

EXPERIMENTING WITH THE LANGUAGING APPROACH IN TEACHING POETRY

SARA KÄHKÖLÄ AND KAISU RÄTTYÄ

Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University

Abstract

This article aims to address the need for research on a collective response to poetry reading and the need for research on poetry pedagogy. Our goal is to develop a teaching method called: the languaging approach. Languaging is understood as a socio-culturally applied and embedded practice that has the potential to improve students' metacognitive understanding. The article examines the differences between dialogue-based student discussions and teacher-led conversation and whether the languaging approach and collaborative dialogue can offer new teaching approaches for literature education. The context of our study is Finnish teacher education. The data were collected during a teaching experiment that was conducted as a part of student teachers' pedagogical studies. The data were collected from two groups of 13-year-old students (n = 31) during their L1 lessons. The structures of the lessons differed from each other: A) the teacher led the discussion, or B) a languaging approach was used in a group discussion. Eighty minutes of video data were analysed using a directed content analysis. The study revealed that several students who were encouraged for languaging were able to describe their thoughts to each other and build meaningful analytical discussions together. The languaging approach encouraged students to communicate their own thinking processes and present argumented representations of poems, but also express their hesitations and doubts about their readings. With the languaging approach, students' various orientations to interpret the poem were made visible. Student's discussions also give an insight that facility with terminology can help students describe their thoughts more accurately.

Keywords: literature education, poetry pedagogy, analytical discussions, languaging approach, secondary education

1

Kähkölä, S., & Rättyä, K. (2021). Experimenting with the languaging approach in teaching poetry. Contribution to a special issue: Working with Literature in Nordic Secondary Education, edited by Aslaug Fodstad Gourvenec, Heidi Höglund, Maritha Johansson, Kristine Kabel and Margrethe Sønneland (for the Nordic Research Network on Literature Education) with John Gordon. L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 21, 1-20.

<https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2021.21.02.08>

Corresponding author: Kaisu Rättyä, Tampere University, Faculty of Education and Culture, Åkerlundinkatu 5, 33014 Tampere University. Email: kaisu.rattya@tuni.fi

© 2021 International Association for Research in L1-Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of literature pedagogy, poetry reading pedagogy is not heavily present. Internationally, as well as in Scandinavia, the number of studies focusing on teaching poetry is small (Sigvardsson, 2017, 2020). A systematic literature review on poetry reading pedagogy in secondary education (1990–2015) reports on 28 peer-reviewed articles that discuss questions about teaching poetry. Articles that dealt with teaching poetry in primary education were not included in the search. The articles found in different databases (Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the local database in the library of the Luleå University of Technology) were written by authors from the UK, Canada, the USA, Ireland, and Australia. Sigvardsson (2017) did not name any Scandinavian peer-reviewed articles. A Scandinavian view on this field is needed, although a couple of articles dealing with empirical research of teaching poetry have been published since 2017 (e.g., Gourvennec, 2016; Jusslin & Höglund, 2020). The effort put into literature education in Nordic countries has only had a slight impact on Finnish literature education and related studies. For example, only some Scandinavian researchers of literature education were mentioned in the references used in Finnish dissertations concerning literature didactics (2000–2017).

According to Sigvardsson (2017), the main theoretical frameworks were reader-response theory and especially Louise Rosenblatt's (1994) transaction theory, in which the interaction between the reader and the text evokes a poem. The theoretical ideas of Wolfgang Iser (1978) and Michael Riffaterre (1978) appear in some articles as well. This literature and text views have played a major role in the latest Scandinavian literature didactics during recent decades (Degerman, 2012; Ewald, 2015; Höglund, 2017; Krogh et al., 2017; Rejman, 2013; Skaftun & Michelsen, 2017). Vischer Bruns (2011, pp. 82–92) has noted that textbooks and guides on literature teaching published from 1980–2012 present two approaches to teaching literature: literary education as the instructor's activity and literary education in which students are actively involved. However, text-oriented literature education has not been totally neglected in Scandinavia (Gourvennec et al., 2020), and according to Rikama (2004), reader-response-oriented literature education has opened space for more text-oriented and literary-history-oriented teaching since the 1990s.

Sigvardsson's systematic review (2017) points out that the main emphasis in the articles (2000–2017) on teaching poetry is on students' personal interpretation and experiences of poetry. Sigvardsson (2017, p. 588, 595) suggests that it is important to develop research on how the collective process of reading differs from the individual process. The same kind of communicative or socio-cultural orientation or paradigm shift in Nordic countries has been presented in more general approaches to literature education (Gourvennec, 2017; Gourvennec et al., 2020; Rødnes, 2014), not just teaching poetry.

This article focuses on answering the branch of research that the systematic literature review suggests: research on a collective response to poetry reading. Our small-scale study is based on socio-cultural learning theory and will discuss the differences between dialogue-based student discussions and teacher-led conversations. The context of our study is Finnish teacher education, specifically subject matter didactics courses for L1 student teachers.

2. THE SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH AND THE PERSONAL RESPONSE APPROACH TO TEACHING POETRY

2.1 *Transitions of teaching poetry*

Research on poetry pedagogy presents two traditions of teaching poetry: one emphasises close reading, while the other focuses on students' reading experiences. These traditions can be found in several publications dealing with literature education (Dressman & Faust, 2014; Sigvardsson, 2017). The schools of thought are 'The Formalist' and 'The Populist' traditions. As the titles imply, the Formalists are interested in the form and structure of the poem, whereas Populists discuss the reader's practical and creative relationship with poetry (Dressman & Faust, 2014; Sigvardsson, 2017, p. 585). These schools are linked in general literature didactics as they can be viewed through paradigm shifts from content-orientation to student-orientation literature teaching (see, e.g., Pieper, 2020). Poetry teaching traditions can be linked to these polarities by their relations to the teacher's role. The traditional way of teaching English includes closely read canonic works and the teacher's role as a guide towards the right interpretation, while the progressive way gives room for the individual, aesthetic growth of a student and creative reading of poems (Dressman & Faust, 2014; Naylor & Wood, 2012). The latest articles on poetry pedagogy have not focused on formal close readings and have concentrated more on the personal response approach (Sigvardsson, 2017, p. 590), though some differing views have been presented, like Lockett (2010), who claims that postmodernist theories have led towards more individual responses of texts. The monographs dealing with literature teaching in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have pointed out the same conjuncture towards the personal response approach (Krogh et al., 2017; Öhman, 2015; Skaftun & Michelsen, 2017). This kind of division in teaching approaches to either an analytical or experience-based approach to reading has been found in Scandinavian research of teaching literature (Rødnes, 2014).

