



# Everyday multidisciplinary

## Confessions of a mother tongue teacher educator

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### Prologue

It is summer 2003. I am attending a conference organised by the International Association for the Improvement of Mother Tongue Education<sup>1</sup> in Lisbon, Portugal. The theme of the conference is The Role of Literature in the Mother Tongue Curriculum, the sessions and presentations, however, cover all types of topics. The curriculum is discussed in relation to education policy and globalisation; teacher identity and teacher education are discussed. (Kaartinen et al. 2003, 53–54.)

In the first workshop, the speaker reveals to us that she had immediately felt at home in Lisbon after having seen the Star of David, the cross and the crescent side by side at an underground

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2014 International Association for Research in L1 Education (ARLE).

station. Reading a text is exemplified by the Jewish Talmud, a book that contains texts written at different times. Reading is not linear, the reader may move from one text to later commentary on it, and the reader is always responsible for the interpretation.

The speaker is Professor Ilana Elkad-Lehman from the College of Teacher Education in Israel. The aim of the session is teaching literature via intertextuality, based on Julia Kristeva's theory. The term intertextuality is used to synthesize Saussure's linguist semiotics with Bakhtin's dialogism (Kristeva 1980, orig. 1969). Intertextuality is later seen as a universal phenomenon that elucidates communicative interconnections between one text and another text, a text and context, and different genres or modes. Intertextuality in a broader sense is used in film, theatre and media studies. I am familiar with Kristeva's writings in structuralist linguistics, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and philosophical feminism.

The central focus of the workshop is on understanding the activity and framing of reading as it relates to the Reader Response Theory. The paradigm shift in academic literature studies from a text-centred to reader-centred approach was the basis of my doctoral dissertation (Vaittinen 1988; see also Vaittinen 2011).

Constructivism as a paradigm for teaching and learning, which places the learner in the spotlight, is often mentioned in Ilana Elkad-Lehman's introduction. She wishes, however, to legitimise associative reading, the fostering of thinking and metacognition as proposed by Vygotsky. Vygotsky is well known in all educational studies in Finland: a psychologist who developed interactive learning and instruction. I have also become familiar with Vygotsky's early work on the origin and psychology of art, as well as his theories of culture and narration in my academic studies in literature. (Vygotsky 1978; 1962.) I share Ilana Elkad-Lehman's emphasis on developing thinking and metalanguage in teaching and learning.

The reading material in the workshop comprises a storybook, a book to be read starting from the back cover and the text to be read from right to left, a book in Hebrew. The pictures and the layout of the book introduce a fairy tale or a strongly stylized

story. There is a princess on the cover and, at the end, a spider and a web look like somewhat familiar ingredients. Another story seems to be told in cartoons with speech bubbles.

The book is circulated among the workshop participants. We are asked to discuss with the person(s) next to us what familiar elements there are, what other stories this book reminds us of. In the conversation, European fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm are brought up; princesses are named, e.g. Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Rapunzel; the animal helping a girl to get a ball dress is familiar from Cinderella, the glowing garment in the end is said to bring happiness. The work of the spider signals an artist and art. There appear unexpected elements such as the princess's determination and the spider, Sigi's, boutique! Intertextual reading can be initiated in many ways: reading a fairy tale, reading as a feminist, reading a myth, reading a story of art and an artist, or as part of more extensive cultural reading.

We can see parts of the dialogue in English also, but the book is easy to read without that. Working with language, dialogue and ethics is brought up by a Chinese participant from Hong Kong, and the normative nature of language is mentioned. A Canadian participant reminds us of imagination: through literature, you can enter a world you cannot step into otherwise. Reading literature has many roles or functions, and literature is characterized by ambiguity.<sup>2</sup>

I felt at home at that international conference because the teacher educator colleague who led the workshop introduced approaches to teaching literature, and more extensively, to teaching of mother tongue with which I was already familiar. She also “walked the way she talked”, i.e. acted according to her own doctrine. There were authentic questions, dialogue and interaction among the workshop participants. (See Elkad-Lehman 2005.)

