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Organised language and culture encounters

»The aim of organised cultural encounters is to bring about change. This can be change in the form of better integration, greater tolerance and coexistence, or the development of the ability to function in a pluralistic and global society.«

(Lise Galal, Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen and Louise Tranekjær)

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SPRØGforum

Foreword

Organised language and culture encounters, which is the theme of this issue of *Sprogforum*, has a key position in language and culture pedagogy. Language and culture encounters have become accessible and a condition for many people, partly via such digital communication as Skype, partly via many forms of physical mobility, from study and tourist trips to migration and flight. To be able to meet people in the world, virtually and face to face, with our various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, is an educational task for which language teaching has a particular responsibility. In the reform of Danish secondary education, which comes into force in summer 2017, language subjects have been assigned a key role as mediators of *global competences*: 'Students' global competences are to be strengthened via targeted work on the understanding of language and culture in teaching. It is to make students more proficient at using language and give them insight into global issues (Agreement, 2016).

This issue focuses on organised language and culture encounters in learning environments both inside and outside formal teaching, i.e. in *language and culture encounters*. Such encounters are characterised by having an aim: They are to contribute to language and culture learning, e.g. as part of an educational programme, or to help people to adjust as newly arrived refugees or migrants, or to become integrated into the Danish labour market. All the articles provide examples of language and culture encounters in practice, thereby illustrating their diversity. Most of them are aspects of teaching at primary, secondary or university level, e.g. study trips and exchanges or meetings via tele-collaboration. Others take up language and culture encounters in other contexts, e.g. a meeting place for asylum seekers or a placement period for refugees and immigrants.

The issue gives the reader insight into organised language and culture encounters that go beyond pedagogical intentions and get close to practice. The articles offer practical experiences and analyses of educational sequences focusing on the actual encounter and its distinctive nature. The highly different types of organised encounter all point to the necessity of questioning whether and how the

encounters address the pedagogical aim: Do they contribute to pupils and students attaining intercultural communicative competences? Language and intercultural understanding? Intercultural citizenship? Which competences are particularly promoted? With which concepts can language and culture encounters be described and understood? These questions are answered via investigations of sequences that include encounters between students at primary and secondary level, language students and course participants with partners in Argentina, Belgium, France, Jordan, China, Spain, Germany – and at a workplace in Denmark.

It is important to be aware that the declared aim of language and culture encounters and the processes that take place in practice are not necessarily unambiguous and immediately transparent. A key to understanding what is going on is to focus on the actual ‘encounter’: How are the ‘languages’ and ‘cultures’ defined that are involved in the encounter – and who has influence on the framing of this? What differences and similarities are singled out, which kept invisible? Are the participants locked in a role as representatives of a given culture, or is there room for manoeuvre and opportunities for openings that can include other identities in the encounter, e.g. linked to age, gender, interests or political attitudes – and thereby change the nature of the event (cf. Galal, Hvenegård-Lassen & Tranekjær, this issue).

Taken together, the articles contribute to showing how important the nature of the event is for language and culture encounters – in particular potentially conflictive types of encounter – being able to become learning environments for those involved. Power relationship and willingness to enter into dialogue play a crucial role. At one end of a scale that has many nuances we have an example of a work placement period the aim of which is to promote the integration of refugees and immigrants having the opposite effect; instead of promoting learning and integration, the trainees are kept in a marginalised position without any real access to the labour market. At the middle of the scale we have an example of great willingness to become involved in dialogue between volunteers and asylum-seekers but where the transient nature of the events places restrictions on the group as a social entity. At the other end of the scale we have an example from a study trip to an Arabic-speaking country where the students themselves formulate their projects and independently organise language and culture encounters that are complex, demanding, not without conflicts, and not least because of this educative.

An organised language and culture encounter can also involve an encounter between various teaching traditions and pedagogical styles. This is a contentious issue that is often toned down or suppressed, probably because it sheds a critical light on some of the consequences of globalisation that various learning cultures and ways of teaching can conflict, either covertly or overtly. One style – often the Western – can dominate at the expense of other traditions, or various styles can compete, e.g. a Danish and a Chinese – of which there is an example in this issue. The examples show that differences in the view of learning can be a barrier, but also that they can be overcome when this dimension is made a legitimate and explicit part of the organised cultural encounter and thereby a learning environment for those involved.

Have an enjoyable read!