While many articles on teaching poetry originate their theoretical framework on transaction theory by Rosenblatt (1994), our research explores different views from a collective response. These ideas and learning theories emphasise, to a greater extent, the collective construction of new knowledge. The methods used are thinking-aloud methods and verbal protocols. One of the methods is 'focal reading practice', which was created by Sumara (1995) and takes into consideration the collective interpretation of a text. His main argument is that meaningful reading is

created together with others' readings and understanding of the text. The same kind of research strategy was used by Naylor (2013) when analysing the poetry reading moments of 15- to 16-year-old students. She claimed that students need several readings and collective reading moments to discover different angles to interpret the poem.

Although reader-response-oriented teaching has been criticised, its impact on teaching has been tremendous, since it has opened the classroom doors to the readers' own knowledge, experiences, and beliefs (Hennig, 2017; Krogh et al., 2017). This can offer students a more empowering agency in the classroom if the classroom is no longer a courtroom, but a marketplace (cf. Faust's (2000) metaphors for literary experiences).

2.2 Linguaging approach as a socio-cultural framework for teaching poetry

From the student-centred orientation or paradigm, the role of students is extensive as meaning-makers and experiencers. The oral or written utterances of students are the way teachers can reach students' cognitive processes in teaching situations. Through languaging, the idea is articulated—and as an object—it can be reflected by the students themselves, other students, and teachers. These fields of reflection (self-reflection, metacognition, teacher's role, and constructing knowledge) have received attention in didactic research on languaging (Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2013; Joutsenlahti et al., 2014; Joutsenlahti & Rättyä, 2014; Källqvist, 2013). The foundation of studies using the concept of languaging originates mainly from three ways of using languaging. Sociolinguistic research refers to languaging, defined by biologist Maturana (1995), for whom languaging means the use of language in interaction and even interaction without words. The other line of research could be called situated languaging, which is mainly based on the writings of Linell (2009) and García (2009). For them, languaging is the use of language and, quite often, the use of language in translanguaging situations. Interesting educational research on languaging has been conducted in second language learning (e.g., Ishikawa, 2013; Gynne & Bagga-Gupta, 2013, 2015; Suzuki & Itagaki, 2009; Swain, 2006a, b).

Languaging in teaching situations is used quite often to refer to the use of other languages. In most of these cases, the languaging concept does not have a theoretical relevance to the meaning of the learning process seen from student's or teacher's actions. However, there exists yet another interpretation of languaging as well: the concept of languaging in mathematics education and the concept of languaging in methods used in data collection during research. Swain (2006a) presented the latter concept—concerning the roots of concept languaging and verbalising—as do articles that discuss the roots of languaging in the Finnish educational field (Joutsenlahti et al., 2014; Rättyä, 2013). Swain (2006a) linked the idea of languaging to verbalising, verbal reports, and the thinking-aloud method, which is part of the introspection used in cognitive psychology. Verbalising refers to clarifying thinking and reporting thinking processes (Brown, 1987; Van Someren et

al., 1994). Instead of collecting data on mental processes produced by informants, we are interested in the instructional use of language in a way that students and teachers can learn using the languaging process. This was also Swain's starting point: what languaging can provide from a socio-cultural learning framework.

When students use specialised language to describe their thinking, they gain a deeper understanding of the subject at hand. Swain (2006a, b) linked languaging to socio-cultural theory and to Vygotsky's (1987) work. Since Vygotsky saw language and thinking as fundamentally connected, languaging as an activity can make the thinking, or the process of making meaning, visible. Languaging is thus a part of the learning and teaching process (Rättyä, 2015; Swain & Watanabe, 2013). Swain's use of the term 'languaging' focused on teaching and the process of making meaning. Processes, meaning, and teaching practices are manifested in several articles (e.g., Brooks et al., 2010; Knouzi et al., 2010; Swain et al., 2009). Students' languaging is described as making meaning, giving deeper understanding, shaping knowledge, or providing new information. Emphasis is placed on the teacher's role in learning situations. This refers mainly to teachers' observational roles but also to teachers' modelling languaging or raising awareness of languaging as a tool. Even teachers' access to students' thinking is mentioned. The aspect of reflection also seems to play an important role. Languaging opens a source for further reflection; it reveals gaps and inconsistencies and provides tools for reasoning. This is possible when languaging is seen as a tool for articulation. It articulates thinking and turns it into a visible or audible product that can be used as a tool for self-scaffolding. Swain and her co-authors described oral and written languaging, and they concentrated on looking at a collaborative dialogue.

