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Genre Pedagogy

“Genre theory emphasises the relationship between context, meaning and language choices. It makes visible the language demands as students progress through the school years.”

Pauline Jones and Beverly Derewianka

AARHUS UNIVERSITETSFORLAG

SPROGforum

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SPROGforum

Foreword

In this issue of *Sprogforum* the focus is on genre pedagogy, which in recent years has assumed a more prominent position, also in Denmark. An important basis is that language has been ascribed a key function for subject-related learning in general, both internationally (UNESCO) and in the Nordic countries. Increasing emphasis on literacy is expected to contribute to students' improved proficiency in specific subjects, especially students with a minority background.

Genre pedagogy has gained a considerable influence in Sweden, and this theme issue perhaps gives the impression that genre pedagogy is also a high educational priority in Denmark. This, however, is not the case if one looks at the regulatory basis. In the recently revised *Simplified Common Objectives* for English and Danish, for example, the concept 'genre pedagogy' is nowhere to be found. There are, on the other hand, over 80 occurrences of 'genre' in the introduction to Danish, as well as the compounds 'genre work' and 'genre characteristics', and in the *Simplified Common Objectives* for English there are nine occurrences of 'genre'. But there is no mention of genre in a genre-pedagogical sense.

But the educational and pedagogical challenges that genre pedagogy addresses are, however, also evident in Danish curricula. In *Simplified Common Objectives* it is stressed that literacy (reading and writing) is to be part of all subjects, cf. for example the following formulation in the curriculum for social science: 'Language and written language. Students are to *learn to use the subject-related concepts in writing and speech, and are to attain an understanding of the objectives and structure of the subject's texts* (Ministry of Education 2014: 7) as well as in the secondary education programmes: 'New literacy is similarly underpinned by the idea that literacy is a key to study competence' (Ministry of Education 2013).

When language and literacy become a concern for all subjects, it is important that language experts contribute to an introduction and discussion of the field. In this issue the main emphasis is on Australian genre pedagogy, which is introduced by the originators of the approach who give it a topical status but also warn against over-

simplifications that one must be on one's guard against (Jones & Derewianka). Furthermore, the issue presents examples of other approaches to literacy, the Norwegian-inspired Danish writing research (Katja Årosin Laursen) and an approach inspired by *critical literacy* (Susanne Perez).

In Denmark, Ruth Mulvad in particular has developed and mediated a language-based pedagogy which, based on Halliday's theory of language, has contributed to new thinking regarding the form, content and function of language in subjects, and which underlies Danish genre-pedagogical approaches, especially linked to experiments to renew teaching education and competence development of students and teachers.

So genre pedagogy contains exciting perspectives and gives rise to many reflections. There are, however, a couple of areas to which we would like to draw attention.

It can be noticed that genre pedagogy refers relatively narrowly to an 'inside-school' context – it is the subjects that are the concern of genre pedagogy. But what about the world outside the subjects and the educational institutions themselves? Does it get the chance of affecting and defining what one uses genres and language use for inside and outside the school? The risk is that reality outside the school only plays a minimal role. Perhaps the form – the genres and language use – risk getting the upper hand at the expense of an investigatory and critically reflecting approach to the use of language in the world outside the school – a risk that Jones & Derewianka also warn against. Much will depend on the individual teacher in this respect.

One can also discuss the aspect of expediency if genre pedagogy excludes literary genres. There is a tendency to contrast 'modern genre pedagogy' and 'traditional literary genres'. If we were allowed to decide, artistic genres would be included in the palette of genres. Why must 'genre' only have to do with subject-related language and non-literary prose? One could also make use of a long-standing literary-pedagogical interest in encouraging play with genres and experiments with textual hybridity. The creative dimension should also be arrived at in school, a dimension that, for example, has a strong position in multimodal advertising and campaign work as well as work with web 2.0.

Genre pedagogy also has an extensive meta-language that can create barriers to students' learning instead of facilitating it. In relation to the models that are used in genre pedagogy and language-based pedagogy in particular subjects, it might seem as if that which is

heavy and new, i.e. the meta-language, was introduced too early on in the learning process. This can be compared to the situation where grammatical terms under a structuralist regime sap the strength of language use.

