge that gives the further information about its interpretation. There is no further question whether it is true in fiction. 'Dogs bark' is true if and only if dogs bark. In contrast to traditional theories, deflationism seems to make truth independent of metaphysical questions by avoiding terms like fact and reality and its meaning is constituted implicitly by its use.

## *1.3. Intertextuality*

Following Julia Kristeva (1993) It is illuminating to keep in mind Julia Kristeva's words that every text is built on mosaic of citations and every text has absorbed other texts and every text is a variant of other texts (Kristeva 1993). Texts have three dimensions: the author, reader and other texts. Thus the implicit or explicit references to other works of art work as meaning constituting parts as well as author's intentions. In order to understand a work of art we need to have certain knowledge on these referential relations. Thus, from a reader's point of view to interpret a text i.e. to discover its potential meanings is to trace those relations (Kalogirou & Economopoulou 2012, 180). Reading is thus a process of moving between texts (Ibid. 180).

In order to understand and judge fiction, the intertextual characteristic seems to pose insurmountable challenge, at least for those who are stuck in rigid meanings and robust truth predicate. Mathematical terms may serve as an example of rigid meanings since they are very likely treated in a very similar way in different situations. By robust truth predicate I mean truth with substantial properties like correspondence relation between language and reality. In my approach the relations between language and reality are constructed in contexts. This idea traces itself to Ludwig Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1999) but at this point it suffices to stress that words may be used differently in different situations which implies that one has to follow the cues available in order to play the language game successfully. Informational texts are easier to understand in this respect since their contexts are more explicit and thus easier to recognize. Mathematics belongs to this category of informational texts because mathematical terms are very likely use similarly in different situations. Following the idea of intertextuality, in fiction multiple language games may be played at the same. This underlines the challenge of understanding fiction. Fiction may produce endless relations to other texts. My view stresses how understanding is about recognizing the relevant contexts for better understanding. Understanding is thus a skill to use words in the right way.

## **2. Fiction, metacognition and meta-representation**

Meta-representation is needed in better understanding of fictional discourse where words have different kind of uses than they usually have. Metarepresentation may well be characterized in a way the term was originally used i.e. as an ability to represent the representational relation itself (Pylyshyn 1978). As Proust (2007) brings out, not every metarepresentation is metacognitive. Proust's example is a statement about a photo failing to convey the luminosity of Leonardo's Last Supper. Metarepresentation is expressed because photo represents the fresco and fresco represents a religious scene. The ways to understand such a picture are numerous depending on e.g. background information. My approach deals with right uses of words and this highlights that mastering the use of a word is a skill and a matter of a degree. With better skills of using the words plus metacognitive skills understanding is better. The concept of truth is the indicator revealing truth in certain context or language game.

Thus one may follow the rules of the game played without recognizing the connections to other games and then the understanding is limited although successful to some extent. As an example of this counts that people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are capable of engaging in mathematics. The existence of mathematical objects is disputable and for that reason it is claimed that mathematical objects are useful fictions. People with ASD have difficulties in meta-representation (Baron-Cohen, Leslie, Firth 1985) and this is claimed to be the reason why children with ASD have difficulties in pretending (Leslie 1987). In general these difficulties should be rather referred to as cognitive differences, not deficits. The differences with children with ASD in performing mathematical tasks challenge the idea of pretence play. In mathematics the uses of the terms are more rigid and this could explain why they are capable of engaging in it. If this is right it implies that understanding mathematics does not essentially require neither pretending nor meta-representational capacity. This is because people with ASD have difficulties in pretending and meta-representation. This view also suggests that the ontological status of objects is not decisive. It is the use of the words that matters, whether they are used differently in different language games. Words of fiction are used as successfully as terms with real life referents if the use follows the basic regularities. I am not intending to make claims about the ontology of mathematical or any other

objects. The theories I rely on stay neutral on such matters. In the following it is showed how the pretence account of fiction fails.

## 2.1 Pretence

Pretence theories about fiction claim that we are not asserting the propositions within fiction. This also implies that we don't believe the sentences of such discourse. Thus we are merely pretending the truth of the sentences or the existence of the objects involved. Pretence theories admit of different versions (e.g. Evans 1982, Currie 1992) but Kendall Walton's (1990) theory is allegedly the most influential one). Walton derives our understanding of representational arts from children's games of make believe. This means that representational works function as props in games of make believe just like dolls and toy trucks serve as props in children's games. Walton's view is generally considered as convincing. Walton declares that "Make-believe –the use of (external) props in imaginative activities- is a truly remarkable invention" (Walton 1990).

Make believe or pretence is considered as essential in order to understand fiction. Pretence is defined as acting in a way that is contrary to how the world is. E.g. Garvey (1990) states that pretending by its definition requires acting symbolically or non-literally with objects in a way that is contrary to reality. This is also expressed as consciously projecting a mental representation onto reality (Lillard 1993) According to developmental theorists the pretence emerges during the second year of life. It is considered puzzling that it emerges so early when children are learning to construct their own concept of world and reality. (Randell & Nielsen 2007) In my approach the focus is in using language and thus many aspects like mental representations are left out.

The following example from Stanley (2001) shows how so called hermeneutic fictionalism deals with philosophically problematic discourse.

"Suppose John and Hannah are playing cowboys and Indians. In so doing, Hannah and John are pretending. John is pretending to be a cowboy, and Hannah is pretending to be an Indian. Suppose that during the game, Hannah squeezes her fist in John's direction, and John collapses to the ground. Within the game, it is true that a cowboy has been shot by an Indian. That is, it is fictionally true that a cowboy has been shot by an Indian. But this fictional truth is made to be the case by an action "in the real world". For Hannah's squeezing her fist in John's direction is an action "in the real world", as is John's dropping to the ground. These 'real' actions make it fictionally true, true in the pretense of cowboys and Indians, that a cowboy has been shot."

This view implies that the sentences containing these pretended entities cannot be true. They are either false or untrue. One solution is to call them fictionally true. These kinds of accounts of fiction are challenged by the autism objection.

Autism objection is based on the assumption that people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) lack the capacity to pretend (Stanley 2001). However people with ASD are capable of engaging in mathematics, sometimes with very high mathematical abilities. Mathematical objects may be considered as fictional (e.g. Field 1980, Yablo 2001). Mathematical fictionalism claims that mathematical objects are useful fictions. At least their existence is highly disputable. Anyway people with ASD can use them. Therefore we could conclude that hermeneutic fictionalism is false. This argument is thus supposed to undermine those fictional discourses people with autism have capacity to engage in. Mathematics is apparently one of those discourses.

The essence of the argument relies on the concept of pretence. A fact that puzzles psychologists is that even two years old children are capable of performing pretend play (Randell & Nielsen 2007). One may question whether such a play includes acting consciously in a way contrary to reality. It may be that when one is acting contrary to how the world is one can be only following certain rules, not pretending. Metarepresentational capacity is needed in understanding fictional discourse where words have different kind of uses than they usually have. In mathematics the uses of the terms are more rigid and this explains why people with ASD are capable of engaging in it. This view implies that understanding mathematics does not require pretending nor metarepresentational capacity to the same extent. Terms are used as successfully as terms with real life referents if the use follows the basic regularities. The ontology of the objects is not decisive. It is the right use of the words that matters. All this suggests that understanding precedes pretending and thus those children with ASD having difficulties in pretence play can be thought to have difficulties in adapting to situations where things have other than their usual meanings. Pretence can be a part of a successful engagement in social situations and this stems from the skill to read contextual cues e.g. social situations. Once we have understood the game or a fictional situation in drama we can modify our behaviour suitable for it. The difference to the views commonly stated in the context of developmental psychology is that the point is not in knowingly stating a false proposition in respect to real world but in following the rules of the game or fictional drama situation. Rules may be followed without metarepresentation but distinguishing explicitly contexts and intertextual relations requires it.

## *2.2 Referential relations and meaning as use*

Words have their basic acceptance properties (Horwich 1998b, 44-45), but the right use in certain context is determined by the circumstances and rules of the language game played. Some contexts may thus be 'scientific' in the sense that the use of the words in question is very limited and accurate, like in mathematics, but understanding is partly consisted in recognizing what is the context i.e. the use in question. In fiction there may be several contexts available at the same time as the concept of intertextuality suggests. Those relations are not of course recognized by all. Only experts have knowledge on some of them.

I do not aim at showing that multiple referential relations make it impossible to say something true of a fictional text. The challenge is to claim truths despite of these obstacles. The point is that understanding means capability to recognize referential relations to other contexts or language games. Those 'referential relations' are not strictly speaking referential, because they are parts of the acceptance properties of the words or concepts in question (Horwich 1998b, 69). In language games words have meanings with certain rules which may create relations to other contexts. Understanding is a practical ability of using words but we can admit that is a form of 'knowing that' if we realize that the knowledge is implicit (Horwich 1998b). This means that our use of a word is governed by a certain basic regularity and that is how we 'implicitly' take the word to have a certain meaning (Horwich 1998b, 8).

In short all this means that using drama education and fiction for dealing with e.g. cross curricular themes opens large variety of possibilities to give tasks that are suitable for all pupils. Texts always require reader to fill in gaps. Text does not tell all there is, and this is one essential part where fiction is connected to the world we live in. Personal experiences are in use when gaps are filled though the teacher may provide pupils with alternatives. Personal experiences are the starting point when pursuing more abstract uses of words.

It has been claimed that it is one of the criteria of a good story that it transports us to a narrative

world (Gerrig 1993, 3-5). However, a poor story may do this as well but it is considered as one of the important aspects of experiencing a narrative. What is going on in a story is what a reader is to find out. We always actively supplement the information we receive and thus the amount of prior knowledge is essential in order to understand. The most complicated cases like allegories or political satires make it visible how the understanding requires constant interplay between different contexts including reality and metafictional contexts. In order to understand fiction it might be necessary to recognize whether the proposition in fiction is true or false in real life. Such a situation is e.g. when some real life person has properties in fiction she/he does not have in reality. Thus it is not enough that we give an account of truth in fiction. It is the same world where we are and fiction is told.

