SKRIVI LESI

2

Atle Skaftun,
Per Henning Uppstad og
Arne Johannes Aasen
(red.)

Artikler fra den andre nordiske konferansen om skriving, lesing og literacy

FAGBOKFORLAGET

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Forord

Skriv! Les! er en arena innenfor nordisk forskning på lesing, skriving og literacy. Lesesenteret og Skrivesenteret samarbeider om å arrangere *Skriv! Les!* annethvert år, samt om utgivelse av en artikkelsamling basert på konferanseinnlegg. Konferansen ble første gang arrangert i Stavanger 2011, etterfulgt av en utgivelse av artikler basert på innlegg på konferansen. Den boken du leser nå er en samling av artikler fra den andre konferansen, som ble arrangert i Trondheim i mai 2013. *Skriv! Les!* er tenkt som et nordisk forskertorg, og vi kan se fram mot nye konferanser og nye spennende artikkelsamlinger i mange år framover!

De siste årene er lese- og skriveforskningen i Norden beriket med et nytt ord, som rommer et svært produktivt perspektiv på skriftspråklige aktiviteter. *Literacy* er etablert som begrep i våre nordiske språk uten oversettelse, fordi det vanskelig lar seg oversette. Begrepet er enda mer plastisk enn ideen om grunnleggende ferdigheter, men noen viktige aspekter er omforente. Det handler om sosiale praksiser, om tekstbruk, om kultur og sosialisering, og det ligger til grunn for å løfte fram skolen og de enkelte fagene som skriftkulturelle domener. Det er ingen vanntette skott mellom literacy og mer etablerte perspektiver knyttet til lesing og skriving, snarere er det mange flytende overganger, og det finnes en rekke mer spesifikke rubrikker som samler ulike forskningsinteresser innenfor og på tvers av lesing, skriving og literacy.

I denne utgaven av *Skriv! Les!* handler mange av artiklene om skriving, mens det er litt overraskende få som direkte handler om lesing. Literacy framstår som en aktiv del av bakgrunnen for flere artikler, noe som indikerer at begrepet er i ferd med å bli naturalisert. Denne fordelingen gjenspeiler konferansens innhold; det er en stor bolk om skriving og en bolk som er mer sammensatt.

To av artiklene i boka har et særlig fokus på litteraturundervisning. Juliet Munden undersøker bruken av litteratur i engelskundervisningen, og stil-

ler spørsmålet om hvordan litteratur kan medvirke til læreplanens mål for engelskfaget. Aslaug F. Gourvennec, Ingrid Nielsen og Atle Skaftun sammenlikner to litterære samtaler, den ene fra videregående skole og den andre mellom forskere med fokus på involvering og dybde. Andrespråksperspektivet er blant annet representert ved Harald Morten Iversen, som tar for seg andrespråkselevers skrevne tekster sett i forhold til forventningene på trinnet. Elisabeth Brekke Stangeland, Åse Kari H. Wagner og Elin K.L. Reikerås rapporterer funn om sammenhengen mellom ferdigheter i norsk og sosial fungering hos minoritetsspråklige og majoritetsspråklige barn. Henning Fjørtoft tar i sin artikkel opp spørsmålet om kvalitet og forskjeller i perspektiv i leseprogrammer i Norge som er mye brukt: LUS, SOL og Leselos.

