

Eva Lindgren & Janet Enever (eds.), *Språkdidaktik: Researching Language Teaching and Learning*. Umeå University: Umeå Studies in Language and Literature 26, 2015.

This anthology offers a broad presentation of contemporary language teaching and learning research undertaken by the Department of Language Studies at Umeå University. One of the aims has been to "contribute to bridging the perceived gap between research and practice within the field of language education" (p. 11).

The presentation encompasses a variety of reviews/discussions of research and empirical studies. A specific focus is laid on Swedish as a national language as well as a second language and on five national minority languages, suggesting that language in relation to research in language didactics may today be defined as mother tongue/s and additional languages learnt inside or outside a formalised context.

Although the overall quality of the texts may be considered a bit uneven, there are some quite original contributions as well, some of which will be mentioned here. The discussion paper "Developing a spoken corpus for South Saami language teaching and learning" by Mikael Vinka, Christian Waldmann, David Kroik & Kirk P H Sullivan is one example. It tells us that since literature, as well as television and radio programmes, in South Saami is scarce, South Saami speakers and learners have to actively search for opportunities to use the language and explicitly maintain their commitment to the South Saami language. The compilation of the corpus of spoken South Saami language that the paper refers to, is to be understood as a means of overcoming the limited use of the spoken South Saami language in a context where national language proficiency is given prominence.

A curriculum theory point of departure is employed in the paper "Researching language-in-education policies: evidence from the Seychelles, Russia and the European Union" by Sergej Ivanov, Mats Deutschmann & Janet Enever. The paper argues that the shaping of language policy may be understood "as an outcome of language planning in three distinctive policy contexts"(p.85). Although the contemporary field of study concerning language policy is extremely diverse the three cases discussed in the paper may present patterns to be found in other parts of the world as well.

Among the empirical papers included, a presentation of a thoroughly researched investigation especially focusing on collaborative dialogue, "The group as a resource for learning" by Anita Malmqvist & Ingela Valfridsson, is also worth mentioning. Using earlier research on small-group interaction in the language classroom as a background, this study compares the same triad of two groups of university students of German in two different problem-solving activities, translation and individual text production. One of the aims was "to find out how group interactions differ according to the type of group activity participants are involved in" (p. 129). An interesting finding was that, when working with the translation task, the participants did not treat the language they produced as something personal, whereas they seemed to need to defend their individually

produced texts against the suggestions of the others, as if these suggestions had been a threat. However, although one group chose German and the other Swedish for their discussions, both groups seem to have taken the sharing of text drafts and giving response very seriously and respectfully.

However, as a reader familiar with language didactic research in Sweden over the last five decades, including the contemporary ongoing well-known research groups and projects in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Falun I have a problem with some of the claims made in the anthology under discussion. For example that language education in Sweden is said to be a significantly under-researched field of study (p. 12). Another claim, that there "is still a lack of consensus as to what theoretical perspectives and methodologies could, or even should be included" (p. 13) makes me wonder if the aim of scientific investigation should really be to reach a consensus on how studies ought to be carried out, independently of the purpose of the study and its specific research questions.

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