Sharing information through book reviews in blogs: the viewpoint of Rosenblatt's reader-response theory

Reijo Savolainen

Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences
Tampere University

Finland

Abstract

Purpose - The present study contributes to research on information sharing by drawing on the reader-response theory developed by Louise Rosenblatt. To this end, information sharing is approached by examining how bloggers communicate their reading experiences of fiction and non-fiction books.
Design/methodology/approach - The conceptual framework is based on the differentiation between efferent and aesthetic reading stances specified by Rosenblatt. The efferent stance directs attention to what is to be extracted from reading for instrumental purposes such as task performance. The aesthetic stance focuses on what is being lived through during the reading event. Rosenblatt´s framework was elaborated by specifying eight categories of efferent reading and six categories of aesthetic reading. The ways in which bloggers communicate their responses to such readings were examined by scrutinising a sample of 300 posts from two book blogs.
Findings - The bloggers mainly articulated responses to efferent reading by sharing information about the content of the reviewed books, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Responses to aesthetic reading were mainly articulated by describing how the bloggers experienced the narrative, what kind immersive experiences they had and what kind of emotions were felt during the reading process.
Research limitations/implications - As the study is explorative in nature and focusses on a sample of blog posts, the findings cannot be generalised to depict how people share their responses to efferent and aesthetic reading in social media forums.
Originality/value - The paper pioneers by examining the potential of Rosenblatt´s theory in the study of sharing information about reading experiences in book blogs. The findings demonstrate that the categories of efferent and aesthetic reading can be elaborated further for the needs of information behaviour research.

Keywords: Aesthetic reading, Blogging about books, Book blogs, Efferent reading, Information sharing, Reader-response theory

Introduction

As a form of language processing, reading is a multi-faceted phenomenon dealing with the decoding of symbols. One of the most influential research approaches to reading is the theoretical branch of reader-response theories that have been developed since the 1930s (Tracey and Morrow, 2017). These theories depart from the assumption that reader is an active agent interpreting the meaning of a literary work. Louise Rosenblatt´s (1978; 2004) reader-response theory offers a particularly relevant framework for the present study, because she conceptualizes reading as a dynamic phenomenon incorporating aesthetic, informational and communicative aspects. The above theory is pertinent to information behaviour research because it offers a novel perspective on the phenomena of information

acquisition, use and sharing. Firstly, reading can be approached as the process of acquiring cognitive-affective information and aesthetic experience from texts such as books and articles. Secondly, reading can be conceptualized as a form of information use because the decoding of symbols is based on the interpretation of signs, words and sentences. Thirdly, in Rosenblatt´s theory, reading is intertwined with writing. Her approach to phenomena of "reading for writing" opens a novel research perspective to examine how information sought and used during the reading process is shared with others by communicating one´s reading experiences. To strengthen the focus of the study, the present investigation concentrates on the last-mentioned aspect of reading.

As a major point of departure, Rosenblatt´s theory conceptualizes reading as a process in which an individual´s selective attention to text is guided by two stances or purposes: *aesthetic* and *efferent*. The aesthetic stance motivates the individual to concentrate on an ongoing reading event as a self-gratifying experience. This approach is particularly characteristic of pleasure reading that is freely chosen and is primarily conducted for enjoyment (Ross, 2004). The efferent stance prompts the individual to retain information obtained during the reading process so that information thus acquired can be used for an instrumental purpose, for example, performing a task. From this perspective, efferent reading is thus particularly relevant for studies focusing on the ways in which people seek for problem-specific information (Savolainen, 2008). Rosenblatt´s theory also approaches reading as a communicative phenomenon in that the individual can share his or her responses to aesthetic and efferent reading with other people by means of writing a book review, for example.

The main goal of the present study is to examine the potential of Rosenblatt´s theory for information behaviour research by analysing how information sought efferently and experienced aesthetically is shared with others. To this end, an empirical study was conducted by scrutinizing how responses to aesthetic and efferent reading are communicated in book reviews submitted to blogs. Such reviews offer pertinent research material because they are indicative of the ways in which people approach literary texts such as fiction and non-fiction books from the viewpoint of aesthetic and efferent reading. In the field of library and information science thus far, Rosenblatt´s theory has been utilised quite rarely. Ross (2004) drew on Rosenblatt´s ideas while investigating the features of pleasure reading. More recently, Latham (2014) made use of Rosenblatt´s framework to investigate how people experience museum objects as documents. The present study differs from the above investigations in that it approaches efferent and aesthetic reading from the viewpoint of information sharing occurring in social media. The research approach is new, and the study also contributes to research on how user-generated content is shared in social media.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. First, to give background, Rosenblatt´s theory is characterized in greater detail, and the nature of book blogs is briefly described. Thereafter, the conceptual framework and the empirical research setting will be specified, followed by the report of the empirical findings. The concluding sections discuss the research findings and reflect their significance with regard to information behaviour research.

Literature review

Rosenblatt´s reader-response theory

Rosenblatt´s theory represents one of the most significant frameworks for conceptualizing reading and writing (Sadoski and Paivio, 2005, pp. 348-349). An early version of the theory was published in 1938 in her book Literature as Exploration. Four decades later, Rosenblatt (1978) elaborated her ideas in the book titled The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work. The book draws on John Dewey´s pragmatist epistemology emphasizing the significance of transaction in the process of constructing meaning (Connell, 1996). The term transaction implies that the self of the reader and the text take on their character during the process of reading. On this basis,

Rosenblatt (1978, p. 18) locates meaning construction in the personal lived-through quality of a literary experience, making the relationship between the text and the reader central.

Rosenblatt´s most significant theoretical contribution is the specification of reader´s stances on the text. As the transaction with the text stirs up elements of the reader´s linguistic-experiential reservoir, he or she adopts a stance, that is, a selective attitude, bringing certain aspects into the centre of attention and pushing others into the fringes of consciousness (Rosenblatt, 2004, pp. 1372-1373). A stance both motivates how the reader approaches a text and determines what he or she "gets out" of a reading. The reading event falls somewhere in a continuum, determined by whether the reader adopts what Rosenblatt (2004, pp. 1372-1373) terms a predominantly aesthetic stance, or a predominantly efferent stance. The term efferent originates from the Latin word *efferre*, meaning "to carry away", while the term aesthetic - reflecting its Greek source - suggests perception through the senses, feelings, and intuitions (Rosenblatt, 2004, pp. 1372-1373).

More specifically, if a reader approaches a text seeking to enjoy its formal characteristics, rhythms, word choices, images and connotations, then that person is reading "aesthetically." The primary purpose of aesthetic reading is for readers to immerse themselves in a text and simply enjoy the reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 26). The aesthetic reader savours the qualities of the structured ideas, situations, scenes, personalities, emotions, called forth by the reading act, participating in the tensions, conflicts, and resolutions as they unfold (Rosenblatt, 1988, pp. 5-6). In contrast, efferent reading - sometimes also called "informational reading" - is motivated by the reader´ purpose to acquire information from the text and retain it after the reading event in order to complete a procedure (Woodruff and Griffin, 2017, pp. 110-111) Thus, in efferent reading, the individual is not primarily concerned with the actual reading experience. The main attention is directed to the identification and interpretation of information potentially instrumental to solving a problem or performing a task, for example.

The differentiation between aesthetic and efferent stances does not mean that the former deals with pleasure reading of fiction books while the latter only appears in the context of reading non-fiction works. Rosenblatt (2004, p. 1376) emphasizes that books of both types can be read either efferently or aesthetically. The efferent stance pays more attention to the cognitive, referential, factual, analytic, logical and quantitative aspects of meaning, while the aesthetic stance directs more attention to the sensuous, affective, emotive, and qualitative aspects (Rosenblatt, 2004, p. 1734). On the other hand, the efferent and aesthetic reading stances rarely appear in pure forms; most readings tend to fall nearer the centre of the efferent - aesthetic continuum. This is because within a particular aesthetic reading, attention may turn from the experiential synthesis to efferent analysis, as some literary judgment is passed. Similarly, in an efferent reading, a general idea may be illustrated by an aesthetically lived-through experience (Rosenblatt, 1988, pp. 6-7).

