



Two students' writer identities

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Introduction

Background

- Pilot project in Denmark
- Ongoing research project: *Writing to Learn, Learning to Write* www.sdu.dk/wllw
- Two students: Martin og Amalie; *What are the characteristics of their writer identities?*
- Data sources:
 - Field notes from grade 9
 - Documents
 - Interviews with teachers and students
 - The 'Acid report' assignment in physics/chemistry from grade 8 – writing prompt and student texts

Student texts

Rapportspørgsmål til Syrer rapport: (Side 22-23 og 126-129) grøn bog

- 1) Hvad er syrer?
 - 2) Hvor finder vi syrer i vores hverdag?
 - 3) Hvilken farve får lakmus når en syre kommer i?
 - 4) Hvad er Lakmus?
 - 5) Hvilken pH-værdi har syre, base og neutralt stof?
 - 6) Beskriv HCl (hydrogenchlorid).
 - 7) Hvad er en Oxonium-ion?
 - 8) Hvordan fremstiller man en saltsyre. Skriv også reaktionsformel.
 - 9) Hvad sker der ved elektrolyse af vand?
- Sitretet af RH d. 22-03-2007

H⁺-ioner i bevægelse

Få H⁺-ioner til at bevæge sig via elektrisk strøm.

- Du tager en lang strimmel pH-indikator papir, der er så lang, at det kan foldes rundt om en glasplade. Skriv + og -, med blyant, i hver sin ende af papirstrimlen.
- Så dypper du pH-papiret i saltvand, og ligger det på et stykke filterpapir på en glasplade, og holder det fast med krokodillenæb.
- Med en træpind, sætter du en lille plet (max 3 mm.) saltsyre midt på pH-papiret.
- Forbind krokodillenæbbene med strømforsyningens pluspol og minuspol, og tænd for strømforsyningen. Se godt efter hvad der sker med pletten.

Syre

Martin

Vi har haft om syre i fysik og her er en rapport om det, som vi har lært/lige fundet ud af (©)

Findings

- Similarities and differences are found in the two students' writer identities
- Differences are found in the construction of a 'discoursal self' among others, observed in the use of writing acts, style and multimodal resources

Theoretical framework, analytical concepts and tools

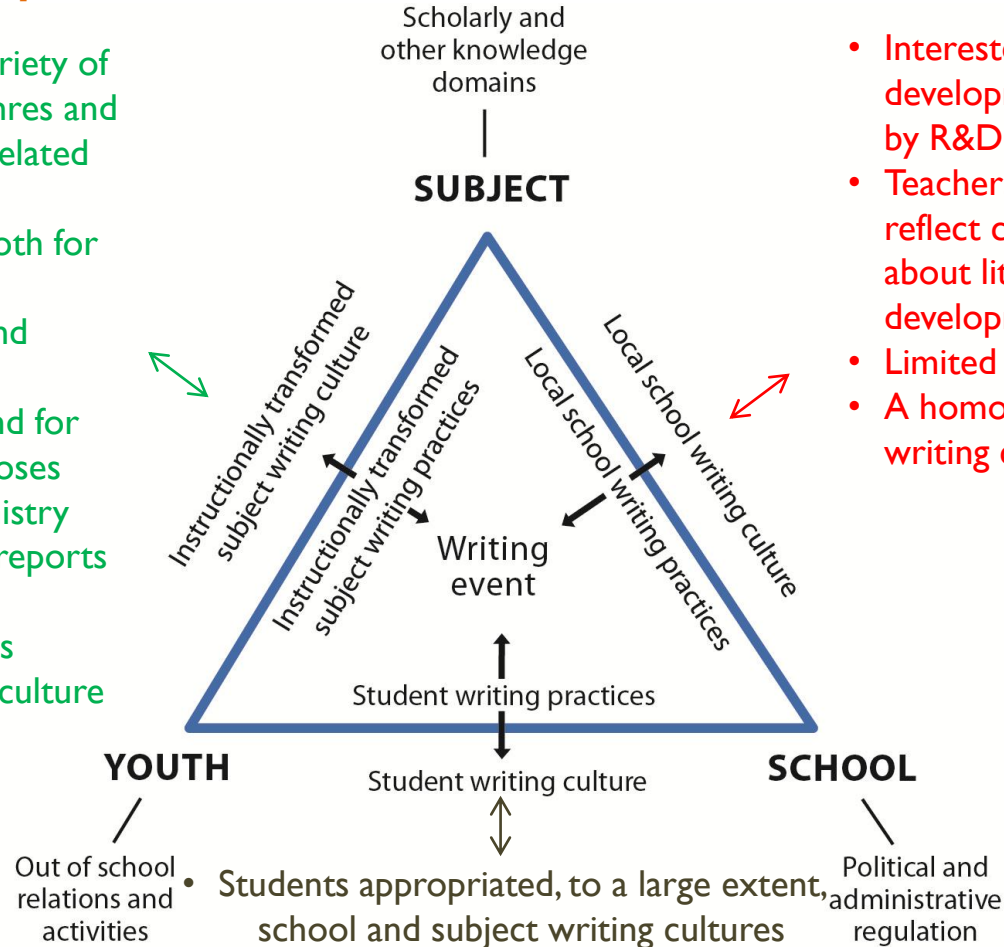
- Two theoretical perspectives
 - Socio-cultural writing theory and ‘the discursive turn’ in disciplinary didactics (Ongstad, 2006)
- Ivanič’ four aspects of writer identity (1998)
 - Possibilities of selfhood available in social context
 - Autobiographical self
 - Discoursal self
 - Self as author
- Prior (2004): participation structure
- Berge et al (2007); Tøgeby (in press): writing acts; style
- Kress (2003, 2010): Multimodal resources; literacy
- Generation of new concepts and models in the project

