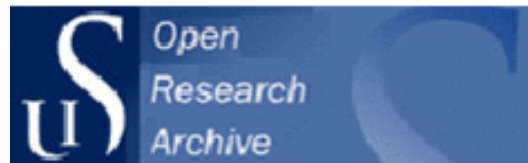




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Researching classroom processes of inclusion and exclusion

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss processes of inclusion and exclusion in compulsory classrooms where both Norwegian and Norwegian Sign Language (NSL) are used. The Norwegian Education Act 1998, section 2–6, gives deaf pupils who have acquired sign language as their first language ‘the right to tuition in the use of sign language and through the medium of sign language’. At the same time, participation in the local school is a key principle in the national policy documents for education. This introduces elements of uncertainty into classrooms where deaf pupils are educated together with hearing pupils. The paper uses data from an evaluation study of deaf education in Norway. Making use of interval observation, fieldnotes, interviews and video recordings of interactional situations, the study makes an explorative description of everyday activities in classrooms where pupils are taught according to s.2–6 of the 1998 Act. The paper analyses interactional patterns and language use in some of the observed classes, specifically, where deaf pupils are taught according to s.2–6 at local schools. Using the concepts *framing* and *classification* and *internal frames*, the article examines how ‘frames’ create opportunities or constraints for classroom interactions and language use and, therefore, for learning.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss processes of inclusion and exclusion in compulsory classrooms where Norwegian and Norwegian Sign Language (NSL) are used. The Norwegian Education Act 1998, section 1–2, gives all pupils the right to adjusted education. In *The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school*, of 1997, the principle of adjusted education is stated in the following terms:

All pupils, including those with special difficulties or special abilities in certain areas, must be given challenges corresponding to their abilities. If all pupils are to receive schooling of equal value, individual adaptation is essential. (KUF, 1996, p. 58)

In regard to deaf pupils, s.2–6 of the Education Act 1998 gives pupils who have acquired sign language as their first language: ‘the right to tuition in the use of sign language and through the medium of sign language.’ Further, *The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school* introduces four syllabuses for deaf pupils taught according to s.2–6: Norwegian Sign Language as a first language; Norwegian for deaf pupils; English for deaf pupils; and Drama and Rhythms for deaf pupils. A key principle underlying national policy documents relating to education is the importance of ensuring that all pupils are able to participate in the life of the local schools, so that they are given a sense of belonging to the school community. It is not always easy to see how this principle can be applied in a way that is consistent with s.2–6 of the 1998 Education Act. Further, this policy brings into focus a range of issues regarding the forms of classroom interactions, the most effective pedagogical approaches and the expectations of the pupils involved. Using the concepts framing and classification (Bernstein, 1996) and internal frames (Lindblad & Sahlström, 1999), the purpose of this article is to examine how ‘frames’ may promote or hinder classroom interaction and language use, and thereby undermine learning.

The paper starts with a brief conceptualization of bilingual education involving Norwegian and Norwegian Sign Language (NSL). Then perspectives on communication and learning are presented. Thirdly, the present study is described, focusing on aspects of the methodology developed, the results obtained and an analysis of the findings. Finally, some issues concerning interaction and language use in the classroom are discussed in relation to processes of inclusion and exclusion.

From deaf education to education

Since 1997, the principle of inclusion has been fundamental in Norwegian policy documents relating to compulsory schooling. In *The curriculum for 10-year compulsory school*, the principle of inclusion is enunciated as follows: 'As a community, the compulsory school must be inclusive ... and ... all pupils shall [*sic*], in principle, attend the local school and belong to a class and the community of pupils' (KUF, 1996, p. 58). This implies that most pupils who follow curriculum-based teaching for the deaf are required to attend two different schools: the local school and a school at a resource centre for the hearing impaired. In 1992 the former state schools for the deaf were transformed into regional resource centres for the hearing impaired. These centres were charged with three responsibilities: offering long-term and part-term education for groups of deaf children based on a bilingual approach; offering in-campus and off-campus consultative services to local educational institutions with deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils; and offering programmes in sign language for hearing parents with deaf children.