It is the written dimension that dominates genre pedagogy at present. The oral dimension would primarily seem to be included as a lever and helps what is regarded as the core of genre pedagogy: to learn to read and write and thereby develop one's written language on the basis of everyday language. The oral language of schools and educational programmes, however, differs in many ways at least as much from everyday language as the written language does. One can see this when one examines their genres and language use more closely (see, for example, Lund in this issue). So the oral genres and language use of schools and educational programmes must be included from the outset – both in their own right and as active support for the transition to literacy. In particular for readers who find it rather hard to attain the same level as others, it can be fatal if the oral dimension is not given a central position alongside the development of written proficiencies.

Have an enjoyable read!
The editors

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Is Danish Sign Language an endangered language?

[Er dansk tegnsprog et truet sprog?]

Abstract

In the feature article the focus is on the question: *Is Danish Sign Language an endangered language?* Only within the past 50 years have linguists started to include deaf people's sign languages in their theories about linguistic diversity and universality. But at the same time as sign languages have become recognised, the languages have become increasingly endangered, especially in industrialised countries. After a brief boom in the last years of the 20th century, Danish sign language has now changed status and become an endangered language.

Language-based pedagogy – genre pedagogy

[Sprogbaseret pædagogik – genrepædagogik]

Abstract

Genre pedagogy has long been a ‘hot’ topic within the teaching environment in Denmark. The term ‘genre pedagogy’ is widespread and is used along with such other names as, for example, *Australian genre pedagogy*, *The Sydney School*, *language-based pedagogy*. The names are used more or less synonymously and are seen used in a somewhat broad and at times imprecise way. The aim of the article is to provide an overview of what is *central* and *special* for a pedagogy which wishes to call itself by one of the above names. The article concludes with a presentation of two variants of the pedagogy that are widespread in Denmark.

The development of genre pedagogy in Australia

[Udviklingen af genrepædagogik i Australien]

Abstract

This article provides an overview of the development of genre pedagogy in Australian schools. Through historical and theoretical lenses, it describes the beginnings in disadvantaged schools serving multilingual communities in Sydney in the 1980s and the provenance of the well-known teaching and learning cycle associated with the approach. Subsequent developments such as the recognition of texts comprising more than one genre, the identification of text phases within stages of a genre, and the increased interest in reading pedagogy are also detailed. The paper concludes by identifying two current and related challenges for genre pedagogy: the need for broad, system level teacher professional learning and the scarcity of good quality teaching and learning materials suitable for use in contemporary classrooms.

Genre pedagogy as competence development at Sølyst School

[Genrepædagogik som kompetenceudvikling på Sølystskolen]

Abstract

Since 2009, Sølyst School in Silkeborg and VIA University College have collaborated on developing genre-pedagogical practice for subjects at the Danish Folkeskole (primary and lower secondary school) with the aim of enhancing the subject-oriented knowledge of, in particular, bilingual students. Competence development of teachers, cooperation on the developing of teaching and knowledge division at the school have featured strongly in the project, in which teachers have made use of their theoretical knowledge about language, texts and learning to change didactic practice in the classrooms. In this article a closer look is taken at the knowledge on which the project draws: Knowledge about the role language and texts play for learning school subjects, and knowledge about how new theoretical and didactic knowledge can come alive in concrete, pedagogical contexts.

Genre pedagogy in the education of teachers of English

[Genrepædagogik i engelsk på læreruddannelsen]

Abstract

This article argues that a functional approach to teaching English as a foreign language at Metropolitan University College has been beneficial for the students. When they enroll it would seem that quite a few of them have limited metalanguage and knowledge of so-called traditional grammar. As a consequence, language processes, language and language use, and culture, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and genre pedagogy now play a prominent role in the three compulsory modules. The article provides concrete examples of activities.

Writing activities as a tool for clear disciplinary writing at PharmaSchool

[Skrivehandlinger som redskab til klar faglig formidling
på PharmaSchool]

Abstract

This article presents a pilot project from 2013 aimed at improving teachers' and students' awareness of clear disciplinary writing on the Dynamic Biochemistry at PharmaSchool course at the University of Copenhagen. Based on a needs analysis, an academic language consultant and the course leader developed an initiative focusing explicitly on the way language and, in particular, academic language functions such as *describing* and *discussing*, were used in the course. The project included constructive feedback on the course leader's exam questions and several group activities for the students, for example, a writing task and discussion exercises. The findings from the pilot project suggest that academic language functions can be used as a tool to explicate the communicative and structural requirements of writing within a particular discipline. The findings also show that language awareness within a discipline needs to be approached as a joint responsibility between teacher and students.