'Sydvestskolen', class 9a

What are the possibilities of selfhood made available in this social context?

- A focus on a variety of writing acts, genres and competencies related to subjects
- Writing used both for knowledge reproduction and knowledge development and for evaluative purposes
- In physics/chemistry students write reports continually
- A homogeneous subject writing culture

- Interested in literacy development, informed by R&D
- Teachers encouraged to reflect collaborative about literacy development
- Limited use of ICT
- A homogeneous school writing culture



- Students appropriated, to a large extent, school and subject writing cultures
 - Students did not write the same quantity of text
 - Nor did they identify in the same way with writing
- Homogeneous and heterogenous student writing culture

Amalie and Martin's autobiographical selves – some observations

Amalie

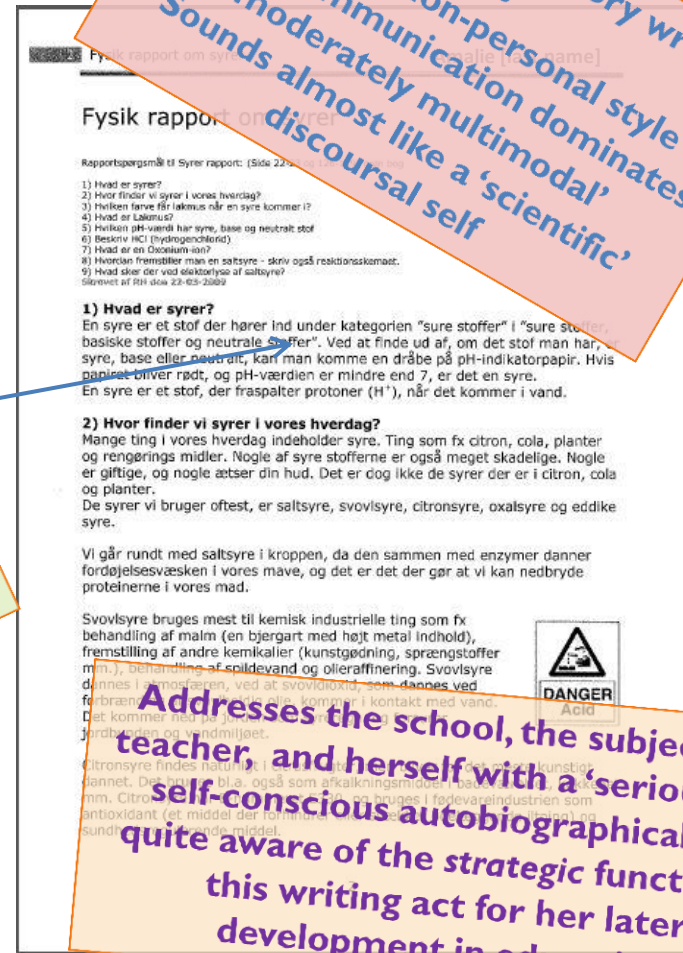
- Makes notes for all subjects, and has organized notes in accessible ways
- Very systematic and thorough as a student in all subjects
- Writes the most in subjects she knows about beforehand, would like to be absorbed in, and that she expects to use in upper-secondary education – like chemistry/physics
- She has known for quite some time that she will apply for the higher technical examination in Denmark, and will choose the science-line, which is for 'nerds like herself'
- An individual writer, a lonely rider
- Reflective about writing, acknowledges the importance of precise use of words and scientific notions

Martin

- A conscientious but not a very ambitious student
- School assignments are not *that* important to Martin; gymnastics *is*
- Focuses on inner motivation and functional use when approaching assignments
- A non-planner both before and during writing: writes his assignments spontaneously in one stroke each Tuesday while having earphones and music in his ears
- Knows that he will apply for the general upper-sec. system, choosing a music and English line
- It was difficult to make him reflect on writing; lacked words and concepts; low degree of conceptualization

Analysis of Amalie's Report on Acid

- **Viewed as text – form analysis:** how is a 'discoursal self' constructed through a voice in the sense of 'the way a student wants to sound' (Ivanič) and *look*?
- **Viewed as discourse analysis:** how is the writer's self constructed in relation to the disciplinary discourse?
Accommodates and 'aligns with' the disciplinary discourse of the writing prompt and, more generally, the subject; albeit with some difficulties
An exploring, quasi researching, self as author, focused on the matter and the disciplinary field, not herself
- **Viewed as social-functional analysis:** How are readers and contexts addressed and addressing the writer, including her autobiographical self?