The very core of languaging is the verbalisation of cognitive processes: by languaging, students describe their thinking processes and therefore organise and construct knowledge through language (Rättyä, 2015). In this article, we focus on the *languaging approach* as a teaching method. In the Finnish context, the languaging approach as a teaching method is defined as describing (mathematical) thinking through language. Mathematics didactics has been connecting the term languaging to the construction process of scientific concepts and with discussions about the features connected to concepts as well as the reflection of the discussions. The socio-constructive aspect in the process of languaging has been linked to the understanding of the concept together with other learners and the teacher. The meaning-making process can utilise different strategies. Five different models have been found to present problem solving in written mathematics exercises. These models mix in different ways natural language and mathematical symbolic language (standard model, story model, road map model, commentary model, and diary model). Verbalisation of the thinking processes in mathematical problem solving has been found to deepen students' understanding of mathematical concepts and improve their attitudes towards the subject (Joutsenlahti & Kulju, 2015). Following the success in mathematics, the languaging approach, in which students are

encouraged to describe their thought processes and strategies when working on an exercise, has also been applied to L1 teaching (Kulju, 2012; Rättyä, 2013).

In this experiment, we explored how the languaging approach can be applied to poetry teaching. Our interest in the languaging concept arises from the use of language during learning processes. We understand the languaging approach as a teaching method that is based on constructive, socio-constructivist, and socio-cultural learning theories. The approach points to students' meaningful learning (Mayer, 2002; Novak, 2002), which enables them to gain factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge. During the constructive learning process, students interact with knowledge by understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating new ideas. This socially shared cognition is facilitated with different kinds of study methods, such as oral or written languaging, visualising, and using symbolic or tactile language, which are performed either alone, in pairs, or in groups. Learning environments can vary according to their subject fields and the study objects, which are based on the idea of problem solving. Both students and teachers gathered information during the languaging process for the assessment and evaluation phase.

Languaging can be oral or written, conducted individually, or in collaboration with others. Oral languaging, especially when done collaboratively, has the benefit of social interaction. Conversely, languaging through writing gives the student more time for reflective thinking (Rättyä, 2017, p. 42). Both oral and written languaging require students to describe their thought processes, elaborate ideas, and reason their answers so that the thinking behind the answers becomes at least partially visible to the teacher. The whole focus of the interaction moves from the final answer to everything that leads to the answer and what lies behind it. Thus, languaging can also give a more precise picture of students' actual knowledge of the matter at hand (Kulju, 2012, p. 13). In previous research, languaging has not only been proven to promote interaction between the students and the teacher and to increase students' motivation, but also to produce successful learning results (Rättyä, 2017, p. 42). When summarising the main features of the languaging approach from the perspective of students' participation, we found four main threads: students producing answers with interpretation, students reflecting on their own thinking process, students reflecting on each other's answers, and students reflecting on each other's thinking processes.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research context and data collection

The study relied on qualitative research methods, and the methodological framework was Educational Design Research (EDR). EDR is a genre of research in which the iterative development of practical solutions is combined with theoretical understanding (McKenney & Reeves, 2012). This study was an attempt to further

develop the languaging approach in the context of literature education. The earlier development cycles have focused on grammar education and on the theoretical understanding of processes and strategies in languaging tasks. In this experiment, we focused on how the four threads found in the languaging approach can be observed in poetry teaching.

The data were collected in 2018 during a teaching experiment that was a part of L1 student teachers' pedagogical studies. Finnish teacher education includes pedagogical studies, didactics courses, and practical training periods in schools and other learning institutions. The last practical training period of the pedagogical studies covers themes such as classroom research and experimenting in the classroom setting. All the student teachers conduct a small-scale study on a phenomenon they are interested in and present the findings in a final report. During all the practical training periods, all the student teachers have a supervising teacher who also mentors the student teachers and gives feedback on their performances. This study was originally conducted as part of L1 student teachers' training in adjacent didactics courses. During the same course and training period, another EDR teaching experiment of languaging approach was made. It focused on the teaching concepts of literary studies in upper secondary education.

Most of the practical training was conducted in teacher training schools, and so was also our study. Teacher training schools operate under universities and thus offer an environment for case studies and experiments. The parents of the students in these training schools give their yearly permission for studies conducted in classes. The students themselves were also informed of upcoming studies and their right to withdraw from them before any data collection. In the case of any withdrawals, they would take part in the class activities but be omitted from the data.

Two groups of 13-year-old students were chosen for the study. These groups were selected for the study because poetry was included in their L1 syllabus during the teacher-students' training period. These groups were also the ones the student teacher was the most familiar with: they had the most lessons taught by the student teacher. Conducting the experiment as part of teacher studies at a teacher training school presented its own limitations to the time frame of the study and selection of the groups, since there are only a certain number of classes in pre-selected groups that are allotted to each student teacher.

The groups chosen for the study were named as A and B. In total, there were 31 students: 15 in group A and 16 in group B. Both groups shared the same teacher, who also acted as the student teacher's supervising teacher during the experiment. The topic for both groups was reading and interpreting a poem 'Möröt' ('Bogeymen') by Kari Hotakainen.

There were also two introductory lessons focusing on characteristics of poetry and language typical of poetry before the data collection lesson. The goal of these preceding lessons was to familiarise the students with poetry as a genre, poetic figurative language, and poetic terms. Common features of poetic language, such as alliteration, simile, metaphor, and repetition, were covered and discussed along with

examples during the introductory lessons so that the students would have the terminology fresh in their minds for the discussion. The student teacher taught all three lessons, two introductory lessons, and one data collection lesson for both groups under the direction of the supervising teacher.

The activities used for the groups during the lesson differed from each other: because the history and dynamics between the students in group A can be described as challenging, the supervising teacher recommended a more teacher-led approach. Because teacher-led discussion was a familiar activity for the students, incorporating the languaging approach to the teacher-led discussion rather than letting the students discuss in pairs seemed the most suitable option for this group. Involving the whole group in one discussion was thought to have a positive effect on the group's mood and sense of community. The goal of the experiment with group A was not only to see the benefits of the languaging approach in a group discussion, but also to build trust in the classroom.