The statutory right to participate in and belong to the local school, and the right to bilingual education, might be seen as mutually inconsistent insofar as pupils who opt for one might be precluded from claiming the other. However, the concept of bilingual education for deaf pupils must now be widened to take into consideration a broad range of activities inside and outside the school. Besides strictly school-related factors, such as legislation, curricula, regulations (teachers who are educating deaf pupils must have competence in NSL at the level of 30 ECTS-Credits), there are also several initiatives aimed at increasing familiarity with NSL among the public at large. Courses in NSL are also offered to parents of deaf children. Local education authority schools that teach deaf children according to s.2–6 of the 1998 Education Act are required to cooperate with the resource centre for hearing impaired in their region in respect of NSL instruction. Normally this involves attending classes for a limited period ('short-term education') together with other deaf pupils using NSL at the resource centre. Similarly, pupils who are following s.2–6 within a school at the resource centre have the right to participation in short-term education at the local school.

Summing up, whereas the education of deaf children used to be the province of special schools which applied specific pedagogical approaches, the picture is now more complex. Firstly, these children's education is no longer the sole responsibility of schools for the deaf. Regular local schools, supported with access to NSL, are also involved. Instead of using the term 'deaf education', it is now probably more appropriate to use 'education' as an overall term to describe the various experiences of deaf pupils.

Perspectives on communication and learning

The way we conceptualize communication and knowledge determines how we approach questions related to education. Focusing on language and construction of meaning requires a re-conceptualization of the term communication. Within education and psychology, communication often has been conceptualized as transmission of information (Colman, 2001). In contrast, a sociocultural tradition (Dewey, 1997; Wertsch, 1998; Wenger, 1998) regards knowledge as being situated within learning and cultural communities, emphasizing communication as 'making something common'. Further, learning is related to various aspects of communication. The most important mechanism for reproduction of knowledge and skills is dialogue. It is through dialogues within the family, in communities and, specifically, in classrooms, that people take part in each other's worlds and construct their own. From a communicative perspective, the classrooms can be regarded as 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998) and the *communicative room* becomes a focus for production and reproduction of knowledge and skills. The important question in relation to this perspective is: what are the conditions that are needed for communication to occur?

Lindblad and Sahlström (1999, p. 75) emphasize that education can be understood as a local and socially constructed activity within certain borders. These borders are not necessarily defined by

political 'actors' or by descriptions in curriculum documents. Through decisions at different levels of an educational system and through the constitution of rules and norms, educational frames are created. These authors claim that a theory of the educational process should be able to take such matters into consideration. Correspondingly, education can be regarded as a socially constructed process based on negotiation and activity constructions by the actors. In this way, educational frames are not only external, but are also constructed in the interaction between the participators.

Bernstein (1996) introduces the concepts of *classification* and *framing* and shows how inner frames are constructed when external frames disappear. In this context, these concepts can be used for analysing the role and function of NSL in classrooms where pupils following syllabuses for deaf pupils are taught together with hearing pupils. Classification refers to the relations between categories, 'whether these categories are between agencies, between agents, between discourses [or] between practices' (p. 20). When a strong classification is used, 'each category has its unique identity, its unique voice, its own specialized rules of internal relations' (p. 21); that is, there is a sharp borderline between categories. On the other hand, when there is a weak classification, there are 'less specialized discourses, less specialized identities, less specialized voices' (p. 21). What is important is that classifications, 'strong or weak, always carry power relations' (p. 21):

Where we have strong classification, the rule is: things must be kept apart. Where we have weak classification, the rule is: things must be brought together. But we have to ask, in whose interest is the apartness of things, and in whose interest is the new togetherness and the new integration? (Bernstein, 1996, p. 26)

Descriptions in *The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school* of Norwegian and Norwegian Sign Language emphasize strict boundaries between the two languages (i.e. a strong classification). Transmission from strong to weak classification involves a transformation towards integrated themes or towards emphasizing communication using linguistic tools from the two languages and code switching.