Temaet skriving er altså godt representert i publikasjonen, som det også var på konferansen. Agnete Bueie presenterer en studie om hvordan elever i ungdomsskolen forstår og gjør bruk av tilbakemelding fra lærer i skrivearbeidet. På grunnlag av en studie av læreres vurdering av skriving drøfter Gustaf Skar hvordan denne vurderingen kan kvalitetssikres. Ulf Dalvad Berthelsen undersøker hvordan interaksjon med fagfeller/jevnbyrdige støtter skriving og språkutvikling hos andrespråksinnlærere. Anne Charlotte Torvatn drøfter den australske sjangerskolen i en nordisk kontekst, og setter fram en påstand om denne som et kolumbi-egg i nordisk skriveopplæring. Outi Toropainen og Sinikka Lahtinen undersøker tekstlengde som kriterium i vurderingen av argumenterende tekster. Kristin Helstad tar i sin artikkel opp spørsmålet om hvordan lærere utforsker sin kunnskap og praksis knyttet til arbeidet med elevenes tekster. Ewa Bergh Nestlog viser i sin artikkel hvordan læreres undervisningpraksis kan forstås som lingvistisk aktivitet, og hvordan praksisen videre kan forstås som tekst. Hildegunn Otnes gir en analyse av tekstoppgaver innenfor det såkalte NORM-prosjektet, med et spesielt blikk for at utformingen av oppgaven vil ha innvirkning på resultatet. Jon Smidt rapporterer fra et samarbeidsprosjekt mellom lærere og forskere om utviklingen av strategier for veiledet skriving. Anne Håland drøfter en studie fra sitt avhandlingsarbeid, en kvalitativ studie av hvordan elever bruker modelltekster i fagskriving, med fokus på hvordan elevene posisjonerer seg som skrivere. Nikolaj Frydenberg Elf diskuterer i sin artikkel den teknodeterministiske påstanden om at ny læringsteknologi leder til nye literacypraksiser. Hans bidrag var et av plenumsforedragene på konferansen.

Med *Skriv! Les! 1* ble en ny møteplass for nordisk forskning på lesing, skriving og literacy etablert. Det var en stor begivenhet. *Skriv! Les! 2* indikerer at denne møteplassen har en framtid. Neste steg på denne veien er *Skriv! Les! 3* i Stavanger 18.–20. mai 2015.

Juliet Munden

Reader-Response in Teacher Education

English is taught as an obligatory foreign language from Year 1 through to Year 11 in Norway. The national curriculum for English has four 'areas', one of which is 'society, culture and literature'. Literature is meant to serve several purposes: to improve learners' spoken and written English, to encourage them to become lifelong readers, and to learn more about themselves and other people. This paper is motivated by a conviction that English literature in teacher education should reflect these purposes, and explores how a reader-response framework may provide an important opportunity for this.

Twenty-four in-service teachers worked with the framework in question. They first read the novel The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian *by Alexie Sherman. They then wrote a response guided by five prompts:*

1. *Reader as fellow human being: bringing the text into your own life;*
2. *Reader as analyst: analysing the writer's strategies and literary techniques;*
3. *Reader in the broader context: exploring issues today and yesterday;*
4. *Reader as critic: estimating the author's success;*
5. *Reader as questioner: thinking of what you want to know or discuss.*

The teachers shared and discussed their written responses in 'book groups', and a selection of their responses is presented. Reflecting on the value and potential of the framework, the teachers concluded that it provides a challenging and effective way of stimulating reading, writing, talking and listening. They commented on the quality of their discussions, and on the framework's potential for enabling pupils to value literature and their own and other readers' interpretations.

This article addresses a central concern in teacher education: how should literature be taught as part of language education (Carter, 2007, p. 4)? It does so by proposing a reader-response framework for English language teacher

education in Norway. It presents a case study of an implementation of this framework, demonstrating how the framework combines the practice of English language skills, pedagogical reflection and the study of literature.[1]

Kvalbein (2006) claims that teacher education is successful when it integrates the pedagogical potential of a syllabus with a course design that focusses on *how* students are to learn and demonstrate their knowledge (p. 275, my italics). Grossman, Hammerness and MacDonald (2009) argue against traditional teacher education, in which student teachers are first *told* by college lecturers how to teach, and then go into schools under the supervision of mentor teachers to practise what they have been told. They argue instead for 'a pedagogy of enactment', suggesting that the education of student teachers should be organized around "core practices" – skills that student teachers need to learn and practise in increasingly realistic contexts. Student teachers, they say, should practise what they will later do in their own classrooms. Grossman et al. do not specify core practices, but they can be understood to include leading classroom discussions and helping pupils become better writers, skills that are central to the framework advocated in this paper. The framework allows readers to write-to-think, and then to participate in book groups with their peers, by providing a set of generic questions to guide readers to deeper reflection on the literature they read

This paper, then, is motivated by a conviction that the way literature should be taught in teacher education should reflect the way teachers are to work with literature in school, and concludes that a reader-response framework can be an organizing principle and a model of good practice in the training of English teachers. I start with a brief consideration of the term "reader-response", and then review national curriculum guidelines and current practice as they relate to reader-response in Norwegian EFL classrooms. In the second part I propose the reader-response framework as an alternative to current practice, and present an implementation of the framework with a group of in-service teachers. I conclude by reflecting on the potential of this framework as a "pedagogy of enactment" in EFL teacher education.