Reading is not necessarily a solitary action because the reader can articulate his or her responses to efferent and aesthetic reading and share such articulations with other people by means of writing. "Reading for writing" is particularly common in cases in which students perform literary course assignments (Rosenblatt, 1988). Depending on the nature of such assignments, the students may emphasize differently the aspects of aesthetic and efferent reading in their writings. However, as discussed below, reading for writing may also occur in other contexts such as hobbyist blogging about books (Steiner, 2010). The blogger approaches the book with the review task in mind. Again, reading for writing can be oriented by both by efferent and aesthetic stances. The blogger may approach the text efferently so that relevant information about the content of the book is retained for the writing of the review to be published in the blog. However, following Rosenblatt´s ideas, it is also possible for the bloggers to articulate their private experiences of aesthetic reading by describing how the text touched their minds and how they felt during the reading process.

The main criticism levelled towards Rosenblatt´s theory draws on the argument that the continuum of efferent - aesthetic reading ignores the aspect of critical reading. To elaborate Rosenblatt´s framework, Lewis (2000) proposed an expanded view of aesthetic reading so that the

social and political dimensions of reader response could be acknowledged in particular contexts. Similarly, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) suggested that Rosenblatt´s framework should be substantiated by adding a critical stance. It would be parallel to the aesthetic and efferent stances, and all three stances should function during our reading experience. For example, when reading a picture book about the Holocaust, the person may respond aesthetically to the story and drawings in it, efferently to the number of children who died during the Holocaust, and critically to varying perspectives on the Holocaust. However, as Cai (2008, pp. 213-214) points out, there may be misunderstandings in this regard. Rosenblatt's theory does not intentionally exclude the viewpoint of critical reading; on the contrary, it allows the incorporation of the aspect of critical evaluation in the efferent and aesthetic stances. From this perspective, there would no need for an additional stance labelled as "critical".

Another criticism is that studies drawing on Rosenblatt´s ideas have almost exclusively focused on the aesthetic stance, thus ignoring the issues specific to efferent reading (McEneaney *et al.*, 2009, p. 5). Even in those instances where there is an effort to study an efferent stance, literary narratives have remained the dominant text type, while the elaborations of the efferent stance have remained quite limited. Therefore, research adopting a one-sided view of the stance continuum may skew efforts to understand transactional theory as a general framework. However, there are a few attempts to approach efferent and aesthetic reading in a more balanced way. Most notably, Many (1991) developed rating scales indicating both aesthetic and efferent reading stances. In a related study, Many and Wiseman (1992) used a categorical system (efferent cluster, aesthetic cluster, no primary cluster) to explore the associations between the aesthetic and efferent stances. The above contributions will be returned in the methodology section while specifying the empirical research setting of the present study.

Blog readership and blogging about books

Since the 1990s, blogs have developed from online diaries to a major type of social media featuring frequent, medium-length posts, written in an informal style and reflecting an assumption of a community of regular readers, who often comment publicly on them (Head, Van Hoeck and Hostetler, 2017). For example, book blogs provide people with a creative outlet for sharing information with like-minded individuals and connecting members through shared experience. Blogging about books can also be considered as a form of serious leisure. It exemplifies a systematic pursuit of hobbyist or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling. According to Stebbins (1992, p. 3), participants in serious leiseure activities may find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience. Ideally, blogging about books meets the key criteria of serious leisure, that is, need to persevere at the activity, need to put in effort to gain skill and knowledge, and unique ethos.

So far, the number of empirical studies examining how people read blogs has remained quite low. First, there are general surveys measuring blog readership and gathering data about the frequency of blog usage. However, many of these surveys focus on demographic changes to blogging rather than changes to blog readership (e.g., Zickuhr, 2010). Second, there are more focused investigations examining how and why people read blogs and how they interact with the bloggers. For example, Sankaram and Schober (2015) found that readers of political blogs often take a critical to role the blog writer. Jarreau and Porter (2017) demonstrated that the strongest motivational factors for reading science blogs were unique information seeking and community seeking. In a study on cancer blogs Chung and Kim (2008) found that the strongest motivations for blog use among cancer patients and their companions were emotion management and information sharing. More recently, Head, Van Hoeck and Hostetler (2017) reported the results from a survey where graduates were asked if and why they used blogs as sources for continued learning purposes. The findings suggest that blogs are an affordable source of information to these readers, especially for acquiring additional

knowledge and closing skill gaps in their personal lives after college. It appeared that respondents were more likely to have read blogs during the past 12 months if they needed step-by-step instructions for hobbies, do-it-yourself household repairs, or money management and creating a personal budget. Respondents who used blogs were also more likely to use complementary sources, such as educational videos on YouTube, to meet their learning needs.

There are only a few empirical studies focusing on book blogs. Steiner (2010, p. 479) identified four main types of blogs of this type: (i) professional commercial book blogs, (ii) professional non-profit book blogs, (iii) non-professional individual book blogs, and (iv) non-professional group book blogs. Along with the growing popularity of non-professional individual book blogs, book reviews are no longer the sole preserve of experts (Yun and Yang, 2014, pp. 18-19). Anyone with an interest can actively share their opinions about books on the internet, thus contributing to the diversification of book reviews.

Interestingly, Albaugh´s (2013) study on the impact of blogging on student communication about books is one of the rare investigations making use of Rosenblatt´s (1978) reader-response theory. The findings indicate that blog simply acts as a medium for students to efferently record their transactions with books; in addition, blogs also invite responses of others. Another example of studies drawing on Rosenblatt´s theory is offered by Lee and Gilles (2012). They examined a cross-cultural blogging project conducted between American fifth-graders and Taiwanese tenth-graders. The students used a blog to correspond with each other and share their reading responses of culturally relevant picture books. The findings suggest that students gained deeper understandings of another culture, as well as the texts, as they were offered opportunities to communicate authentically with people of another culture.

Finally, based on questionnaire survey conducted in Sweden, Steiner (2010) examined the nature of book blogs. Most of them appeared to be single-writer, non-professional book blogs. The findings indicate that blogs of this type tend to have a short life span, rarely more than two years. This is because blogging about books requires time, hard work and dedication. The findings also revealed a wide variety of writing styles among the bloggers. Some of them wrote short postings about a book they have read, followed by a similar review of another book. Others preferred longer texts where they compared books they had read and discussed literary trends. Steiner (2010, p. 480) concluded that Swedish book bloggers operate with a variety of functions: reviewing, recommending, displaying, marketing and sometimes gossiping. From this perspective, book blogs can serve as notable forums for sharing information about reading experiences.

Conceptual framework and research questions

The literature review suggests that Rosenblatt´s (1978) theory holds a strong potential for the analysis of reading experiences articulated in diverse contexts such as literary courses and hobbyist blogging about books. It also appeared that book reviews published in blogs offer relevant material for the analysis of efferent and aesthetic reading. On the other hand, "aesthetic" and "efferent" as qualifiers of reading stances are abstract in nature because they depict the endpoints of a conceptual continuum. As these qualifiers appeared to be all too general for the needs of the present study, the conceptual framework was elaborated by identifying a set of subcategories describing the nature of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading.

To achieve this, the empirical studies conducted by Joyce E. Many and her colleagues appeared to be particularly useful. In a series of empirical investigations, they elaborated Rosenblatt´s categories by identifying elements constitutive of primarily efferent and primarily aesthetic responses to text (Many, 1991; Many and Wiseman, pp. 272-273; Many *et al.*, 1995). Examples of subcategories of efferent reading include What I Learned (indicating important messages or lessons learned from the story) and Retelling (summarizing what the story is about). In the above investigations, aesthetic reading was characterized by subcategories such as Associations (making connections between the

world of the text and life, either through placing themselves in the story-world or reflecting on their own real-life world in relation to the text) and Emotions Felt (expresses personal emotional reaction).

