The initial teaching across Europe (FELA)
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- Most schools have chosen a traditional bottom-up strategy
- Letters as step-stones – however not for all!
- Letter learning can open for comprehension and strategic insights
- Most children are able to learn to read after introduction to letters
- Some schools use language games to develop linguistic awareness (Lundberg, Frost, & Petersen, 1988; Frost & Lønnegaard, 1995)
Norway 2

• Some schools have chosen a top-down strategy:
• Language production, experimental writing with invented spelling
• Positive results
(Hofslundsengen, Hagtvet, & Gustafsson, 2016; Oullette, Sénéchal, & Haley, 2013)
Reading as a focused language process

• Language games focus the spoken language to develop ability to *phonological processing* (Frost, 2001), *one of the two most important step-stones for early literacy development* (Snow, 2008).

• The child focuses the sound structure in words and is taught to differentiate sounds and to separate and handle them.

• Through invented spelling the child in addition learns to attach the sounds to letters (Hofslundsengen m.fl., 2016).

• In this way letters become functional units of language processing in spelling and reading (Frost, 2001).
Linguistic transparency (hypothesis)

• Invented spelling offers a variation of meetings with sound structures in words.

• These meetings – alone or through mediation by others – might create tolerance for variation in pronunciation of sounds in words.

• Largest benefit in languages with low level of transparency.

• In this way the problem about degree of transparency might be minimized, compared to children who don’t get these kind of linguistic experiences.

• Both Norwegian and Canadian beginning readers seemed to profit from these experiences (Hofslundsengen m.fl. 2016: Ouéllétte m.fl. 2013)
Basic thoughts for didactics in literacy learning

• Mediation is about facilitating learning by support in the child’s proximal learning zone.
• Different didactic elements offer different opportunities for mediation.
• Activities for letter learning have less potential compared to activities with phonological processing. Letter learning profits from being part of a phonological processing task – like invented spelling.
• Accordingly, dynamic assessment seems to be ideal as tool for evaluation and planning regarding early literacy development.
Bottom up and top down!

• Simple view of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1995)

• **Reading = comprehension** $\times$ decoding

• **Top-down** means comprehension before decoding
• **Bottom up** means decoding before comprehension

• **Balanced view** means interaction - *in a language process*