### *2.3 Interplay between texts in practice*

The manners of approach that give equal opportunities to learn are such that take into account the personal starting points. The same drama educational project can be source for multiple learning experiences. The teacher can provide these opportunities by sharing roles and tasks of the project in a way that intertextual links come visible. As the play or project is a mosaic of citations the fragments of it show how words should be used in some particular context. How can we know whether an expression should be taken seriously or not? I take it as a natural starting point that we consider a sentence to be true. How would it be possible to judge a sentence as non-assertive if we don't first consider it true? It might be essential in order to understand what a story is about to realise that some expressions of the story are true in real life. For example understanding a Sherlock Holmes story might require basic knowledge on the city of London or natural laws. There is no prior label in sentences of fictional story or lines of an actor which sentences should be taken seriously. Many fictional stories like those about Sherlock Holmes are a mixture of real life events and fictional events. A play for example might have a character whose lines are such that recognizing their truth-value in real life is essential in order to understand the actions or the nature of this personality. What makes understanding more complicated is when sentences are true about another fictional story. My point of view is about using language in a right way in the contexts at stake. Understanding is thus a matter of a degree and the ability to use the words in different contexts shows better understanding. The concept of truth makes these different uses visible. The same expression can be true or false depending on the context. This may sound self-evident but in fiction this is disputable. Sherlock Holmes Stories in Strand magazine were published with the following note in the beginning of a story:

“Being a reprint from the reminiscences of  
JOHN H. WATSON  
Late of the Army Medical Department”

Experts of the texts published in Strand magazine could recognize that the name ‘Watson’ is not used accurately if it is claimed that the story is in reality a reprint from the reminiscences of Watson. If the reader does not take this meta-fictional context, the story is a reprint from Watson's reminiscences. It is true that the story is a reprint from Watson's reminiscences if and only if the story is a reprint from Watson's reminiscences. In the story it is a reprint from Watson's reminiscences. The one who makes this claim has a better understanding of the word Watson if she recognizes that the claim is false in e.g. scientific context. The stories were not reminiscences of Watson but created by Conan Doyle. Experts have better skills to use certain words and recognizing different contexts requires metacognitive abilities. One may join the conversation by following the rules of the language game but the better understanding comes from acknowledging

the context. A fruitful assumption in using fiction as a tool in drama is that all fiction is about reality. The distance to reality varies poetry being the most remote form of fiction.

To sum up my arguments, it is by the semantical ascent done with the concept of truth by which we come aware of the interplay between reality and fiction and different contexts. In order to do these steps, prior knowledge or some investigation is needed. This means taking into account our personal learning history, experiences, knowledge on genre, context etc. Some of these dimensions are useful in interpreting the work in question and some are crucial in order to make claims. For a teacher all this means e.g. choosing such cross curricular themes that provide large scale of sub-themes ranging from personal level to higher order comparative tasks. Thus the understanding of fiction varies from restricted understanding of words based on personal experiences to understanding that recognizes links between various texts. Comparative perspective shows the connections between texts and shows more advanced skills to use words. These perspectives apply to both planning the learning curve and analysing the outcome.

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### **III**

## **TRUTH IN FICTION RECONSIDERED**

by

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## Truth in Fiction Reconsidered

*Christer Nyberg*

### *Abstract*

Possible and narrative worlds are traditionally the most influential tools for explaining our understanding of fiction. One obvious implication of this is considering fiction as a matter of pretence. The theory I offer claims that it is a mistake to take truth as a substantial notion. This view rejects possible worlds and pretence as decisive features in dealing with fiction. Minimalist theory of fiction offers a solution that gives a way to combine a philosophical theory of meaning and views of literary theory. Narrative worlds approach saves its usefulness since its focus is more in the psychological process of reading. Minimalist theory of fiction is based on the minimal theory of truth and the use theory of meaning. The idea of language games as a practice of constructing contextual meanings is also decisive. A sentence is not true because it corresponds to a fact but because it is used in a right way in certain circumstances. The rejection of the possible worlds approach is thus based on the idea that understanding fiction is essentially about recognizing the constant interplay between different texts and contexts. Better understanding makes different interpretations possible.

Keywords: Truth, Fiction, Possible worlds, Narrative worlds, Minimal theory of truth, Use theory of meaning

### *1. Is the story true?*

Following the philosopher and mathematician Gottlob Frege's thoughts/ideas it may be tempting to think that when we merely want to enjoy poetry we do not care whether, for example, 'Odysseus' was a real-life person (Frege 1980, 63). Such a question interests us when we ask whether the story is true. "In hearing an epic poem...we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused." In Frege's words our concern is with the "aesthetic delight" not with the scientific worry on truth. Frege thus seems to ignore the possibility that a poem might tell something about the world we live in. In chapter 9 of the *Poetics* Aristotle was aware of this idea in remarking that poetry is something more philosophical and worthier of serious attention than history, for while poetry is concerned with universal truth, history deals with particular facts.

In literary theory, e.g. Thomas Pavel (1975, 1986) has suggested that possible worlds are autonomous worlds in which we become immersed when reading a story. Fiction is thus thought to be about possible events, possible worlds. The boundary between reality and fictional or possible worlds is puzzling. Difficulties in evaluating truth values show this. Possible worlds approach admits of different versions but generally also consider possible worlds to be necessarily linked to the actual world. The boundaries of what is possible are defined by the accessibility relation between actual and possible (Ryan 2013).

In this paper, I aim to show that the previous attempts to explain the function of truth in fiction fail<sup>1</sup>. From the point of view of literary theory this means that narrative worlds are not interchangeable with possible worlds and while narrative worlds save their usefulness possible worlds should be rejected. As the title of Richard J. Gerrig's book<sup>2</sup> says, narrative worlds are used to demonstrate the psychological process of reading. This does not mean that truth is irrelevant in that context. Truth is important but the focus of narrative worlds is in the psychological process of making a story coherent. Possible worlds are more about truth, necessary and possible truths<sup>3</sup>. My rejection of the possible world approach is based on the idea that understanding fiction is essentially about recognizing the constant interplay between different texts and contexts. Recognizing truth in this process is a feature, possible worlds cannot explain. Theories like Pavel's (1986) that take into account those multiple links rely too much on salient structures i.e. independence of fictional worlds. In addition, they are similarly with other theories of fiction relying substantial

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, I concentrate my attention more on showing the benefits of Minimalist theory of fiction in contrast to possible worlds and pretence theories. Equally important attempts to deal with fictional objects are offered by theories following Alexius Meinong's (1981) theory of objects. Admitting non-existent and impossible objects to existence offers an account of intentional and linguistic reference. The leading contemporary Meinongians, are Terence Parsons (1980) and Edward Zalta (1983). More exhaustive account of my theory is offered in Nyberg 2016 (Forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> *Experiencing Narrative Worlds, On the Psychological Activities of Reading*. Gerrig 1993.

<sup>3</sup> The modal operators in possible world semantics are interpreted as quantifiers over possible worlds.

"Nec A sentence of the form [Necessarily,  $\varphi$ ] ( $[\Box\varphi]$ ) is true if and only if  $\varphi$  is true in every possible world.

Poss A sentence of the form [Possibly,  $\varphi$ ] ( $[\Diamond\varphi]$ ) is true if and only if  $\varphi$  is true in some possible world." (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2016)

theories of truth. In my view better understanding of a story means recognizing different language games played at the same time. Narrative worlds rely essentially on psychological process of reading while questions on truth are often unnecessarily avoided. Minimalist theory of fiction (MTF) offers a way to unite these two.

The Minimalist Theory of Fiction I promote gives a new way to deal with truth in fiction. The solution rests essentially on two things. Firstly, in order to understand a story, it might be essential to recognize whether a sentence is true in reality, in another context or in another fiction. Consider for example a fictional story about an actor in Star Wars movies. The whole idea of the story might be to play with the events of Star Wars movies and real-life events of making the previous movies. Better understanding of the story thus depends on prior knowledge and recognizing intertextual links. Secondly my theory rests on minimal theory of truth which states that calling a sentence true is the same thing as repeating that sentence. It is the correct use of the words that counts<sup>4</sup>. This approach rejects possible worlds. The rejection of possible worlds goes together with the rejection of pretence theories. Make-believe is not a decisive feature in dealing with fiction.

Frege's way of thinking resembles that of modern pretence theories of fiction. The concept of pretence has been popular in analysing the position of fictional characters. Frege (1980), Gareth Evans (1980), Gregory Currie (1986), David Lewis (1980), Kendall Walton (1990) etc. consider in a way or another that we only pretend to refer or make assertions when we talk about fictional characters. According to Kendall Walton "It is not the function of biographies, textbooks, and newspaper articles, as such, to serve as props in games of make-believe" (Walton 1990, 70). They are used to claim truth for certain propositions rather than to make propositions fictional. Instead of establishing fictional worlds, they purport to describe the real world. We read *New York Times* to find out what actually happened "in the world of the *Times*". Walton admits that some works blur the difference. Historical novels are sometimes trying to get readers to believe the propositions they state and some history books or biographies can be read as novels. An author may also claim truths for what he

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<sup>4</sup> Minimal theory of truth goes together with the use theory of meaning.

writes despite his claims being false. What Walton does not admit is that it is justified to claim that newspapers and other texts meant to describe the real world similarly serve as props in make-believe games. As Gerrig 1993, 7) puts it,

we enjoy many activities that are explicitly designed to prompt experiences of narrative worlds: novels, newspapers, movies, television programs, history books, representational artworks, and so on. In each case I suggest, we should be able to find some common core of processes that are the implementation of being transported.