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<sup>2</sup> The book is “Sigi and the Thread Shop” (in Hebrew) by Nurith Zarchi, illustrated by Hildi Havkin (1995).

## Introduction

The story above describes my vision of mother tongue didactics and subject-specific didactics. In this chapter, my views will be presented through a narrative of a teacher educator's professional identity, which, according to Ropo (2019), is personal, social and cultural. My purpose is to explore my teaching and activities in subject teacher education at the University of Tampere with focus on the significance of reflection and research in developing autonomous teachers. (Jaatinen 2015.) The cultural context in the chapter includes the history and tradition of mother tongue teaching to which my choices and reasoning are related. I regard subject didactics as a perspective of teachership, of being a teacher.

Subject didactics comprises the knowledge and theories of the disciplines that are the basis for the subject to be taught, theories and models of education and philosophy, as well as critically evaluated historical knowledge of the traditions of the subject concerned. Subject didactics at the university is also *the knowledge domain which contains developing skills*. While participating in mother tongue subject didactic studies, for example, students practice skills which enable them to take part in professional or other encounters that require expertise in mother tongue and literature teaching. The aim is to practice the skills for themselves, not merely as a tool for external goals. The goal of education is then included in the practice, and it does not come from the outside. (Tomperi 2017.)

Studying the pedagogical practices of mother tongue and literature in teacher education also promotes living in the situation at hand, not merely preparing for the future. The goal of subject didactics is always emancipatory, because its ethical aim is to strive for the good of both the learner and the community (Grünthal 2007). Subject didactic studies also comprise explaining and exploring meanings and application of the subject in society (Rättö et al. 2018; originally Ongstad 2006; see also Krogh et al. 2016).

## History of mother tongue didactics in Finland

The history of mother tongue teaching in Finland can be traced back to the early use of the Finnish language from the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Finland was under the Swedish rule, or to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Finnish became a school subject in 1843 and the language of instruction in 1856 in the Grand Duchy of Finland (Karasma 2014). The history of school curricula from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1950s was written later (Kauppinen 1982). The Mother Tongue Teachers' Union was founded in Finland in 1948; it has published an article and a book on its history (see Mäenpää 1974; Kaipainen et al. 1998).

The history of Finnish *mother tongue didactics*, however, dates back to the 1970s. It was the period of a significant school and teacher education reform in Finland: the school system was transformed into one common basic education system, and the subject teacher education in the teacher training schools was incorporated in the universities' faculties of education.

The first academic textbook in mother tongue didactics dates back to 1986. It contains a brief history and a disposition following the traditional sections of teaching. (Kauppinen 1986.) An academic textbook on mother tongue didactics in Swedish in Finland, i.e. *Svenska med sting! Didaktisk handledning med tyngdpunkt på modersmål, litteratur och drama* (Østern 2001) also exists. It is based on modern conceptions and theories, such as the 'holistic individual', 'body, thought and emotions together', 'learning in the cultural context', 'learning as an active process', and 'dialogue in the expanded didactic space'. Anna-Lena Østern's expertise is teaching arts, about arts, through arts, in the process of arts, using drama especially (Østern 2001). Her book also serves my interest in theatre and drama education.

Heilä-Ylikallio and Østern's article on the history of mother tongue didactics (Finnish and Swedish) was published in 2012. It presents an overview of academic research in mother tongue didactics

and introduces mother tongue professionals at the university level. In the development of teaching subject didactics, several changes can be recognised: shifting from canonical thinking to the mother tongue as a cultural subject, from formalism to functionalism, from cognitive to sociocultural, from a monocultural to a multicultural perspective, and from the text reader orientation to a multimodal orientation in literary teaching. (Heilä-Ylikallio & Østern 2012.) In another article by Rättyä et al. (2017), Finnish research in mother tongue and literature in the 21st century is thoroughly surveyed. In addition, various aspects of the history of mother tongue as a school subject and some other themes have been dealt with in several articles and academic dissertations.