Even though the above studies date back to the 1990s, most of the subcategories of efferent and aesthetic reading identified by Many and her associates are relevant for the present investigation, due to their generic nature. However, the list of subcategories was substantiated for the needs of the present study. More specifically, a novel conceptual framework was created in close connection with the preliminary analysis of the empirical data, i.e., book reviews published in blogs. As a point of departure, a set of subcategories relevant to the analysis of blog posts were taken from the investigations conducted by Many and her associates. Thereafter, informed by the preliminary analysis of the blog posts, additional subcategories were specified to elaborate the conceptual framework so that it in sufficient detail covers the continuum of efferent and aesthetic reading.

As a result, the nature of responses to efferent reading was elaborated by identifying eight subcategories. Of them, three were derived from the study of Many and Wiseman (1992), that is, *Retelling the plot*, *Introducing characters* and *Getting ideas and learning new things*; the last-mentioned category was originally labelled as "What I Learned" in the above investigation). As the present study examines the reviews of both fiction and non-fiction books, a new sub-category, i.e., *Summarising the content* was added in order to differentiate between Retelling the plot (fiction) and describing the content of non-fiction books. Furthermore, to take into an account the specific context of reading for writing, two additional subcategories were included in the conceptual framework: *Blogger´s context* and *Putting the book in context.* Finally, the list of subcategories indicative of responses to efferent reading was substantiated by drawing on the ideas of Lewis (2000) and McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004); they proposed that Rosenblatt´s continuum should be specified by adding a critical (or evaluative) stance. However, a less radical solution was preferred in this regard. The subcategory of the *Strengths of the book* indicates a summarising positive evaluation of the book, while the category of the *Weaknesses of the book* refers to a summarising negative evaluation, respectively. Summarising evaluations of this type often incorporate recommendations for the blog readers, thus suggesting whether the book is worth reading.

The nature of responses to aesthetic reading was specified by identifying six subcategories. They were mainly derived from the studies of Many (1991), Many and Wiseman (1992) and Many *et al*. (1995). The category of Making Associations between the Story and Literary or Life Experiences (Many *et al*., 1995) was relabelled more briefly as *Making associations*. Moreover, the sub-category of Emotions Felt (Many and Wiseman, 1992) was relabelled as *Experiencing emotions*. The subcategory of Putting Self in Character's Shoes (Many *et al*., 1995) was slightly expanded by drawing on Rosenblatt´s (1988, pp. 5-6) characterization of aesthetic reading experience that may incorporate participation in event-related personal and social tensions, conflicts and resolutions. Accordingly, the above subcategory was labelled as *Identifying with characters and events.* Moreover, the construct of Hypothesizing Alternative Outcomes (Many *et al*., 1995) was relabelled as *Envisioning alternative views*. The sub-category of *Experiencing immersion* is new and it depicts the extent to which the reader is concentrated on the book. Finally, the sub-category of *Experiencing the narrative* describes how the reader experienced the ways in which the book author uses language and narrative tools.

The subcategories indicative of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading constitutive of the conceptual framework are presented in Table I.

Responses to efferent reading

- *Blogger´s context*. Provides background information to put the book review in a broader context (e.g., describes the blogger´s motive for selecting a book for review, and his or her personal approach to the reading of a book under review).
- *Putting the book in context*. Provides background information about the book and its author(s) (e.g., indicates the length of the book, the publication year of the original edition and the book author´s prior works).
- *Summarising the content*. Briefly describes the main content of the non-fiction book (e.g., characterizes the key issues discussed in the book and highlights the main conclusions).
- *Retelling the plot*. Describes the plot or storyline of the novel (e.g., depicts the main events and dramatic changes in the story).
- *Introducing characters*. Describes the characters of the novel (e.g., indicates their names, roles and mutual relationships).
- *Getting ideas and learning new things*. Identifies usable ideas and facts obtained from the book (e.g., getting insights about how to handle teenager rebellion or learning facts about health self-care practices).
- *Strengths of the book*. Presents a summarising positive judgment of the book (e.g., classifies the novel as one of the best books of the year or praises the timely content of the non-fiction book).
- *Weaknesses of the book*. Presents a summarising negative judgment of the book (e.g., concludes that the novel does not offer anything new or that the non-fiction book offers a biased approach to an issue).

Responses to aesthetic reading

- *Experiencing the narrative*. Characterizes how the blogger experienced the book author´s ways to use language and narrative tools (e.g., depicts how he or she perceived the clarity and readability of the text, the use of stylistic devices, the nature of expressions and the pace of the story).
- *Experiencing immersion*. Characterizes how the blogger became immersed in the book (e.g., characterizes the depth of immersion or ways of skipping uninteresting sections).
- *Experiencing emotions*. Describes the emotions and feelings experienced during the reading process (e.g., expressing positive or negative emotions such as joy, sympathy, fear and disgust).
- *Identifying with characters and events*. Describes how the blogger identified him or herself with the characters of the book (e.g., empathizing a character's innermost struggles or participating in event-related tensions, conflicts and resolutions described in the book).
- *Making associations*. Describes connections between the world of the text and life (e.g., by placing him or herself in the story-world or reflecting one´s own real-life in relation to the text).
- *Envisioning alternative views*. Reflects alternative outcomes (e.g., imagines a different end of the story or speculates how an issue could have been approached differently in a non-fiction book).

Table I. The conceptual framework: the categorization of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading shared in the book blog posts.

The conceptual framework depicted in Table I suggests that the book blogger´s responses to efferent reading can be depicted by eight subcategories. First, such responses put the book review in a broader context by offering background information about the criteria by which the book was chosen for review. Moreover, the blogger may introduce book and its author(s). Responses to efferent reading also entail the summary of the main content of non-fiction book, retelling the plot of a novel and/or the description of person characters. The blogger may also report what he or she learned from the book. Finally, responses to efferent reading can incorporate an overall assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. Responses to aesthetic reading can be articulated by characterizing how the blogger experienced the narrative. Moreover, central to aesthetic reading is the description of how deeply the blogger immersed in the book and what kind of emotions he or she experienced during the reading process. Finally, the blogger may describe how he or she identified him or herself with the characters of events, what kind of associations of the text with world were found, as well as how he or she speculated about the alternative outcomes of a book.

Drawing on the above framework, the present study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1. How are the responses to efferent and aesthetic reading distributed quantitatively in the book reviews published in blog posts?
- RQ2. How do bloggers articulate their responses to efferent reading communicated in such reviews?
- RQ3. How do the bloggers articulate their responses to aesthetic reading communicated in book blog posts?

The answer to the first research question offers an indicative quantitative picture of the nature of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading reported by the bloggers. Answers to research questions 2 and 3 elaborate the above picture qualitatively by specifying how the bloggers articulate their responses to efferent and aesthetic reading in book reviews shared with potential readers through blog posts.

Empirical data and analysis

As the present study is explorative in nature and thus does not aim at statistically representative picture of book bloggers´ responses to efferent and aesthetic reading, the investigation was focussed on two blogs. One of them was selected from the list of *Top 100 UK Book Blogs and Websites for Book Readers & Authors* (https://blog.feedspot.com/uk_book_blogs/) and the other from *Top 25 Nonfiction Blogs & Websites for Book Writers and Readers* (https://blog.feedspot.com/nonfiction_blogs/). These two blogs were selected for two main reasons. First, as suggested by their inclusion in the list of top blogs, the book reviews published in these forums are indicative of high quality and the blogger´s dedication to the hobby. Second, the blogs offer reviews of both fiction and non-fiction books. One of the bloggers - henceforth referred to as blogger A - classified her book reviews into the categories of fiction and non-fiction. Her classification was used in the present study while differentiating between books of the above types. As the other blogger - henceforth referred to as blogger B - reviewed non-fiction books only, there was no need to categorize her blog posts in this regard.