With group B, it was possible to engage the students in discussions in pairs and in small groups before a teacher-led discussion with the whole group. After a short introductory teacher-led discussion, the students were directed to describe their findings to each other and discuss them in small groups. All the groups were also provided with a short list of possible questions to discuss. The questions were open-ended and focused on both the language and contents of the poem: for example, 'What kind of juxtaposition can be found in the poem?' and 'How would you describe the speaker of the poem?'. Besides questions, there were also small tasks, such as 'choose one metaphor and decode it together'. Finally, a short, teacher-led summarising discussion with the whole group followed.

3.2 Data analysis

The data collection lessons were recorded on video, and the recordings were then transcribed. In total, there were 80 minutes of recorded data: 40 minutes for group A and 40 minutes for group B. The standard length of one school lesson was 45 minutes, and the experiment was planned to take one whole lesson. The transcripts in total were 41 pages: 19 pages for group A and 22 pages for group B. The first 10 minutes of group A's recording were omitted from the transcription because they focused on reviewing the main ideas from the previous lesson in a teacher-led questioning.

Since the interest of our study lies in how the students were able to reason their interpretations, the data analysis focused on sequences in which students described their interpretations and observations. The data were examined using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which allowed us to use coding categories determined by the previous research on the languaging approach and to begin coding instantly.

First, all sequences in which students described their interpretations and observations were collected. Then, these sequences were coded based on the usage

of the languaging method; there were expected to be sequences both with and without languaging. Focusing on the verbalisation and reasoning of thought processes, the collected sequences were thus coded into two predetermined categories: the first category consisted of analytical discussions that included an explanation or other reasoning and the second group of utterances that lacked explaining elements. The aspects of languaging were determined using the summing up of the students' activity (see Chapter 2.2 Languaging approach as a socio-cultural framework for teaching poetry) and focusing on the four categories, though applied to the context of the literature lesson:

- a) students produce an answer with interpretation (e.g., codes: using earlier knowledge, understanding the meaning of poem and giving a notion of question or problem, reflecting the answer with an argument, analysing the problem, using relevant terminology, creating new connections);
- b) students reflect their own thinking process (e.g., codes: telling the strategy of problem solving, telling that they do not know or understand the poem);
- c) students reflect on each other's answers; and
- d) students reflect on each other's thinking process.

A category above these was students producing an answer without interpretation (e.g., code: repeats the word or phrase or term). In the first student group, the languaging method was in use, and in the second group, it was not used as widely and or with such versatility.

4. RESULTS

When comparing students' responses during these two lessons, the differences between groups A and B are clear: in group A, there was hardly any verbalising of the thought process, but in group B, several students used the possibilities for languaging their ideas. They could describe their thoughts to each other and build their interpretations together in an analytical discussion.

4.1 *Unelaborated answers*

A rather passive mood continued in the lesson for group A, during which the teaching experiment was conducted. The group had shown some active participation in the discussions in previous lessons, but the structure of the lesson and the chosen method of teacher-led questioning quickly left the students in a relatively passive state. There was no dialogue, because the students focused only on the teacher when answering. The answers were mostly correct and shared by other students, but they lacked all the explaining elements and references to the poem. True discussion and interpretation of the poem together in a collaborative manner seemed impossible:

(01) TS: No millaiset on savikiekkosilmät?

(So, what are clay disc eyes like?)

1: Sokeet.

(Blind.)

2: Isot.

(Big.)

(02) TS: Millaiset on lapiokädet?

(What are shovel hands like?)

5: Semmoset tiäksää lättänät.

(They are like, you know, flattened.)

6: Isot.

(Big.)

Interpretations in both excerpts are possible, but because the students do not present anything that would back them up, the whole thought process behind the interpretation remains hidden. Decoding the metaphors and languaging the decoding process proved to be especially challenging for the students; they were able to produce only brief and unelaborated observations and impressions. Languaging and elaborating the answers seemed to be the biggest obstacle, since when asked to be more precise or just to tell more, the students closed in and responded quickly with 'I don't know', which cut off the interaction and any possibility of dialogue. The stress of the situation seemed to affect both their ability and willingness to take part in the discussions.

(03) TS: Entäs jos sydämenä on lapio, niin millainen ihminen on?

(How about if someone has a shovel as a heart, what kind of a person are they then?)

3: Se heittää kaiken turhan pois.

(They throw away everything they don't need.)

TS: Joo, perustele?

(Yeah, elaborate?)

3: En mä oikein tiää.

(I don't really know.)

Student 3 provides an interesting interpretation in the excerpt above, but again, the thought process is not verbalised and thus remains hidden. To continue a meaningful discussion, it is important to present ideas and elaborate on them. Only then can the ideas be discussed, evaluated, and reflected upon (see Rosenblatt, 1994).

By encouraging and giving immediate positive feedback to the students, it was possible to gain more elaborate interpretations:

(04) TS: Millainen sydän on puinen sydän?

(What kind of a heart is a wooden heart?)

4: Se ei oo niinku lempee ja kiltti vaan se on ilkee.

(It's not like gentle and kind, but rather it's mean.)

TS: Miks?

(Why?)

4: En mä tiää.

(I don't know.)

TS: Se oli ihan hyvä vastaus, ihan hyväksyn sun tulkinnan,

mutta mä haluaisin että sä kerrot miksi siitä tuli sulle

sellainen vaikutelma?

(It was an okay answer. I do accept your interpretation, but I'd like you to tell me why this is the impression you had?)

4: En mää-tai siis. Nii ku. Koska se on niinku kova ja silleen kylmä?

(I don't-or well. Like. Because it's like hard and in a way cold?)

Student 4 first answers the question but provides no further explanation or description of the thought process behind the answer. When the students were directly asked for a more precise answer and encouraged to tell what led to it, they could provide some kind of explanation for their interpretation. The students seem to hesitate to share their thoughts: they need direct encouraging and verbalised acceptance for their initial answer before further languaging is possible. The explanation the student could give is still rather incoherent, but the associations that led to the interpretation still offer a glimpse of the students' thought processes.