[1] I am greatly indebted to Joan Kopperud of Concordia College, Minnesota, who developed the framework. I have modified her version somewhat for use in the present study.

Reader-response – theorizing the classroom

As a theory about the relationship between the author, the text and the reader, reader-response had its heyday in the late 1960s and in the 1970s. Its roots as an educational approach to literature can be traced to Richards (1929), who found that when his students were not guided as to how to interpret or value a set of poems, they responded with personal anecdotes and stock answers. In Richards' view, the students simply misinterpreted the poems.

In 1938, nine years after Richards raised the issue of students' actual and (as he saw it) ideal response to literature, Rosenblatt published a book that was to be seminal: *Literature as Exploration*. For Rosenblatt, the value of literature lies in its potential for individual development, by enriching readers' emotional, moral and social lives (1995, p. 36). She describes the relationship between a reader and a literary text as a personal, aesthetic transaction. A text, she says, is stable through time, yet capable of arousing limitless individual responses. Rosenblatt was not only, or not even primarily, a theorist, but a committed educationalist. Her agenda was to move students' relationship to literature away from a formalistic academic practice that, in her view, favoured the analytical over the personal. Rosenblatt's understanding that a literary work "becomes an event in the life of each reader as he recreates it from the text" (1995, p. 265) is an enduring contribution to theories and classroom studies of reading, and an inspiration for the present study.

> We can ask of every assignment or method or text, no matter what its short-term effectiveness: […] does it make literature something to be regurgitated, analyzed, categorized, or is it a means towards making literature a more personally meaningful and self-disciplined activity? (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 273)

Smidt follows in Rosenblatt's tradition, challenging the conventional activity of literary analysis that places pupils in what he describes as a strangely abstract position: "Whom are they writing for? What are they actually writing about? And why, for goodness sake?" (1989, p. 245, my translation). The framework presented in this paper provides meaningful answers to Smidt's three questions. The teachers are writing *for* their fellow students, who will listen to and comment on what they have written. They are writing *about* a book that has been chosen for them both because the teacher trainer considered it well-written and thought-provoking, and because it is a text that they may be able to use in their own classroom. And as to *why*, the

purpose of the framework is to guide students "to observe, feel, remember, understand, analyse, and relate to the work of literature through writing"[2] in order to deepen their experience as readers and to prepare them for face-to-face discussions about their reading.

As readers, we rarely question the assumptions underlying our responses, until we are confronted with a different understanding of the same text (McCormick, 1994, p. 79). In reader-response theory it is usual to understand the way a reader makes sense of and writes about a particular text as balanced between autonomy and social determination (Rabinowitz, 1997; Sumara 2002; Thein, Guise & Sloan, 2011). Fish (1980) provides a terminology for understanding this balance, viewing our interpretation of literature as an individual activity constrained by the interpretive community to which we belong. In the present study, the readers are members of the larger community from which they are recruited, an interpretive community constituted by all English teachers in Norwegian schools. At the same time they are participants in a less permanent but salient community constituted by the English course they are attending.

English-language literature in classrooms in Norway

An emergent consensus about how best to respond to literary texts advises both scholars and teachers to take each text on its own merits, using the most appropriate available tools (Carter, 2007, p. 10). Yet knowing which tools are appropriate requires considerable competence and confidence on the part of teachers and their pupils (Rødnes, 2011). Eagleton (2010) points out that despite claims to the opposite, teachers may not feel free to choose from the full range of possible approaches. The conventions of literary analysis, he says, are upheld according to a stock of socially-legitimated ways of reading (2010, p. 76). Established teaching practices for Norwegian literature include placing a work in a literary period, reviewing the biography of the author, and applying literary categories such as main character, point of view, setting, turning point and, not least, message. Norwegian teacher education institutions – and EFL teachers of literature – need to take these dominant forms of valuation and interpretation into account. This does not mean, however, that they have to follow them. On the contrary, in my experience many pre- and in-service teachers are pleasantly surprised to

[2] Citation from the written instructions that students were given.

discover that these practices are negotiable, and can be replaced when other more appropriate approaches are made available to them.