## Contributions of the University of Tampere

The first lecturer in mother tongue didactics in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Tampere was appointed in 1974. Anna-Liisa Mäenpää had been a lecturer at the teacher training school in Tampere since its establishment in 1962, i.e. during the period of pioneering when novel ideas were developed for the curriculum of the new comprehensive school. She was active in the Mother Tongue Teachers' Union and one of the authors of the book *Kirjallisuuskritiikki ja opetus* (Literary criticism and teaching), a sign of striving for scientification of the mother tongue didactics (Rainio 1971; Vaittinen 2011). The same trend is continued with *Tutkimus ja opetus: strukturalismia* (Research and teaching: Structuralism) which suggests common starting points to the disciplines associated with the mother tongue teacher studies at universities (Mäenpää et al. 1976; Vaittinen 2011).

Starting a new academic branch of knowledge also needs history. Anna-Liisa Mäenpää wrote an article on contemporary changes in the field and a comparison of mother tongue teaching in different

countries (Mäenpää 1974). Later, she completed a survey on the studies in the universities in Finland where she pointed out that the structure of mother tongue teacher education was fragmented. Her stand was that it should be possible to base teacher education on the national school curriculum in the faculties of humanities at universities. In the theory of mother tongue subject didactics, linguistic, pedagogical, psychological and sociological views should be combined with the general philosophy of education and the advanced studies should provide space for an interdisciplinary project to find research themes for subject didactics. (Mäenpää 1978.) She refers to Jerome Bruner who, in his early theories, emphasised that children learn language in order to communicate; meaningful language is acquired in the context of meaningful parent-infant interaction; learning scaffolded or supported by a child's language acquisition support system – following Vygotsky's socio-cultural development theory (Smith 2002).

Kyllikki Keravuori was appointed the lecturer in mother tongue didactics at the University of Tampere in 1989. She introduced the *Language through Curriculum* concept, classroom dialogue in teaching and using small groups in learning. The approach and conceptions were based on English research and development material. (Keravuori 1977; 1978.) Keravuori's doctoral dissertation *Ymmärrätkö tarkoitukses: tutkimus diskurssirooleista ja funktioista* (Do I get your point: a study of discourse roles and functions) was published in 1988. Keravuori began to apply the theory and research method of *discourse analysis*. In her study, she investigated roles in classroom discourse; the initiator was the teacher, while the pupil remained in the respondent's role. She explored classroom discourse functions, i.e. elicitation, directive and informative functions and the structures of questioning, checking and inquiring. While working in small groups, the roles were different. (Keravuori 1988.)

My predecessors, the first two university lecturers in mother tongue didactics at the University of Tampere, were active mother

tongue teachers and mother tongue teacher educators from the university teacher training school. They carried with them a great deal of silent knowledge of the school and of their profession. They were among the pioneers in the school reform (Keravuori 2004). And they actively participated in developing the curriculum through their union. They seemed to think that by being normative and mirroring the values and ideologies of society, the national curriculum will render precious pedagogical tools to teachers. Their expertise covered academic disciplines, literature, linguistics and speech communication, and they also had theoretical and methodological interests and activities that guided them when they were creating the basis for the new branch of knowledge, i.e. mother tongue didactics. Anna-Liisa Mäenpää conveyed new approaches in the humanities to teachers and teacher education. Kyllikki Keravuori was a pioneer in the field of classroom discussion research, which has become more and more prevalent in many Finnish universities, both in linguistics and in education.

## I did it my way

In my story, I can now see the significant power of Little Red Riding Hood, school plays with my sister and my neighbour's children, the city library where my mother took me and the poetry analysis that was taught at school. My family were evacuees from Karelia after the wars. Therefore, I had two languages and cultures.

I went to elementary school in the parallel school system and then grammar school. The local upper secondary school was a private school. Being in doubt what to do, my father ended up educating his daughter there. The Finnish language teacher lent me Pablo Neruda's poetry as a topic for composing an essay. I began my university studies in Finnish and Finno-Ugric languages, but progressed quicker in comparative literature. I completed my advanced studies in both. During summer, I studied education, psychology and journalism.



