Experiences with R2L in Danish year 4 and 5 literature classrooms

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For foreign language teaching, we see potential in closing the gap between the learners' cognitive level and their linguistic level. Especially weak learners get to produce larger amounts of written language. Furthermore, through R2L, foreign language teachers can work with culturally rich authentic texts.

For the Danish classroom improved reading competences have been detected, especially weak learners improved their writing in their mother tongue. Weak students moved from non-cohesive texts to writing stage cohesive narratives, i.e. one learner was not expected to write at all prior to the Tel4LE intervention.

Writing in science has improved dramatically for all students and the text-based pedagogy has made the science teacher aware of the importance of systematic scaffolding the learners’ writing. Prior to the Tel4LE intervention, writing in science was random and not a requirement from the teacher and never assessed, as it only served as personal note-making for the individual student.

SAMPLE STUDENT’S TEXT
Agnes is a year 4 student diagnosed with ADHD and finds it very difficult to follow and take part in classroom activities. The well-structured and teacher-led activities in the R2L-approach to teaching reading and writing turned out to be an effective way to include Agnes in Danish class.

Agnes’ pre-intervention text is a recount and a review of the film "Suburb Crocodiles." Of all the collected pre-intervention texts, Agnes’ text stands out. Clearly, Agnes was not able or willing to write up a text response to the movie. The pre-intervention text from Agnes scored as low as 4.

After participating in a couple of R2L-sessions, a second text was collected from Agnes. This text is a re-write, and even though the text is not Agnes’ individual work, it still shows that the R2L-strategies can be an important tool also for students like Agnes. The goals are the same for every student and Agnes is being helped in a way that her texts can meet the same requirements as the other students in the class.

CHALLENGES
In Danish literature teaching there is a rich tradition of working with complex and ambiguous texts that can be opened through the resources of R2L alone, hence the pedagogy needs to be informed by current trends in literary criticism as well.

To work with a SFL-based and socio-semiotic pedagogy we need a shift in paradigm as Danish pedagogic discourse is dominated by a constructivist view on teaching and learning.
R2L’s fundamental Principles and Underpinning Theories

- Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural view of learning
- Bruner’s notion of scaffolding
- Michael Halliday’s socio-semiotic theory of language
- Martin and Rose’s notion of genre and text
Characteristics of literature for children in late modernity

• Complexity (Kampp 2002)
• Ambiguity (Jansen 2006)
• Absence of an authoritative narrative voice (Ibid.)
• Modern realism (Ibid.)
• New, hybrid genres (Skyggebjerg 2009)
Literary theory and pedagogy

Writer
- Biografic method
- In the classroom: Kanonudvalget 2004

Text
- New criticism (Brooks 1979)
- Formalism and Structuralism (Todorov)
- In the classroom: Skardhamar 2001

Reader
- Reader-response criticism (Iser 1972)
- Place-based theory
- In the classroom: Hetmar 1996, Hansen 2004; Steffensen 2005

- Historical/generic readings
- Queer-theory
- Post-colonial theory
- Formalism and Structuralism (Todorov)
- Place-based theory
- Reader-response criticism (Iser 1972)

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Louis Jensen (1992) Hundred square stories

En gang var der en munter bager der lavede en særlig slags kager. Tænk sig, de kunne selv gå derhen hvor de skulle spises. Så sagde bageren til dem, at de skulle gå hen i Vestergade nummer fjorten. Og så gik de i en lang række hen i Vestergade (og så sang de hele vejen) og ringede på. Og når så konen i huset lukkede døren op, så sagde de at de kom henne fra den glade bager for at blive spist til eftermiddagskaffen.
Once there was a jolly baker, who made a special kind of cakes. Imagine, they were able to walk to the place, where they were going to be eaten. Then the baker told them to go to West Street no 14. And then they walked in a long line to West Street (and then they sang all the way) and rang the bell. And when the woman in the house opened the door, then they said that they came from the happy baker in order to be eaten with the afternoon coffee.
A ninetysixth time there was a wheelbarrow. Its favourite thing to do was to roll off with some soil or some branches or some rocks or some grass or an old pole or a duck in a cage or a bunch of rhubarb or some sand or some tiles, which needed to be moved, or some cardboard and some tar or a curtain which was to be thrown out or an old matress that was going to be burned.
Square stories

• Form and content are contradictory
• Intertextual references
• Hybdridity: poetry and/or prose?
• Absent or unclear narrative structure
A second time there was a potato, who no longer wanted to be a potato. Therefore it got a new haircut and a pair of high gloves and it went out into the wide world. And it told everyone it met, that it was the director of a diary company. At the end it fell into a milk carton and drowned. (It had three children and a grandfather who in turn died of hunger)…
En enoghårrettyrende gang var der en strand, der kæbte en temmelig stor færge, og da det blev vinter sejrede hele strands væk på færgen, fordi den var trat af alt det vandfjæsteri. Og om sommeren, da alle badegæsterne kom og ville bade, så var strandenvæk.
Independent (square) writing

A third time there was a book commercial. The commercial thought that it was a very good commercial, but when it was over, the other commercials teased it for being boring, because it was about a book.
A seventh time there was a building site, who bought a crane. And during the break it lifted itself because it was tired of being build upon. And when the break was over, the building site was gone.
Independent (square) writing

A tenth time there was a valley who bought a rather big air balloon. And when the wind started to blow, the entire valley flew away because it was tired of being overlooked between the mountains.
References
