

# Introduction

This edited volume is a collection of doctoral research within English didactics in a Norwegian context from 1988 to 2017. The ambition has been to cover *all* doctoral research that has been conducted within this field, and to the best of our knowledge all but four PhD theses within the field of English didactics in the Norwegian context are represented here. The four missing theses are referenced below. Our aim is to continue this project in future editions, adding chapters as new doctoral studies are carried out.

As a relatively young research field both in Norway and internationally, English didactics has not had a clear distinctiveness as a separate field, and in Norway there has been no overview of the research that has been conducted. English didactics has traditionally been a practically oriented domain developed from research conducted in more established fields, such as linguistics, literature, sociology and psychology. It still is a practically oriented field, but in recent decades it has firmly established itself as a research field in Norway. Students in Norwegian teacher education write their Master's thesis in English didactics, research fellows do their PhD in English didactics, and scholars continue to conduct research in English didactics as the core of their academic careers. Furthermore, teacher education is increasingly in need of research-based literature to use as course texts. We believe it is high time English didactics in Norway is given the attention it deserves as a separate academic field.

Following these considerations, this volume has been compiled for scholars nationally and internationally who are interested in English didactics, as well as for students at Bachelor and Master's levels in teacher education. We demarcate the field of English didactics as follows:

English didactics is best described as research, theory and applications relevant for English as a school subject. This includes research and applications in primary and secondary school, as well as in higher education, including teacher education for future teachers of English, and including English communication outside school.

The English didactics research in this volume is thus also relevant for readers who identify themselves as scholars of *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL), *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL), *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) and *Applied linguistics*, as well as English language education in general.

## IDEA AND CONCEPT

The volume comprises 19 chapters in addition to this introduction and a state-of-the-art chapter by the editors. Each of the 19 chapters represents one doctoral project, and each chapter is a “mini version” of the thesis using an IMRAD format, i.e. Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. Based on this format, each contribution thus comprises an opening abstract, followed by the introduction (including a review of earlier research, and theoretical framework), methods, and results (sometimes labelled findings). These first sections provide a synopsis of the doctoral project, which consequently entails that the theory and review of previous research reflect the status quo at the time of the study.

A discussion is then added to the synopsis of the doctoral project: Each author has added a new and updated section to the presentation of their doctoral study, making up approximately one third of each chapter, namely the section *Discussion: Contributions to the English didactics field*. These additional sections for all the chapters are the primary novelties of this volume as they highlight the overall contributions of the doctoral study to the field of English didactics. These sections specifically comment on the contributions of the study in light of the period in which it was conducted, as well as developments in the field since then, and discuss how their doctoral work is relevant for students, researchers and practitioners of English didactics today. Each author has thus been asked to *revisit* their doctoral study and discuss it in the format of this volume. In line with this task, each chapter has kept the title of the original doctoral study but with the crucial prefix *PhD revisited*.

The additional discussion section of each chapter is divided into three parts. The first part, entitled *Empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions*, raises the central aspects that each doctoral study offers to the field of English didactics, thus showing how this particular study has contributed to the development of English didactics as a research field. The second part, *Implications for teaching English*, applies to current English language teaching, learning and development, including specific recommendations for how to deal with topics related to the doctoral study in the English classroom. In the final part, entitled *Suggestions for future research*, each author briefly presents recent developments in this research

area and offers suggestions for further research on the topic. The update on the status quo of the research topic is especially relevant for doctoral studies that were conducted some time ago, but also within areas in rapid development, and some authors have added an additional section entitled *Recent developments* for this purpose. This section varies between chapters in the extent to which some authors have updated their own research in the field, and some have included updated research in the field of English didactics in Norway in general.

### THESES NOT REVISITED

Four Norwegian doctoral theses in English didactics are unfortunately not included in this volume due to their authors' full or partial retirement from academia and the extensive work inherent in participating in this book. We do, however, want to honour their contribution to the field of English didactics by presenting them here in chronological order, with authors, titles, and years of publication, and encourage readers interested in their work to read the original theses or the published versions:

Bjørg B. Gundem (1986). *Skolefaget i skolereformen. Utviklingen av engelskfaget som del av skolereform og Læreplanrevisjon* (Unpublished doctoral study). University of Oslo, Oslo. The doctoral thesis is published as two publications: Bind 1 and Bind 2.