I learned the basics in educational sciences from Professor Erkki Lahdes. His *mastery learning* offered a meaningful method. The 1970s was time for completing the basic education reform in Finland; one of the textbooks was the Comprehensive School Committee's report from the year 1970. After my MA degree, I worked in 1974–1979 as a researcher and planner of the university education reform.

The employer was the Ministry of Education. While working with the best experts in the field, I continued my studies in education and learnt many theories and practices, especially in university pedagogy.

Later in the 1980s, I participated in a university teachers' qualification course. The theory offered was Yrjö Engeström's *theory of action* and *developmental work research* (Engeström 1987). I thought that the idea of the theory was also applicable to academic basic courses in literature. Later, I recognised *the complete learning cycle* in the guide book of the university teacher training school. Another impressive theory in university pedagogy was *cognitive psychology* as a theory of learning. In 1980, I began the *subject teacher's pedagogical studies*. I could only study in the autumn term, because I was offered an opportunity to apply in practice what I had learnt, i.e. project work in the Cultural Activity course. Then I received a scholarship for doctoral studies in the University of Uppsala. I was also a member in an early doctoral school in theatre and film research, funded by the Academy of Finland.

I completed my doctoral dissertation in literature while working as an associate professor of literature at the University of Oulu. The theoretical framework of my research was based on German reception aesthetics, phenomenological and hermeneutical philosophy. I also studied American Reader-Response research and empirical reading research in sociology and pedagogy. My doctoral thesis on comparative literature was accepted in 1988 at the University of Turku. (Vaittinen 1988; see also Vaittinen 2011). Later, I also applied the same theoretical framework to theatre research – and later to educational research. At the University of Turku, as an academic

teacher of the theatre research, I completed some research projects in contemporary theatre (Vaittinen 1992; Berg et al. 1994).

In 1994, I moved to the USA with my family to work at Indiana University for two years as a professor of Finnish language and Finnish and Finno-Ugric culture. Teaching culture there was very 'school-like'; the semester was divided into periods with defined and measurable objectives. In addition to evaluation, we had to give each student personal feedback. Discussing the principles and practices of pedagogy with the teachers of 'exotic' languages at the university was significant and fruitful.

## Synthesis and reflection

In 1996, I continued the subject teacher's pedagogical studies in Finland. I gained fresh knowledge and insight in the studies. The lecturer in mother tongue didactics, Vuokko Kaartinen at the University of Turku, introduced in her dissertation the reading process as it relates to the concept of 'active reader', following the tradition of cognitive psychology. I learnt that teaching involves immediate feedback to learners at different phases of their reading process, in accordance with socio-constructivism, and that the action research used to develop the mother tongue student teachers could be based on portfolios, a type of authentic evaluation applied to mother tongue teacher training. (Kaartinen 1996.)

My experiences as a student teacher, as well as my observations of the experiences of peer learners, helped me build a vision of the action that is based on reflection, meta-level thinking and discussion, both at school and in teacher education. Accordingly, active reading is a model for mother tongue and literary teachers' scope of actions. It can be applied to all learning skill areas as a strategy and process. In addition to process reading, the previously invented process writing becomes understandable; it is suitable for speaking and listening,

and, furthermore, processing is a tool for language use awareness. All of the different content areas can be structured into processes for teaching and learning. Strategic teaching means bringing the meta-level into the learning process, reflecting and commenting on learning while learning the content.

During my supervised teaching practice at the teacher training school in Turku, I also had an opportunity to teach in a local school for two weeks. In 1997–1998, I worked with two appreciated upper secondary school lecturers who guided me in planning courses and lessons, using textbooks and other materials, and assessing matriculation examinations. Then I felt ready to work as a mother tongue teacher educator at the University of Tampere. I considered subject teaching to be a liaison; the academic expertise of the disciplines forms the basis for the school subject and the subject didactics provides a viewpoint integrated in that expertise.