Gerrig intends narrative worlds to be neutral with respect to the issue of fictionality. He explicitly comes to the conclusion that there is no psychologically privileged category of “fiction”. This discussion about immersion is extensive but what it shows is that the focus is in the psychological process of getting emotionally involved in narratives. The framework is thus essentially different than in philosophical discussion of understanding and judging fiction. However, truth is still involved.

Is there any reason to think that process of ‘being transported’ is somewhat different in reading fiction than in reading a newspaper or a history book? I think not. What this observation suggests, besides questioning the idea of make-believe, is that the ‘worlds’ of literary theorists and philosophers are for different purposes. They are not interchangeable. The ideas of being *transported by* a narrative by virtue of *performing* that narrative are misleading if they are mixed with other than narrative worlds of literary theorists. ‘Being transported’ reminds us of the words of Frege; ‘we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused...’ This immersive feature means getting ‘lost in a book’ or being emotionally moved by a movie or a museum exhibition. The reality and fiction are intermingled. This needs not to rule out immersive features. Images and feelings are dependent on prior knowledge and understanding. Knowledge and understanding are essentially connected to truth.

How useful possible worlds are in dealing with different modal operators applications to fiction are facing insurmountable problems. David Lewis's (1980) account of truth in fiction is an illuminating example. If the focus is in constructing a narrative world we get a picture of something separate, a world we create. That resembles the philosophical ideas of possible or fictional worlds. The difference is the relation to the concept of truth. It is maybe too harsh to claim that literary theorists are not interested in truth but maybe it is justified to claim that it is interpretation that counts more for literary theorists than truth. A sign of this is the effort to secure the autonomy of fictional worlds (e.g. Pavel 1986).

It is the constant interplay with other 'worlds', 'contexts' or texts<sup>5</sup> that is challenging the traditional attempts to deal with fiction and also showing the limitations of possible or fictional worlds. The solution I offer provides a possibility to build a bridge between philosophy and literary theory in giving a common ground theory of understanding fiction without the one-world-models or structuralist approaches. This means adopting the Minimalist Theory of Fiction (MTF). An important thing to notice is that I am not focusing on defending my background theories. Such a defence is of course an extensive one<sup>6</sup>. I am using my background theories to develop MTF. However, MTF as such is an argument supporting them.

## *2. Minimalist Theory of Fiction*

The Minimalist Theory of Fiction is essentially grounded on minimalism on truth. The minimal theory of truth belongs to the family of deflationary conceptions of truth. Deflationary conception of truth admits different versions and the biggest difference between them is that some versions hold the view that deflated truth may still be useful. These theories usually go under the names "minimalism" or "disquotationalism". Advocates of "Redundancy theories of truth", e.g. F. P. Ramsey (1931) and A. J. Ayer (1936) maintain that truth is a

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<sup>5</sup> I consider these other contexts as language games where meanings are constituted. The idea of language game originates from Wittgenstein (1999).

<sup>6</sup> The debate on deflationary theory of truth is an extensive one. Equally debatable theories are the use theory of meaning and the idea of language games. The burden of defense of these theories lies on the shoulders of prestigious developers of these theories. However I consider MTF as a strong argument for their support.

fully redundant notion and thus always eliminable. Truth is thus not considered as a property. Sometimes this view is labelled as “disappearance theory of truth” because truth is taken as eliminable from all occurrences. A common feature for all deflationary theories is that truth is considered to add nothing substantial to sentences and every sentence specifies its own condition for being true. In general, I favour Paul Horwich’s (1998a) version which he calls the minimal theory of truth. I will mostly follow his terminology. In his theory the function of the predicate ‘true’ is defined implicitly by its use. This implies that the deflationary account of truth is not credible without assuming the use theory of meaning.

According to the use theory of meaning<sup>7</sup>, the meaning property of a word is reduced to its use regularities. This means that explicit knowledge is not needed in order to use the word correctly. Understanding a word or a sentence is thereby a form of knowing *how* instead of knowing *that*. A member of a language community knows implicitly what the word means when her use of the word stems from the word having certain use property in the communal language. (Horwich 1998b, 44-45). An important aspect of this is that understanding is a matter of degree ranging from minimal understanding to an expert’s full knowledge on the use of the word (Horwich 1998b, 16-18). This is also a crucial characteristic in understanding fiction.

According to the minimal theory of truth saying that ‘snow is white’ is true, is equivalent to simply saying that snow is white. It is the use of the words, our prior knowledge and social cues that give further information about meanings in a particular context. The ultimate meaning is thus constructed in contexts i.e. in language games<sup>8</sup>. There is thus no further question whether it is true in fiction. ‘Dogs bark’ is true if and only if dogs bark. Thus in contrast to traditional theories, deflationism makes truth independent of metaphysical questions.

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<sup>7</sup> Mostly I follow Paul Horwich’s account on use theory of meaning (Horwich 1998b). The idea originates from Wittgenstein (1999)

<sup>8</sup> The idea of language game goes together with Wittgenstein’s idea of use theory of meaning. Meanings are constructed in language games.

The MTF implies that the unsatisfying solutions to problems underlying understanding fiction are due to philosophical confusion caused by considering truth and meaning as dependent on worldly entities or corresponding structures of language and world. Truth is still an essential tool but in a different way than traditionally assumed. As W.V.O Quine brought up, truth works as a logical tool and a device for semantic ascent (Quine 1970) which is essential in connection to metacognitive procedure in better understanding fiction. Referential semantics along with the substantial notion of truth leading to complicated ontologies or possible world semantics are thus rejected. This view implies also that make-believe theory of fiction is no longer valid. Make-believe or pretend may still be involved but their role is similar in both fiction and informational text.

The idea of the use theory of meaning is that the meanings not only stem from use: meaning *is* use. As the meanings develop in use, so does knowledge on meanings. Some readers have read Holmes stories having a belief that Holmes was a real life person, and their knowledge on the name “Sherlock Holmes” is thus not the one of an expert. A reader with better knowledge on the use of the word is able to use it correctly in metafictional and other contexts. There is no need to pretend the existence of objects of thoughts, since understanding is a matter of knowing the right use of the words. Mental images, situation models etc. may well describe the psychological process of what happens when reading a narrative, fiction or an informational text (Gerrig 1993, 6-7).

### *3. Understanding fiction*

There is a lot of research on narrative comprehension that suggests that knowledge in a given domain facilitates the acquisition of new domain information (Gerrig 1993, 41). High knowledge subjects recall more information after hearing a narrative and seem to remember more relevant details than low-knowledge subjects. In addition, enhanced knowledge enables readers to direct attention toward the more informative aspects of narratives. These aspects show that knowledge, truth and connections to



other texts are necessarily involved. Recognizing right contexts or language games depends thus on how much knowledge we have of the uses of words.

The way how the information is represented to readers explains why readers do or do not access appropriate knowledge. In order to make sure the appropriate knowledge is available; the knowledge should be represented in a way that is accessible to readers. For example, the word “hammer” comes available when “board game pounded together with nails” is mentioned instead of “mallet”. These are natural likelihoods since associations depend on personal experiences. (Gerrig 43-44) Some associations may thus be rarer; they may require expert knowledge which means that only some readers recognize certain intertextual links. In my view associations are connected to meanings since they form in their own part the acceptance properties of a word. In MTF understanding is a matter of a degree which means that better understanding of a word, sentence or a story means recognizing different interpretations, i.e. relevant meanings. This will be highlighted in what follows.

It is often claimed that fictional characters are vague and thus there is no way we can give a scientific account whether Holmes could have solved A.B.C murders sooner than Poirot. However, we have no way to find out whether Eliot Ness could have solved Jack the Ripper case either. We may gain more information on the right uses of the names like Holmes or Eliot Ness and some people have the best understanding. For example, in case of an assertion concerning fictional characters it is a matter of understanding, i.e. having the skill to use the words in question in order to give enlightened judgement. In literary criticism, it is the community of literary theorists that has got the best knowledge on the use of the concepts in question.

The possible world approaches and pretence theories have great difficulties in taking into account the complexity of fictional texts and works of art in general. An illuminating image of this totality is Julia Kristeva’s account on intertextuality. The notion of intertextuality has changed its shape during the decades but in Kristeva’s words any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another (Kristeva 1982). Many other poststructuralists, like Roland Barthes made the

same point. It is evident that all literature has implicit or explicit references to other texts. This makes it problematic to consider a world of fiction where a certain sentence is true. “In the story” is one context where a sentence may be true, but inside the story there might be other contexts, for example created by references to other texts. Stories also contain references to the real world when knowing the truth e.g. in scientific context might be crucial. My claim is that understanding requires recognizing these different contexts and this interplay with other contexts is constant.

The concept of pretence has been popular in analysing the position of fictional characters. Frege (1980), Evans (1982) Lewis (1978), Walton (1990), Currie (1986) etc. all consider in a way or another that we only pretend to refer or make assertions when we talk about fictional characters. According to this view e.g. Conan Doyle only pretended to make assertions about Sherlock Holmes. This is illustrated in David Lewis’s classical article which promotes both possible worlds and pretence account of fiction. According to Lewis, the sentences about Holmes may be considered together with a prefixed operator: “In the Sherlock Holmes stories...” which is an intentional operator that may be prefixed to a sentence of fiction to form a new sentence. Lewis’s account is on the right track in underlying a context but from the point of view of MTF it is just one context or language game among other relevant ones.

In order to show how MTF works in practice let’s consider a familiar problem posed by contingent facts not widely known. In the Sherlock Holmes story, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, a murder is carried out by sending a poisonous snake to a room. The snake climbs down and back up a fake bell rope. The story contains several false assertions on snakes. Snakes can’t hear whistles, they don’t drink milk and they cannot be trained to climb down and up a rope. Holmes calls the snake a “Swamp Adder” but it hasn’t been easy to find a snake that has been called with that name or a snake that matches the description “a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles”. The analysis offered by Lewis (1982) suggests that there are different possible worlds depending on interpretation. Thus, in some possible world, Holmes stories are told as known fact and the snake reached the victims in some

other way. This suggests an interpretation that Holmes failed to solve the case. Such an interpretation is very unlikely to be correct.

