

Interactions of Language and Power in the First Grade Classroom

Desirée Fristedt, Linnaeus university

The aim of this study is to develop teaching practices that promote students' critical literacy in the first year of primary school. The following research questions are addressed: 1) How can instruction that promotes students' critical literacy be designed, planned, and conducted? 2) What possibilities for developing writing skills does instruction promoting a critical literacy perspective offer? The study was conducted as part of an eight-month-long combined research and professional developmental project in a Swedish primary school. The Interdependent Framework for Critical Literacy Education (Janks, 2013) was used for planning, implementing, and evaluating the project. Methods for data collection included audio recordings of planning sessions with teachers, observations and video recordings of lessons, and samples of student work. The tools of critical content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) was used to examine the material. Findings from initial analyses indicate that teacher-led discussions, with questions based on the framework, enhanced the students' ability to reflect over and deepen their understanding of language use in relation to issues about power. The students also developed awareness of their own writing, particularly in terms of vocabulary selection. Critical literacy explores interactions of language and power, and addresses social issues about power, equity and justice (Comber, 2015). In education, critical literacy is a textual practice that encourages students to explore how texts are socially constructed and position the writer and reader in specific ways (Janks, 2013). Research on the teaching and learning of critical literacy in the early school years is, however, scarce, and there is a need to further explore how to best support young children's development of critical literacy (Larson & Marsh, 2015).

References

- Comber, B. (2015). Critical Literacy and Social Justice. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(5), 362–367.
- Janks, H. (2013). Critical literacy in teaching and research. *Education Inquiry*, 4(2), 225–242.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. SAGE Publications.
- Larson, J., & Marsh, J. (2015). *Making literacy real: Theories and practices for learning and teaching*. (2nd ed). SAGE Publications.