To examine Rosenblatt´s (2004, p. 1376) idea that the aesthetic and efferent stances can be adopted to reading both fiction and non-fiction books, a sample of 150 blog posts containing reviews of fiction books and 150 posts focusing on the review of non-fiction books was taken. More precisely, the sample of 150 fiction book reviews was taken from the posts submitted by Blogger A within the period of 2012-2018. To this end, an attempt was made to include an equal number of items in the yearly subsamples. Based on systematic sampling, 20 book reviews from the years 2012 and 2013, and 22 reviews from the years 2014-2018 were selected. For example, from the list of 66

fiction book reviews written by Blogger A in 2012, every third item - beginning from the oldest post submitted in January 2012 - was taken until the subsample size, i.e., 20 was reached.

The sample of 150 non-fiction book reviews include all the 78 reviews written by blogger A within the period of 2012-2018. The non-fiction sample was complemented by taking 72 book reviews submitted by blogger B within the period of 2012- 2018. To ensure the comparability of reviews submitted by bloggers A and B, the subsample of 72 reviews written by Blogger B was confined to general non-fiction books with similar topics or themes preferred by Blogger A, that is, biography, health, history, language and writing, parenting, pregnancy, politics and social issues. The subsample of 72 reviews was formed differently in that max. 10 most recent reviews per topic were included. This criterion was applied because taking systematic subsamples with equal number of reviews per year would have resulted in the overrepresentation of reviews focussed on biographies and health-related books, at the expense of works discussing topics such as parenting and social issues. This approach slightly favoured book reviews published within the period of 2016-2018. However, the subsample of 72 items is relevant for the purpose of the present study because the blog posts will not be analysed on the basis of their submission dates.

Although the sample of non-fiction book reviews was taken from two different blogs and the subsamples were formed somewhat differently, the reviews of both fiction and non-fiction books appeared to be quite similar with regard to their length and structure. The length of the blog posts ranged from 150 to 850 words. On average, a review of a non-fiction book contained about 450 words, while the reviews of fiction books were somewhat shorter, that is, about 400 words. This difference is mainly due to more detailed description of the content of non-fiction books. The reviews of both fiction and non-fiction books were structured quite similarly. Usually, the review began with introductory notions offering information about the blogger´s and the book´s context, followed by the summary of the book´s main content or the novel´s plot. Thereafter, responses to aesthetic reading were depicted and new things learned from the book were highlighted. The review ended with a summarising judgment, accompanied by recommendations for the potential readers about the value of the book.

The sample of 300 book reviews appeared to be sufficient for the needs of an explorative study because the sample allowed an indicative quantitative picture of the bloggers responses to efferent and aesthetic reading and a detailed qualitative analysis of how such responses were articulated in the blog posts. As the sample became saturated, it is evident that the analysis of additional book reviews written by bloggers A and B would not have essentially refined the qualitative picture of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading.

The blog posts were first downloaded into a separate Word file and equipped with identifiers running from F-1 to F-150 for fiction books and from NF-1 to NF-150 for non-fiction books. The material was then read several times to obtain an overview. Thereafter, the data were coded by making use of the list of subcategories specified in Table I above. In the coding, a sentence (or sentences) representing a subcategory, for example, Retelling the plot was equipped with a single code when it appeared for the first time in the blog post. Other sentences indicating the same subcategory were simply ignored. Because the study is explorative in nature and does not aim at statistically representative generalizations of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading, the requirement of the consensus on coding decisions based on interrater reliability can be compromised without endangering the reliability of the exploratory study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 64), check-coding the same data is useful for the lone researcher, provided that code–recode consistencies are at least 90%. Following this guideline, check-coding was repeated, and the initial coding was carefully refined until there were no anomalies.

The material was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, to get an indicative quantitative picture of responses to efferent and aesthetic reading, the distributions of the codes assigned to subcategories specified in Table I were calculated by means of descriptive statistics. Thereafter, the analysis was elaborated by means of qualitative content analysis. It focused on the

ways in which the bloggers articulated their responses to efferent and aesthetic reading. More specifically, the constant comparative method was used to capture the variety of articulations constitutive of such responses (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For example, in the analysis of responses to efferent reading, sentences describing the blogger´s context were scrutinized by identifying similarities and differences in the ways in which the blogger´s explained their motives for selecting a book for review. Similarly, in the analysis of responses to aesthetic reading, the attention was directed to the similarities and differences regarding the ways in which the bloggers depicted their experiences of immersion or emotions felt during the reading process, for example.

Even though the book bloggers are expected to be well aware of the fact that their posts will become publicly available, both bloggers were contacted by-email in order to obtain permission to the use of their posts in the present study. Blogger B replied affirmatively, while no answer was obtained from blogger A. Nevertheless, given that her blog is publicly available, the blog posts were used similar to blogger B. When using the illustrative extracts taken from blog posts, they are referred to using neutral identifiers such as F-42 and NF-145. The identifiers primarily serve as technical tools indicating the repertoire of illustrations used in the analysis and separating the reviews of fiction books from the evaluations of non-fiction works. On the other hand, such identifiers do not necessarily protect the anonymity of the bloggers. Their individual names may be identified by conducting Google searches on a few consecutive words copied from the illustrative extracts. In the final end, however, it is unlikely that occasional Google searches of this kind would give rise to an additional problem threatening the privacy of the bloggers. At most, searches such as these would disclose their first names but this information is already publicly available in their blogs.

Findings

Quantitative overview

From the quantitative point of view, the bloggers reported more frequently their responses to efferent reading. This finding is based on the distribution of the codes (n = 1597) assigned to subcategories specifying the responses to efferent and aesthetic reading. Overall, three codes out of four indicated responses to efferent reading. The quantitative findings are summarised in Table II.

	Fiction (n=903)	Non-fiction (n=694)
	%	%
Response to efferent reading	74.2	77.9
Introducing characters	16.1	4.8
Summarizing the content	15.7	21.6
Strengths of the book	13.7	18.2
Putting the book in context	12.2	9.5
Blogger´s context	10.2	11.8
Weaknesses of the book	5.4	4.8
Getting ideas and learning new things	0.9	7.2
Response to aesthetic reading	25.8	22.1
Experiencing the narrative	11.7	13.3
Experiencing immersion	5.4	5.0
Identifying with characters and events	3.8	1.7
Experiencing emotions	2.0	1.0
Envisioning alternative views	1.9	0.4
Making associations	1.0	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Table II. The percentage distribution of codes assigned to responses to efferent and aesthetic reading.

As Table II indicates, the share of codes assigned to responses to efferent reading was quite equal in the case of fiction books (74.2%) and non-fiction books (77.7%). Consequently, there were no remarkable differences between the shares of codes assigned to responses to aesthetic reading: 25.8% for fiction and 22.1% for non-fiction books. Overall, the quantitative results support Rosenblatt´s (2004, p. 1376) idea that fiction and non-fiction books can be read both aesthetically and efferently. As expected, the bloggers preferred the efferent stance because they were preparing themselves for the writing of the book review.

A more detailed analysis of the distribution presented in Table II reveals that in the case of both fiction and non-fiction books, the description of their content occupied a major role in responses to efferent reading. The bloggers retold the novel´s plot or summarised the main content of the non-fiction book. Unsurprisingly, the reviews of fiction books differed from the characterization of non-fiction works in that the former focused more strongly on the description of person characters. Responses to efferent reading also manifest themselves in text portions in which the bloggers offered background information about their motives for selecting a book for review. Moreover, responses to efferent reading were depicted by providing background information about the books and their authors; this element was somewhat more frequent in the review of fiction books. The clearest difference deals with the extent to which to which the bloggers reported of new things learned from book reading. Non-fiction works were more often referred to in this regard (7.2% of the codes), while the share of codes assigned to fiction books was marginal (0.9%). Finally, responses to efferent reading manifested themselves in the positive or negative summarising judgments of the reviewed books. Overall, these assessments emphasized the strengths of the books, while the share of critical evaluations remained quite low. A closer analysis of the summarising evaluations of 150 fiction books revealed that 71.7% of them were positive and 28.3% negative, while the positive judgments of non-fiction books (79.2%) were slightly more common than the critical assessments (20.8%).