Angela Hasselgreen (1998). *Testing the spoken English of young Norwegians: A study of test validity and the role of "smallwords" in contributing to pupils' fluency* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Bergen, Bergen. The PhD thesis was also published by Cambridge University Press in 2004, in the series "Studies in Language Testing 20".

Torunn Lehmann (1999). *Literacy and the Tertiary Student: Why Has the Communicative Approach Failed?* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Bergen, Bergen.

Bjørg Olsen Eikrem (2006). *Teaching English as a foreign language in the 21st century: Perceptions, attitudes, dilemmas, types of talk and educational needs* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). This doctoral thesis was also published by VDM Verlag in 2009.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The volume is divided into six thematic sections, representing separate but inter-related topic areas; (1) The development of English as a school subject, (2) English Writing, (3) Digital English competence, (4) Reading in English, (5) Culture and literature, and (6) Oral proficiency. Within each section, the chapters are presented chronologically to emphasise the development within each topic area; the thematic sections are also ordered chronologically based on the first doctoral thesis within its topic area.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

In the first section of this volume, Aud Marit Simensen revisits her pioneering doctoral work from 1988, *Engelsk i grunnskolen: Mål og innhold*, written only a decade after English didactics was introduced for the first time in Norwegian teacher education. She discusses the contribution of her work within three significant areas – the national curriculum, differentiation, and assessment – and discusses the implications of the development of English as a school subject for English teaching today.

### ENGLISH WRITING

With a total of five doctoral theses conducted over 20 years, the works in this thematic section address English writing as a topic of research in secondary school, teacher education, and business. Aud Solbjørg Skulstad revisits her doctoral work from 1997, *Established and emerging business genres: Genre analyses of corporate annual reports and corporate environmental reports*, the only doctoral work during these 30 years to address English for specific purposes. Ion Drew revisits his doctoral work also from 1997, *Future teachers of English: A study of competence in the teaching of writing*, in which he studies the duality of student teachers' writing competence and the ability to teach writing. The remaining three doctoral theses in this section, all related to students' writing, were written 20 years later. Tony Burner revisits his doctoral work from 2016, *Formative assessment of writing in English: A school-based study of perceptions, practices and transformations*, studying the use of portfolios as a tool for formative assessment during the writing process in upper secondary school. May Olaug Horverak revisits her doctoral work, also from 2016, *English writing instruction in Norwegian upper secondary school – a linguistic and genre-pedagogical perspective*, concerning formative assessment of students' classroom writing in upper secondary school.

Finally, Stephanie Hazel Wold revisits her recent doctoral work from 2017, *INglish English – the progressive construction in learner narratives*, concerning students' narrative writing in primary and lower secondary school. These three chapters discuss implications for teaching and assessing writing in primary and secondary English classrooms.

## DIGITAL ENGLISH COMPETENCE

Here, we present two doctoral theses that have both addressed the development of professional digital competence among experienced and future secondary school teachers, written 12 years apart. First, Andreas Lund revisits his doctoral work from 2004, *The teacher as interface. Teachers of EFL in ICT-rich environments: Beliefs, practices, appropriation*, in which he studied experienced teachers designing and enacting the use of digital technology in the secondary classroom. Next, Fredrik Mørk Røkenes revisits his doctoral work from 2016, *Preparing future teachers to teach with ICT: An investigation of digital competence development in ESL student teachers in a Norwegian teacher education program*, focusing on student teachers' development of digital competence in teacher education and enactment in school practice. Both suggest implications for English teaching, specifically the need for teachers to become designers of technology-rich environments to change the traditional teacher-centred ways of teaching with ICT in today's secondary classrooms.