The editors

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Agreement between the Danish government, the Social Democratic Party, Danish People's Party, Liberal Alliance, the Social Liberal Party, Socialist People's Party and The

Conservative Party concerning strengthened upper secondary education programmes, 3 June 2016 [in Danish]

Minority languages in the Danish national language strategy

[Minoritetssprogene i den nationale sprogstrategi]

Abstract

Feature article: The Danish ministers for education and research will launch a new national strategy for languages during 2017. The purpose is to strengthen the position of language teaching from primary school to tertiary education, in depth (levels of language proficiency) as well as breadth (number of languages offered). This article discusses the role of minority languages within the strategy, building on the following target point from the mandate of the preparatory committee: [The strategy must include reflections on how] “to create opportunities for bilingual students’ first languages also to be drawn in as resources”. In the article, this target area is discussed vis-a-vis the general Danish political discourse on minority languages, in which they are viewed as problems rather than resources. The resource orientation is supported by international educational trends concerning translanguaging (Garcia & Seltzer 2016) and additive pedagogy (Cummins 2000). Based on this framework, the article concludes with a list of four themes to be developed further in the implementation of the new language strategy.

The organised cultural encounter

[Det arrangerede kulturmøde]

Abstract

This article presents a framework for analysing different types of ‘cultural encounter activities’ that share the aim of bridging cultural differences through a specific organisation or setting. Despite the differences between the presented cases, we argue that the *organised cultural encounter* perspective enables the exploration of the potentials for transformation and the participants’ active role in negotiating the encounter. The article presents three cases of organised encounter in a Danish context: global citizenship education at high school level, a public interfaith dialogue meeting, and intercultural competence training for social workers. We show how the cultural complexity that the participants in each separate case bring along and produce in relation to gender, race, religion, profession etc. is framed, and participants are directed towards a specific type of transformation. The result, counterproductively, is that cultural complexity is reduced and some cultural differences are highlighted at the expense of others, depending on the context and aim of the specific encounter. The framing of the encounter, in our cases, is thus at least partly at odds with the explicit transformative aims and the potential of encounters.

Organised language and culture encounters via telecollaboration

[Sprog- og kulturmøder gennem telekollaboration]

Abstract

This article presents telecollaboration, or online intercultural exchange, as a powerful pedagogical resource for the development of intercultural competences in the foreign language classroom. With three examples of telecollaboration projects held at Aarhus University in recent years, we illustrate how various aspects of intercultural awareness can be focused on and developed in different classroom contexts. In our studies, Danish students of French and Spanish at Aarhus University have been connected with students in France, Belgium, Spain and Argentina through online tools such as Skype, chat fora and e-mail. In spite of their different tasks, topics and learning objectives, these three studies share their pursuit of a virtual intercultural forum that allows students at distant locations to come in contact with each other and expand their personal horizons. We make a brief presentation of some of the main results and challenges of these projects in order to inspire other teachers to adopt and adapt telecollaboration for their specific contexts and needs.

Green Kidz: an intercultural citizenship project in the teaching of English

[*Green Kidz* – et interkulturelt medborgerskabsprojekt i engelskundervisningen]

Abstract

The article presents the results of a project on intercultural citizenship in the English classroom. Pupils from a 7th grade class from Randersgades Skole and a 5th and 6th grades class from Argentina participated in the project activities. The project was a sub-project of a broader international cooperation coordinated by Michael Byram and focused on how students' intercultural citizenship can be strengthened in primary school teaching. The basic idea of intercultural citizenship projects is to develop pupils' intercultural competences by cooperating with each other and engaging in the world they live in. In our project, Danish and Argentinian pupils focused on environmental questions – locally, transnationally and globally. The article presents a short introduction to the overall design of the project. The central phases of the project are subsequently described on the basis of Byram's definition of intercultural citizenship projects. Finally, the project results are outlined, considering how intercultural citizenship projects deconstruct pupils' stereotypical perceptions of "Argentina" and "Denmark".

