



Plurilingual students' learning opportunities through functional writing in early school years: teacher perspectives

Kimberly Norrman, Uppsala universitet

Sweden is linguistically and culturally diverse, which offers possibilities and challenges in educating heterogeneous student groups. This linguistic and cultural variation can pose challenges in early school years when all students are developing their language, from everyday language to school language, in the majority language and learning how to read and write simultaneously (Christie, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004).

This study examines teachers' perspectives about their plurilingual students' language and writing development during a teacher professional development functional writing intervention during 1st and 2nd grade. The project, *Funktionellt skrivande i tidiga skolår. Bedömning, undervisning och professionell utveckling (FEAST)*, is financed by *Skolforskningsinstitutet*. The aim of this study is to examine teacher perspectives on a functional writing teacher professional development intervention in relation to their plurilingual students in early school years. This study is guided by the following research question: What challenges and opportunities for plurilingual students' writing development are identified by their teachers during a functional writing intervention?

A thematic analysis of teacher interviews, collaborative reflection discussions and survey short response answers was conducted. Seven themes could be identified: contextual and structural challenges; self-reflection; writing instruction content; student motivation to write; teacher and peer support; multimodal expression and communication; visible development in language and writing. According to Borg (2006), teacher cognition is difficult to change but can be affected by experience including professional coursework and classroom practice through reflection. Both of these experiences, including time for reflection, were provided by the intervention project, therefore resulting in an indication of changes in teacher beliefs over the two-year intervention. One important didactical implication is that functional writing instruction can be an effective means of teaching plurilingual students, even as early as first grade.

Keywords: Plurilingual, Early school years, Functional writing

References

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