## Dialogue á la Tampere

At the University of Tampere, I was fascinated by the theme of *dialogue* in the Student Guide of the subject teacher education in the Faculty of Education. According to it, education is not possible without dialogue, because without dialogue an educator cannot know what a person to be educated needs. Dialogue is therefore both the goal and the means of education. The criticality raised by dialogue is constructive. In dialogical interaction, people are willing to listen to and understand each other, and if necessary, change their views. Dialogic skills do not emerge automatically, but we can grow into dialogue by practicing openness within our relations to the world. (Lehtovaara & Jaatinen 1994; 1996.)

Dialogue in education is associated with philosopher Martin Buber's *I–you* relationship, a person meeting another person as a unique human being (Buber 1993, orig. 1923). The dialogue in

education can also be seen through the philosophy of Mihail Bakhtin<sup>3</sup>, first developed in connection to the dialogue in Dostoyevsky's poetry. Bakhtin is known to me as a literature scholar! (Bakhtin 1981; Bahtin 1991; 1979.) In Finland, dialogue and phenomenology are often associated with the name of the psychologist and philosopher Lauri Rauhala (1978; 1983). A common denominator with my aesthetics studies in Turku, is phenomenological philosophy.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the student portfolio was introduced in subject didactic courses at the University of Tampere as an option for course completion. Reflection in portfolio work (Kaartinen 1996) is related to the idea of dialogue in teacher education. Although the formal task is to collect a sample portfolio to be presented at the end of the spring term, more important is continuing reflective work. In a narrow sense, the portfolio consists of the year's best pedagogical studies, the most significant learning experiences documented, commented and assessed, and it may also contain items from other studies, hobbies, family and friends. The framework or composition can be either a professional profile, teaching philosophy or theory of usage, strengths as a teacher, areas of development, or goals for further development; or the 'Me as a Teacher' option, which is personal, autobiographical, beginning from childhood, based on a learning diary, and extending to the future.

Traditionally, the portfolio is compiled in writing. This is because it forces student teachers to stop and shape their ideas, and because increasing the level of abstraction in writing is important for evaluating their work. Also, other types of evaluation can be used, a SWOT analysis for example. (See Virta et al. 2001.) One form of reflection in teacher education is working with metaphors (Kaartinen 2013). A metaphor for being or becoming a teacher can be a journey, but I have also seen a tuft of wool yarn and a dance as part of portfolio presentations. Portfolio discussions are student

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<sup>3</sup> In English-speaking countries the name of the Russian scholar is spelled Bakhtin. In Finnish it is spelled Bahtin.

teachers' proud presentations of their own know-how; they are the best experts in their development, and they are the agents in their lives! I have analysed the material my student teachers have produced in their portfolios to demonstrate their growth during the year of their pedagogical studies in national and international conferences (Vaittinen 2005; 2007a, b).

Research on teachership is a common denominator for us in the subject teacher education at the University of Tampere. A dissertation on the autobiographical reflective approach to foreign language learning and teaching was completed in 2003 (Jaatinen 2003; 2007). In the 2010s, two doctoral theses on the professional growth of mathematics student teachers were completed (Portaankorva-Koivisto 2010; Yrjänäinen 2011). One of the dissertations focused on the use of concepts and meta-language (Silfverberg 1999). Tero Autio's doctoral dissertation (Autio 2002) introduced his interest in curriculum studies, which is also related to subject didactics.

At the University of Tampere, I have eagerly participated in the courses for university teachers pertaining to university pedagogy, the use of computer-based technology as well as the problem-based learning (PBL) approach. PBL was first applied in the faculty of medicine and in vocational studies, and it was accepted as the basis for the curriculum in primary teacher education and early childhood education. In subject teacher education, it could be used more flexibly in collaborative working. It would serve the ideas of integration and multidisciplinary within the subject didactics of mother tongue and literature, for example, or in forming study units combining a subject, or a section of a subject, and pedagogical knowledge.