Responses to aesthetic reading mainly described how the bloggers experienced the narrative. Of the codes assigned to the fiction book reviews, 11.7% dealt with this element, while the

share of this subcategory was somewhat higher in the reviews of non-fiction books, i.e., 13.3%. Responses to aesthetic reading were also characterized by the attention devoted to the immersive aspects of reading and identifying the characters and events. In this regard, no remarkable differences were found between the reading of fiction and non-fiction books, however. The same applies to other responses to aesthetic reading, that is, emotions experienced during the reading process, as well as the associations made between the book and real-world and speculations on how a novel or a non-fiction book could have been written from an alternative point of view.

Articulating responses to efferent and aesthetic reading

This section answers research questions 2 and 3 by communicating the findings of the qualitative content analysis. The results will be presented by starting from the articulations of responses to efferent reading, followed by the analysis of the aesthetic reading experiences. Both fiction and non-fiction books will be discussed within these contexts, thus following Rosenblatt´s (2004, p. 1376) idea that books of diverse kind can be read both efferently and aesthetically. The findings will be illustrated by taking extracts from the book reviews.

Responses to efferent reading

Blogger´s context

To provide background information, the bloggers explained what motivated them to write the blog post and how they selected the books for review. The analysis revealed that the bloggers take the review tasks seriously by attempting to read the books carefully. The intention of "reading for writing" is exemplified by the notion made by blogger A; she characterized her approach to Samantha Schweblin´s fiction book Fever Dream.

Fever Dream is very short and can easily be read in under two hours which is just as well because, unusually for me, I have had to read it twice in order to review it. I don't think I absorbed it properly the first-time round. (F-124)

The motives for selecting books for review varied widely. Sometimes, the motive originated from external factors such as an invitation to review a book delivered by a publisher. The strongest motivator appeared to be the personal interest in the works of individual authors who occupy a special place in the blogger´s preference list. Therefore, every novel book written by such authors will be read with a particular interest.

I love 'The Secret History' by Donna Tartt which is one of my all-time favourite books and also really enjoyed 'The Little Friend' so one of the books I had been looking forward to reading the most is her new novel 'The Goldfinch' which I recently received as a Christmas present. Given that Tartt only publishes novels approximately once a decade, I expect nothing less than Great Things from her work. I can't remember the last time I had such high expectations for a book. (F-49)

Another major factor triggering the reading interest is the fact that an author has received a prize, thus indicating high quality of literary work. In fiction book markets in particular, shortlisted books or works having obtained recognition in the form of prizes are found particularly interesting. This applies to fiction books in particular. The motive for review can also be triggered by situational factors such as coming across with a book while browsing library collection. Another important factor affecting the selection of a book for review is the blogger´s "to be read" list indicating his or her reading preferences or the ambition to systematically familiarise oneself with classic books.

Sometimes, the motive for reading fiction books may arise out of curiosity, for example, willingness to familiarise oneself with books that are known to be demanding to read and difficult to review. Thomas Pynchon´s novel 'V.' was mentioned as an example of "challenging" books of this type (F-70).

Similarly, the bloggers offered contextual information to make it understandable why a non-fiction book was chosen for review. Again, the personal interest in the book´s topic appeared to be the primary motive, and it was strengthened by the positive book reviews published in prestigious forums.

Rachel's first book, Girl, Wash Your Face, has made headlines and is a #1 New York Times Bestseller. I have not read the first book so I can't compare it to this one, but I found the second book, Girl, Stop Apologizing, very good. (NF-95)

Another strong motive to read and review non-fiction books was the need to familiarise with economically and culturally important topics dealing with living in today´s society. In some cases, topics of this kind may be related to the blogger´s university studies providing background for the understanding of the complex issues of contemporary politics and economy. Finally, non-fiction books were read and reviewed because they were dealing with hobbies such as writing and pet care.

Putting the book in context

The reviewed books were often introduced by providing background information about their genre and characterizing the author(s) prior works. In the simplest case, just a few basic facts were offered.

'Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow' is the follow-up to the hugely successful 'Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind' by Yuval Noah Harari. (NF-68)

A special feature of reviews published in book blogs is that the blogger can insert hyperlinks to networked resources providing additional information about the book. Sometimes, references were made to other reviews published in newspapers or television programmes shedding additional light upon an author`s career.

For another perspective of Spark's life, I also recommend watching the BBC Four documentary 'The Many Primes of Muriel Spark' presented by Kirsty Wark and broadcast earlier this year (it's no longer on BBC iPlayer but is available on YouTube). (F-137)

Efferent reading also manifested itself in the characterization of the book author´s biography. To achieve this, the blogger has to take additional pains to search background information and summarize it for the readers.

Raymond Radiguet was just 20 years old when he died from typhoid fever in 1923 having written just one play, two short novels and a selection of poetry during his all too brief life. Based on the promise and precocious talent shown in 'The Devil in the Flesh' written between the ages of 16 and 18, Radiguet could easily have gone on to be just as well-known as other French literary masters had he lived. (F-39)

The characterizations of reviewed books can also be based on the comparison of works of different authors representing similar literary style. For example, 'Revolutionary Road' by Richard Yates was described as reminiscent of 'Stoner' by John Williams) (F-116). The reviewed book was also introduced by describing how it is related to other works of the same author. Characterizations

such as these may incorporate recommendations for the blog readers about the order in which the books should be read.

Although it is not entirely essential to have read 'Bad Science' (by Ben Goldcare) before tackling 'Bad Pharma', it probably does help to take a look at it first as 'Bad Science' clarifies some of the more general issues surrounding evidence-based medicine and the misuse of statistics and data. (NF-12)

Retelling the plot, describing characters and summarising the main content

A significant part of responses to efferent reading was occupied by text portions in which the bloggers retold a novel´s plot or summarised the main content of a non-fiction book. Usually, the plots were retold by using a few sentences or a text paragraph.

'The Goldfinch' (by Donna Tartt) tells the story of Theo Decker, a thirteen-year old boy who survives a terrorist attack in a New York art gallery which kills his mother. On his escape from the ruined building, he takes a small, mysterious painting by Carel Fabritius called The Goldfinch which ultimately draws him into the murky criminal underworld on a journey through New York, Nevada, back to New York, and finally to Amsterdam. (F-49)

Sometimes, the bloggers faced difficulties in trying to retell the plot without disclosing too much because it might spoil the reading experience of those potentially interested in the book. Retelling of the plot was often associated with the description of the characters of the novel. This is unsurprising because novels tend to depict what happens to people with different roles.

Maurice is a slippery antihero and his psychopathic behaviour oscillating between charming and ruthless is believably portrayed by Boyne even if his crimes end up becoming a bit far-fetched towards the end. (F-143)

The summaries of the non-fiction books were written in a more straightforward manner because there is no need to be afraid of the "spoilers". The content of the summaries varied widely, depending on the topic. Usually, a few sentences were considered good enough to describe the book.

"The Mommy MD Guides" cover common pregnancy and parenting concerns and then are followed up with quotes from actual doctors who are moms. Each book has more than 900 tips from 60 or 70 doctors. (NF-140)

Getting ideas and learning new things

Responses to efferent reading also manifested themselves in the bloggers´ articulations describing ideas obtained or new things learned from the books. Unsurprisingly, this element was more frequent in the reviews of non-fiction books. Nevertheless, novels may offer ideas that help to approach social issues such as children´s welfare in a new light.