## READING IN ENGLISH

In this section, the three doctoral theses addressing reading comprehension in English among primary and secondary school students during the 30 years of doctoral research in Norway are presented and discussed. That is, three more theses on the reading of literature were also conducted during these 30 years – however, we have chosen to include these in a separate section on culture and literature due to their aim of studying literary interpretation. The three studies in this section are conducted across a period of ten years and focus on students in primary and secondary school, as well as higher education. Glenn Ole Hellekjær revisits his doctoral work from 2005, *The acid test: Does upper secondary EFL instruction effectively prepare Norwegian students for the reading of English textbooks at colleges and universities?*, involving an international reading test in English. Lisbeth M. Brevik revisits her doctoral work from ten years later in 2015, *How teachers teach and readers read. Developing reading comprehension in English in Norwegian*

*upper secondary school*, integrating classroom observations of reading comprehension instruction with teachers' and students' perspectives on such instruction, as well as with students' reading proficiency. Finally, Rebecca Charboneau Stuvland revisits her doctoral work from 2016, *Approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) reading instruction in Norwegian primary schools*, in which she observes English instruction using different approaches to teaching reading. All three discuss contributions of their work and discuss implications for English teaching today.

## CULTURE AND LITERATURE

This section addresses topics of culture and literature related to the English school subject through four doctoral theses written during the short span of four years, focusing on secondary school students and student teachers. Ragnhild Lund revisits her doctoral work from 2007, *Questions of culture and context in English language textbooks. A study of textbooks for the teaching of English in Norway*, which is the only doctoral thesis offering research related to teaching the cultural component of the English subject. The remaining three theses in this section study how literature is influenced by the cultural context of the readers. Signe Mari Wiland revisits her doctoral work from 2009, *Poetry: Prima vista. Reader-response research on poetry in a foreign language context*, Annelise Brox Larsen revisits her doctoral work from 2009, *Content in Nordic pupil narratives in instructed EFL: A Norwegian perspective*, and Juliet Munden revisits her doctoral work from 2010, *How students in Eritrea and Norway make sense of literature*. All four chapters discuss the implications of making students literate and culturally aware in the context of English teaching today.

## ORAL PROFICIENCY

In this section, four doctoral theses address oral proficiency in English in very different contexts, also during the short span of four years, related to primary and secondary school, and focusing on both students and teachers. Ulrikke Rindal revisits her doctoral work from 2013, *Meaning in English. L2 attitudes, choices and pronunciation in Norway*, exploring adolescent (age 17) learners' spoken English. Anne Dahl revisits her doctoral work from 2014, *Young language learners: The acquisition of English in Norwegian first-grade classrooms*, in which she studies the effect of spoken input for young (age 6) learners' development of oral English competence. The two other theses in this section are both from 2016: Henrik Bøhn

revisits his doctoral work *What is to be assessed? Teachers' understanding of constructs in an oral English examination in Norway*, investigating what English teachers assess in an oral English exam without a common rating scale. James Coburn revisits his doctoral work, *The professional development of English language teachers*, in which he looks at the effect of an in-service teacher education course on English teachers' professional competence.

## STATE OF THE ART

As a final chapter to this edited volume, the editors highlight some of the issues that have risen from collecting and revising the doctoral work on English didactics from the past 30 years in Norway. In this state-of-the-art chapter, they present the accumulated knowledge developed from these 19 research projects and discuss how this research has formed English didactics as a distinct research field, providing a foundation for further empirical research.

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For the editors, it has been an absolute honour to gain access to the high quality research conducted by scholars of English didactics in Norway, from the first included doctoral work of 1988, to the (so far) final batch of projects – a staggering seven theses in 2016 and 2017. We are impressed by the professionalism of the authors in how they have dutifully revised – and particularly shortened – their work according to the editors' vision for this volume. We hope they agree with us that the volume does justice to their excellent work. We would like to take the opportunity to thank the anonymous reviewer who has worked through this entire volume, offering critical, yet constructive and enthusiastic feedback to all authors and editors, improving the work considerably. Furthermore, this publication would not exist as open access without the financial support of the publication funds at each and all of the nine academic institutions represented in the volume, which truly reflects the national effort to present the field of English didactics in Norway.

*Ulrikke Rindal and Lisbeth M Brevik, March 2019*