A further amended account offered by Lewis considers the following condition:

$\emptyset$  is true in fiction F iff the counterfactual ' $\emptyset$  would have been true had F been told as known fact' is true in every belief world of the author's community.

This means taking a belief world of some community as a possible world where all the overt beliefs of the community are true (Byrne 1993). Byrne takes this as convincing analysis but MTF is not about beliefs but about the correct use of words. An enlightened reader recognizes the belief world of the author's community which means recognizing the limitations of the uses of words in that community. The efforts to get through such basics of interpretation makes it clear how narrow the possible world approach is in this context. What gets the possible worlds approach to more serious troubles is its incapability to deal with impossible propositions. Lewis has suggested that contradictory fictions may be divided into consistent fragments with truth in such fictions being identified with truth in at least one fragment. Such a complicated account does not give common sense account on our understanding of quite common features of fiction. Many science fiction stories include contradictory features. Gregory Currie (1990) claims that a story about a hero who refutes Gödel's theorem is not compatible with Lewis's solution. The idea of the story would be lost if the refutation of Gödel's theorem is ruled out.

Gregory Currie suggests the following condition:

It is true in fiction F that p iff it is reasonable for the informed reader to infer that the fictional author of F believes that p.

An informed reader is a reader who has the relevant knowledge on the community where the story was written. This aspect, in my opinion, highlights the semantic ascents made. An informed reader may at the beginning recognize that a sentence is not true in a scientific context. Then, having the relevant information on the community where the story was written, the reader infers that it is true in the story. And further, it may later

in the story turn out to be the case that the author has better knowledge on the matter and argues the opposite. This account makes it clear how it is a matter of knowledge on the meanings of words to achieve a better understanding of a story. It also reveals the limitations of possible worlds.

Currie also introduces the idea of a fictional author. By this he means a fictional character constructed within our make-believe whom we consider to be telling us the story as known fact. This fictional author's belief set is a set of propositions that make up the story. According to Currie, building a belief set of a fictional author is like interpreting real people. (Currie 1990, 76) This suggestion seems to nicely solve the problems stemming from the fact that many apparent truths in the story are not explicit. A reader is supposed to fill the missing parts by constructing a belief set of a fictional author. Thus the London of Sherlock Holmes stories is presumably very alike to how London was in the late 19th century and it is also allegedly true in those stories that Holmes never visited the moon yet these things are not explicitly told.

As Byrne points out, it is problematic to construct London from some person's, fictive or not, beliefs. Our belief sets are very limited and such a construction of London would look very odd. In my opinion, this fictional author is considered to have some kind of a perfect belief set of e.g. a person who lived in 19th century London. In some cases, this fictional author takes a voice of some character in a story, like Watson or Huckleberry Finn. In those cases, the narrator may be unreliable. Gregory Currie's account on fiction thus follows Lewis's idea of prefix operator.

From the point of view of MTF fictional author's perspective is one language game going on in a story. Some readers are able to recognize the way this game is played better than others. The MTF makes it possible to deal with truth in contexts and the concept of truth works similarly in all contexts, fictional and scientific alike. The sentence 'Sherlock Holmes solved the riddle of Baskerville' is true in the story. The minimal theory of truth implies that the sentence 'Sherlock Holmes solved the riddle of Baskerville' is true if Sherlock Holmes solved the riddle of Baskerville. Sherlock Holmes solved the riddle of Baskerville and thus the sentence is true. The one who

recognizes the context and thus knows that Sherlock Holmes solving the riddle of Baskerville didn't happen in real life, has better understanding of the story. The view I am promoting leaves thus ontological questions unanswered and this is because of the way language is used. This is not to deny the importance of the knowledge of whether the objects have real life existence or not. It might be important in order to get a better understanding of a story.

#### *4. Rejecting pretence*

From the point of view of MTF it is thus not the pretend play that is essential. What actually happens is that the words in question are used in a different way than usually. Using the word "apple" in the presence of a wooden block is a radically different use of the word. If the word is not used in a "customary" way it is more challenging to understand what is going on. The word in question does not appear alone. It is used in a context that includes numerous clues that help in using the word right way in that context. This process is a language game. In order to recognize the context, it is essential to have enough knowledge on the meanings of the words and skills to grasp the contextual clues and rules. However, the knowledge in question is not explicit since those who knowingly take part in the game, have some contextual clues that help in that task. Playing the game is easier than talking about the game. Those who engage in the game start to follow the rules and they don't need to articulate the different uses of the words. It is enough to master the rules in order to play the game.

The idea of pretence is often defined as acting in a way that is contrary to how the world is. According to developmental theorists the pretence emerges during the second year of life which is generally considered puzzling. It is a very early stage when children are learning to construct their own concept of world and reality<sup>9</sup> (Randell & Nielsen 2007) E.g. Garvey (1990) states that pretending by its definition requires acting symbolically or non-literally with objects in a way that is contrary to reality and Lillard (1993) defines pretence as consciously projecting a mental representation onto reality. However, we can question

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<sup>9</sup> See also Nyberg 2015

whether an actor or a reader knowingly projects a (mostly) false proposition onto a real state of affairs. It is obvious that the same propositions can be false in other contexts. Thus there is no reason to exaggerate the non-seriousness and awareness of participating in a game, especially when the participants are two years old. My claim is that it is the participation in the language game that explains how children so young can deal with seemingly “false” statements.

In the following passage Rakoczky (2003, 2) explains further the structure of pretence play:

Thus the real situation and the false proposition have to be coordinated somehow, and in extended sequences of pretence, the implications of the stipulated pretence proposition (“This is an apple”) have to be respected, e.g. “This can be eaten”. Furthermore, in joint pretence one has to understand the other person’s coordination of real situation and false pretence proposition in order to be able to join into the play. Given this logical structure of pretence, and given robust findings from other areas of cognitive development where similarly structured problems are mastered much later, it becomes an even greater puzzle that children from around two years of age seem to comprehend and perform pretend play actions.

One other area of cognitive development relevant here is counterfactual reasoning. Confronted with explicit counterfactual reasoning tasks, such as “Suppose all bears were blue and that Jimmy was a bear. What colour would Jimmy be?”, even school-aged children have considerable difficulties (Dias & Harris, 1988; 1990; Harris, 2000). Yet in pretence comprehension it seems that even very young children do draw such counterfactual inferences, e.g. from “If this were an apple” to “I could eat it”. Another area of cognitive development relevant here is children’s developing understanding of false beliefs. Not until four years of age seem children to understand that one can believe a false proposition (“This is an apple”) to be true of a real situation (“This is a block”) in the world (for a review see Wellman, Cross & Watson, 2001). Yet in pretend play, considerably younger children seem to understand structurally analogous states of affairs: that a person can pretend that a false proposition (“This is an apple”) is true of a real situation in the world (“This is a block”).

Explicit counterfactual reasoning tasks pose problems for even school-aged children. My analysis of pretend play suggests that it is a matter of semantic ascent to be able to do counterfactual inferences. It is not my purpose here to give answers to the deep problem of counterfactuals but a few remarks should be made. Counterfactual inferences like “Suppose all bears were blue, and that Jimmy was a bear. What color would Jimmy be?”, to “Jimmy would be blue”

require metalevel thinking. It actually means that *in a language game in which we use the word “blue” as describing the color of bears, it is true that the bear named Jimmy is blue.* So, in order to do the inference we are actually using the concept of truth. We are thus talking *about* language game. It is the metalevel thinking that makes the inference difficult. We are using “metalanguage” in doing counterfactual inferences. If one takes part in a language game there is no such need for metacognitive skills. It is about knowing how to use words and following the rules of the game. This explains the success of two-year-old children in such games<sup>10</sup>. Counterfactuals require thinking that reality has different properties than it actually has. In MTF “Reality” is one context or language game among others (not actually one coherent unit but in this case considered as such for the sake of an argument) and it may be called e.g. following Frege, as “scientific” context. In addition, the basic acceptance properties of words are decisive since making a difference between uses of words in different contexts is essential. And finally, MTF says actually nothing about metaphysical question of reality.

According to MTF mastering the use of a concept, being an expert, means the ability to recognize the context where the concept can be applied. Some are more abstract or generalizations, which makes their use more difficult but all the same, understanding a concept is mastering its acceptance property.

##### *5. From understanding to interpretation. Enlightened judgements*

According to David R. Olson, the traditional meaning of interpretation was “to reveal” or “render clear and explicit” the meaning of a passage or text but the more modern meaning brings out the subjectivity in considering it as “construing” or seeing in a particular light. Thus, the old meaning is close to the word “understanding”. The verb understanding is described as factive, which means that it entails the truth of the complement and thus understanding a text is to know what it means. In contrast interpreting a text does not require that one knows what it means but only that one thinks that it means certain things. Thus, it is sufficient that some meaning is reached, not necessarily the ultimately right one. The concept of interpretation makes

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<sup>10</sup> In Nyberg 2015, I have defended this idea in more detailed form. The way people with autism spectrum disorders use language supports MTF.

it possible to recognize an interpretation as an interpretation and thus makes a difference between what is said and what is meant. (Olson 1994, 117) MTF does not take understanding as ‘factive’ since it is a matter of mastering the use of words in different contexts and thus also recognizing different contexts. This means that better understanding makes different interpretations possible. The attempts to use ‘literal’ meanings easily get into trouble because they might fail in recognizing the context i.e. being unsuccessful in following the rules of the language game played.<sup>11</sup>

Though I resist the idea of possible “worlds” unless taken somewhat metaphorically, the point is that both fiction and non-fiction require some kind of mental models or situation models in order to carry out complex reasoning with respect to the text. Though the text might be too complex or insufficiently determinate to make such models possible, they are necessary for readers to perform judgements with respect to the text. (Gerrig & others 1993, 6). In my view such models, no matter which account is better, the mental model or situation model, are compatible with having certain knowledge on the use of the words that imply recognizing relevant contexts or language games. When those are recognized the mental model helps to make a judgement concerning the language game or context. There is no difference between fictional or non-fictional text in this respect. Make-believe or pretence is not decisive, since both text types use them.