Martin's

- **Viewed as text – form analysis:** how is a 'discoursal self' constructed through a voice in the sense of 'the way a student wants to sound' (Ivanič) and *look*?
- **Viewed as discourse – contextual analysis:** how is a 'self as author' constructed; i.e. *voice as a function of the writer's position, opinions and beliefs* in relation to the disciplinary discourse?
- **Viewed as social act – functional analysis:** How are readers and contexts addressed and addressing the writer, including her autobiographical self?

Use of several forms of writing acts, expository, explanatory, evaluative and narrative.
 Often subjective, personal og modalizing style.
 High(er) degree of multimodality, using pictures in particular; wants this report to look nice
 A 'multivocal' discoursal self, looking/sounding like a science student while also playing with the voice of other selves

Accommodates only to some extent the disciplinary discourse of the writing prompt and the subject.
 Suggests that inner motivation, personal interest, and functional uses are important criteria for writing on this topic.
 A George Curious-like self as author

Addresses first and foremost himself and his everyday life in communicative ways

The image shows a student report page with several handwritten notes and a diagram. The report text is in Danish and discusses acids and indicators. A pH scale diagram is visible, showing colors from red to purple. Handwritten notes in blue and purple ink are overlaid on the page, providing analysis of the text.

1) Hvad er syre?
 Syre er som regel en forbindelse med et positivt ladet proton (H⁺). En syre smager surt eller bitter. I hvert især i hverdagen finder vi syre i mange forskellige ting som mælk, syltetøj, appelsin og det brint. Syre kan også lede strøm.

2) Hvorunder vi syrer i vores hverdag?
 I ting som citronsyre, eddikesyre finder vi selvfølgelig syre. Men faktisk er der også syre i ting som æbler og andre frugter. Det er helt normalt at spise/drikke syre hver dag. Det er sjældent man ikke gør.

3) Hvilken farve får lakmus når en syre kommer i?
 Når lakmus kommer i kontakt med en syre skifter den farve. Lakmus bliver en mere lys gul hvis det er en svag syre. Mørkere gul ved en mellem og rød ved en stærk syre.

4) Hvad er lakmus?
 Lakmus er et farvestof, samlet af flere kemiske forbindelser. Lakmus bliver brugt som pH-indikator. pH-papir er lavet af lakmus. Det kan blive brugt som pulver, flydende væske eller papir som det vi bruger. Lakmus har en gul farve. Gul er en neutral farve, så hvis det fx kommer i vand forandre det sig overhoved ikke. Men hvis det så kommer i syre bliver det mere rødt og en mørkere gul, mens det i baser bliver det med grønt og blåt.

5) Hvilken pH-værdig har syre, baser og neutralt stof?
 Dette er meget enkelt. Hvis et stof er neutral har den en pH-værdig på 7. Det er neutralt. Alt under syv er syre og alt over er base. Så enkelt er det.

7 er gul, over syv bliver grøn- og blåligt og under syv bliver en rød og rød.

6) Beskriv HCl (hydrogenchlorid)

Conclusions – through comparisons

Similarities: Amalie and Martin

- appreciate writing in school
- realize possibilities for selfhood made available by school and subject teachers prompting them to act as disciplinary writers within subjects
- identify with science writing in particular, trying to accommodate the dominant writing practice in the science subject
- become bearers, or representatives, of the disciplinary discourse giving more or less authority to the scientific discourse of the subject

Differences: Amalie and Martin

- Use of writing acts (expository, explanatory, evaluative, narrative)
- Use of writing style (e.g. non-personal vs. personal)
- Use of multimodal resources
- The way they position themselves in writing (the importance and function assigned to writing)
- The construction of selves: discorsal self, self as author, and autobiographical self

Implications:

Challenges concerning transition

Amalie's challenges concerning writer identity and competence

- Among others, handling a shift in the participation structure – from being allowed to write individually to being demanded to write in collaborative processes
- *”When it comes to school, I am somehow a loner, and I hate to work collaboratively with others. I have to improve that a lot, now that I know that everything is about collaboration in the three years to come.”*
(interview with Amalie, grade 9)

Martin's challenges concerning writer identity and competence

- Among others, facing higher demands about disciplinary genre awareness
- *”It's actually quite stupid that it is called a report [rapport]. It's really just an assignment [opgave] we have written. We've made a lot of experiments, and then we are given some questions, and then we have to answer them in, like, a long essay [stil]. I really don't know why we call it a report [rapport], that's pretty stupid.* (interview with Martin, grade 9)

Implications for writing research

- Development of writing competence goes hand in hand with development of writer identity; and we need to understand better this relationship, developing new research designs and new analytical concepts and tools
- Writing acts and practices must be understood and analyzed in a multimodal perspective; moving beyond the linguistic paradigm
- Development of writer identity is a multimodal/social semiotic enterprise, and should be explored as such

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