Systematic requests for explanations made some students slowly give more elaborate answers. For example, the same student as in the previous excerpt now unprompted gives a more elaborate interpretation of 'cardboard legs':

(05) TS: Jalat on kartonkia. Millaiset jalat siis on?

(The legs are cardboard. So, what are the legs like?)

4: Jotenki siis tosi ohuet silleen, et niinku, et ne ei paljon kestä mitään. Kartonki on semmosta.

(So somehow like very thin, so that like, that they don't really hold up to anything. Cardboard is like that.)

This answer is clearly more in-depth and thoughtful than before since the student is trying to describe how they reached their conclusion by describing the impression they have and then connecting that impression to the poem with a direct reference.

The student decodes the metaphor and manages to describe the thinking process to others. However, even though the students were able to decode some of the metaphors, the discussion and final interpretation fell short. Because the teacher-led method of questioning leaves little room for students' own unprompted participation, languaging their reasoning and arguments remains in the background. Though the student teacher was open to interpretation, the attempt towards a collective response might have resembled the courtyard rather than a reconstructed marketplace (cf. Faust, 2000). None of the students used the terms learned in the introductory lessons; they were able to point out, for example, alliterations when asked to do so, but no one used the terms unprompted. The terms learned in previous lessons did not seem to connect with the text material in the students' minds; the terms were meaningless to them in the interpretation process.

4.2 Active conversationalists

In their analytical discussions, group B was more active than group A. Group B could produce more or less defined interpretations of the poem immediately after reading it. Group B's students were also able and willing to describe their thought processes and connotations. Before the languaging exercise in small groups, one student produced a rather well-rounded interpretation using the term metaphor, which was learned in the previous lesson:

(06) 1: Tota mörköähän vois periaatteessa jos tohon tekstiin sijoittais? Niin noita mörköjä niin ne vois olla niinku metafora, niinku toi mörkö, niin muutokselle. Koska muutosta ihmisethän pelkää. Ihmiset pelkää kaikkea uutta.

(That bogeyman could basically if you'd place in that text? Yeah, those bogeymen then could be like a metaphor, like that bogeyman, for change. Because change is what people are afraid of. People are afraid of everything new.)

Student 1 linked the bogeymen of the poem to the idea of change. They suggested that the word 'bogeymen' could be replaced with the word 'change', and thus the bogeymen could be read as a metaphor. When asked to elaborate, the student put emphasis on a certain line in the poem: 'We replace all your things with something else: moon we / call a blob, heart a lump, art is / planning to us and literature a library card fuelled with A4s'. With these verses from the poem, the student verified their theory and linked the interpretation to the poem. That is, Student 1 described their thought process and their reading of the poem to others through languaging.

After the teacher-led short introduction, the students were divided into small groups to discuss the poem together. In these collaborative discussions, students were able to present their ideas, elaborate on them, and together build more rounded interpretations. Some groups were better equipped for the task and had satisfying discussions, but others struggled with the poem and the task. The more productive groups worked systematically question-by-question, negotiated, and then eagerly engaged in a collaborative interaction, where all kinds of remarks, feelings, and connotations were welcomed and developed further together:

(07) 4: Ja sit silminä savikiekot.

(And then clay discs are like eyes.)

5: Näkee vaan harmaata.

(They see only grey.)

6: Näkee vaan harmaata tai ihan. Ei varmaan nää mitään? Tai ei nää asioita.

(They see only grey or just, perhaps, don't see anything? Or don't see things.)

4: Nii.

(Yeah.)

Compared with the interpretations presented in group A, here the idea of blindness is developed further. Both groups read the same verse as a metaphor for blindness, but students in group B could give more insight into the process of decoding the metaphor. In an ideal situation, Student 6 would also explain why clay discs are linked to blindness in their mind. It is notable that, unlike the students in group A, the students in group B could also connect the themes and metaphors to their everyday lives; they often brought their own experiences and attitudes to the table during the discussions.

The productive groups of students in group B also actively negotiated and evaluated ideas before deciding on the most satisfying interpretation. During these negotiations, students had to reason their ideas and describe their thoughts to each other. In the following excerpt, students 1 and 2 negotiate and question each other before reaching a satisfying interpretation:

(08) 1: Sydäntä mötkäleeksi. Siis sydämellä on arvoa (- -) sitä voidaan

kuvata myös mutkikkaana.

(The heart is like a blob. So, the heart has value (- -); it can also be described as complex.)

2: Sydän ei ole mutkikas. Tai no oli oikeestaan silloin kun siinä oli

tunteita.

(The heart is not complex. Oh well, actually, it was when it had feelings.)

1: Niin mutta nyt puhutaanko biologisesta sydäimestä vai henkisestä

sydäimestä?

(Yeah, but are we talking now about the biological heart or the spiritual one?)

2: Molemmat minun mielestäni pumpaavat verta.

(Both in my opinion pump blood.)

Similar collaboration can be seen in the following excerpt, in which students 4, 5, and 6 ponder the nature of the bogeymen. They utilised their own experiences and

knowledge of the world, and through these shared experiences and memories, they reached a conclusion:

(09) 5: Ihmisillä on siitä semmonen mielikuva. Niinku kaikesta tummasta alueesta. Et se pelottaa.

(People have that kind of image of it. Like about all the dark areas. That they're scary.)

4: Niin. Vaikka niinku pimeessä vaikka eihän siinä oo mitään pelottavaa.

(Yeah. Like in the dark even if it's not scary at all.)

5: Niin ja sit kun niitten silmät ei nää.

(Yeah and then their eyes won't see.)

4: Niin ja sit niinku pienenähän kaikki vähän pelkäs.

(Yeah and then, as a kid, everyone was a little scared.)

6: Nii ja just sitä niinku et pienenä kaikki pelkäs mörköjä.

(Yeah and that's exactly what I mean, as a kid everyone was scared of the bogeymen.)