(The Children Act by Ian McEwan). *The story draws on details of real cases and the title refers to the 1989 Children Act which demands that Fiona's ruling must be based on the interests of the child's welfare. As a result, 'The Children Act' raises a whole host of thought-provoking medical, ethical and legal questions about the place of religion in the law and rulings which affect those so close to adulthood.* (F-59)

The repertoire of new things learned from non-fiction books was broad, ranging from pharmacy to introversion as a psychological feature. There were also a number of specific topics which the reading of the non-fiction books helped to understand better.

(Shakespeare: His Work and His World by Michael Rosen). *I really liked the explanations of bits of text from Shakespeare's books. I always had a hard time understanding how he wrote and the books explanations were very helpful. I also learned what most of the plays are about which I didn't know but always wondered.* (NF-115)

Strengths: positive assessments of books

As a part of reporting their responses to efferent reading, the bloggers presented summarising judgments of the strengths and weaknesses of the books they had read. Most assessments of fiction as well as non-fiction books were positive. Positive evaluations of fiction books were articulated at diverse levels of generality. Often, just a general level judgment praising the book was expressed by drawing on the blogger´s impressions of the book.

'The Heart's Invisible Furies' (by John Boyne) is among the best books I have read so far this year. (F-130)

The strengths of the books were often explicated in connection with other contextual elements of efferent reading, for example, retelling of the plot and the description of the novel´s characters. In this context, the blogger may praise a riveting plot or the ways in which the roles of key characters are presented. Positive evaluations were sometimes justified by comparing the novels of the same author. Alternatively, the comparison was made by referring to the works of diverse authors representing the same genre, for example, 'Lucky Jim' by Kingsley Amis and 'Cold Comfort Farm' by Stella Gibbons (F-5). Positive evaluations of non-fiction books devoted attention to the content of the work in particular. Usually, in evaluations such as these, the depth of analysis and the author´s expertise were praised.

'Another Day in the Death of America' (by Gary Younge) is by far one of the most powerful non-fiction books I have read this year, carefully balancing thoughtful and astute analysis with human poignancy. (NF-55)

Weaknesses: critical evaluations of books

The bloggers seldom presented negative judgments. This may simply be due to the fact that bloggers intentionally avoid reviewing books which they deem of lesser value. The critical evaluations were mostly focused on the content of the book. Often, the critique was directed to overly long novels with "far too meandering" plots and the loss of focus (F-88). Many of the negative evaluations also took a critical view on the credibility of the plot and characters.

(May We Be Forgiven by A. M. Homes). *I also didn't warm to any of the characters and I think this was because the dysfunctional nature of Harry's family life was stretched beyond real believability. To me, the plot(s) just became farcical and absurd rather than funny and insightful as all good satire should be.* (F-36)

Negative evaluations of non-fiction books were rare. In most cases, the critique was directed to a biased approach adopted by the author or the untimely content.

Even though 'The Women Who Shaped Politics' (by Sophy Ridge) was only published a few months ago, the outcome of the snap general election held in June means that the context of the final chapter about Theresa May already feels quite out-of-date now that she is in a much-weakened position politically. (NF-64)

Responses to aesthetic reading

From the quantitative point of view, the bloggers articulated less frequently their responses to aesthetic reading. On the other hand, such responses tend to be more interesting from the viewpoint of qualitative analysis because they offer a more nuanced picture of the books reviewed by the bloggers.

Experiencing the narrative

Most of the blogger´s responses to aesthetic reading focused on the ways in which they experienced the narrative. This category is quite broad because it encompasses a variety of impressions and subjective judgments of the ways in which the book author uses language. Judgments of this type may concern the extent to which the author has succeeded to create a credible plot of a novel or how clearly he or she has analysed complex political issues in a non-fiction book. Therefore, in the responses articulated by the bloggers, both positive and critical assessments were presented. However, different to summarising positive or negative judgments reviewed above, the descriptions of experiencing the narrative focused on a specific feature of the text, not the book as a whole. One of the aspects of experiencing the narrative deals how the book authors use the potential of linguistic expressions, thereby offering novel viewpoints to the ways in which language can be used creatively to describe reality.

(Autumn by Ali Smith). *As with 'The Accidental' and her Baileys Prize-winning novel How to be both, Smith's signature fragmented prose style is dominated by inventive wordplay based on rhymes and puns and varied experimentation with language, form and structure.* (F-93)

The articulations depicting how the bloggers experienced the narratives of non-fiction books appeared to be more straightforward. The main attention was devoted to the clarity of writing. Positive assessments praised the depth of analysis, as well as clearly structured content of the books.

(Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow by Yuval Noah Harari). *Despite the broad subject matter, Harari finds specific and relevant examples to illustrate his ideas and theories, some of which are quite provocative and controversial. This adds some colour to what could otherwise have been a very dry text.* (NF-68)

However, the narratives were not always experienced positively. For example, the author´s verbose writing style was sometimes criticized.

(The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama by David Remnick). *For me, the middle section about his early career definitely dragged. This was the point when I really started to wish that political biographies were a more manageable length ... reading a 600 page tome often requires an awful lot of commitment.* (NF-5)

Experiencing immersion

Closely related to responses of the above type, experiences of immersion are important elements of aesthetic reading because they indicate how an individual concentrates on the book during the reading process. The experiences of immersion were reported in more detail while recalling the reading of fiction books.

(The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt). *I found myself reading it very slowly. I was lucky I had the Christmas holiday to languish over it. I found the story and the characters completely captivating. Reading 'The Goldfinch' was a knackering but immensely satisfying experience.* (F-49)

Deeply immersive reading experiences of this kind appeared to be rare. In fact, the bloggers reported more often how an intensive reading process was interrupted or changed to browsing, due to boring text portions or obscure plot.

(V. by Thomas Pynchon*). I was fine for the first 150 pages and then I hit a wall. I persevered for another 100 pages or so before accepting that I wasn't going to finish it.* (F-50)

The bloggers also recalled their immersive experiences of reading non-fiction works. Similar to reading fiction books, these descriptions were closely related to the impressions of the writing style, particularly the degree to which the authors could express their thoughts and ideas in a clear fashion. Again, the bloggers devoted more attention to factors hindering an immersive reading experience. This was often due to the difficult topic or the verbose writing style of the author.

(I'm Not Really Here by Tim Allen). *But a lot of the book is philosophical thinking and talking about quantum physics and I just didn't want to read that. I don't mind a little philosophy but there was heavy quantum physics talk and especially at the end, there was SEVENTEEN pages of a letter from someone to Tim that goes deep into Quantum talk. I skimmed it, it was so boring.* (NF-116)

Experiencing emotions

Emotions experienced during the reading process represent significant responses to aesthetic reading. Somewhat surprisingly, responses of this type contained no explicit references to positive emotions and feelings such as delight, gratitude and joy. However, there were indirect indications of positive feelings such as "I love 'The Secret History' by Donna Tartt which is one of my all-time favourite books and also really enjoyed 'The Little Friend' (F-49). Phrases such as "I love" and "I really enjoyed" are difficult to interpret because they may mean that the blogger generally liked the book, without identifying particular moments of enjoyment, however. In contrast, there were several indications of negative emotions experienced during the reading process. This may be due to the fact that strong emotions such as frustration, sadness and repulsion are recalled better.

(Little Egypt by Lesley Glaister). *Although I wouldn't classify this book as part of the horror genre, it has a gruesome and bizarre ending which will leave you feeling very unsettled.* (F-43)

Overall, the role of affective experiences was less prominent in the articulations of aesthetic reading of non-fiction books. Again, the bloggers mainly reported experiences of negative emotions. This is mainly due to the topics of the non-fiction books chosen for review.

(Dark Chains by LaTasha "Tacha B." Braxton). *I've read other memoirs of those raised in terrible conditions but LaTasha's story was just appalling. Reading her story made me pray for those who have been or are still living in similar conditions. That's how much it moved me.* (NF-112)

Identifying with characters and events

The bloggers also shared their responses to aesthetic reading by depicting how they identified themselves with the characters of a novel or participated in the event-related tensions, conflicts and resolutions described in a book. Experiences of this kind were both positive and negative in nature. Sometimes, due to the ambiguous nature of the character, the experiences identification and participation appeared to be difficult to express in detail. Moreover, the indications of sympathy or antipathy towards the characters may be somewhat conflicting.