## From integration to research

In my youth, the school subject of ‘mother tongue and literature’ was called ‘Finnish’. The term ‘literature’ was included in the title in 1999, as an acceptance of the status quo. The integration of the school subject ‘mother tongue’ began in the 1970s; the term ‘linguistic knowledge’ connected the skills of reading and writing, speaking and listening. (Kaipainen 1998, orig. Ruusuvuori.) In the 1990s, development continued from this separation to ‘textual skills’ and ‘multiliteracy’. The concept of ‘text’ is broad, i.e. texts are spoken and written, fiction and fact, verbal, pictorial, audio and graphic as well as various combinations of these.

At the moment a group of researchers at the University of Tampere are investigating the concept of verbalising or the ‘*linguaging*’ of math problems and learning grammar concepts. (Joutsenlahti & Kulju 2010; Rättö 2013.) I adopted the same approach with eighth-graders. I was then supervising student teachers at the university teacher training school. (Rättö & Vaittinen 2015.) In the background, I see the idea of talking about language with the little ones (cf. Pynnönen 1996; 1998.) The approach is also suitable for working with literary reading. (cf. Oja & Vaittinen 2013.)

During the years of my career as a teacher educator, I have constructed my instruction according to the themes based on the latest theories, national curricula and material that the learning environment offers, i.e. new books, films and theatre, new research in language and language learning, literature and reading, writing and oral skills. Every year, I have had new, small-scale projects to apply different ways of teaching and learning in up-to-date situations. I feel that the instruction of subject didactics should be organized as projects that include teaching and guidance, teacher training, student teachers’ own research, a few of the ‘subject disciplines’ and co-operation with the world outside the university.

I had used *theatre discussions* as a method for performance analysis in theatre research earlier and learned about literature circles through the reading research. Teaching and study conveyed through technology was also constantly present in my work. I decided to enter into developing the reading experience by investigating the reading of young student experts, i.e. the online discussion by the members of the assessment group of the Young Aleksis Prize, organized by the Mother Tongue Teachers' Union. (Vaittinen 2008a, b, c.)

In 2009, I collected material videotaped from small group discussions of 7<sup>th</sup> grade pupils at the teacher training school. The topic of discussion was reading books of the pupils' own choice. Teaching was based on the textbook, one author of which was the teacher of the pupils, lecturer Kaarina Ahonen. In the following year, literature discussions with the same class were organized in small circles in the library and they were recorded. For the other half of the class, discussions were arranged online in computer labs in a discussion forum opened in the Moodle environment. The pupils read the French writer Michel Tournier's juvenile book *Friday and Robinson* (1977, orig. *Vendredi ou la Vie sauvage*; in Finnish *Robinson ja Perjantai* 1982). Assignments on the book were mainly in the form of questions for reading and writing at home. The pupils took notes and the goal-oriented discussion with a question or topic of discussion was then videotaped or saved digitally. For the final classroom discussion, the pupils read (at least) some chapters of the original *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe.

The integrative development of teaching and the research project were also introduced to the student teachers who had their practical training at the school, in the guidance of both the supervising lecturer at school and the university lecturer in mother tongue didactics. Student teachers conducted some of the project-related teaching and participated in the designing and implementation of the research project.

Later, the student teachers formulated a series of research themes for their short research essays. They used the data gathered together and worked in pairs or in groups of three. They were mainly interested in small group communication, and I introduced them to a Canadian-French researcher's study on various *turns of speech in literature discussions*. (Hébert 2008; 2003; Vaittinen 2011.) It was used for the analysis of both the oral discussions and the discussions held by means of technology. Students in one group used a conversation analysis known to them from their academic studies of the Finnish language.

The results indicated that working within a theme and project provides the pupils with opportunities to use their existing skills and work in small group interaction which is motivating. When pupils choose a suitable level for their tasks, they share responsibilities with each other and with the teacher(s). Project work builds bridges reaching out from school to society.

In our developmental teaching project, the teacher(s) noticed that topics relating to the young pupils' lives and their authentic questions served the assignments well. There were several branches in the oral discussions and the participants using the computers were very attentive and thoughtful. The best parts of the discussions, the topic of 'a good life', for example, were deep and philosophical. (Ahonen & Vaittinen 2011; 2012a, b; Vaittinen 2012.)