Whereas classification refers to what, framing is concerned with how meanings are to be put together in order to position the communication within pedagogical processes.

Framing is about *who* controls *what*. What follows can be described as the *internal logic* of the pedagogic practice: Framing refers to the nature of the control over

- the selection of the communication;
- its sequencing (what comes first, what comes second);
- its pacing (the rate of expected acquisition);
- the criteria; and
- the control over the social base which makes this transmission possible.

Where framing is strong, the transmitter has explicit control over selection, sequence, pacing, criteria and the social base. Where framing is weak, the acquirer has more *apparent* control (I want to stress apparent) over the communication and its social base. (Bernstein, 1996, p. 27)

The focus of this paper is on how an educational process constructs its frames and on how this affects interaction between the participants and influences the nature of their language use. Some aspects of interactions and language use in mixed local school classes are investigated. Specifically, the interconnections between language use in the classroom and pupils' access to and participation in the communicative room are highlighted. Learning, meaning construction and socialization within the classroom are regarded as interactive, mediated activities (Wertsch, 1998). When combining the concepts of the *communicative room*, *classification* and *framing*, several questions can be raised: how are NSL and Norwegian constructed and what is the relationship between the two languages involved

in the classroom? What opportunities and constraints for communication are created through interactions in the classroom? In what way will the activities and language use be understood as internal frames that restrict pupils' access to the communicative room? The degree to which an individual pupil participates in and benefits from the educational process cannot simply be explained in terms of the linguistic competence of those involved. It is equally important to investigate constraints (that are imposed) on the educational process itself.

This kind of approach differs from traditional ways of investigating the roles of interaction and language use in the education of deaf pupils. This study does not look at the teachers' or pupils' competence in NSL. Nor does the study look at outcomes in terms of level of integration, level of participation in learning activities, level of independence or level of social participation (Miranda, 1998; Power & Hyde, 2002). Instead of looking at what are essentially preconditions (e.g. competence in NSL or Norwegian) or outcomes at some point (e.g. level of participation), this perspective examines the characteristics of the encounters between deaf pupils, hearing pupils and teachers. That is, what are the communicative experiences occurring, how are they negotiated among the participants and how may they be classified in classrooms where NSL and Norwegian language are used?

The study

This paper uses data from a research project, 'Towards a new compulsory education for deaf pupils' (Ohna *et al.*, 2003). This project is a part of the Norwegian Research Council's 'Evaluating Reform 97' (NFR, 1999). In the research project, two researchers have observed 10 classrooms located in different schools across different year levels in a single week. Both special schools for deaf pupils and local schools are included in the sample. This paper presents data from the local schools in the study.

Making use of interval observation, fieldnotes, interviews and video recordings of interactional situations, the intention was to make an explorative description of everyday activities in classrooms where pupils are taught according to s.2–6 of the 1998 Education Act. The interval observations were based on a predefined registration form (Hagtvet & Klette, 2000), which registers, at five minute intervals over a period of 30–45 minutes, what the class teacher was doing, what the class was doing, what one particular pupil was doing and what a support teacher or sign language interpreter was doing. The fieldnotes focused on what the class was doing, with particular focus on the teacher and the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils (especially in classes with only one pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils). In the course of that week the researchers made approximately 10 interval observations and 10 fieldnotes in each class. Because there were two researchers, it was possible to register and record the same activities with both interval observations and fieldnotes. The video recording focused on two different interactional activity types. The first activity type consisted of 'plenary' lessons (Sahlström, 1999), which combined teacher-centred instruction for an entire class as well as a whole-class conversation. The second activity type involved group work in which four to six pupils discussed a topic. In both cases, it was the teacher who had decided when video recordings could be made. In each class, there were between 40 and 60 minutes of video recordings from these two activity types.

The observations in the study did not focus on which of the two languages (Norwegian or NSL) was being used in classroom interactions. Deciding which language was used is a difficult task which presupposes linguistic definitions about the two languages and the borders between them. Code switching between them further complicates this task. Therefore, the observers registered language use in terms of modality: *sign alone*, *sign and speech* and *speech alone*.