The less productive group of students in group B still had major problems with the poem and languaging task. They were able to produce some incoherent remarks and impressions, however, developing these ideas further seemed challenging. The problems with languaging were pretty similar to the problems group A's students had. Students in these groups were eager to abandon the task or to not take it seriously. Nevertheless, they were able to utilise their common knowledge of the world and tie it to the poem. In the following excerpt, students make a reference to the animated science fiction comedy film *Monsters vs. Aliens*:

(10) 7: Sitten. Mikä vastakkainasettelu runossa on?

(Then. What kind of juxtaposition does the poem have?)

8: No. Niinku maitopurkkimiehet vastaan muu maailma. He he. En mä tiä.

(Well. Like milk carton men against the rest of the world.

[laughing] I don't know.)

7: Maitopurkkimöröt vastaan muu maailma! Möröt vastaan muukalaiset!

(Milk carton bogeymen against the rest of the world! Monsters versus aliens!)

The same students who offered less elaborated responses in group B also had difficulties with teamwork skills. Although working in a small group offers a more intimate setting for collaborative dialogue, the students had problems with adjusting their actions accordingly and focusing on the task at hand together. Students in these groups seemed to be confused about what was expected of them. It is also noteworthy that even the productive groups depended heavily on the list of questions when working together. The questions guided their discussions and

notions, and only a few students were able to let go of the questions and let the poem speak for itself.

After the small group discussions, the teacher led a short, summarising discussion. Each group chose a metaphor from the poem and decoded it to others. Besides an interpretation, they were also required to explain how they reached the interpretation. Finally, three different interpretations of the entire poem were presented to the students. In this final discussion, the students chose the interpretation they felt was the best and then reasoned their choice. The most popular interpretation of the poem reads the bogeymen as adults or grown-ups. One student could tie the interpretation to the poem but also to their own personal experience:

(11) 10: No munki mielestä toi kakkonen koska tässä on hirveesti tällästä että nää möröt on silleen että vähän niinku että me ollaan parempia kun te. Mutta ja te ette kiitä meitä tarpeeksi. Ja tää kuulosti tosi paljon aikuisilta jotka on silleen että mä oon kasvattanut sut mutta sä et silti arvosta sitä.

(Well, I too think that option two is best because in the poem, there are so many of these kinds—like, of bogeymen, that are like: We are better than you and you don't thank us enough. And this sounded a lot like adults who are like: I have raised you and still you don't appreciate it.)

Student 10 starts with a reference to the previous speaker. This kind of dialogue and collaborative discussion was typical for students in productive groups. These students, who were ready and willing to take part in a collaborative discussion in smaller groups, actively built new knowledge and developed ideas further in the teacher-led discussion.

5. DISCUSSION

This study answers Sigvardsson's (2017) request to develop research on the collective process of reading and shows how a socio-cultural languaging approach offers students possibilities to discuss their interpretations more vigorously than during teacher-led lesson discussions. As Sumara (1995) and Naylor (2013) claimed, more collective interpretations are needed for meaningful reading experiences. This research shows what kind of difference between the classes there could be when collective interpretation is offered. It shows how the teacher's instruction and teaching method can promote students' unrestricted thinking and thus create a courtyard to the classroom (cf. Faust, 2000; Höglund, 2017). This study also shows how the languaging approach can activate the students to produce personal responses to texts and encourage the students to take a more active role (cf. Miller 2011), thus offering a new perspective that combines the languaging approach with poetry teaching.

Teacher education can improve the teaching of poetry. This study is a concrete example of how focusing on the needs presented in research can be met during pedagogical courses in subject teacher education. Finnish teacher education is

research-based, and it contains courses that include small-scale studies of teaching experiments—and the theoretical background for studies is covered during the preceding courses. The studies were executed in teacher training schools, which are closely connected to teacher education. This arrangement offers both a great opportunity and an environment in which to experiment in the classroom and develop teaching methodology.

The languaging approach has been used before for teaching grammar and solving mathematical problems. This is the first study concerning the approach to teaching literature and to reflect the interpretative responses of students in different collaborative lesson contexts. The findings propose that more collective interpretations of poems should be used in teaching if responses from students are expected. However, there are many factors to be considered when applying the languaging approach in practice. Group A's dynamics and general mood proved to be a challenge, and the supervising teacher's knowledge and experiences pushed the exercise to a more teacher-led approach than was intended. Because the teacher-led discussion seemed to passivate the students, there was no real interaction or dialogue; the students had only limited scope to verbalise their thoughts or build knowledge together through languaging. However, as group B showed, a teacher-led discussion can produce genuine interaction if the group can work together. The students in group B produced answers with interpretation and reflected not only their own thinking process but also each other's answers and thinking processes. It is evident that the most fruitful discussions also required the group to have good teamwork skills. The languaging approach might also develop these skills if exercises are planned and instructed carefully.

The most advanced discussions also linked terminology to close readings of the poem and the readers' own experiences. Discussions like these required the students to combine knowledge on multiple levels and verbalise their connotations and conclusions. In the most elaborated interpretations, the students reflected their own thinking process. One key factor also seemed to be how safe the students felt they were in the classroom: A safe space promoted acceptance and nurtured the students' willingness to try to experiment together. Collective interpretations and collective meaning-making could thus not only promote meaningful learning but also strengthen students' sense of belonging. Teacher-led instruction might be too structured for this kind of free thinking and experimentation, which results in the students' desire to work individually and answer correctly. The difference between a normal classroom discussion and languaging is also the metacognitive understanding the teacher can grasp: understanding how students become aware of their thoughts. Languaging research has shown that the teacher gains a deeper understanding of students' knowledge of the subject when students use languaging and argue their responses.