Yet there is a tendency in English teaching in Norwegian schools to reproduce earlier practices. A partial explanation is that many teachers of English lack formal qualifications, both in the subject itself and in how to teach it (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2012). Eikrem (2006) found that in-service teachers "do not normally allow themselves blunders. They tend to play safe" (p. 217). They describe their choices and methods, she says, "without realizing that their teaching is closer to the ideals of the past than the present" (2006, p. 229). In their survey of English teaching in Norwegian schools, Ibsen and Hellekjær (2003) describe as typical "a relatively traditional English classroom, where […] the textbook provides the safety and structure a teacher needs or wants" (p. 86). Charboneau (2012) and Sandvik and Buland (2013) confirm this impression.

So how does this conservatism and tendency to play safe affect the ways that pupils read English-language literature? Several of the textbooks currently used in secondary schools typically follow both factual and literary texts with a set of content-based comprehension questions. There is, I believe, something pacifying in the classroom practice whereby teachers question pupils about the content of a literary text. In her study of a class responding to Norwegian literature, Sommervold (2011) observed how the teacher struggled to engage her students in a conversation about the text. Many English teachers know first-hand what it feels like to try to pull more than partial sentences out of reluctant participants, and even those teachers who abandon the textbook and formulate potentially more interesting questions may receive only short answers from a handful of pupils.

How, then, can teacher education help teachers and pupils towards a more confident, autonomous and purposeful encounter with literary texts in the EFL classroom? Every course in English teaching must take account of two fundamental considerations: firstly, what knowledge and skills pupils should acquire; and secondly, which pupil activities are most effective for this purpose (Simensen, 2006). This dual focus on both language and pedagogical skills is reflected in the national plans for the educations of teachers, which prepares students to implement the national curriculum – *Kunnskapsløftet*. The part of the curriculum that deals with English states that pupils are to read and respond to literature at all levels, not only to achieve language competence and social and cultural insight, but because reading English-language literature can provide "reading pleasure for an entire life and a deeper understanding of others and of ourselves" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013). After Year 7, for example, pupils are expected to "express own

reactions to English literary texts". After Year 10, pupils should be able to "discuss and elaborate on different types of English literature from English-speaking countries".

The study of literature, then, is meant to serve many purposes in EFL: to improve learners' spoken and written English, to encourage them to become lifelong readers, and to teach them more about themselves and other people. To help their pupils towards these goals, student teachers should be familiar with a range of children's and young adult literature; they should try out "new" approaches to reading, writing and speaking; they should reflect on and adapt these approaches; and they need a toolkit for discussing literary texts, both personally and critically. All of these skills are practised in the reader-response framework.

The reader-response framework

The reader-response framework combines both personal and critical ways of reading by requiring readers to write-to-think in five different ways.

1. *Reader as fellow human being: bringing the text into your own life*
   This heading focuses on themes that readers find in the text, and invites them to relate these themes to their own life experience.
2. *Reader as analyst: analysing the writer's strategies and literary techniques*
   This heading requires readers to analyse *how* the writer has created the story.
3. *Reader in the broader context: exploring issues today and yesterday*
   This heading challenges readers to explore larger issues such as gender and ethnicity. The text becomes an invitation to enter conversations about the world – past, present or future.
4. *Reader as critic: estimating the author's success*
   This heading encourages readers to evaluate the text and provide supporting examples.
5. *Reader as questioner: thinking of what you want to know or discuss*
   This heading encourages students to formulate questions about their reading.

While reading can be a private activity, writing always has a reader in mind, even though that reader is seldom addressed explicitly in the student's text (Ivanič, 1998). The respondents in this study knew that their fellow stu-

dents would listen to and comment on what they wrote. Regardless of the extent to which they were aware of this as they wrote, they would certainly have experienced during the discussions what is always the case, as Hyland (2001) says: "Writing is a social act, and every successful text must display its writer's ability to engage appropriately with his or her audience" (p. 571). Let us now see how this framework worked with a group of readers who were training to become English teachers.