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used. The quantitative analyses were based on interval observations of the registers of activity during intervals described above, while the qualitative analyses were based on fieldnotes and video recordings of interactions and language use in the classroom.

Situations are presented in which single pupils following syllabuses for deaf pupils were taught together with hearing peers in local schools. In class A, there were 15 pupils from Years 6 and 7.

There were two teachers; both of them had formal competence in NSL (30 ECTS Credits, i.e. half a year's full-time study). In class B, there were 17 pupils in Year 2. In this class there were also two teachers, one with formal competence (30 ECTS Credits) in NSL. In class C, there were eight first-year pupils and only one teacher. The teacher had formal competence in NSL (30 ECTS Credits).

Results

Interval observations of class activities in class A for all pupils showed that the three most frequent pupil activities were:

1. Working individually
2. Working in groups (with other children)
3. Conversation (with other children) during individual work

In this class the pupils worked with their individual week-plan most of the time. At the end of the week, the teachers inspected the pupils' work, commented on it and gave the pupils a new plan for the next week. This lesson type can be summarized as a 'desk work lesson' (Sahlström, 1999) or 'pupil-focused work lessons' (Bagga-Gupta, 2002). The teachers in this class very seldom talked to the whole class in 'plenary lessons' (Sahlström, 1999) or in 'teacher-guided lessons' (Bagga-Gupta 2002). The frequent use of the category *Conversation (with other children) during individual work* suggests that there was an 'informal' communicative room in the class. We were primarily interested in finding out which language or communication modality pupils used in their interaction with others and what were the conditions surrounding their participation in these conversations. More generally, we wanted to identify the way in which all the pupils in the classroom had access to this communicative room.

The interval observation of the activities of the deaf pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils in class A showed that the most frequent activities were:

1. Working individually
2. Getting help from the teacher
3. Listening to the teacher

As for the rest of the class, the most frequent activity for the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils was *working individually*. But when the pupils in the class were working in groups or taking part in conversation with other pupils during their individual work, the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils was most frequently getting help from the teacher or listening to and watching the teacher. In fact, activities involving interactions with the teacher were two of the three most frequent activities for the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils. When the rest of the class were working individually or in groups and, at the same time, talking to each other informally in speech alone, the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils typically worked individually or was talking with the teacher in sign alone. Very seldom did the pupil talk with other pupils. In fact, the activity category *Conversations (with other pupils) during individual work* was rated as number 11, the least frequent activity observed. There were only one or two registrations of this category during 8–10 hours.

Through their language use in the classroom, the teachers appeared to construct two groups of pupils: one using Norwegian and one using NSL. When looking at language use in this classroom, the pattern shows a sharp boundary between use of NSL and Norwegian. Observing the languages used in the classroom in terms of their modality, there is clearly either *sign alone* or *speech alone*. When the teachers interacted with the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils, they always used *sign alone*. When the teachers interacted with the hearing pupils, they always used *speech alone*. The use of *sign and speech* hardly ever occurred. One of the teachers explained that she felt 'it is not proper sign language' to use sign and speech simultaneously. Similarly, one of the pupils gave the following explanation of why he did not have more contact with the deaf pupil: 'You know that he has become

more fluent in sign language; I don't know so much, I don't understand what he says; he knows more sign language than me.'

As in class A, there were two teachers in class B, a second-year class, but only one with formal competence in NSL. Interval observations of the activities in class B showed that the three most frequent pupil activities were:

1. Listening to the teacher.
2. Answering questions, participating in discussion.
3. Working in groups (with other children).

The regular teacher was responsible for most of the instruction given. When she talked to the class, she used *speech alone*. The second teacher (we describe her as the 'sign language teacher'), who had formal competence in NSL, provided a simultaneous sign interpretation of the other teacher's speech and that of hearing pupils. The sign language teacher also interpreted from sign into speech, when the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils expressed something in *sign alone*. It is important to note that her assigned role in the class was that of a teacher, not interpreter. At first sight, there appear to be good opportunities for the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils to participate in a common communicative room.

