

Göteborgsstudier i nordisk språkvetenskap 20

Att hantera praktiken

Om sfi-studerandes möjligheter
till interaktion och lärande
på praktikplatser

(English Summary)

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TITLE: Handling practice – second language students’ opportunities for interaction and language learning at work placements.

SWEDISH TITLE: Att hantera praktiken – om sfi-studerandes möjligheter till interaktion och lärande på praktikplatser.

LANGUAGE: Swedish (English summary)

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Abstract

The overall aim of this work is to explore and problematize adult second language students’ opportunities for interaction and language learning at work placements. The study is designed as four case studies where students enrolled in Sfi – the basic Swedish language programme for adult immigrants – were observed in school and at various work placements. Data from interviews, field observations, audio and video recordings were analysed from an ecological perspective (van Lier 2004a). Also, notions such as identity, agency, face, investment, and participation in (imagined) communities of practice have been used.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses, partially supported by a computer program, suggest that several factors influenced the students’ opportunities for interaction and language learning. These factors are related to aspects of interaction, workplace tasks and relations concerning participants, workplace practices and tuition. The quantitative analysis shows that three of the students interacted by means of verbal utterances, body language and/or artifacts to a very limited degree. An exception was a student placed at a preschool who was indeed involved in interaction to a higher degree, but almost exclusively with 2-3-year-olds. During the period observed, students talked, on average, between 30 seconds and 2 minutes each day. Further, the amount of interaction decreased significantly over time. The qualitative analysis shows that as the situated interaction was mediated by affordances, it generally worked well. Paradoxically, this reduced the students’ need to use and expand their linguistic resources. Also, students’ “simple” and solitary workplace tasks, as well as their limited tutoring and participation in social intercourse, contributed to the scarcity of interaction.

The analysis further suggests that the “school world” and the “work placement world” were perceived as two separate entities with no mutual relevance. One implication is that the learning potential of both contexts must be made visible, more fully exploited and strengthened. For implementing this, and for integration of (in-)formal learning within and between the contexts, pedagogical tools are proposed. The results are further related to short-term goals of labour market policy as well as to more long-term integration-policy goals concerning individuals’ further education and active participation in society.

KEYWORDS: (adult) language learning, ecological linguistic perspective, second language learning, Swedish, workplace learning, work placement.

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