

The Development of Writer Identity across Multi-Subject Coursework

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The Focus of this Presentation

- Mette – a student who passed one of the Danish upper secondary exams in 2012
- I focus on how Mette construes her writer identity and on the instructionally transformed subject writing culture
- In Mette's programme there are two interdisciplinary constructions of subjects:
 - Culture and Social Science Group of Subjects (History, Social Science, Religious Education)
 - Natural Science Group of Subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Geography)

Multi-Subject Coursework

- **MULTIDISCIPLINARITY**

many subjects may be included

each subject working independently on the same topic

- **INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

e.g. two or three subjects included

the subjects are working together on the same topic and with a common problem statement as the starting point

Writing Acts

("The Writing Wheel")

1. To interact and to give information
2. To express and to reflect one's own experiences (formation of identity)
3. A: To store and structure knowledge
B: To develop knowledge
4. To narrate
5. To express opinions, to argue to persuade (meaning formation)

Curricular Discourses of Interdisciplinarity and Writing

NATURE-GROUP:

Discourse of interdisciplinarity:

- to understand the coherence between the three subjects

Discourse of writing:

- Genre: Exercise Reports

CULTURE-GROUP:

Discourse of interdisciplinarity:

- To work with epochal core questions

Discourse of writing:

- Genre: Synopsis

Writing Prompts in the Classroom

- instructionally transformed subject writing culture (I)

NATURE-GROUP

- Short-answer-texts matching textbook questions
- Exercises
- Training of writing acts
- Communicative texts (very few)

CULTURE-GROUP

- Taxonomically organised short-answer-texts
- Training of writing acts
- Communicative texts (very few)

Analytical Model of Constellations of Literacy Events

Analytical unit	Viewed as Text	Viewed as Discourse	Viewed as Social act
Assignment task/prompt			
Student text			
Teacher's comments			
Interview with student			

The Writing Prompt

- instructionally transformed subject writing culture (2)

- NATURE GROUP
- Topic: Osmosis
- Three independent exercise instructions in geography, chemistry and biology
- "Can you provide an example on how osmotic changes influence our body or nature?"
- CULTURE GROUP
- Topic: Danish National Feeling
- Interdisciplinary problem statement
- Compendium of text for writing the synopsis
- Use subject concepts
- Conclusion

From the Nature-Report (The Biology-Report – 4 pages)

- Mette has no Problem Statement, neither for the biology report, nor for the overall multi- or interdisciplinary report. She formulates one hypothesis for each report.
- ”In experiment A **molecules of water enter through** the **cell membrane** (of an potato) in order to provide the same concentration inside and outside **the cell**. This is a **hypoternic** reaction because **the water is entering**. If it had been a **cell of an animal** and not **the cell of a** plant, the result could have been that the **cell** had exploded ...”
- (From the Discussion of the report)

From the Culture-Synopsis (2 pages)

”What is the cohesive force in Denmark” (Problem Statement)

”... Previously **the common patterns of culture**, e.g. religion, history and traditions, constituted **the cohesive force** in Denmark. The development has led to the domination of a **political understanding of nationality.**”

(From The Conclusion)

How do the Teachers Comment on Mette's Assignments? And how does Mette Comment on this? ... (3)

- NATURE GROUP
- The biology teacher demands accuracy when it comes to the application of concepts
- This is accepted by Mette. She even accepts that the teachers of biology and chemistry say that she has to use different concepts when speaking of the same topic.
- But she does not understand why.
- Mette answers the interdisciplinary question quoted. But the biology teacher does not comment on that.
- CULTURE GROUP
- The teachers are critical of the Mette's Problem Statement, but they do not explicitly define what a Problem Statement is
- Mette is frustrated by this
- The teachers do not comment on the fact that Mette gives an account of the texts.
- They do not comment on the fact that the voices heard in the synopsis are the voices of the texts. Not the Mette's voice.
- Mette says that she finds it ok that her voice is not heard.

Writer Identity

- **Two Quotations from an Interview with Mette (Spring 2012)**
- **”What is the purpose of writing?”**
- ”Well, I guess the purpose is to understand and to remember what the teachers emphasize, - what they find important”
- **”Why is multi-subject coursework important?”**
- ”Well, I think that the Culture Group is relevant because I have got a greater knowledge about how things have been and how they may be now. So, I can follow how things will be and how they are, and I understand better what I read in the papers or what they say on TV and on the radio. And so I may be able to discuss these things with my friends.”

Literature

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- Haue, Harry (2004): *Almendannelse for tiden.* [Bildung at Time]. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag
- Ivanic, Roz (1998): *Writing and Identity.* Amsterdam/Philidelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Klausen, Søren Harnow (ed.)(2010): *På tværs af fag. Fagligt samspil i undervisning, forskning og teamarbejde.* [Across Subjects. Disciplinary Interactions in Education, Research and Team Work]. København: Akademisk Forlag
- Krogh, Ellen; Christensen, Torben Spanget; Hjelmsted, Kirsten (2009): *Ny skriftlighed. Evaluering af det skriftlige arbejde efter gymnasireformen.* [Writing. An Evaluation of Writing in Upper Secondary Education after the Reform] .Odense: Gymnasiepædagogik nr. 73
- Links:
- The Ministry of Children and Education <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education>
(Gives an overview of the Danish Education System in English)
- The Writing Wheel:
[http://www.skrivesenteret.no/files/article/4821/WritingWheel_Static_\(rev_03_2012\)_2.pdf](http://www.skrivesenteret.no/files/article/4821/WritingWheel_Static_(rev_03_2012)_2.pdf)
http://lesesenteret.uis.no/leseopplaering/skjulte_dokumenter/article2114-975.html