

Reflections

1.0: Language and language usage

In our practice we take an optimistic view (an additive approach), as defined by Bruntt & Bryanne in the book *Handbook for language detectives* (2012), of the learner's interlanguage. We choose to see errors as signs of development, because the learners take risks instead of playing it safe by using very simple English.

2.0: Analysis

2.1: Analysis of learner's text

As we have no access to authentic learners' texts written by pupils in the 6th form, we have decided to analyze Mie Jensen's text *Dear Maria*. We have chosen this text because it shows some of the typical errors, we as teachers may encounter teaching English in the Danish Folkeskole. We intend to analyze the text using communicative competences (Lindhardsen & Christensen, 2006, pp. 31-35) as a tool to categorize the errors found.

In the text we find some syntax errors, in the form of inverted word order. We see examples of this error in lines 12, 14, 29 and 30. We also find a plethora of danicisms, which can also be defined as syntax errors. Examples of these can be found in lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11 etc.

We also see errors in spelling, defined as orthography errors, in lines 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14 and 31. In the orthography category, there is also a capitalization error in line 17.

This pupil is in the process of learning, which her interlanguage shows. Her strategy is based on direct translation of words and sentences in her native tongue, which accounts for the syntax errors found in the text.

On the basis of this analysis we find that the main problems for this pupil are syntax and orthography, both belonging to the linguistic competence area. Therefore, we will address these issues in our course.

2.2: Analysis of teaching materials

The text analyzed in this section is an excerpt from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This excerpt, which is presented to the pupils as a model text, consists of pages 126-129.

We see a number of genre traits common for the fantasy genre, namely the number three, a parallel universe, fantastic elements and anthropomorphic animals and objects.

The excerpt contains a number of words, which we find may be difficult or unknown to the pupils, e.g. *executioner*, *croqueting*, *dispute* and *beheaded*. Therefore, we have compiled a list of words like these, which will be handed out to the pupils and examined in plenum.

We will now take a closer look at the following two sentences:

"The King's argument was, that anything that had a head could be beheaded, and that you weren't to talk nonsense." (Carroll, 1865, p. 128).

"...by the time he had come back with the Duchess, it had entirely disappeared..." (Carroll, 1865, p. 129).

The common word order in English is Subject-Verb-Object. In the first sentence, *The King's argument* is the subject, *was* is the verb in past tense, and the following two main clauses function as objects. Capitalization is used in King because it is a certain king, not just any king. Had it been any king, the sentence would likely have started with A.

In the second sentence, *it had* is the common word order in English. In Danish, we would always use an inverted word order in this sentence.

3.0: Reflections on our teaching plan

The communicative competences (Lindhardsen & Christensen, 2006) form the basis upon which we have made our analysis of the learner's text. The results of this analysis have consequently shaped the contents of our teaching plan. In the analysis, we have found that most of the errors in the learner's text occur in the linguistic competence area, with the highest occurrence relating to syntax and the second highest occurrence relating to orthography.

Since the best way to work with communicative competences is to be exposed to samples correct language usage and analyze the form of those samples (Lindhardsen & Christensen, 2006, s. 37-38), our teaching plan states that the pupils are to first watch a film (and through that listen to spoken English) and then read an excerpt from the book (and through that see how native English speakers write). The idea is that when we and the pupils in unison have analyzed these samples, the pupils can then use those analyses to form their own written product and then read that product out loud.

When using the Teaching and Learning Cycle (Gibbons, 2015) we are aware that the pupils may be on different stages. Therefore, we could differentiate by letting the pupils who are able to write independently do so during the third phase of the cycle. However, we have decided against this since there could be a risk that some pupils may not be as proficient in the English language as they presume to be.

Literature

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