Organisation and data collection

The twenty-four participants who "wrote-to-think" in the present study were attending a course in English as part of a national programme to raise the level of formal teaching competence in primary and secondary schools. These courses were mandated to contribute to "a more varied, practical and relevant education for the pupils" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2012, p. 15, my translation). The participants, who all spoke Norwegian as their home language, were employed as teachers in primary or lower secondary school, but lacked formal qualifications in English. Most of them were women, ranging in age from their late twenties to their mid-fifties. For the sake of anonymity I refer to all the respondents, regardless of gender, as "she". As a group, they were highly motivated and conscientious, although they sometimes struggled for time between the demands of work, studies and family. Over the term in which the data was collected, participants attended four days of campus seminars and a study week in York. The bulk of their learning, however, was internet-based and comprised obligatory individual assignments. Reading a novel and then writing a reader-response was one such assignment.

Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) was chosen for the study for a variety of reasons. Alexie, himself of Native American heritage, has written a jaunty, contemporary and poignant story, which unfolds through the diary of a fourteen-year-old boy. We learn about his challenges and rewards when he decides to leave his family and his closest friend to attend a "white" school outside the reservation. The language of the diary is fast, idiomatic and poetic, and the adroit handling of form and content has also attracted adult readers. The choice of this particular novel was based on a functional understanding of literature, motivated not by the canonical qualities of the text but by "the ends to which the text can be used" (Carter, 2007, p. 5). The novel's language, its division into short units, and the support offered by Ellen Forney's humorous illustrati-

ons make it attractive to L2 readers. An additional reason for selecting this particular novel is the requirement in the Norwegian national curriculum that pupils should describe and reflect on the situation of native people in English-speaking countries.

The framework was made available to the teachers ten weeks in advance of the campus seminar at which they were scheduled to discuss the book. At the seminar, they were divided into "book clubs" of five or six members. Each book club chose a facilitator to ensure that the voices of all participants were fairly heard. I was available only to answer the occasional administrative question. Immediately after the book club discussions, each teacher wrote a reflection in which they were instructed to demonstrate "critical thinking about the framework, first from the perspective of reader and then from the perspective of teacher". Quotations from the teachers' texts are cited and referred to here with their kind permission.

Cherrypicking from the readers' responses

The length and thoroughness of the readers' responses differed from one question to the next and from one reader to another. Since this article aims to demonstrate the benefits of the framework in teacher education, I have cherrypicked from the responses to show the quality of the writing that it generated, concentrating on the two headings which most clearly invited a subjective response: reader as fellow human being and reader as questioner.

'Reader as fellow human being: bringing the text into your own life' was the first heading in the framework. Rosenblatt has observed that a reader's first response is usually based on their own experience and knowledge of the world. It makes sense, therefore, to ask for a subjective response first.[3] The heading invited readers both to relate the text to their own life experience and to generalize about life. This double invitation proved productive for nearly all the respondents, although the extent to which they chose to bring the text into play with their own life experience varied. Typically the generalisations were either about the importance of family as a basis for emoti-

[3] Some school textbooks include a question about personal response, but place it *after* a sequence of comprehension questions. "Did you like this story? Why? Why not?" in *Searching 8* is a typical example.

onal security and identity, or about the importance of going one's own way and believing in one's own aspirations. "When we move the boundaries of fear," wrote one respondent, "we achieve greater well-being. And the more times we face fear, the more often we bring in the experience of well-being into our lives".

More frequent than generalisations, however, were responses that constituted some form of recontextualisation. Recontextualisation "involves the extrication of some part or aspect from a text or discourse […] and the fitting of this part or aspect into another context" (Linell, 1998, p. 154). A transformation of meaning will always be involved. Recontextualisation in the present material involved the identification and transformation of *theme*. Here is one example:

> Feeling split is also relevant considering that more and more parents are splitting up and moving away from each other. I'm sure many children feel a bit split inside in this period. They get two different homes, and maybe two new families.