However, analysis of the fieldnotes and the video recordings prompted a revised interpretation of the interactions in the classroom. In the fieldnotes there were registrations of situations where the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils and the sign language teacher talked together, in a way that was unconnected with what was going on between the class teacher and the rest of the pupils. The analysis of the video recordings of the plenary lesson showed that they were discussing the sign language teacher's signing. The pupil was not satisfied with her way of signing and wanted her to clarify misunderstandings. These clarifications did not disturb the rest of the class, because the pupil and the teacher did not use speech, but only communicated through *sign alone*. In these situations, the class teacher and the rest of the class continued independently of what the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils and 'her' teacher were discussing. In this way, the latter pupil was less involved in what the rest of the class were doing. These situations prevented the pupil from participating appropriately and continuously in the classroom conversation. In concise terms, the analysis of interactions and language use presented a picture of two parallel discourses in the classroom: one using *speech alone*, involving the hearing pupils and the class teacher, and the other using *sign alone*, in which the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils and the sign language teacher were the only participants.

Unlike the two previous classes, class C, which was a Year 1 class, had only one teacher. The three most frequent activities, both for the class as a whole and for the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils were:

1. Listening to the teacher.
2. Working individually.
3. Answering questions, participating in discussion.

In this class all of the pupils participated in common activities initiated by the teacher. Applying the typology introduced by Sahlström (1999), the lesson type varied between plenary lessons and deskwork lessons. In plenary lessons the teacher varied between *sign and speech* and *sign alone*, when talking to the class as a whole and when interacting with individual pupils, respectively. When the hearing pupils used *speech alone*, the teacher repeated what they said in *sign and speech* before she answered in *sign and speech*. In this way, the language use in the class was characterized by a combination of different modalities: *sign and speech*, *sign alone* and *speech alone*. Most of the time, the teacher used *sign and speech*. But the teacher and the pupils (both the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils and the hearing pupils) alternated between using *sign alone*, *sign and speech* and *speech alone*, both in whole-class conversations and in dialogues between two persons. Another

characteristic feature of this class was that the teacher would occasionally use *sign alone* when talking to the class as a whole. Moreover, she expected all her pupils to respond in the same way.

Discussion

Focusing on how the classroom interaction creates 'internal frames', the discussion will focus on patterns of interaction and language use in relation to processes of inclusion and exclusion. In class A, both teachers had formal competence in NSL. The dominant lesson pattern was individualized deskwork. The activities and the use of language in the class created two communicative rooms in the classroom: one auditory-vocal communicative room containing conversations in *speech alone*, and one visually communicative room containing conversations in *sign alone*. Because of the infrequent use of a plenary lesson format, there were hardly any common communicative events in which all of the pupils participated.

In class B there were also two teachers, but only one of them had formal competence in NSL. The lesson type switched between plenary lessons and individual deskwork. During plenary lessons, one of the teachers interpreted simultaneously between the two languages, which, on the face of it, made it possible for all of the pupils to take part in the interactions. However, analysis of video recordings showed that problems with language use, needing constant clarification, occurred between the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils and the sign language teacher. As in class A, this created two communicative rooms in the classroom.

In many ways, class C was atypical. First, there was only one teacher in the class, and secondly, the analysis of the language use showed less sharp boundaries between the two languages. During the day, the teacher used both *sign and speech* and *sign alone* when talking to the pupils. This strategy gave the hearing pupils access to NSL and they were expected to use *sign alone* when responding to an utterance in *sign alone*. The most frequent mode of communication in the class was *sign and speech*. These three aspects: one teacher in the classroom, a flexible use of communication modes and codes, and hearing pupils being included in discourse in sign language, made it possible to maintain a more common communicative room in this class.

