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Book review of *Teaching English in Norwegian Classrooms. From Research to Practice*

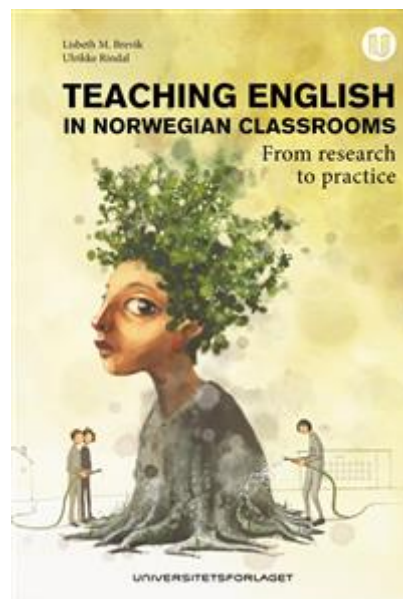
Lisbeth M. Brevik and Ulrikke Rindal (Eds.)

Teaching English in Norwegian Classrooms. From Research to Practice.

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What is special about this book is that the point of departure for the editors, Lisbeth M. Brevik and Ulrikke Rindal, is always research – on students' use of English in and out of school, classroom learning, teaching practices and reflections of students and teachers, according to the Introduction. This means recent research according to the back-cover text. Furthermore, it informs us that on this basis, the authors give examples of best teaching practices and as such,

the book is relevant for teachers, teacher educators and student teachers, and for everyone involved in the ongoing development of the English school subject.

The authors are primarily the editors, Lisbeth M. Brevik and Ulrikke Rindal, both associate professors of English Didactics at the Department of Teacher Education and School Research (ILS) at the University of Oslo. In addition to their PhD degrees, they have records of considerable research published both nationally and internationally. Apart from the first chapter, which is written solely by Ulrikke Rindal, all the other chapters are co-authored. One of the editors is involved as a co-author in all the other chapters; in one case, both editors are actually involved.

An interesting aspect of the book is the choice of other co-authors. Some are colleagues in higher education with research interests in the relevant academic fields, be it in Norway or abroad. Others are practicing teachers of English with a master's degree in English didactics from ILS, normally with a thesis of particular relevance for the book, such as the teaching of pronunciation and the teaching of English for students in vocational programmes. About the invitation of newly educated teachers, the editors claim that this “ensures the subject's relevance to the book's main target readers” (p. 19). Current PhD candidates with relevant research interests are also selected as co-authors.

According to the Introduction to the book, it represents a collection of topics that the editors and the authors perceive as central to English didactics, based on experience from teaching English in Norwegian classrooms or teaching its didactics to student teachers.

The titles of the nine chapters clearly signalize present-day relevance for the teaching of English in Norwegian classrooms and consequently for English didactics, such as “English in Norway – a language and a school subject in transition”, “Language and technology – Digital competence in English”, “Vocational English – Building vocational orientation and relevance”;

“Language use in English lessons – Monolingual, bilingual and multilingual approaches”; “Pronunciation – Accent, identity and intelligibility”; “Strategic readers of English – Gradual release of responsibility”; “The role of literature in the English classroom”; “English use outside of school – Gamers, Surfers and Social Media Users”; and “Intercultural competence and cultural identities.”

The topics of the chapters are also presented in italicised paragraphs at the beginning of each chapter. Most of these paragraphs also include one question such as *What does...? Why is it...? How can ...?* Being a textbook, *Questions for reflection*, are included.

The ambition of present-day relevance is strengthened by the fact that the chapters are organized according to the three core elements of the 2020 English curriculum (LK20): *communication, language learning and textual encounters*. Each element constitutes one of the three parts of the book; each introduced by an explanatory quote of the relevant core element in LK20, such as «Kommunikasjon innebærer å skape mening med språk og å kunne bruke språket i formelle og uformelle sammenhenger...» for part I (p. 21).

The book has an index, indispensable for a book like this. A quick look at the concept ‘vocabulary’ for example shows that it is dealt with in a number of chapters (21 references).

In keeping with the subtitle of the book, one section of each chapter has the heading *Research-based recommendations for teaching English*. These are suggestions based on the research involved. The types of research are referred to in the first paragraph of each chapter.

Recommendations offered may be both general principles for teaching and more specific recommendations for classroom activities, probably with a tendency towards the former.

Based on research discussed in the first chapter for example, “English in Norway. A language and a school subject in transition”, the author claims that “multilingualism is today taken as a given and many scholars regard proficiency in any language as linguistic resources to be activated according to the communicative demands of different contexts” (p. 36). In other words, it might not make any difference for the individual language user whether English is considered a foreign or a second language. However, according to the author, it *will* make a difference if learners of English in a classroom situation are given the impression that some people, including learners like themselves, have fewer rights to English than others and accordingly they may be asked to mimic the language use of *native* speakers. A purpose of the recommendations for teaching on this point may therefore be to assure the learners “of their status as legitimate users of English” (p. 36).

Chapter 5 deals with pronunciation and the authors come up with recommendations of a similar kind, for instance that it could be problematic to ask students to imitate a native-speaker accent, and they suggest that “teachers can instead allow them to find an accent that allows them to be themselves in English” (p. 129).

Several books for teachers, teacher educators and student teachers are presently on the market. *Teaching English in Norwegian Classrooms. From Research to Practice* is probably most suitable for readers with a certain academic foundation in English didactics. The editors may have had this in mind in the following concluding remark: “Our goal was to create a book that can coexist with other books or articles relevant to the teaching of English in Norwegian classrooms” (p. 15).

With its ambition to infer practice from existing recent research, the book is unique in a Norwegian context, and I would add an amazing achievement.

About the reviewer

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