The argument against Kendall Walton’s and other pretence or make-believe theories is twofold. Firstly, make-believe or pretence is present in reading both fiction and non-fiction, and thus working as a prop in a game of make-believe is no decisive feature of fiction. Secondly the use theory of meaning shows how fiction is a matter of using words in different contexts or language games. Pretence might be involved in a game but it is not decisive since it is the skill to use the word in different contexts that shows better understanding of a language game. For example, the one who knows that Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character understands the Holmes story better than the one who thinks that Holmes existed in a scientific sense. Mastering the use of the word “Holmes” includes knowing its applicability in the

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<sup>11</sup> See Nyberg 2015 on autism spectrum disorder and mathematics.



sentence “Holmes is a fictional character”. Ultimately it is the right use of the concept of truth that reveals the semantic ascent to another language game.

Walton claims that linguistic strategies emphasizing semantic properties like denotation and truth lead to confusion. The question of the difference between fiction and non-fiction is more on pragmatic than on semantic grounds (Walton 1990, 76). In this I agree with Walton but pragmatic emphasis does not mean that we can avoid problems posed by truth. In fact the function of truth is necessary in order to understand fiction. Ignoring semantic properties leads to confusion. Walton and other (e.g. Currie 1986, Evans 1982 etc.) pretence theorists can’t avoid the real-fictional problem. Adherents of this make-believe view don’t deny that some sentences occurring in fictional contexts containing real proper names express standard proposition (Kroon 1994, 207-2014). “Baker Street is in London” is a such standard proposition. The sentence “Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street in London” is different. Make-believe theorists claim that a proposition is not expressed, because there is no Sherlock Holmes. There is thus only pretence that a proposition is being expressed or a different kind of proposition. According to Kroon (1994, 207) make-believe theorists think that occurrences of real proper names like “London”, “Baker Street” or “Napoleon” in fictional contexts take their usual reference being thus purely referential. This view appears problematic in metafictional context where real proper names are used. Kroon gives the following example: Consider the following sentence

1. Holmes is much cleverer than Poirot.

Walton’s theory implies that this sentence is true in an unofficial game of make-believe where different stories serve as props. The problem arises in the following example:

Frenchman Pierre has read the novel *Je désire Londres* and claims the following:

2. The London of *Je désire Londres* is much prettier than the London of the Holmes stories.

*Je désire Londres* is a fictional novel in French about London.

The proposition expresses a contradiction since both *Londres* and London refer to real London.

Though Walton offers a few different solutions to this, they prove out to be very complicated and somewhat questionable, the MTF handles such problems very nicely. Words have their basic acceptance properties, but the meanings are created in contexts or in other words, language games. The one who has a reasonable amount of knowledge on real London, *Londres* in fiction and London in fiction, can recognize the differences and different language games and make an enlightened judgement. The concept of truth is a tool for semantic ascent in order to make judgements like. It is true that “The London of *Je désire Londres* is much prettier than the London of the Holmes stories” if and only if The London of *Je désire Londres* is much prettier than the London of the Holmes stories. Those who can recognize the context to which the concept of truth is applied i.e. the context of comparing descriptions of London in different stories may give enlightened judgements on whether the words are used correctly. Thus “The London of *Je désire Londres* is much prettier than the London of the Holmes stories” may be true.

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## **IV**

### **PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON INTEGRATIVE COMPLEXITY**

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## PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON INTEGRATIVE COMPLEXITY

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### **Abstract:**

Integrative complexity (IC) refers to a psychological construct, a measurement, and an experience. As a construct IC refers to our less than conscious thinking style in the face of difference or disagreement, how we process information, make decisions, solve problems. The cross-culturally validated empirical measurement frame of IC has predictive values. 'Low IC' indicates a simple thinking style that is rigid and closed, a 'tunnel vision' way of thinking that cannot respect or recognize different dimensions or perspectives on a topic, predicting destructive conflict or violence. An increasingly complex thinking style is able to 'see the big picture', to differentiate and then integrate different dimensions and perspectives on topics, linking them in some way, predicting more peaceful outcomes to conflict. As an experience, IC refers to less or more awareness of thoughts, emotion, and physical states in self and others related to IC management. The IC Thinking Research Group (University of Cambridge) pioneered the 'operationalization' of the IC measure into an educational method, program and professional practices. The coding system i.e. empirical measurement frame, has been developed further to take elaborative aspects into account. The two components of complex thinking, differentiation and integration can each be broken down in two sub-components, elaborative and dialectical. In order to clarify the pros and cons of integrative complexity theory and its further developments in IC Thinking, it is useful to investigate its philosophical background. The theory and its applications are essentially dealing with language and the skill to use words or concepts. However it should be noted that besides the skills an essential part of the theory and its applications deals with our unconscious processes that are not explicitly controllable. An alternative for a philosophy of language behind the theory of integrative complexity is to consider an application of the *use theory of meaning* to explain its central components. Minimalist theory of fiction (MTF) was developed to explain the philosophical problems of fiction, but can also be applied to integrative complexity. Using words in different situations requires an ability to read contextual cues in order

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to follow the correct rules for the uses of words in particular contexts<sup>ii</sup>. From these philosophical grounds, the theory of integrative complexity (IC) appears as a totality of the language games people are playing. One may be limited to one game, which means separating oneself from others, considering this game to be ultimately defining the correct uses of words. When one recognizes alternative games going on, it means reaching higher levels of IC. What is crucial is that this does not require a person to reject their core beliefs, since they may still be true. This approach challenges IC theory to improve its coding system but also offers possibilities for further developments and applications.

**Keywords:** integrative complexity, use theory of meaning, ludwig wittgenstein, communication

## 1. Integrative Complexity

The origin of integrative complexity theory lies in political psychology research (Suedfeld & Rank, 1976; Suedfeld & Tetlock (1977); Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Ramirez (1977); Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Streufert, 1992). It is a measure of the way we process social information and is essentially about the complexity of the *less than conscious structure of thinking*. Thus we might use very simple language to convey a very complex structure of thought or we might use very complex language but convey a very simple structure of thought. The content of a statement is not the focus of the analysis but the underlying structure of thinking.

There is always a subjective element in assessing integrative complexity, since coders need to make interpretations<sup>iii</sup> of the intended meanings of the authors of the analyzed statements. This feature of IC coding is recognized and thus the coding needs to be done by trained and experienced coders. Additionally, e.g. in ICthinking® Method<sup>iv</sup>, two trained, qualified coders independently assign IC codes to collected data and then compare their codes for statistically significant inter-coder reliability<sup>v</sup> (e.g., using Cohen's Kappa, or Alpha). The difficulties are often related to judging the extent to which a statement contains differentiation and integration. (Baker-Brown et al., 1992). Differentiation is about recognizing different dimensions and perspectives on a topic. For example, finding both negative and positive effects of alcohol. Integration means the recognition of links or connections among dimensions and viewpoints. Recognizing

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<sup>ii</sup> This ability, 'sensitivity to context', is a key part of the IC management capacity.

<sup>iii</sup> One could claim that coders are not supposed to interpret but just rely on the words that are there. However, the background theories relied on here (Minimalist Theory of Fiction (Nyberg 2015, 2016, 2018), use theory of meaning (Wittgenstein 1999, Horwich 1998b)) imply that meanings are constituted in contexts and language games and thus we cannot avoid interpreting. Understanding is a matter of a degree and better understanding makes possible various interpretations. Interpretation means choosing some particular language game as meaning constituting.

<sup>iv</sup> ICthinking® Method is an educational method based on the theory of Integrative Complexity. It has been developed by the IC Thinking Research Team, Dept of Psychology, University of Cambridge.

<sup>v</sup> See e.g. (Boyd-MacMillan et al 2016, p. 70.)

positive effects in negative effects shows integration<sup>vi</sup>. Since the theory of integrative complexity is very much about inter-personal or inter-group differences and disagreements integration is about recognizing common understanding between them e.g., shared underlying values. Thus, recognizing a mutual influence among groups is a sign of higher integrative complexity. In short, *“lower integrative complexity scores indicate one-dimensional, black-and-white communication, whereas higher integrative complexity scores reflect more nuanced communication accompanied by a recognition of multiple perspectives”* (Houck, Repke, & Conway III, 2017).

The basis for scoring the written or oral communications communication is set in the coding manual (Baker-Brown et al., 1992). Integrative complexity is scored on a 1-7 scale. A score of 1 indicates no evidence of either differentiation or integration. A score of 3 indicates moderate or even high differentiation but no integration. The author relies on at least two distinct dimensions of judgement, but fails to consider possible conceptual connections between these dimensions. A score of 5 indicates moderate to high differentiation and moderate integration. The author notes the existence of conceptual connections between differentiated dimensions of judgement. These integrative cognitions can take a variety of forms: the identification of a superordinate category linking two concepts, insights into the shared attributes of different dimensions, the recognition of conflicting goals or value trade-offs, or the specification of interactive effects and causes of events. A score of 7 indicates high differentiation and high integration.

For example, a statement such as *“Rules can be both positive and negative for society. On the one hand, rules can make individuals feel safe. But on the other hand, they are sometimes unnecessarily suppressive,”* contains both negative and positive perspectives, thus there is differentiation. When the statement contains connections between these perspectives, there is integration which implies a score above 3 (Baker-Brown et al., 1992). Thus finding e.g. solutions where rules make most of the individuals feel safe while suppressive elements are minimized and special solutions are developed in order to avoid suppressive elements.

