In the middle of a new learning materials culture

The learning materials culture is undergoing a pronounced change at present, one where at all levels within the education system one can observe a paradigm shift in the use of teaching aids. The textbook in paper form is no longer necessarily the predominant type.

A teaching aids culture must always, by the very nature of things, reflect the way in which we teach, and the change that one can see taking place is inextricably bound up with the change in the forms of teaching that are also occurring. New didactic possibilities with web 2.0 and the implementation of the computer as a learning tool in teaching mean, for better or worse, that we are being forced to rethink the organisation of teaching and gain experience in how web 2.0 and the computer can be used from a teaching point of view.

Traditional and digital teaching aids

Not all that many years ago, planning a teaching sequence started with a trip to the school's book depot in the basement to get an overview of the textbooks one had at one's disposal and that would form the core of one's lessons. But with the entry of the Internet into our everyday lives we have gained admission to a vast range of sources of knowledge that are accessible to both teachers and pupils. The teacher no longer has a monopoly on knowledge, and in most instances

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one can with a few clicks google one's way to answers to any questions one might have. Factual knowledge has become common property.

The book as a traditional teaching aid is, among other things, characterised by the fact that its content is subject-related and pedagogically legitimised by the author, who has often didacticised the publication to a certain extent. Furthermore, the book is also easy and reliable to use compared with digital teaching aids, where one is also dependent on the Internet and a computer. In other words, there are fewer didactic and practical choices one has to make as a teacher if a textbook is used as the main teaching aid.

In connection with digital teaching aids, one must distinguish between didacticised and non-didacticised digital teaching aids. The former include electronic portals, i-books and e-books[1] that are distributed via the computer and have been developed for use in teaching. The latter include a great many different materials and tools that are also distributed via the computer, but which have not been developed with the intention of being used in teaching. Such materials the teacher must personally evaluate and didacticise, and they only become teaching aids once this process has taken place. The range of possible teaching aids within digital tools is endless.

Examples of non-didacticised tools used as teaching aids include various podcast tools, e.g. MailVU or Screencast-O-Matic[2], which many language teacher have integrated as tools in their teaching. They are used, for instance, to record oral presentations with the aim of training oral proficiency and presentation competences in the foreign language being worked with. These tools are thus a short cut to increased language production in foreign language teaching, both oral and written.

With the influx of digital teaching aids the teaching aids culture in Denmark is changing radically, and the perception of what constitutes a teaching aid is also changing. To a far greater extent than before, publishing firms are publishing electronic textbooks and portals, the Internet is being used as an integrated source of knowledge in the teaching, and via web 2.0 we have gained access to a whole range of tools that can be positively implemented in our teaching. There are, then, a great many possibilities when teaching is to be planned and implemented, but the consequence is also that it has become neither easier nor less time-consuming to prepare lessons when, in connection with non-didacticised teaching aids, one has to carry out a whole series of subject-related and didactic choices. So it is essential for teachers to possess well-developed didacticising competences and have a knowledge of various forms of learning,

teaching and organising. Apart from didactic competences, this also calls for insight, reflective thinking and the ability to take decisions (Hansen, 2010, 11-18). There are many choices to be made. At the same time, our perception of what constitutes good practical teaching changes more rapidly than before, since with the entry of the computer into the classroom we are under pressure to use other forms of organisation if we want teaching to work, and to exploit the full teaching potential that is linked to the use of digital teaching aids.

The i-book as a teaching aid

The i-book as a teaching aid differs from non-digital teaching aids, e.g. the traditional book in paper form, by being interactive and multimodal, since it often comprises sound, text, images and, for instance, quizzes and other test formats. The i-book thereby also includes a whole range of Internet-based resources and possibilities, since the publication contains more media and is not limited to a particular number of pages, as is the case with a printed book. This in turn results in the teacher being ascribed a more active role in the use of an i-book, since in planning the teaching selection and deselection from the available resource material must take place.

An obvious advantage of i-books is that as an author or publisher one can update on an on-going basis, can adjust and add to the i-book. I-books are thus characterised by a flexibility that printed books do not possess.

The i-book as a teaching aid is a genre that is under development. The optimal format has not been found yet, and there is a need for more research to examine the subject-related, didactic and pedagogical advantages of using i-books, which for obvious reasons are different to navigate and read in, compared to a printed book.

New forms of practice

When using digital teaching aids in teaching, it is important for there always to be didactic and subject-related reasons for doing so. A digital teaching aid must make a difference compared to existing practice, and make a noticeable contribution to the pupils' learning. In addition, digital teaching aids must be easily accessible and easy to use – both for teachers and pupils.