(4 3 2 1 by Paul Auster). *Despite the varying outcomes and events which take place, the four versions of Archie Ferguson and his friends and family did sort of merge into one after a while, although I felt differing amounts of empathy for certain characters depending on what was happening to them.* (F-139)

To a lesser extent, experiences of identification were articulated in the reviews of non-fiction books. Again, the book´s topic was a decisive factor when the bloggers reflected the texts in relation to their own life experiences.

(What You Can Learn from Your Teenager by Jean-Pierre Kallanian). *The unique perspective on teenagers made perfect sense. I can remember being a teenager, and my preteens act like teenagers already in some ways, so I can see myself having similar problems and see my kids thinking in similar ways.* (NF-137)

Making associations between the text and the world

The bloggers´ responses to aesthetic reading rarely included evaluations of how the things described in books correspond to the realities of everyday life. Nevertheless, fiction books may create interesting associations between imagined events of climate change and the real-world processes of global warming, for example.

(Flight Behaviour by Barbara Kingsolver). *Kingsolver's story is convincingly told. The reader won't feel blinded by the science of climate change, but it is also impossible to come away unaffected by it after reading the novel. Just like with The Poisonwood Bible, I felt that Kingsolver had a very clear message, yet still managed to add extra nuances to the story to prevent it from becoming too simplistic and predictable.* (F-25)

In the reviews of non-fiction books, the bloggers seldom reflected the associations between the text and real-world circumstances.

(Catch Me If You Can by Frank W. Abagnale). *It is also easy to forget that Abagnale did all of his tricks in an age before CCTV, the internet, routine background checks, chip and pin machines, national databases, microchips in passports, GPS and so many other technological devices which help prevent this sort of crime. In today's less trusting and more security-conscious society, Abagnale's methods and disguises just would not work.* (NF-7)

Envisioning alternative approaches to novels and non-fiction books

Finally, responses to aesthetic reading dealt with the ways in which the bloggers pondered alternative storylines of novels or critically reflected how a non-fiction book could have been written better by placing emphasis on different things. Speculations of this type mostly focused on fiction books;

typically, the bloggers envisioned how overly long texts could have been condensed. Moreover, they speculated how a novel´s plot could have been written otherwise.

(The Good Liar by Nicholas Searle). *The story would have been more convincing if the main characters had been younger, perhaps in their sixties. However, the plot was hinged on the very particular historical context of the Second World War while the modern part of the story wouldn't have worked without the Internet meaning that the characters' ages couldn't be amended.* (F-96)

The attempts to envision alternative approaches to non-fiction books were rare indeed. This may be due to the fact that questioning the conclusions drawn by the book author - to be credible in the eyes of blog readers - would require extra efforts from the blogger, for example, gathering competing evidence from research articles.

Discussion

Rosenblatt´s reader-response theory provides a novel perspective on reading as a transactional process of information acquisition, use and sharing. Her theory explains how reading is guided by aesthetic and efferent stances on the text and how the reader´s responses to the text can be analysed by focussing on the written articulations presented by the readers. The present study examined the potential of Rosenblatt´s theory in the context of blogging about books. The main point of departure was the assumption that book reviews published in blog posts articulate responses to efferent and aesthetic reading and that such reviews serve the ends of sharing information about the content of the book, as well as depicting aesthetic reading experiences.

The present investigation offers two main contributions to information behaviour research. First, Rosenblatt´s continuum of efferent - aesthetic reading was elaborated by developing a conceptual framework which identifies a set of subcategories relevant to empirical research. The framework enables a detailed study of how readers articulate their responses to efferent and aesthetic reading. Although the framework was developed for the analysis of hobbyist book reviews published in blogs, the framework may also be used in other contexts such as reporting reader responses in literature courses. Second, the potential of the conceptual framework was tested in an explorative empirical study focusing on a sample of 300 book reviews downloaded from two book blogs. The findings shed additional light on how bloggers acting as non-professional literary gatekeepers share information about books (Steiner, 2010).

More specifically, the quantitative findings suggest that book bloggers predominantly articulate responses to efferent reading. On average, three codes out of four assigned to the empirical data focused on efferent reading. This emphasis may be due to the self-imposed requirement to write an informative book review in which the main attention is directed to the description of the main content of the book, rather than reporting one´s private responses to aesthetic reading. Quantitatively, there were no remarkable differences between responses to reading fiction and non-fiction books. Responses to efferent reading were somewhat more frequent in the context of non-fiction books, while responses to aesthetic reading were slightly more common in the context of reading fiction books.

The qualitative analysis refined the above picture of the ways in which responses to efferent and aesthetic reading are articulated in book reviews. The articulations of responses to efferent reading can be made intelligible in two related ways. First, such articulations are indicative of the ways in which bloggers read the book with the future review task in mind. To this end, the bloggers devote attention to contextual issues such as the criteria by which the book was chosen for review. Moreover, they approach the text efferently to be able to characterise the book content and assess its strengths and weaknesses, thus suggesting to blog readers whether the book is worth reading. Second, responses to efferent reading are indicative of useful information obtained from the

book, particularly in cases in which the blogger chose it for review for instrumental reasons such as the need to learn new things about health self-care. The qualitative findings highlight that the main reason for the blogger to choose a book for review is personal interest in the works of individual authors or book topics, followed by lists of books-to-be-read and the need to familiarise with award-winning books. Responses to efferent reading also indicate that one of the most demanding part of the review task is to provide sufficiently detailed information about the book content and formulate a well-founded summary judgment of the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

The qualitative findings highlight that responses to aesthetic reading primarily offer information about how the bloggers experienced the narrative, most notably the book author´s way to use language and construct the novel´s plot. Responses to aesthetic reading are also shared by characterizing emotions experienced during the reading process. Somewhat surprisingly, the emotional experiences were predominantly negative. Similarly, more attention was devoted to factors hindering an immersive reading experience in comparison to positive, deeply immersive experiences. Finally, the bloggers reported aesthetic reading experiences related to identifying with the characters and events. As the book reviews were descriptive in nature, they rarely articulated responses to aesthetic reading resulting in the imagination of alternative approaches to fiction books. Similarly, the reviews of non-fiction books seldom suggested alternative viewpoints to the issues discussed in the book. This may be due to the fact that the provision of alternative approaches would require extra work from the blogger, for example, the analysis of comparative evidence gathered from other sources.

Due to the paucity of similar studies, the novelty value of the empirical findings is difficult to evaluate. For example, Ross (2004) drew on Rosenblatt´s ideas while investigating the features of pleasure reading but her findings almost exclusively dealt with reading guided by the aesthetic stance. As aptly criticized by McEneaney et al. (2009, p. 5), the elaborations of the efferent stance have remained quite limited, thus resulting in a one-sided view of the stance continuum and skewing efforts to understand Rosenblatt´s theory as a general framework. This bias is also evident in prior studies on book blogging informed by Rosenblatt´s theory. For example, Albaugh´s (2013) investigation of the impact of blogging on student communication about books did not specify the nature of efferent reading. The same applies to the study of Lee and Gilles (2012) focussing on the cross-cultural book blogging project conducted between American and Taiwanese students.