The original coding system has been supplemented by breaking down differentiation and integration into two further parts each, dialectical and elaborative. (Conway et al., 2008). The original coding system recognizes less or more complexity regarding a particular topic, with a high score indicating a complex view that integrates more than one viewpoint or a single viewpoint that is elaborated in a complex way. The Dialectical and Elaborative Supplement to the original coding system divides scores into two parts. Dialectical complexity means the presence of competing themes in a statement. Thus one may have a complex view of the discussed topic at a broad level. Elaborative complexity is about the justification of a single viewpoint. Thus, for example, a statement can score 1 for dialectical complexity and 3 for elaborative complexity (e.g. *“French fries are unhealthy because they are fried in oil and they contain no*

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<sup>vi</sup> For example suggesting that moderate use of alcohol lowers the negative effects and stresses the positive effects. E.g. tasting good wines offers nice occasions for both enjoying quality wines and a social event with low stress.



*vitamins" elaborates a single viewpoint, but does not include competing themes, e.g., French fries can also be healthy if....").*

Based on integrative complexity theory, the ICThinking® educational method, educational programs and professional practices, have been developed to reduce and prevent destructive conflict by increasing cognitive complexity management amongst those going through the intervention. This is based on the predictive values of IC scores; generally, low IC predicts destructive conflict or violence between conflicted groups, while higher IC predicts more peaceful outcomes to conflict (Boyd-MacMillan et al., 2016, 111.) IC Thinking interventions are run as courses designed for different contexts; course participants must recognize the cultural 'clothing' of their context in order to inhabit the course activities (e.g., role plays and other group learning activities). Measurement of integrative complexity is often used for analyzing texts, speeches, personal letters etc. but in the IC Thinking courses<sup>vii</sup> the contexts are closer to everyday communication<sup>viii</sup>. Generally, the presence of high integrative complexity can be described as openness to new ideas and recognizing diverse opinions, along with flexibility and resilience. Low integrative complexity in turn appears as rapid and inflexible thinking that does not recognize the legitimacy of different viewpoints. (Boyd-MacMillan et al., 2016, 58) There are pros and cons to high IC. It is more deliberate but can sometimes be indecisive if one is distracted by too much information and can lead to moral compromises. (Boyd-MacMillan et al., 2016).

## 2. Philosophical Analysis of Integrative Complexity

In my philosophical analysis of Integrative Complexity I take the perspective of philosophy of language which turns the attention to the use of words and concepts. It has already been mentioned that the IC coding system includes a subjective element because of the interpretations of the intended meanings of the authors of texts<sup>ix</sup>. However, the point should not be in the content of thinking but in the structure, the thinking style. While the content does matter, it is the structure of thinking that we are interested in. Content matters because we are dealing with meanings and understanding meanings is dependent on our skills in using language. In the end, the meanings are constituted in contexts. Our background knowledge and our ability to read contextual cues are essential in order to successfully join the discussion. This applies to both the participants of IC Thinking courses and the IC coder.

Some words are more likely to be used similarly in different contexts than others. Concepts of mathematics belong to this category. Words like good or god are much

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<sup>vii</sup> IC Thinking uses pre-post paragraph completion tests (PCTs) that ask participants to identify their own group and those who are other to their group and then to write about them in a freely flowing way. IC Thinking also audio records presentations made by participants at the end of the course as a second end of course IC measure. E.g. Boyd-MacMillan et al., 2016)

<sup>viii</sup> IC coding manual framework is based on analyzing a wide range of written communications, everyday communications as well as more formal, e.g., diplomatic, communications.

<sup>ix</sup> In the theory I promote, Minimalist Theory of Fiction, understanding words and language is always a matter of a degree. Better understanding makes it possible to recognize alternative meanings.

more complex in this sense. The more possibly complex uses a word has, the more likely we are to be confused by different contexts. We might be using the concepts differently from others without realizing it, and this is often a cause of lack of mutual understanding<sup>x</sup>. This often means that in a discussion, the participants are implicitly using words<sup>xi</sup> in a conflicting way<sup>xii</sup>. These aspects of language are not explicitly taken into account by current IC coding systems. The facilitator and the coder should have the adequate knowledge on the right uses of the words in the contexts in question. Otherwise the given IC-scores might be high despite a confusion between language games. E.g. knowing whether an argument concerning the rules of boxing is adequate requires knowing the differences between amateur and professional boxing. In addition, a use of language that shows recognition of confusion between contexts shows more complexity than merely recognizing pros and cons of certain topic. By taking these phenomenon into account it may be possible to reveal more complex thinking and also show over valued dialectical or elaborative complexity scores. However, it should be noted already at this point that fully exhausted account of relevant knowledge is not possible. We are always in a position that some meanings are beyond reach.

Language skills are essential in reaching mutual understanding on complicated issues. In very complicated situations, it is good to choose topics that are neutral and familiar to all participants. This lowers the risk of situations becoming difficult to control and reduces the role of language skills. My point of view stresses the importance of language skills, especially the skills to use particular words and concepts. This is very much the target of this study. The philosophical starting points of integrative complexity are such that the skill to use words differently in different contexts is crucial<sup>xiii</sup>. Context sensitivity is a somewhat self-evident starting point but the theory I use, Minimalist Theory of Fiction (MTF) takes this principle further. My purpose is not to question or to over emphasize the role of language but to bring up some points that help to sharpen both coding system and IC courses and in addition to find further applications of the IC theory.

In order to underline the philosophical underpinnings from the perspective of The Minimalist Theory of Fiction, we should refer to the basics of the use theory of meaning. It is easy to accept that the meanings of words originate from their use, but the *use theory of meaning* takes a step further in claiming that the meaning *is* use. This idea, as well as the idea of language games, originates with Ludwig Wittgenstein (1999). However, these ideas have been developed further and Paul Horwich's (1998a; 1998b) account of *use theory of meaning* is in an essential position.

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<sup>x</sup> Awareness of this is part of IC management. E.g., One might deploy active listening skills to ensure one is understanding what the other is saying.

<sup>xi</sup> I will use the Wittgenstein's idea of language games to describe this (Wittgenstein 1999).

<sup>xii</sup> Lack of awareness of this—a lack of metacognition in this area- might (although not necessarily) lead to a 'low IC' impasse between conflicting parties.

<sup>xiii</sup> This is not to say that less skilled language users are unable to manage IC or that e.g. IQ correlates with IC management. Quite the opposite. If language games are not taken into account properly both coding system and authors are more disposed to unwarranted results, for better or worse.

MTF is a theory that has been developed to explain the philosophical problems of fiction, but it can also be applied to all social situations. Using words in different situations requires an ability to read contextual cues in order to follow the correct rules for the uses of words in particular contexts. *The meanings of words are constituted in these so-called language games. Along with language games goes the use theory of meaning and the minimalist theory of truth. According to these theories truth is defined implicitly in its use. This means also that truth of a sentence is context dependent i.e. dependent on the language game where it is used.* This requirement stresses the challenges of integrative complexity and thus IC Thinking practices. Words differ in their rigidity of meanings. Some words are more likely to be used similarly in different contexts than others. Concepts of mathematics belong to this category (see e.g. Nyberg 2015, 2016). Words like good or god are much more complex in this sense. The more possibly complex uses the words have, the more likely we are to be confused by different contexts. We might be using concepts differently without realizing it, and this is often the cause of a lack of mutual understanding. These aspects of language are not taken enough into account by current IC coding systems. It is self-evident that the context is stressed but my focus is in particular language games inside the bigger context. Recognizing these aspects can reveal more complex thinking and also show over valued dialectical or elaborative complexities. As a result we may gain a deeper picture of cognitive complexity. This will be explained in what follows.

The philosophical problem of fiction is very much about the ontology of fictional objects and the truth of sentences referring to fictional objects. Bertrand Russell (1890) and Gottlob Frege (1898) are guilty of rejecting the possibility to apply the concept of truth to fictional contexts. For them, statements concerning fictional entities are either simply false or lack truth-value completely. Pretense theories are probably the most widely accepted solution to the problem posed by fictional entities (e.g. Walton, 1990, and Currie 1990).

MTF stresses that the difference between reality and fiction is not clear. Theoretical physics is an obvious example of a use of language that deals with matters whose ontological status is vague. Fiction is a distant way of talking about reality<sup>xiv</sup>. Recognizing contexts and different uses of words turns out to be crucial. A sentence is not true because it corresponds to a fact but because it is used in the appropriate way in certain circumstances. Taking the position of use theory of meaning and in addition the points stressed by MTF means using concepts in different ways in different contexts. Instead of looking for definitions or a particular absolute meaning or correct use of a term, we should concentrate on the context, i.e. the language game being played. The use theory of meaning relies on the idea that the meaning property of a word is reduced to its use regularities. This view stresses the skill to use words. It also means that explicit knowledge is not needed in order to use a word correctly. Understanding a word or a sentence is thereby a form of knowing how instead of knowing that. According to Paul Horwich, a member of a language community knows implicitly what

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<sup>xiv</sup> See Nyberg 2015, 2016 and 2018. Following Kristeva (1993) All texts contain endless references to other texts.

words mean when use of the word stems from the word having a certain use property in the communal language<sup>xv</sup>. (Horwich, 1998b: 44–45).

In practice, it is crucial that understanding is a matter of degree. We master a language to different degrees. Skill to use words ranges from minimal understanding to full expert knowledge of the use of the word (Horwich, 1998: 16–18). MTF puts this into practice in loosely applying Wittgenstein's idea of the language game. There are different ways to describe language games, but I take the rule-governed character of language as central in using that concept. There are no strict and definite systems of rules for each and every language game, but each game has some contextual roots. As Wittgenstein pointed out, we cannot give a final, essential definition of 'game', so we cannot find "*what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language*" (PI 65). Every game has a context and the participants are required to find out the correct uses of words in that particular context. The meaning constituting game thus consists in having some background information about the context, the skill to use the words in question plus the contextual factors, i.e. the way in which the participants implicitly define the right ways to use words<sup>xvi</sup>.

