

The discourse regarding the multilingual pupil in need of support in test-instructions

Anette Bagger

During 2010-2011 the implementation of the national tests in mathematics in the third grade in Sweden was investigated¹. The result pointed towards a need to look further into the discourse regarding the multilingual pupils with other mother tongue than Swedish in need of support. The most important steering-document: the test instructions to teachers were investigated during 2010-2014. Conclusions are that instructions have shifted to a more categorical wording where adaptations are for pupils with disabilities. Teachers then get less guidance on their mission to help pupils who needs language support.

The multilingual third-grader taking the national test

Pupils with parents that are born in foreign countries are overrepresented in the group not taking and not passing the test (see e.g. Skolverket, 2012). This indicates that the test situation is not equal for this group. An earlier Swedish study revealed that almost every other pupil talked about negative pressure. At the same time, teachers expressed a particular dilemma in situations where the language was the thing what needed to be supported (Bagger, 2015). Similar dilemmas where the teachers are challenged in their role as caregivers by the context of the test have been found in research (Kasanen & Rätty, 2008; Putwain, Connors, Woods & Nicholson, 2012). The instructions are an important document for the teachers. The purpose of this paper is to explore the discourse regarding the multilingual pupil in need of support and to find out how these pupils are positioned in test instructions. Three questions have guided the study: *Q1: How is the pupil in need of support mentioned? Q2: How is the multilingual pupil in need of support mentioned? Q3: How is support to these pupils talked mentioned?*

Methodology

Discourse is understood as representations of knowledge and truth that governs what can be said and being situated in time and culture (Foucault, 1994). Foucaults discursive formations have been used for developing a frame for analysis in five steps: 1: Expressions about the multilingual pupil in need of support and identification of the support. 2: Describing the shape and form of these expressions. 3: Describing their relation to each other. 4: Grouping of

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statements to find out which concepts are used and how these are connected. 5: Summing up how groups of expressions are working together in a discourse.

Results and conclusions

Pupils with Swedish as a second language are mentioned all years in the tests instructions in the aspect that they could do better in the one part test that is verbal. 2010, 2011 and 2012 adaptations were advised to be given to *for example* pupils with disabilities or pupils challenged by the language. In 2013 and 2014 adaptations are described as being for pupils *with* disabilities. Support regarding language concerns tasks that might be translated or explained and that dictionaries might be allowed. Conclusions from this study are that the discourse on multilingual pupils in need of support shifted from a relational conception of 'a pupil in need of' towards more categorical expressions like 'a pupil with' and finally in 2014 instructions focus on 'pupils with disabilities'. This should be put into relation to the adjustments regarding special support in the Education act (SFS 2010:300) and advices to teachers on how to fulfil this assignment. The focus is shifting towards reaching the goals of the curriculum – the disabilities are no longer ground for making adaptations (Skolverket, 2014). In addition to this, changes have been made in the Discrimination act (SFS 2008:567). Lack of accessibility is now considered to be a discrimination in relation to disabilities. Managing language is not regarded as a disability; it could though threaten the learning process if teaching is not adapted. The findings of this study are planned to be contrasted towards a follow-up study on teachers and principals talk about the support to multilingual pupils in need of it during national tests.

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