Languaging research has shown how students' responses have contained better argumentation if they have used the required terminology. This study does not provide additional evidence on this, but it hints at how terminology can help

students describe their thoughts and findings more accurately. This study is a small-scale study drawing data from only two different classes; further experiments with more classes and perhaps with different age groups would improve the quality of our findings. It must also be noted that group A's teacher-led discussion might have been different with the teacher instead of the student teacher, although previous experiences of the classes prognosed that the languaging approach would have been more suitable for group B instead of the teacher-led method. There is a need for iteration of the experiment with more emphasis on the selection of the groups, as well as the more detailed instructions for short introductory teacher-led discussion and a rewritten list of possible open-ended questions to discuss. The questions were now open-ended and focused on both the language and the contents of the poem. These might be more directly connected to the previous lessons.

When students are languaging their thoughts in a learning context that encourages them, they do not have the pressure of answering correctly because the collectiveness supports and empowers them. There might be a need for this kind of support if the poem is deemed difficult to interpret. In this experiment, the poem included figurative language, which might have affected how the students experienced the poem.

Conducting the experiment as part of the teacher studies at a teacher training school also presented its own limitations to the study. Because of this, there were no comparison groups. The languaging approach, its theoretical background, and its use have been included in study modules in some Finnish teacher education programmes and continuing professional development. Student teachers have been using it during their training periods, and they have focused on the use of it in their bachelor's or master's theses. The use of languaging in teaching poetry is a relevant approach, and the variance in teaching methods—especially collective responses—needs to be further inspected.

REFERENCES

- Brooks, L., Swain, M., Lapkin, S., & Knouzi, I. (2010). Mediating between scientific and spontaneous concepts through languaging. *Language Awareness, 19*(2), 89–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658410903440755>
- Brown, A. L. (1987). Metacognition, executive control, self-regulation, and other more mysterious mechanisms. In F. E. Weinert & R. H. Kluwe (Eds.), *Metacognition, motivation, and understanding* (pp. 65–116). Erlbaum.
- Degerman, P. (2012). *Det didaktiska fältet i förvandling. Om svensk litteraturredaktisk forskning under det begynnande 2000-talet* [Literature is what you teach. The transformation of the field of Swedish literature education] [Doctoral dissertation, Åbo Akademi University]. Åbo Akademi.
- Dressman, M. A., & Faust, M. (2014). On the teaching of poetry in English Journal, 1912–2005: Does history matter? *Journal of Literacy Research, 46*(1), 39–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X14521194>
- Ewald, A. (2015). Litteraturredaktiska utmaningar och dilemman i systemskiiftens tid [Challenges and dilemmas of literary education in an era of system changes]. In M. Tengberg & C. Olin-Scheller (Eds.), *Svensk forskning om läsning och läsundervisning* [Swedish research on reading and reading instruction] (pp. 183–195). Gleerups.

- Faust, M. (2000). Reconstructing familiar metaphors: John Dewey and Louise Rosenblatt on literary art as experience. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 35(1), 9–34.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gourvenec, A. F. (2016). En plass for meg? Faglig identitetsbygging i en litterær gruppesamtale. *Acta Didactica Norge*, 10(1), Art. 1, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.5617/adno.2342>
- Gourvenec, A. F. (2017). *“Det rister litt i hjernen”: En studie av møtet mellom høytpresterende elever i videregående skole og litteraturfaglig praksis*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Stavanger].
- Gourvenec, A. F., Höglund, H., Johansson, M., Kabel, K., & Sønneland, M. (2020). Literature education in Nordic L1s: Cultural models of national lower-secondary curricula in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 20, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2020.20.01.07>
- Gynne, A., & Bagga-Gupta, S. (2013). Young people’s languaging and social positioning. Chaining in “bilingual” educational settings in Sweden. *Linguistics and Education*, 23(2013), 479–496. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2013.06.002>
- Gynne, A., & Bagga-Gupta, S. (2015). Languaging in the twenty-first century: Exploring varieties and modalities in literacies inside and outside learning spaces. *Language and Education*, 29(6), 509–526. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2015.1053812>
- Hennig, Å. (2017). *Litterær forståelse. Innføring i litteraturdidaktikk* [Literary understanding. Introduction to literary education] (2nd ed.). Gyldendal akademisk.
- Höglund, H. (2017). *Video poetry: Negotiating literary interpretations. Students’ multimodal designing in response to literature* [Doctoral dissertation, Åbo Akademi University]. Åbo Akademi.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*. Routledge.
- Ishikawa, M. (2013). Examining the effect of written languaging: The role of metanotes as a mediator of second language learning. *Language Awareness*, 22(3), 220–233. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2012.683435>
- Joutsenlahti, J., & Kulju, P. (2015). Kielentäminen matematiikan ja äidinkielen opetuksen kehittämisessä [Languaging approach and developing of mathematics and L1 education]. In T. Kaartinen (Ed.), *Monilukutaito kaikki kaikessa* [Multiliteracy] (pp. 57–76). Tampereen yliopiston normaalkoulu.
- Joutsenlahti, J. & Rättyä, K. (2014). Kielentämisen käsite ainedidaktisissa tutkimuksissa [The concept of languaging in subject didactics research]. In M. Kauppinen, M. Rautiainen & M. Tarnanen (Eds.), *Rajaton tulevaisuus. Kohti kokonaisvaltaista oppimista. Ainedidaktiikan symposium Jyväskylässä*. [Proceedings of the Didactics Symposium] (pp. 45–61). University of Jyväskylä.
- Joutsenlahti, J., Sarikka, H., & Pohjolainen, S. (2014). Languaging as a tool in learning and teaching university mathematics. *Fourth Finnish—Estonian Mathematics Colloquium*.
- Jusslin, S., & Höglund, H. (2020). Entanglements of dance/poetry: Creative dance in students’ poetry reading and writing. *Research in Dance Education*. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14647893.2020.1789088>
- Källqvist, M. (2013). Languaging in translation tasks used in university setting: Particular potential for student agency? *The Modern Language Journal*, (97)1,2 17–238. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2013.01430.x>
- Knouzi, I., Swain, M., Lapkin, S., & Brooks, L. (2010). Self-scaffolding mediated by languaging. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2009.00227.x>
- Krogh, E., Elf, N., Høegh, T., & Rørbech, H. (2017). *Fagdidaktik i dansk* [Danish L1 didactics]. Frydenlund.
- Kulju, P. (2012). Äidinkielen kieliopin kielentäminen [Languaging L1 grammar]. In M. van den Berg, R. Mäkelä, H. Ruuska, K. Stenberg, A. Loukomies, & R. Palmqvist (Eds.), *Tutki, kokeile ja kehitä. Suomen harjoittelukoulujen julkaisu 2012* [Research, experiment and develop. Finnish teacher training school journal 2012] (pp. 10–22). University of Helsinki.
- Linell, P. (2009). *Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically. Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making*. Information Age Publishing.
- Lockett, M. (2010). Close reading: A synergistic approach to the (post)modern divide. *Changing English*, 17(4), 399–409. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2010.528874>
- Maturana, H. R. (1995). The nature of time. *Chilean School of Biology of Cognition*.