The novel's two settings, the reservation and the white school, are recontextualised as the two homes in which children in a split family may live. The writer transforms not only the locations, but also the social constellations that must be negotiated. By recontextualising in this way the respondent does at least two things. She highlights that both the fictional and the experienced situation can lead to a sense of confusion and require emotional reorientation. At the same time, she positions herself as a thoughtful respondent who is aware of her own readers, namely the other teachers in her book club, who will be able to value the insight that this recontextualisation brings. In fact many of the recontextualisations explicitly involved issues of relevance to teachers, and were typically introduced with the phrase "As a teacher".

The instructions advised the reader that "the best way to show that you have read and understood the themes in the text is to bring them into your own life and show how they personally relate to you", and a few reader/writers took this advice very seriously. They were consequently wary of allowing their responses to be reproduced in this paper. I am particularly grateful for permission to use the following quotation, which illustrates the intensity of some of the personal recontextualisations:

> After being exposed for serious bullying when I grew up, I had a hard time to be myself. [….], so I was an easy target. Where I grew up there was a "mock or be mocked" mentality. […] As a teacher I strongly encourage my pupils to be themselves. I realize, I'm quite a hypocrite.

Brumfit has argued that the most valuable literature enables students to define themselves through contact with others' experience, and that the teacher's primary role is to enable this contact (Carter, 2007, p. 7). The heading "Reader as fellow human being: bringing the text into your own life" has clearly provided this opportunity.

"Reader-response: reader as questioner" was the fifth and last heading. Asking questions of a text can enhance reader engagement and promote critical thinking (Chambers, 1993), and this heading invited respondents to look back over the novel and generate questions for discussion or further exploration. The teachers' responses were wide-ranging. Some had many questions, others only a few. Some stayed in the fictional world and wondered what would happen next. "How did Junior manage later in life?" asked one; "Did changing school make a difference?" asked another. Others moved outside the text to ask, and in some cases to find out more, about the situation for Native Americans in the US: responses included "Why was the Indian Health Service so bad?" and "Why can't they live outside the reservation?" There was also one reader who wondered about the term the author used when referring to his people:

> What puzzled me is the use of the word Indian. I have learned at school and also read in English books for junior high schools that the right term is to call the "Indians" for Native Americans. […] Does he use the word to enhance the fact that the Native Americans are still a suppressed people?

Some readers raised more universal questions such as "Is it actually possible to suffer so much hardship as a child and succeed in life anyway?" Finally there were those who questioned whether the book drew a valid picture of life on a reservation; whether life there was really so hard.

The teachers' reflections about using the framework

Most of the teachers expressed satisfaction with the process and with their own development as critical readers. One wrote: "When I had finished reading the novel, I concluded that I liked it and that was it. While working with the framework I experienced that the more I thought about the novel the more I liked it". Nor was it only a matter of liking the book; the framework clearly stimulated readers to go back and think more deeply about what they had read. One wrote, for example: "I did a lot more thinking about the book and its issues because of the reader response". Another noted that the book had made a lasting impression because of the time and thought she had invested in it: "Because I'm got so involved in 'The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian', I will remember the book forever and I will recommend it to others".

A couple of the teachers reported that the process had not been entirely pleasurable. They described an initial resistance or even dislike: "I'm not used to work this way, and I feel unsecure answering this task. When I read a book I usually do it for fun, and write nothing down during reading". Another described how she overcame her dislike and came to enjoy the process: "In the beginning I did not feel comfortable with this way of working with the book. After I started to work with it it got better, and it was very interesting to work with the book this way."

A central component of the framework was the book clubs, and the contribution that the teachers' written responses played in facilitating a socially inclusive discussion that opened new perspectives. Since I was not continuously present during the discussions, I can only report my general observation that the groups seemed to be committed to the task, both sharing and listening with enthusiasm and respect. This impression is corroborated by the reflections that the teachers wrote afterwards. The following remark is representative: "It was actually very fun and interesting to work in the group. Everyone was well-prepared". The discussions were at times challenging, but within the bounds of what these highly motivated groups could manage: "I think it [the framework] helped us all be very focused, all though we had understood the questions/tasks differently. That was both confusing and interesting".

The teachers were unanimously positive about using the framework in their own teaching, one even proclaiming that it was "absolutely a tool we have to use in all classrooms"! Those who taught the youngest learners also saw classroom potential in the framework. One teacher explicitly valued the framework as an alternative to more traditional ways of working with lite-