The Education Act 1998 gives deaf pupils in Norway the right to bilingual education. In consequence, pupils are taught according to the four syllabuses for deaf pupils and at least one of their teachers is required to be formally competent in NSL. Regarded as (external) frame factors, these aspects are important for education of deaf pupils in Norway. The problem is that these (external) frame factors do not relate to the educational process. The results from the present study document a need for better understanding of how the educational process constructs internal frames, and how these frames constrain access to and participation in classroom discourse leading to pupil learning.

When we take into account the interrelations between interactions and language use, the three classes present different opportunities for participation in the communicative room. In classes A and B both framing and classification of the two languages are strong. In these classes the teachers have explicit control over the selection of the communication and its social base. It is the teachers who use either Norwegian or Norwegian Sign Language. In class A only the two teachers and the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils use NSL. The hearing pupils are not expected to use NSL, and hearing pupils only rarely use sign in classroom interactions. Indeed, the pupils use lack of competence in NSL as an excuse for not interacting with the deaf pupil. When the teacher in class A expresses the view that the use of sign and speech simultaneously 'is not proper sign language', she confirms the pupils' preconceptions about language. In this way, the strong classification of the languages becomes a barrier to interaction within the classroom. In class B it is the separation of auditory and visual communication that imposes constraints on participation. When the teachers accept that the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils and the 'sign language teachers' communicate between themselves for the sake of 'clarification' parallel to the ongoing classroom interactions, they also risk

putting the process of discourse in jeopardy. Instead of making these clarifications a part of the classroom discourse, they lead the pupil into a parallel discourse, which is separated from what the rest of the class are doing. As in class A, the framing and classification in class B are strong.

In contrast to classes A and B, the framing and classification in class C is weak. Here the pupils have more control over the communication and its social base, and the divisions between the languages are less apparent. There are several aspects that are important in relation to this. First of all, the only teacher in the class is competent both in NSL and Norwegian. The teacher uses *sign alone* in plenary lessons when talking to all of the pupils, not only to the pupil following syllabuses for deaf pupils. Further, the hearing pupils are expected to use *sign alone* in plenary sessions. By creating these expectations, the teacher also shows her pupils that the use of NSL is a valuable strategy for interactions in the classroom. Finally, when the teacher uses *sign and speech*, she reduces the divisions between the languages. In this form of interaction, the focus is not on using NSL correctly, but on using the two languages for communicative purposes.

Classification is about power relations. Upholding strict divisions between the languages therefore can be regarded as a strategy for recognizing NSL as a language in its own right, different from Norwegian. The introduction of s.2–6 in the 1998 Education Act, of four separate syllabuses for deaf pupils in *The curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school* and of educational programmes in NSL for parents and teachers have made an important contribution to the recognition of NSL in the course of the past decade. The problem is that these initiatives do not reflect the pedagogical realities inside classrooms; they do not take the realities of the classroom interaction into account or the need for communication tools in encounters between pupils using NSL and Norwegian in learning situations. When the recognition of sign language is related to strong classification and framing, this has consequences for the educational process. This study seems to show that strong framing and classification confront deaf pupils with exclusionary processes. In the three classes reported in this study, this is most apparent in classes A and B.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed inclusion in relation to deaf pupils, who used to be taught in separate settings. This study shows how exclusionary processes are engendered by certain conditions created in the educational process in classroom contexts that are ostensibly designed to promote inclusion as a process. Using the concepts of framing and classification, important aspects are investigated related to language use and interaction in classrooms where deaf and hearing pupils are taught together. The analysis indicates that approaches emphasizing weak framing and classification of the two languages are valuable in relation to deaf and hearing pupils' participation classroom processes.

The analysis of the interactional patterns and of language use (in terms of modality) in these three classrooms further indicates that deaf pupils using NSL are exposed to processes of exclusion from the class community in some of the class structures observed, especially in regard to gaining access to a common communicative room in the class. The analysis also gives examples of processes of inclusion and exclusion in every-day activities in the classroom. The author believes that the analysis procedures used may assist teachers to analyse their classrooms, and to develop strategies for making their classrooms more inclusive.

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