

Abstract

Title: New Spaces for Language Learning. A study of student interaction in media production in English

Language: English

Keywords: English, language learning, digital media, learner interaction, media literacy, hybrid spaces, film production, adolescents' media repertoires

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The thesis project takes as its starting point an interest in foreign language learning as a social and cultural activity. Globalisation and digital media have contributed to changed conditions, especially for learning English. These changing conditions offer opportunities and new arenas as well as a challenge for current educational practice. Against this background, the research questions aim to explore foreign language learners' activities to contribute to our understanding of these changing conditions. The context the digital media environment represents differs from the educational context, and holds different spaces for language activities. The overarching aim in this thesis has been to investigate the linguistic activities of a group of learners of English in school as they engage in a film production. The foreign language learner is here seen as a producer of language and as participating in several practices. Of specific interest was to explore emerging hybrid practices through the analyses of foreign language learners' activities in an educational context that integrates adolescents' media literacy repertoires. These research interests were realised by means of an intervention study, Design-based Research (DBR), at upper secondary level. The intervention in existing practice also involved the teacher as the designer of the foreign language-learning task itself. The empirical data mainly consist of video data, which captured the foreign language learners' activities in one specific case when engaged in a film production. Other empirical data produced during the study consist of classroom observations, learners' artefacts e.g. paper-based storyboards, teacher interviews and the learners' final film production. Interaction analysis was applied for the analysis and the foreign language learners' spoken interaction was analysed in-depth during the production process: from a focus on characters, a narrative, to the editing of their footage. The results from this study demonstrate diverse language learner foci, which display various interrelationships between the digital media resources, adolescents' media repertoires and the language learners' linguistic production. Digital media offered new spaces and opportunities for language production, spoken and written, and for representing language in use, but were also shown in some cases to constrain the learners. Improvisation and scripted talk during the digital media production led to negotiations and strategies, which involved a playful approach to words, code switching and the use of adolescents' media experiences as resources. The results from the analyses discuss emerging hybrid practices and potential implications for foreign language education, and point to reasons for looking beyond the common classroom discourse for further research and development.