Kreativt skrivande för kritiskt tänkande
En textanalytisk fallstudie av studenters arbete med kritisk metareflektion

av

Hélène Edberg

Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i retorik,
som kommer att försvaras offentligt
fredagen den 22 maj 2015 kl. 13.00,
MB 505 Södertörns högskola

Opponent: Professor Kjell Lars Berge
Universitetet i Oslo
Norge

Örebro universitet
Institutionen för humaniora, utbildnings- och
samhällsvetenskap
701 82 ÖREBRO
Abstract


This study’s research problem has its starting point in teaching and learning in higher education. The focus is on learning through writing, particularly the use of creative writing for critical thinking purposes. Learning is viewed as being linked to identity and to new possibilities for selfhood as writers, thus opening up new ways of thinking from the expansion and change that result from the identification processes involved in learning. In a writing context, identity is defined as discoursal identity, and it originates and develops in an interplay between the writer and the writing environment, where the writer may reflect upon their own learning and that of others through their writing. The activities of writing and learning by writing are thus viewed as deeply embedded in the social context in which they are situated. My main hypothesis is that creative writing can enhance critical thinking, and the study at hand aims to test this hypothesis by means of a writing assignment that I have developed.

There are two more specific aims of the study. One is empirical, that of testing the link between critical thinking and creative writing, to examine different types of reflective writing and the discoursal identities that result from the writing assignment. Another aim is theoretical. I look for an understanding of how texts constitute sites where learning and identity are negotiated by writers in their writing environment. For this I have constructed a model for analyzing context in text, applying categories from activity theory (Engeström 1987) onto various types of textual analyses, mainly thematic and discourse analysis. In this study, the model has been empirically tested in a case study.

The results confirm the hypothesis that creative writing can be used to train critical thinking, but the learning outcomes vary amongst the writers and are closely linked to the discoursal identities they wish to ascribe to themselves. The empirical test of the model shows that it can be used to map texts as “sites of struggle” (Ivanič 1998:331f.) revealing where conflicts lie between the learner and the learning environment.

Keywords: activity theory, applied linguistics, creative writing, critical thinking, identity, rhetoric, teaching and learning, textual analysis

Hélène Edberg, Södertörns högskola, 141 89 Huddinge, helene.edberg@sh.se