From the perspective of information behaviour research, the features of efferent reading are particularly relevant for studies examining how people seek and use problem-specific information. In this context, one of the issues largely neglected in prior research deals with the connections between (i) information seeking, (ii) information use, (iii) problem solving and (iv) decision making (Kolarić, Cool and Stričević, 2018; Lopatovska, 2007). In general, information seeking deals with the identification, selection and accessing of potentially useful sources, while information use refers to physical and mental incorporation of the found information into one's prior knowledge (Wilson, 2000). Problem solving involves finding the issue worthy of attention, setting goals and appropriate alternative courses of actions. Problem solving is followed by decision making which involves evaluation and choice among alternative courses of actions in response to a perceived problem (Case, 2007, p. 331). We may think that ideally, information sought and used enables people to specify the nature and requirements of the problem at hand and gain an understanding of how to choose among the alternative courses of action. For example, as demonstrated by Julien (1999), the above four factors are central to adolescents making career decisions. The study participants sought access to information sources of various types and interpreted the information content in order to make well-informed decisions. It is evident that investigations such as these may elaborated further by a detailed analysis of efferent reading processes occurring in the context of problem solving and decision making. Most importantly, the analysis would indicate how the reader actually identifies portions of information potentially useful for the solving of the problem at hand and how such information is

then interpreted to prepare a decision. To realiably capture the process and outcomes of efferent reading of this kind, there is a need to combine methods such as interview, diaries and thinking aloud.

Overall, prior studies are indicative of the fact that so far, Rosenblatt´s ideas have mainly been applied in the context of schools´ literary courses. The present study expands the research perspective by examining responses to efferent and aesthetic reading in the context of serious leisure, that is, hobbyist book blogging. Moreover, as the present investigation devotes attention to both aesthetic and efferent reading, a more balanced view on Rosenblatt´s continuum is offered. As a result, the distinction power of the analytic continuum of efferent - aesthetic can be enhanced.

Conclusion

Reader-response theories hold good promises for the elaboration of the picture of information acquisition, use and sharing. These theories offer a novel perspective on the ways in which readers approach texts as information sources, how readers interpret them and how they communicate their interpretations to others. The present study tested the potential of Rosenblatt´s classic theory to the examination of information sharing occurring through book blogs. The findings highlight that the responses to efferent and aesthetic reading are contextually sensitive and that they are significantly oriented by the stance adopted by the reader. However, as the present study is explorative in nature and confined to the analysis of a relatively small sample of 300 blog posts submitted by two bloggers, more research is needed to refine the picture of efferent and aesthetic reading by taking larger samples of posts from book blogs of diverse types (Steiner, 2010). Research on reading stances may be expanded beyond the context of book blogging by analysing information acquisition guided by the efferent stance, as well as the ways in which readers use information by interpreting texts available in fiction and non-fiction books. Comparative studies such as these can be conducted in other contexts such as schools´ literacy courses. Finally, it is evident that Rosenblatt´s theory holds good potential for the examination of information literacy, particularly if the theory would be enhanced by elaborating the categories constitutive of critical reading.

References

Albaugh, B.M. (2013), "The impact of blogging on student communication about books", *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*, Vol.15 No. 2 (no pagination), available at: https://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=networks (accessed 8 August 2019).

Cai, M. (2008), "Transactional theory and the study of multicultural literature", *Language Arts*, Vol. 85 No. 3, pp. 212-220.

Case, D.O. (2007). *Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs, and Behavior*, 2nd.ed., Academic Press, Amsterdam.

Chung, D.S. and Kim, S. (2008), "Blogging activity among cancer patients and their companions: uses, gratifications, and predictors of outcomes," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, Vol. 59 No. 2, pp. 297-306.

Connell, J.M. (1996), "Assessing the influence of Dewey's epistemology on Rosenblatt´s reader response theory", *Educational Theory*, Vol. 46 No. 4), pp. 395-413.

Head, A.J., Van Hoeck, M. and Hostetler, K. (2017), "Why blogs endure: a study of recent college graduates and motivations for blog readership", *First Monday*, Vol. 22 No. 10 (no pagination),

available at: https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/8065/6539 (accessed 8 August 2019).

Jarreau, P.B. and Porter, L. (2017), "Science in the social media age: profiles of science blog readers," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* (published online 11 January 2017), available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1077699016685558 (accessed 13 October 2019).

Julien, H.E. (1999), "Barriers to adolescents' information seeking for career decision making", *Journal of American Society for Information Science*, Vol. 50 No. 1, pp. 38-48.

Kolarić, A., Cool, C. and Stričević, I. (2018), "Adolescent information behaviour in everyday life decision making: a literature review", *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, Vol. 61 No. 1, pp. 83-125, available at: https://www.hkdrustvo.hr/vjesnik-bibliotekara-hrvatske/index.php/vbh/article/view/648/564 (accessed 13 October 2019).

Latham, K.F. (2014), "Experiencing documents", *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 70 No. 4, pp. 544-561.

Lee, H-C. and Gilles, C. (2012), "Discussing culturally relevant books online: a cross-cultural blogging project", *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 161-177.

Lewis, C. (2000), "Limits of identification: the personal, pleasurable, and critical in reader response", *Journal of Literacy Research*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 253-266.

Lincoln, Y.S., and Guba, E.G. (1985), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.

Lopatovska, I. (2007), "Decision making framework for thinking about information-seeking behavior", in *ASIST 2007. Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 19-24 October, 2007*, available at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/meet.1450440252/pdf (accessed 13 October 2019).

Many, J. (1991), "The effects of stance and age level on children´s literary responses", *Journal of Reading Behaviour*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 61-85.

Many, J. E., Gerla, J. K., Wiseman, D. L. and Ellis, L. (1995), "Transactional criticism and aesthetic literary experiences: examining complex responses in light of the teacher's purpose", *Reading Horizons*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 166-186.

Many, J.E. and Wiseman, D.L (1992), "The effect of teaching approach on third-grade students' responses to literature", *Journal of Reading Behavior*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 265-287.

McEneaney, J.E., Li, L., Allen, K. and Guzniczak, L. (2009), "Stance, navigation, and reader response in expository hypertext", *Journal of Literacy Research*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 1-45.

McLaughlin, M., and DeVoogd, G. (2004), "Critical literacy as comprehension: expanding reader response", *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 52-82

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., Sage, London, UK.

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1978), *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, IL.

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1988), *Writing and Reading: The Transactional Theory*, University of Illinois, Illinois, IL, (Illinois Center for the Study of Reading. Technical reports; 416), available at: https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/18044/ctrstreadtechrepv01988i00416_opt.pdf (accessed 8 August 2019).

Rosenblatt, L.M. (2004), "The transactional theory of reading and writing", in Ruddell, R.B. and Unrau, N.J. (Eds), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*, 5th ed., International Reading Association, New York, NY, pp. 1363-1398.

Ross, C.S. (2004), "Reading nonfiction for pleasure: what motivates readers?", in Burgin, R. (Ed.), *Nonfiction Readers Advisory*, Libraries Unlimited, Westport, CT, pp. 105-120.

Sadoski, M. and Paivio, A. (2007), "Toward a unified theory of reading", *Scientific Studies of Reading*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 337-356.

Sankaram, K. and Schober, M.F. (2015), "Reading a blog when empowered to comment: posting, lurking, and non-interactive reading," *Discourse Processes*, Vol. 52 Nos. 5-6, pp. 406-433.

Savolainen, R. (2008), "Source preferences in the context of seeking problem-specific information", *Information Processing & Management*, *Vol.* 44 No. 1, pp. 274-293.

Stebbins, R.A. (1992), *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, QC.

Steiner, A. (2010)," Personal readings and public texts book blogs and online writing about literature", *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 471-494.

Tracey, D.H. and Morrow, L.M. (2017), *Lenses on Reading: An Introduction to Theories and Models.*, 3rd ed., Guildford Press, New York, NY.

Wilson, T.D. (2000), "Human information behaviour", *Informing Science*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 49-56, available at: http://www.inform.nu/Articles/Vol3/v3n2p49-56.pdf (accessed 13 October 2019).

Woodruff, A.H. and Griffin, R.A. (2017), "Reader response in secondary settings: increasing comprehension through meaningful interactions with literary texts", *Texas Journal of Literacy Education*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 108-116.

Yun, K.H. and Yang, W.I. (2014), "Using networked narratives to understand internet book reviews in online communities", *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 17-30.

Zickuhr, K. (2010), *Generations Online in 2010*. Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/12/16/generations-2010/ (accessed 13 October 2019).