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Lerikkanen, Marja-Kristiina – Poikkeus, Anna-Maija – Ahonen, Timo – Siekkinen, Martti – Niemi, Pekka – Nurmi, Jari-Erik. 2010. The development of reading and writing skills and motivation in preschool and initial school years. *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (2), 116–128.

In the present study we examined the literacy and motivational development of three groups of children from preschool to the second grade: a group of children at risk for reading problems ($n = 162$), a group of precocious readers ($n = 460$), and the group of other children in the follow-up ($n = 1205$). In addition, we analyzed within group gender differences, and compared the three groups on children's self-rated motivation, parental achievement expectations and ability beliefs concerning their child, and the extent of parental teaching of reading at home. The three groups differed in their pre-reading skills, reading and spelling achievement, and in their motivation across all time points. We also found some group differences in literacy skills and motivation favouring girls. Differences were found between the groups indicating that parents' expectations and beliefs were most positive among the group of precocious readers, and lowest among the group of children at risk of reading problems, and the latter group of children received also the lowest amount of parental teaching of reading at home. The present study is part of the ongoing First Steps Study, a large scale follow-up of children's learning and motivation.

Descriptors: reading, spelling, motivation, development, preschool, early primary grades

Mäkinen, Marita – Kulju, Pirjo. 2010. How initial writing could be assessed from the point of view of the word structure? *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (2), 129–142.

In the article, we will compare two different assessment methods of dictation spellings: the so called mistake analysis developed by Ruoppila, Röman and Västi (1969) and word-structure analysis developed through the present authors' previous research (Kulju, née Turunen 2003; Mäkinen 2007). The objective of the word-structure analysis was to focus on the phonological overall structure of words. A total of 114 children took part in the dictation exercise in May in their first school year. In addition to this general comparison, we studied the weakest writer of the data as a case study in order to discuss the information given by two methods for teaching and supporting the acquisition of spelling.

According to the results, especially the most common mistake types in mistake analysis – "letter omission" and "wrong letter" – revealed difficulties on a letter-sound level as one of the key challenges in initial writing. Instead, the most common mistake types amongst the children in the lowest five percent of the study was the 'unpleasant word', which, however, is not necessarily representative of the problems of spelling, because it does not describe which phonological feature of the word-structure is problematic to the writer. The results reveal that using the word-structure analysis it is possible to open up the problems specific to the weakest writers. For example, the case study referred to the challenges of the decoding of the prosodic features of the word-structure.

Descriptors: initial writing, phonology, mistake analysis, word-structure analysis, dictation

Reiman, Nina – Mustonen, Sanna. 2010. The writing skills of lower secondary school students for Finnish as a second language. *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (2), 143–153.

This article examines the writing skills of pupils of Finnish as a second language from the viewpoint of how these skills enable equal educational opportunities. The data comprises 527 texts written by immigrant pupils at lower secondary school (grades 7–9) on the basis of communicative tasks. The article is part of a Cefling research project funded by the Academy of Finland and carried out at the University of Jyväskylä. The project examines language proficiency development based on the proficiency levels of the Common European Framework (2003).

The majority of the research informants are originally non-EU pupils. Earlier studies have shown these types of pupils to be at an elevated risk of becoming excluded from further education (Kuusela et al. 2008). Therefore the article examines the level of the lower secondary school F2-pupils' written communicative skills, how the skills stand in relation to the aims of school curricula, and how they enable the study of other subjects at the lower secondary school and the further pursuit of educational possibilities.

The data support the notion that F2-pupils should not be viewed as a solely problematic group. The backgrounds of the pupils are highly heterogeneous and individual differences in students' writing skills may be significant. All in all, development in writing skills and language proficiency in general is a matter of time consuming processes, and thus requires particular attention in teaching. Knowledge of the pupils' written skills in an increasingly diverse world of texts and language users poses new challenges – and possibilities – for teaching: resources should be channelled towards educational practices that enable multilingual pupils to participate on equal grounds in relevant Finnish communities.

Descriptors: language acquisition, language skills, writing, immigrants, Finnish language, second language, textual skills lower secondary school

Tarnanen, Mirja – Luukka, Minna-Riitta – Pöyhönen, Sari – Huhta, Ari. 2010. Literacy practices in the Finnish lower-secondary school as seen by teachers. *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (2), 154–165.

School should prepare learners for citizenship in the knowledge society; this presents challenges for the teaching of literacy practices and skills. To what extent are schools able to create an environment for learning that takes into account the dynamic and collectively constructed nature of knowledge as well as the ever diversifying media environment with its different texts and practices? Our article examines literacy practices in Finnish lower-secondary schools, as reported by mother tongue and foreign language teachers. We examine literacy practices and media choices in schools and the values and attitudes that teachers attach to literacy skills. Our data comes from a large-scale survey administered to language teachers in lower-secondary schools and from their interviews. Our findings show that the literacy practices of the school socialize students mainly into the school's own practices whereas less attention is paid to students' literacy practices in their free-time and when they use the new media. Teachers do not consider the texts and contexts of the new media particularly valuable for learning. Their attitude to students' skills and abilities is ambivalent: on the one hand, they consider students' new media skills good and versatile but, on the other hand, estimate that students' reading and writing skills have deteriorated in the recent decades. Consequently, the challenge of the school is to identify and acknowledge students' free-time practices and to expand their literacy skills by bringing the new media into use as an environment for different activities.

Descriptors: literacy practices, lower-secondary school, language teaching, new media

Sulkunen, Sari. 2010. Supporting adolescent struggling readers: elements of good practices. *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (2), 166–179.

In this article, elements of classroom practices supporting adolescent struggling readers are explored. The article is based on an international research project of 11 countries called Teaching struggling adolescent readers. A comparative study of good practices in European countries (ADORE) funded by the EU. The project aimed at finding and analyzing classroom practices that support adolescent struggling readers. The data was collected using ethnographic methods such as observation of classroom practices and interviews of teachers and students and questionnaires about reading materials used in instruction. The data was analyzed using key-incident analysis and international triangulation, as a result of which a list of important key-elements of classroom practices supporting adolescent struggling readers was produced. The results are reported concentrating on classroom-level elements. Finally, the key elements are placed on a reading instructional cycle illustrating how the key elements form a successful instructional practice. Additionally, suggestions for improving the instruction for adolescent struggling readers are presented.

Descriptors: reading, instruction, adolescents, special education students

Varis, Markku. 2010. Making use of genre in teaching reading and writing. *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (2), 180–188.

The article discusses possibilities of genre pedagogy in the subject of Finnish mother tongue and literature. Here, the term genre is understood as the class of conventionalised text types. The aim is to clear up, how text types can be used when we are teaching reading and writing primarily at higher grades of comprehensive school and after that. The following presentation is theoretical in essence, but it also draws on the writer's experiences from genre analyses and from working as the didactic of genre pedagogy in teacher training. The latest point of view to the genre pedagogy is an interpretation that genres are a major part of intercultural communication, also when we are using written language: genre works as an indicator between cultural differences, because genres have developed to serve specific communicative goals of one cultural community. Distinctions between the term of genre and other close by it are introduced in the article.

Descriptors: genre pedagogy, reading, writing, mother tongue, intercultural communication