- Mayer, R. E. (2002). Rote versus meaningful learning. *Theory into Practice*, 41(4), 226–232. http://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4104_4
- McKenney, S., & Reeves, T. C. (2012). *Conducting educational design research*. Routledge.
- Naylor, A. (2013). “Old poems have heart”: Teenage students reading early modern poetry. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 12(1), 64–78.
- Naylor, A., & Wood, A. B. (2012). *Teaching poetry: Reading and responding to poetry in the secondary classroom*. Routledge.
- Novak, J. D. (2010). *Learning, creating, and using knowledge: concept maps as facilitative tools in schools and corporations* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Öhman, A. (2015). *Litteraturdidaktik, fiktioner och intriger* [Literature education, fiction and plots]. Gleerups.
- Pieper, I. (2020). L1 Education and the place of literature. In B. Green & P.O. Erixon (Eds.), *Rethinking L1 Education in Global Era*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-0303-55997-7_6
- Rättyä, K. (2013). Linguaging and visualisation method for grammar teaching: A conceptual change theory perspective. *English Teaching Practice and Critique*, 12 (3), 87–101.
- Rättyä, K. (2015). Kielitiedon opetusmenetelmien uudet suunnat: toiminnallinen kielioppi ja kielentäminen [New grammar teaching methods: Action-based grammar teaching and languaging]. *AFinLAn vuosikirja [AFinLA Yearbook]*, 187-207.
- Rättyä, K. (2017). *Kielitiedon didaktiikkaa: Kielentäminen ja visualisointi sanaluokkien ja lauseenjäsenten opetusmenetelminä* [Pedagogical content knowledge in teaching metalinguistic awareness: Linguaging approach and visualisations as teaching methods for word classes and sentence constituents]. University of Helsinki.
- Rejman, K. (2013). *Litteratur och livskunskap—modersmålslärares berättelse om undervisningen i årskurs 7–9* [Literature and life skills—The L1 teacher’s story about teaching years 7–9] [Doctoral dissertation, Åbo Akademi University]. Åbo Akademi University Press.
- Riffaterre, M. (1978). *Semiotics of poetry*. Indiana University Press.
- Rikama, J. (2004). *Lukion kirjallisuudenopetus 1900-luvun jälkipuoliskon Suomessa opettajien arviointien valossa* [Literature education at Finnish upper-secondary schools in the second half of the 20th century] [Doctoral dissertation, University of Tampere]. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Rødnes, K. A. (2014). Skjønnlitteratur i klassrommet: Skandinaviske forskning och didaktiske implikasjoner (Literature in the classroom: Scandinavian research and pedagogical implications). *Acta Didactica Norge*, 8(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.5617/adno.1097>
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). *The reader, the text, the poem. The transactional theory of the literary work*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Sigvardsson, A. (2017). Teaching poetry reading in secondary education: Findings from a systematic literature review. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 61(5), 584–599. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1172503>
- Sigvardsson, A. (2020). Don’t fear poetry! Secondary teachers’ key strategies for engaging pupils with poetic texts. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64(6), 953–966. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2019.1650823>
- Skafun, A., & Michelsen, P. A. (2017). *Litteraturdidaktikk* [Literature education]. Cappelen Damm.
- Sumara, D. J. (1995). Response to reading as a focal practice. *English Quarterly*, 28(1), 18–26.
- Suzuki, W., & Itagaki, N. (2009). Linguaging in grammar exercises by Japanese EFL learners of differing proficiency. *System*, 37(2009), 217–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.10.001>
- Swain, M. (2006a). Linguaging, agency and collaboration in advanced second language proficiency. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced language learning: The contribution of Halliday and Vygotsky* (pp. 95–108). Continuum.
- Swain, M. (2006b). What does it mean for research to use speaking as a data collection tool? In M. Chalhoub-Deville, C. Chapelle, & P. Duff (Eds.), *Inference and generalizability in applied linguistics* (pp. 97–113). J. Benjamins Pub. Co.
- Swain, M., Lapkin, S., Knouzi, I., Suzuki, W., & Brooks, L. (2009). Linguaging: University students learn the grammatical concept of voice in French. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93(1), 5–29. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00825.x>

- Swain, M., & Watanabe, Y. (2013). Languageing: Collaborative dialogue as a source of second language learning. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics* (pp. 3218–3225). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Van Someren, M., Barnard, Y., & Sandberg, J. (1994). *The think aloud method. A practical guide to modelling cognitive processes*. Academic Press.
- Visher Bruns, C. (2011). *Why literature? The value of literary reading and what it means for teaching*. Continuum.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky (Volume 1). Thinking and speaking*. Plenum Press.