If meanings are constituted in contexts, this means something concerning the role of truth. In fact, the use theory of meaning goes hand in hand with the minimal theory of truth (Horwich, 1998a, 1998b). According to the minimal theory of truth, saying "it is true that snow is white" is the same as saying "snow is white". Thus, calling a sentence true does not add anything substantial. This condition was originally called the adequacy condition for a theory of truth and was stated by the logician Alfred Tarski (1944). Tarski offered the so-called semantic definition of truth, which was meant for formal languages. Tarski thus saved his model's theoretical ambitions, and could still rely on the context-independence of words and sentences. However, context-independence does not work in the context of natural languages. Syntax is more complicated and context-dependent features of language raise impossible barriers. In some philosophical debates, 'indexicals' mean context-dependent elements. Indexicals (or demonstratives as they are sometimes called) are, for example, words such as 'I', 'now', 'here', 'this' etc. Homonyms belong to this group of words, since the context shows whether e.g. 'bank' refers to a financial institution or a riverside. It is debated whether Tarski's semantic theory of truth has a deflated concept of truth, but the actual minimalist or deflationist theories of truth state that Tarski's equivalence schema tells everything there is to say about truth<sup>xvii</sup>. Together with the use theory of meaning, minimalism on truth opens new insights into the problem of context-independence or -dependence. In MTF, the focus is on the meanings created in contexts i.e. language

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<sup>xv</sup> There is nothing about IC as a concept or measure that contradicts this.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Nyberg 2015

<sup>xvii</sup> Deflationism admits different versions. The views that deflated truth may still be useful usually go under the names "minimalism" or "disquotationalism". Redundancy theories of truth", (Gottlob Frege (1956), F. P. Ramsey (1931) and A. J. Ayer (1936)) maintain that truth is always eliminable and thus fully redundant notion.

games. Indexicals is one narrow feature of language, but much more far-reaching is the idea of intertextuality.

Julia Kristeva's description of intertextuality highlights the history of the uses of words and the numerous other contexts present when we are reading a text. According to Kristeva, every text is built on mosaic of citations, every text has absorbed other texts and every text is a variant of other texts (Kristeva, 1993). This makes reading a process in which we move between texts and try to discover potential meanings (Kalogirou & Economopoulou, 2012: 180). If we think about all the dimensions present in a reading process, i.e., the author's intended and unintended meanings, the time and place, relations between fiction and reality (many things in a fictional text are true in reality), the reader, intentional or unintentional references to other texts, etc., we may grasp the multiple interpretations available. In contrast to many literary theorists, I consider understanding to precede interpretations. This is because of the use theory of meaning and MTF. Understanding a word, a sentence or a story is always a matter of degree. Thus, understanding a word, even minimal understanding, makes some interpretation possible. Better understanding makes more interpretations possible. A crucial question concerning different interpretations is which one is true. Although this discussion stems from literary theory, language works similarly in everyday use. Following the minimal theory of truth, let us consider the idea that calling a sentence true is the same as repeating the sentence. It is about saying the sentence in the appropriate circumstances. It is not about the correspondence relation between a sentence and reality but the correct use of the words. If the contextual factors are decisive and there is always a context, the truth of a sentence depends on the particular rules of the language game being played.

In order to illuminate the early two-dimensional philosophical alternatives to solving problems concerning the truth of alleged fictional sentences, we should take a look at Gottlob Frege's (1898) views. Frege introduced a special assertion sign '⊢' to indicate the act of judgement. In Frege's formal system, an assertion sign marks the difference between assertion and predication. This is illustrated by the following remark by Frege: "*'2+3=5' merely designates a truth value whereas, '⊢ 2+3=5' does not designate anything; it asserts something*" (Frege, 1898). Wittgenstein argues in *Tractatus* that Frege's assertion sign is "*logically altogether meaningless*". He claims that an assertion cannot give a proposition a sense and merely shows that the author holds as true those propositions followed by it. However, Frege claims that an assertion sign merely indicates the act of assertion, which means the sense of the proposition remains the same. Thus he makes a difference between entertaining a supposition and making an assertion. However, if we follow Frege's thinking, the act of assertion in practice precedes entertaining a supposition. In the context of fictional discourse, the act of pretense is a more adequate description than entertaining a supposition to describe what is at stake, since it acknowledges that sentences have failed in their alleged essential task, i.e. stating something true about reality. In other words, if understanding a sentence stems from recognizing its truth-value, sentences of fiction are not understandable unless they are first noticed to lack a truth-value and then pretended to

have one. When it comes to using the assertion sign as a precedent for an ordinary sentence, one may wonder whether the sentence preceding the assertion sign should be taken seriously. In this early discussion concerning the demarcation of assertion and just entertaining the supposition, we can see signs of language games. Words are considered to have different meanings depending on their uses. Wittgenstein was at that time still tied to his picture theory (Wittgenstein 1922) and did not follow use theory of meaning.

However, what is essential from my point of view is that the presumed 'entertaining a supposition' or fictional discourse does not differ from our everyday discourses. It is not necessary to acknowledge that a sentence is false when compared to reality in order to understand the sentence. According to MTF, understanding is a matter of degree and related to contexts and language games. Recognizing truth in some particular language game is one thing and realizing links to other games shows better understanding of concepts in question.

### 3. Practical Implications

From the point of view of integrative complexity, the preceding analysis means two separate things. As pointed out, differentiation means recognizing more than one dimension or finding some legitimacy in different viewpoints. Thus, from a philosophical point of view, the process of differentiation is about recognizing various relevant meanings, and understanding is increased or greater when more meanings are observed. Integration and higher IC mean identifying links among the different dimensions or viewpoints<sup>xviii</sup>. When using words is considered as a skill, the knowledge is implicit. Thus it is not necessary for us to be consciously moving from one language game to another. Children can play games without knowingly stating false statements as reality.<sup>xix</sup> When we are consciously claiming truth or falsehood for sentences, we are taking a step towards metalanguage (language about language). Thus, claiming the sentence, "Sherlock Holmes solved the riddle of Baskerville" to be false, we are comparing a sentence of a novel to reality, which means taking a metalevel where we are comparing two language games i.e. 'Sherlock Holmes stories' and 'scientific discourse'. That shows differentiation. Integration comes into the picture when we are analyzing Sherlock Holmes stories by showing details of stories that are also true in reality. It has already been noted that the original coding manual has been joined by a supplementary manual because the two main components of cognitive complexity, differentiation and integration, can each be broken down into two sub-parts, dialectical and elaborative. The features of MTF suggest that the IC coding involves judgements that are to some extent context-dependent ('The person who is coding the data set should be familiar with the topics expressed in the paragraphs but need not be an expert' (Baker-Brown et al., 1992, 7). However, despite the supposition that the coder

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<sup>xviii</sup> In other words, integration and higher IC mean recognizing links among the different meanings and thereby deepening or expanding meaning further.

<sup>xix</sup> See e.g. Nyberg 2018

need not to be an expert one should be aware that there might be micro-language games going on that are beyond reach unless one is an “expert” in that particular area. When understanding is considered as a matter of a degree there is always a possibility that some interpretations and thus potential meanings are not grasped.

By loosely using Wittgenstein’s (1999) concept of the language game, I follow the principle that words may be used differently in different situations and the decisive rules might be defined in the game. This in turn implies that one should be able to follow the cues available in order to play the language game successfully. Texts differ greatly in their difficulty to recognize dimensions. Informational texts are more explicit than fictional ones. Mathematics and physics belong to the category of informational texts and their terms are very likely used similarly in different situations. In fiction, it is more likely that multiple language games may be played simultaneously. The same applies to everyday language. Jokes, sarcasm, irony, metaphors, etc., play with meanings that might be difficult to grasp because their meanings differ from the basic acceptance property. Everyday language use contains endless amounts of situations where uses of words differ from their basic acceptance properties to various degrees. Irony and metaphors are more explicit examples of use of language that require an advanced level of understanding of a language. One could claim that they even contain a conceptual structure with both differentiation and integration (IC score 4 or above), since there are different dimensions present, but still the uniting element is the requirement to understand them<sup>xx</sup>. However this is too harsh since irony and metaphors are of course also context dependent and can be used in a way that is low IC. Generally irony and metaphors are difficult to grasp because their meanings are far from their words’ basic acceptance properties. Thus their use requires recognizing resemblances in their use in different contexts. People with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) typically have difficulties in using metaphors, etc. In contrast, they can be good at mathematics. It is often claimed that people with ASD have difficulties in imagining things. I have argued<sup>xxi</sup> that the difficulties people with ASD have in using language do not stem from

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<sup>xx</sup> A crucial point here is that understanding a meaning is the ability to use concepts in a right way in different circumstances. Meaning *is* use. It is the way concepts are used in particular language games that determines whether the IC score is high or low. This applies of course to metaphors, irony etc. as well. Some might be a 2 or 3 elaboratively, but 1 dialectically. Some might be a 1 elaboratively and dialectically. E.g consider the following statement, in a language game which is about decision making: ‘That proposition on the ballot died a long, lingering, painful death and was buried six feet under without a tombstone’. This statement is a metaphor but it is a 1 elaboratively and dialectically and overall. There is one valence and one dimension, and one perspective. However in another language game it can be a manifestation of radically different uses of those concepts and an example of a new point of view. This phenomenon is described as intertextuality (e.g. Kristeva 1990). In short it means that uses of words have similarities in different contexts and sometimes it is relevant to recognize references to other contexts where similar expressions have different meanings. For example sayings that are made popular by some famous person. Consider e.g. “Ich bin ein Berliner” or “Hasta la vista, baby” are such that proper understanding requires recognizing reference to other context. However, the final meaning is constituted in the context where these idioms are uttered.