## Arts education in a broader frame

In arts education, it is essential to share experiences of art in language, either as a verbal expression, narrative, conversation, or by writing a comment. During the academic year of 2009–2010, the Sara Hildén Academy<sup>4</sup> in Tampere exhibited and worked on visual art related to

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<sup>4</sup> 'Basic education in the arts' is art education provided by the Sara Hildén Academy primarily for children and young people on an extracurricular basis, as out-of-school activities.



the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*. In the autumn of 2010, a group of 15-year-old ninth-grade pupils went to see a selection of imaginary characters in *Kalevala*, all of which were made by artists more or less their own age. The imaginary characters were studied in detail, and the pupils made preparations to write stories about them. The stories were read aloud in a meeting with the young artists who, in turn, had the opportunity to explain how they had worked based on their interpretations of the *Kalevala* stories and portrayed mythical figures. The pupils also later wrote analyses on the works of art.

According to the Finnish national curriculum, ninth-grade pupils must read the poetry of *Kalevala*. In our class, each pupil read a series of poems about the person or events he or she had been acquainted with via the new artistic interpretations of the young artists. The pupils also learned about other modern interpretations: the performances of *Fire Theater Flamma*, the comics of Kristian Huitula and Gene Kurkijärvi, and Johanna Sinisalo's novel *Sankarit* (Heroes).

The last phase consisted of small group meetings of the young artists from the Sara Hildén Academy and the pupils from the teacher training school. The topic for discussion was 'Kalevala Imagery: before and now'. The material consisted of the classics and the new interpretations of the young artists, both known by everyone.

The project showed that today's young people are skilled at working multimodally and handling texts and images in interaction with each other. School is a place where it is also possible to hold a mirror composed in art in front of young people, who are struggling with their identity issues, and give them an opportunity to find out 'alternative perspectives' and 'other worlds' – as well as to perpetuate cultural heritage.

The school creates a multi-voiced and shared learning culture in which ideas and knowledge are shared with others, division of labour is negotiated, roles are changeable and opportunities are given to observe and reflect on group activities. The school is a meeting place where constructing meanings in collaboration is possible. Art is

another mode of knowledge; through art and artistic activity various relationships are created between human beings as well as between human beings and the world. (Bruner 1986.)

## Epilogue

Research-based teacher education has existed in Finland for 40 years. In subject teacher education at the University of Tampere, the development of teachers as researchers has been adopted into the curriculum to guide student teachers to become reflective, dialogic and autonomous professionals. During the twenty years of my career as a teacher educator, I have expanded the basis of subject teacher education from reflection to research. Research orientation is a process integrated into the basic courses of the studies in education, and the research or method-oriented courses of the disciplines are studied to gain competence in teaching subject(s). The subject didactic studies and the teacher-as-a-researcher orientation are designed on the same foundation. The knowledge and methodological skills of the students provide valuable material for subject didactic research. In subject didactic research studies, the research orientation typical of the educational sciences can be extended, for example, to school ethnography and action research and especially to design-based research.

As multidisciplinary fields of knowledge, teaching and learning will only develop if the research favours mutually competing research premises and methods that challenge our dominant thought patterns but remain justifiable. Emphasising the significance of continuous reconstruction and testing of theories is important, as vital and current information is the key criterion. Supporting teacher communities to introduce new knowledge and work as learning communities is also important. Teachers need an investigative attitude towards their work; they need to study their own teaching,

utilise active pedagogical research in their work and develop their pedagogical thinking. Teachers' independent thought is liberating; one does not have to go along with trends and 'isms'.

Becoming a teacher is a complex process and teaching is a complex phenomenon – to me and to everyone! My educational and professional position is the result of my subject-specific academic expertise. The teacher as a researcher, i.e. the research orientation of subject teacher education, is a tool for me as a teacher educator, and it is part of my professional identity. I see and interpret the world through the lenses of my own subject-specific experience<sup>5</sup>. The mother tongue and literature teacher identity is living in autonomous, creative and critical future teachers.

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<sup>5</sup> Thank you, Eero Ropo, for the metaphor!

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