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Learning Chemistry: Text use and text talk in a Finland-Swedish chemistry classroom

Citation: Danielsson, Kristina (2010). Learning Chemistry: Text use and text talk in a Finland-Swedish chemistry classroom. *IARTEM e-Journal* 3 (2) 1 - 28

Abstract

The article draws on the notion that the process of gradually becoming part of new social contexts always involves a gradual enculturation into the discourse of the field, and also that the responsibility of the educational systems is to give students opportunities to develop their literacy competence in various subject areas. The article also argues for an explicit text focus in science classrooms, due to the complexity of texts used in the area, especially regarding multimodality. For the purpose of discussing these issues, an analysis of literacy events in a chemistry classroom has been done. The starting point was to investigate what semiotic resources connected to a multimodal concept of texts were used, and how, with a special interest in meta-textual classroom discussions. The results of the analysis reveal that the students come across a number of different texts in the chemistry classroom, but that longer running texts neither are read nor written in the classroom and that almost no meta-textual discussions take place. Pedagogical implications of the results are discussed.

Key words: Genres, text talk, chemistry learning, subject specific texts, multimodal texts