The embedding of reading and writing in the school curriculum

[Integrering af læsning og skrivning i skolens fag]

Abstract

This article outlines a methodology for embedding reading in classroom learning, by teaching students to learn from reading, at the same time as they are learning the school curriculum. The methodology is known as Reading to Learn, and has been developed over 30 years of action research with schools. It includes strategies for supporting students to read whole texts, known as Preparing for Reading, for reading text passages in depth and detail, known as Detailed Reading, and for practising foundations skills in reading, as well as teaching beginning reading, known as Sentence Making. The paper briefly describes the models of language and learning underpinning the methodology. It then outlines strategies for working with factual, story and persuasive texts in the school curriculum, followed by the techniques for Detailed Reading and Sentence Making. Research shows that these strategies can achieve growth in students' literacy skills at 2 to 4 times standard growth rates.

Genre pedagogy at Danish Language Schools: Where do we begin?

[Genrepædagogik på Sprogcentrene – hvordan kommer man i gang?]

Abstract

In this article we advocate the implementation of a genre-based approach to teaching Danish as a Second Language at Danish Language Schools and argue that this requires a functional analysis of the curriculum. We touch on the language theory of Michael Halliday: Systemic Functional Linguistics, outlining the key components of a functional analysis and what teachers need to consider when using this theory. We then demonstrate the use of functional analysis to identify the genre and the structural and linguistic features of the e-mail assignment at the levels of Danskuddannelse (Danish Education) 1, module 6 (CEFR level A2) and Danskuddannelse (Danish Education) 2, module 6 (CEFR level B1). In our experience, such an analysis enables the teacher to make tacit knowledge explicit and help students improve their writing skills.

Genre pedagogy and equal opportunities in the teaching of newly arrived young immigrants

[Genrepædagogik og ligestilling i undervisningen af nyankomne unge udlændinge]

Abstract

The article has as its point of departure a teaching sequence in a Class 9 for newly arrived young foreigners and discusses if language-based teaching supports young new arrivals on their way towards educational equality. The analysis finds five elements in the teaching which combined to have a beneficial effect on the preparation process by the young people towards the final examinations: the drawing up of a curriculum that integrates linguistic and subject-related development; focus on the examination situation as a genre; parallel development of Danish everyday language and subject-related language; the inclusion of the young people's everyday and school language use from other languages; and culture-sensitive teaching. The analysis also points out that at the final examinations only slight consideration is taken of the fact that the newly arrived young people are in the process of acquiring the language in which they are examined. The question is therefore raised as to whether language-based teaching is enough if the young arrivals are to be placed on an equal footing with other young people in the Danish education system.

The complexity of academic language use illustrated by model analyses

[Kompleksiteten i akademisk sprogbrug belyst ved modelanalyser]

Abstract

In the article *The complexity of academic language use illustrated by model analyses* detailed analyses are made of genres and language use, with examples from nursing education, the aim being to illustrate the considerable genre- and language-related challenges facing students in medium-length and higher education programmes – particularly if one has Danish as a second language. It is further argued that within genre pedagogy one should, from day one, focus not only on writing skills but also on oral skills as an independent area of study.

The future of foreign language studies: challenges and measures

[Fremtiden for fremmedspråkstudier - utfordringer og tiltak]

Abstract

As in the other Nordic countries, Norway faces low student recruitment to its foreign language study programmes. Most of the students are within teacher education – with foreign languages in their portfolio, they are usually guaranteed a job after finishing university. There are few traditional philology students – and their labour market opportunities with a BA or MA are somewhat limited. Among the reasons for low student recruitment is the rather low proficiency in the respective language after the completion of secondary education. It is hardly surprising that the students lack the self-confidence concerning using the language in their studies and in work life afterwards. Many among those who dare start foreign language studies drop out since they experience too high requirements. At the same time Norwegian industrial associations tend to claim that there is a high demand for professionals with a competency which includes excellent language skills.

The article addresses such issues and tries to outline realistic possibilities of increasing the students' language skills and at the same time providing them with the kind of competency that work life in Norway actually demands.

Good News

Selected recent books about Genre Pedagogy at AU Library, Campus Emdrup

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