<sup>xxi</sup> Nyberg 2015

lack of imagination<sup>xxii</sup>, but rather a difficulty using words differently to how they have learnt them. Thus, the acceptance property of words is then under strict control. It is often so that those with special learning difficulties often bring focus on difficulties experienced not only by themselves but by all. If we are unable to recognize different ways to use the same word, we might miss the particular language game in question. If we fail to read the cues for the correct uses of words, we are not talking about the same thing.

An essential feature of MTF is that different language games are principally equally valued, since they have their own meanings whose truth is tied to their context. The confusion comes from being unable to distinguish different word uses. As already stressed, being aware of the different ways a word can be used and selecting the proper usage for a particular context is a matter of degree. Understanding is thus also a matter of degree. The more we have relevant knowledge and master the language and words in question, the better we understand the alleged reality. For example, in the context of physics it is a physicist who has the best knowledge of the use of the word 'quark'. This is a particular language game where rules are introduced following the scientific inquiry of physics. This also means that physicists are implicitly in a process of constructing the correct ways to use words in certain contexts. They are thus masters in using concepts of physics in the 'scientific' context. They might be in a position to recognize alternative uses of concepts of physics, but not necessarily. Just like mathematics, physics uses concepts that are 'rigid' in a sense that their uses do not differ in different contexts. Much more challenging concepts in this sense are those like 'good' and 'beautiful'. Really hard problems arise when the word 'god' is used. The starting point in an IC Thinking course discussion might be such that each participant is using the same word to talk about a different thing (or just in general?). With these considerations in mind, the theory of integrative complexity, IC Thinking practices and the coding system develop new dimensions.

The basis of MTF lies in the twofold approach to texts. Firstly, what is required is recognizing the multiple ways words may be used. This means that one should recognize both the relevant and also more distant but still meaningful interpretations of a text. This is the first phase of the process, i.e. differentiation. Secondly, there is a difference in comparison to the principles of the IC coding system. We are supposed to find the relevant and meaningful interpretations. In IC coding, differentiation is about recognizing the conceptual structure in a statement, either dialectical (different viewpoints) or elaborative (one viewpoint). This might involve a number of possible structures—temporal perspectives (change over time), different dimensions to one viewpoint, different perspectives on a topic, multiple causality, ambiguity, exceptions to the rule, qualifications, etc. However there is no guarantee that those interpretations, i.e. the alleged language games, are relevant. Consider for example a simple discussion about Formula 1 cars. If the rules for the correct uses of words are based on a language game concerning Formula 1 cars on the 2017 circuit and especially in Monaco GP, then a viewpoint that *"Ferrari is a good car but it is also a bad one because it does not work on rocky*

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<sup>xxii</sup> Much of this discussion originates in Baron-Cohen, S., Leslie, A. M., & Frith, U. (1985).



*roads*” is failing to take part in the language game in question. Formula 1 cars are not made for rocky roads. Despite the confusion, the author gets a score for differentiation<sup>xxiii</sup>. One purpose of IC thinking is that one recognizes different viewpoints and this cannot be done if one is not able to understand or recognize the difference between conflicting language games. Thus what is stressed here is the role of language games as units inside larger language games and all these language games are waiting to be discovered<sup>xxiv</sup>.

Integration means recognition of common features between different viewpoints or a much elaborated single viewpoint. Since the theory of integrative complexity is very much about possible conflicts between groups, integration is about recognizing common understanding between individuals or between ideas. Thus, recognizing mutual influence among groups is a sign of higher integrative complexity. From the point of view of MTF, what is required in various degrees is finding the common ground for different language games and finding uniting rules. This is the phase of integration. These separate games are part of a larger language game, a larger story. This is of course a simplified account of what is going on, but the point is in recognizing differences and resemblances in uses of words and in then constructing a bigger picture, e.g. a story that incorporates them all. The concept of truth is a tool and marker for understanding words, language games and stories. In the context of integrative complexity truth works similarly. It shows how different language games are equally valid in a sense that they are played by their own rules.

#### 4. Summary

Minimalist Theory of Fiction (MTF) and theories behind it, use theory of meaning and minimal theory of truth, can be seen as totality of language games going on in written or spoken communication. The theory of Integrative complexity and IC Thinking practices are dealing with language games since they are the manifestations of structures of thinking. Limiting oneself to one game means taking this game to define the ultimately right way to use words. Recognizing alternative games going on means that one is reaching higher levels of IC. It is essential that this does not require a person to reject their own core beliefs. They may still be true. The result of the process of integration is that we can accept that from certain rules in a particular language game it is implied that certain propositions are true in that particular game. Thus for example in a simple language game where Santa Claus has flying reindeer, it is true that Santa Claus has flying reindeers. Someone might argue that it is not ‘really’ true that there is

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<sup>xxiii</sup> IC coding is not measuring the veracity of a person’s belief or statement, or whether the person has all the information they need on a particular topic. The coding frame is neutral regarding the truth of statements or else the coding frame could be used to try to enforce uniformity in beliefs. Thus it is the structure of thinking that is decisive. [And this is what gives us (ICT) an entry into a variety of groups; we are not viewed as having an agenda or being biased in favour of one belief system. It is up to participants to think for themselves, decide what is relevant or true, and what is ambiguous. IC interventions equip them to make these decisions themselves. ]

such a character as Santa Claus and there are no flying reindeer. Intuitively we are of course willing to accept this claim. However such a claim has a presupposition that truth is limited to the language game 'really'. My claim is that this game is only one of multiple games. We may call it the 'scientific' game, since it is about a scientific account of what exists. It is perfectly right to argue that Santa Claus has flying reindeer in a context where Santa Claus has flying reindeer. If someone disagrees, she might be playing the 'scientific' game or another game where Santa Claus has reindeer but they are not able to fly.

When we realize how truth is involved in contexts, we realize how people are committed to the truth of their views. Their views may be justified in a particular language game. However it should be remembered that claims can be wrong, irrational and contradictory in an intended game. One can also ask clarifying questions about the intended game; for example. *"Are you talking about the legend of Loch Ness or a scientific account of the Loch Ness Monster? Or maybe about some children's book about the Loch Ness monster? Or the way your parents told it?"* This is somewhat the position that David Lewis (1980) suggests by introducing a 'prefix operator'; *"in such and such fiction"*<sup>xxv</sup>. However, as pointed out, all texts have elements that may be considered fictional. Calling texts or all uses of language 'games' helps us to leave fiction at this point. The concept of the language game is problematic since it is loosely defined. But this does not mean it is not useful. Using the phrase 'language games' to refer to contextual uses of language where the truth of a sentence is determined by those who are expert in that particular use of the word in question enables us to analyze the philosophical assumptions behind IC Thinking. The process of measuring the structure of thinking uses the concepts of differentiation and integration. The coding system of IC is based on scoring the signs of finding different points of view, and further, integration is measured in terms of finding more than one elaborated dimension in a viewpoint or things that are common to competing views.

One feature of IC Thinking courses is that the participants are required to take positions that might oppose their personal opinions<sup>xxvi</sup>. This is reminiscent of the way in which most philosophical theories about fiction deal with situations that are in contrast with reality; we are supposed to make believe or pretend. According to MTF, taking part in the on-going language game is not a matter of make believe. Adjusting our behavior to different social situations is constantly present and not a necessary precondition for understanding fiction<sup>xxvii</sup>. We should thus differentiate between using language and pretending feelings. In taking part in an IC Thinking course, the participants join games in which the roles played gradually get them immersed in the game. Words carry personal history and feelings are thus involved. As the understanding of words is a matter of degree, so is the strength of the feelings aroused.

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<sup>xxv</sup> This "true in fiction" approach rests on the idea of possible worlds.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Taking different positions is extremely useful in educational practices like drama education. See Nyberg 2015.

<sup>xxvii</sup> About pretence see Randell, A & Nielsen, M. (2007), Leslie, A. M. (1987), Lillard, A. S. (1993), Nyberg 2015, 2016, 2018.

In other words, the game's emotive influence is dependent on personal experiences. As pretense is commonly defined as consciously acting in a way that is contrary to reality, this also means that understanding has to precede pretending.

MTF implies that meanings are constructed in contexts and this requires an ability to use words differently in different contexts. Limited vocabulary or knowledge of meanings restricts the possibilities to recognize different viewpoints in a language game where the rules of the game are recognized, but they also restrict the possibilities to recognize if people are not playing the same language games. As noted earlier use of language that shows recognition of confusion between contexts shows more complexity than merely recognizing pros and cons of certain topic. Recognition of confusion is not possible without understanding conflicting uses of words. The context dependency is thus always there and the structure of thinking cannot be revealed without taking this into account.

In autism spectrum disorder the tendency to consider meanings as rigid restricts the possibilities to deal with multiple language games at the same time. These findings are not flaws of the theory of integrative complexity or IC Thinking but rather showing the parts where they can be fine-tuned to take into account situations where language is an extra barrier in order to find common understanding and respect of diverse opinions. Not all communication and understanding is tied to language, and it is a challenge for IC Thinking courses to incorporate more physically active methods where role of language is not so decisive. However non-verbal communication can as well be thought via language games since rules of the communication are similarly constructed in contexts. When training is more language-based and the content is more conceptually challenging, the dimensions of cognitive complexity become more difficult to evaluate. On the other hand, developing conceptually challenging or specialized themes with carefully chosen vocabularies for IC courses opens up possibilities to use them with more specialized groups, for example in special education or with very complex specialized themes. In order to use these findings to develop IC-Thinking the coding manual should be edited in two ways. Firstly, the low IC-scores may be the result of still developing language skills or rigid uses of words. In practice this means that the first requirement is a platform that ensures a common ground. A platform that minimizes the risk of playing a language game with different rules. Secondly, a platform that minimizes the risk of confusion in the game is syntactically and semantically as simple as possible when it comes to language. This leads to methods that are more pictorial or movement based. When the role of use of language decreases the new challenge is to find new ways of measurement. In movement or action based methods the measuring should thus concentrate more on the choices and actions the participants make during the trainings.

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