With web 2.0, the Internet has distinctively changed, and we no longer use it just to search for and collect information but to a great extent to produce, communicate and share knowledge (Christiansen

and Gynther, 2010, 67). To be able to navigate and act in a digital world and to use the Internet as a source of knowledge one must, then, master certain new skills and practices.

One must be able to:

- search for and collect relevant information on the Internet
- evaluate sources on the Internet
- use information from the Internet in new contexts
- document the use of Internet sources
- produce and mediate knowledge digitally
- share knowledge and cooperate digitally[3]

To master these forms of practice, the pupil must possess the three following proficiencies: information competence, cooperation competence and what one could call production competence. Pupils make use of their production competence when they communicate and share knowledge on the Internet and/or create an actual product via a digital tool. This can, for example, be a podcast with an oral presentation, an electronic mindmap used as a presentation tool or a blog used as a written assignment to be handed in. When working on these three products the pupils train a wide range of subject-related goals and competences, but all of them involve 'producing' and 'communicating', with the pupils creating an actual product that, among other things, makes their learning visible.

Pupils' work on digital forms of practice in teaching is also a prerequisite for their being able to develop a personal digital culture, and teaching must be organised in such a way that the pupils train basic digital forms of practice on an on-going basis (Hermann, 2014).

Simple planning model

In planning a teaching sequence with digital aids, it can be advantageous to use the following simple teaching model. The model bases itself on the subject goals, competences and forms of practice in which teaching is to take place (Why?), and what core material from the curriculum is involved (What?). Then come reflections on the practical organisation (How?) as well as which teaching aids and digital tools (Which?) are to be used. The model focuses on a competence perspective, including forms of practice used, as well as a teaching aid perspective that also includes the actual equipment and the digital tools used.
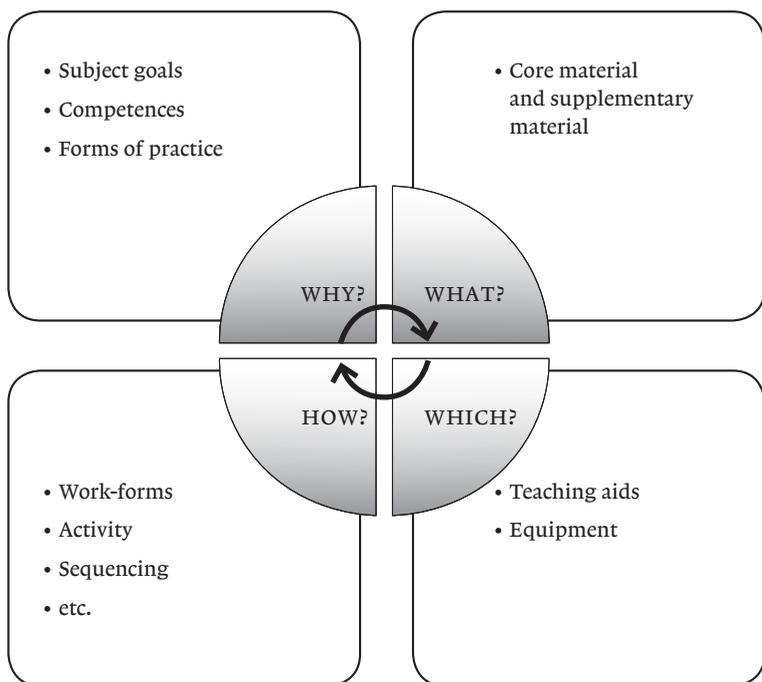
FIGURE 1: Planning model

Example of the use of teaching aids

The assignment below has been used with a second-year group of upper secondary students. In a brief project lasting a total of five lessons, the students are to work individually on a rhetorical analysis of a speech by Nelson Mandela. The assignment is a typical example of how in foreign-language teaching use is made of various teaching aids, and of how IT is used as an integrated learning tool in the teaching.

Mini-project: Rhetorical analysis of Nelson Mandela's inauguration speech in 1994

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read the following chapters in the book 'On Purpose', Gyldendal 2009:
   1) Chapter 2: What is non-fiction?
   2) Chapter 3: Rhetorical analysis
   3) Chapter 4: Nine lords a'blogging
2. Find background information about Nelson Mandela on the Internet.

3. Make a rhetorical analysis of Nelson Mandela's inauguration speech of 1994. Include your knowledge of Nelson Mandela in this analysis.