A language and culture encounter as a cross- disciplinary project at upper secondary level

[Et sprog- og kulturmøde som tværfagligt gymnasieprojekt]

Abstract

In this article a cross-disciplinary project, *Borders*, is presented. It was developed at Rødovre Gymnasium over a period of years in a cooperation between the subjects German, History and Social Science. The hub of interest is an organised language and culture encounter between students from Rødovre Gymnasium and students at the same level among the Danish minority in South Schleswig. The focus is on the linguistic and cultural complexity of this encounter and the multiple learning opportunities it contains for the students. The project represents a cross-disciplinary and pedagogical advance, since the students take several steps forward towards an intercultural and linguistic competence. By travelling out, the students meet the people their project deals with. Contact becomes direct, the encounter makes the project relevant, and it strengthens the pupils' curiosity regarding other cultures. In the cross-disciplinary work on identity and integration theory, there are parallels between the Danish minority in South Schleswig and those Rødovre students who come from another ethnic background, e.g. the feeling of identity and being part of another country and another culture, the feeling of being 'neither-nor' or 'both-and'. In addition, there is language: the ability to switch effortlessly between two languages and to mix languages.

Sprach- und Kulturbegegnung als fächerübergreifendes Projekt im Gymnasium.

In diesem Artikel wird ein fächerübergreifendes Projekt, *Grenzen*, in der Oberstufe vorgelegt. Das Projekt an Rødovre Gymnasium ist das Produkt einer Zusammenarbeit mit den Fächern Deutsch, Geschichte und Sozialkunde. Im Fokus ist eine geplante Sprach- und Kulturbegegnung zwischen Schülern an Rødovre Gymnasium und Gymnasialschülern in der dänischen Minderheit in Südschleswig. Es wird auf die sprachliche und kulturelle Komplexität in dieser Begegnung und auf die für die Schüler vielfältigen Lernmöglichkeiten fokussiert. Das Projekt stellt einen fächerübergreifenden und pädagogischen Fortschritt dar, weil die Schüler sich schrittweise einer interkulturellen und sprachlichen Kompetenz nähern. Beim Reisen treffen die dänischen Schüler die Leute, um die ihr Projekt sich handelt. Der Kontakt wird direkt, die Begegnung motiviert die Schüler, und es fördert die Neugier der Schüler gegenüber anderen Kulturen. In der fächerübergreifenden Arbeit mit Identität und Integrationstheorie gibt es Parallele zwischen der dänischen Minderheit in Südschleswig und den Schülern an Rødovre Gymnasium mit anderem ethnischen Hintergrund, z. B. mit dem Gefühl von Identität und Verbundenheit mit einem anderen Land und mit einer anderen Kultur, und mit dem Gefühl „weder-noch“ und „sowohl-als auch“ zu sein. Hinzu kommt die Sprache, die Fähigkeit mühelos zwischen den Sprachen wechseln zu können und die Fähigkeit die Sprachen zu vermischen.

Out of the classroom in Jordan: projects at the BA-programme in Arabic, University of Copenhagen

[Ud af klasseværelset i Jordan – projekter på arabiskstudiet
på Københavns Universitet]

Abstract

The article focuses on the necessity of learning experience outside the classroom during study abroad programmes. The article consists of a case study of a project done by Arabic language students during their study abroad term in Amman in Jordan, spring 2017. This they do in groups, and it consists of fieldwork where they carry out interviews in Arabic and a presentation for their class. The students themselves choose the subject of the project (For example Yazidis in Amman, unemployment among youth etc.). The learning outcome shows that the project gives the students possibilities of creating contacts and expanding their vocabulary and general Arabic language communicative competences as well as of gaining a cultural insight and understanding in a way it would have been difficult to achieve through classroom teaching only.

The conceptual intercultural encounter

[Det konceptuelle kulturmøde]

Abstract

This article presents and discusses the pedagogical application of two theories, Ethnopragmatics (e.g. Goddard & Wierzbicka 2007 2014) and Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al. 2013; Haidt 2012), for the promotion of intercultural awareness at university level. We focus on the theoretical and methodological considerations behind an interdisciplinary course on Intercultural Communication for humanities students held at Aarhus University, where intercultural competence is fostered by a conceptual meeting with theories that focus on the routines, values and beliefs that underlie our communication patterns and our understanding of social interaction. In the article, we introduce the two above-mentioned theories and our current efforts to explore and exploit their pedagogical potential. Using examples of student work on concrete cases and dilemmas, we suggest directions for future work on the integration of language and intercultural awareness across the curriculum.

When Danish and Chinese understandings of learning meet

[Når danske og kinesiske læringsforståelser mødes]

Abstract

This article studies the importance of taking into consideration the basic understandings of learning upon which national education systems are built in relation to student exchanges. Based on the authors' experiences from a Danish-Chinese context, the article discusses Danish and Chinese partners' understanding of student exchange and the understandings of learning they build on. The article argues that the potential and conditions for learning in organised international encounters are closely connected to the basic understandings of learning that the partners' national education systems are inspired by. The article suggests that it is important to take into consideration such varying points of departure if one is to create a learning context that is meaningful to both sides. Furthermore, the article advocates the importance of a qualitative approach to student exchanges to create meaningful, internationalist internationalisation.

Organised cultural encounters and social integration

[Arrangerede kultur møder og social integration]

Abstract

This article investigates English conversation meetings that took place during a grassroots initiative intended to improve the life situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Denmark. Contrary to similar initiatives which have been studied from an integration policy evaluation perspective, this study takes a social-interactional approach. The paper gives examples of a common occurrence during these meetings: specifically, how the volunteers who run the English conversation meetings actively seek out shared identities with the asylum seekers and refugees as language learners. Adopting the theoretical and analytical perspective of Membership Categorisation Analysis (Sacks 1992), the analyses show three interactional segments of this common occurrence throughout the English conversation meetings. While this may be read positively as regards social integration, the study concludes on a critical note about the staying power of the volunteers' seemingly encouraging interactional choices.

Practice in practice: an organised encounter with Danish job culture?

[Praktik i praksis – et arrangeret møde med dansk arbejdskultur?]

Abstract

This paper discusses potential challenges with internships for refugees based on the analysis of two case descriptions of refugee experiences with internships. The article hereby aims to actualise and contextualise previous research carried out in 2009 on the expectations and concerns that employers, job-consultants and refugees address in internship interviews. The analysis takes a point of departure in sociocultural theory on *communities of practice* and discusses the notion that learning and legitimate participation occurs when newcomers are placed in a given workplace. On the basis of theories of *race* and the notion of *passing*, the paper argues that while opportunities for learning culture and language in the workplace are dependent on participation in workplace practices, the opportunities and terms of participation are dependent on the identities and positions that are made available for the intern as a 'cultural other'. In this way, the paper invites further exploration and reflection of the terms and outcome of the processes of learning that form the premise and goal of internships for refugees and migrants. It brings attention to situations where internships potentially end up reinforcing the marginalisation of refugees in the labour market despite their goal to include and integrate.

The future of foreign language studies: challenges and measures

[Hvad hedder det på fransk ? Ordforrådstilegnelse og mundtlig kommunikation]

Abstract

This article is based on a qualitative study examining French oral communication in a Danish context. The study analyses the experiences of L2 French students in connection with vocabulary acquisition and oral communication in class; it also involves communicative strategies used by the students during the practice of oral activities. The teaching approach is based on Nation's (2011) four strands within language learning: 1) meaning-focused input, 2) form-focused instruction (direct vocabulary learning), 3) meaning focused output, and 4) fluency development. The results of the study reveal that the students consider an approach based on form-focused instruction most efficient when they are to learn new words in French. Furthermore, the students clearly benefit from activities dealing with practice of fluency as well as activities that require a pushed output. Finally, the students consider the input-focused activities the least efficient. The results regarding communication strategies show that the students prefer using borrowing strategies based on another language; however, in general they find these strategies difficult to use.

Comment dit-on en français ? L'acquisition du vocabulaire et la communication orale

Cet article se base sur une étude qualitative traitant la communication orale en français en contexte danois. L'étude analyse les expériences langagières des élèves en se concentrant sur l'acquisition du vocabulaire et les activités orales et communicatives. L'étude implique aussi les stratégies communicatives utilisées par les élèves pendant les activités orales. La méthodologie de l'enseignement se base sur les quatre principes de Nation (2011) au sujet de l'acquisition d'une langue étrangère, c.-à-d. 1) une approche basée sur l'input ; 2) une approche basée sur l'output ; 3) une approche basée explicitement sur la forme de la langue ; 4) une approche entraînant *fluency*. Les résultats révèlent que les élèves estiment une approche basée explicitement sur la forme de la langue étant la plus efficace par rapport à l'apprentissage de nouveaux mots en français. D'ailleurs, les élèves bénéficient d'une manière évidente des activités de *pushed output* et de *fluency*. Finalement, les élèves considèrent les activités de l'input les moins efficaces. Les résultats concernant les stratégies communicatives révèlent que les élèves préfèrent utiliser une stratégie basée sur l'emprunt des mots d'une autre langue ; toutefois les élèves trouvent en général les stratégies difficiles à utiliser.

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