The presentation must contain the following:

1. A brief account of what a rhetorical analysis is, and how one uses the rhetorical pentagon.
2. A short presentation of Nelson Mandela and the historical context of the speech.
3. The analysis of the speech.

The analysis must use a PowerPoint presentation and be presented orally in a Screencast-O-Matic recording in which you go through your PowerPoint on the screen, while doing a VO.

The presentation is to be handed in either as a YouTube video or an MP4 file. You must also hand in a literature list with an overview of the sources used in the presentation.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

You will receive a mark for your presentation, assessed on the basis of the following::

– The subject level of the rhetorical analysis
– The communicative competence – both oral and written
– The linguistic competence (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation)
– Your ability to search for, use and evaluate material from the Internet

In this activity various different teaching aids are used. As a point of departure for the project, a textbook on rhetorical analysis is made use of. The book only exists in paper form. In addition, the Internet is used as a source of knowledge, since the students themselves are to find relevant background information about Nelson Mandela and the historical context of the speech. Furthermore, two digital tools are used, PowerPoint and Screencast-O-Matic, since the students are both to make traditional PowerPoint presentations and to record their PowerPoint presentations on the screen via Screencast-O-Matic while they do a voice-over and recording of what is both seen and heard. Since the presentations are not traditional oral presentations done in the class, there is time for all students to prepare themselves and do an individual presentation. This would otherwise have been inconceivable in the available time. The possibility to present one's product orally also means that language production is increased at an individual level.

The project has several aims. The students are to acquire knowledge of rhetorical analysis. In addition, they are to train their written and oral presentation competence and information competence, as they themselves must find relevant background material on the Internet. These trains such forms of practice as 'searching', 'evaluating' and 'using'. In the model below, the aims, organisation and teaching aids employed are illustrated.
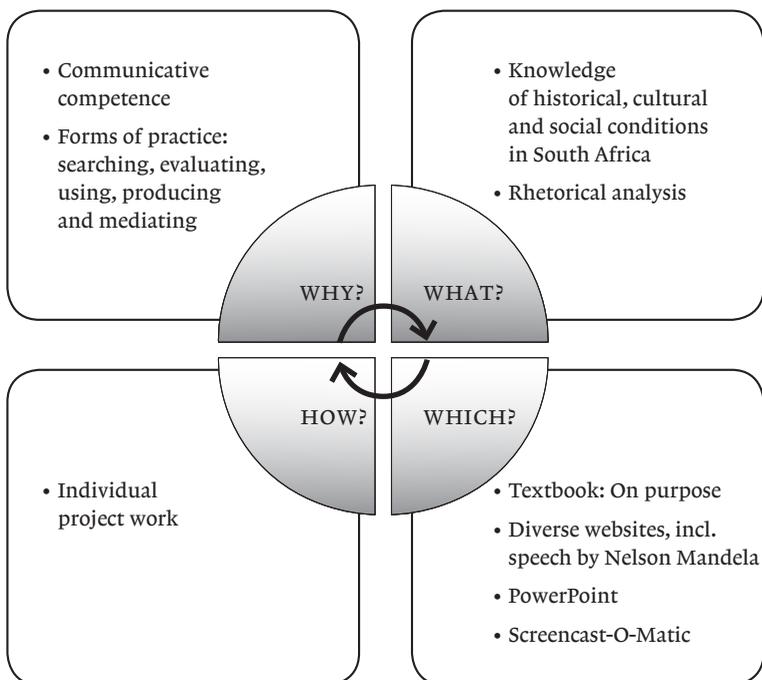

FIGURE 2: Overview of the aims, organisation and teaching aids employed in the project

This model shows how many didactic choices must be made in planning a teaching sequence, and the range of teaching aids involved. Both the teacher and the students have to learn to navigate in and use many different media and tools. A text is no longer a printed text in a book, and a written assignment is no longer just handing something in, with the teaching as the main recipient. It is not only our teaching aids culture that is changing at present but also our understanding of how we learn, and what forms of practice are needed for us to be able to navigate and act in an increasingly digitalised world.

Notes

1 By e-books is meant an electronic edition of a printed book. By i-books is meant interactive publications that combine the traditional book with the Internet.

2 Cf. www.mailvu.com and www. screencast-o-matic.com

3 The listed forms of practice are based on René B. Christiansen and Karsten Gynther's definition, presented in the publication *Didaktik 2.0 – læremiddelkultur mellem tradition og innovation* in Chapter 2 " Didaktik 2.0 – et nødvendigt paradigmeskifte" [Didaktik 2.0 – a necessary paradigm shift].

References

René B. Christiansen and Karsten Gynther: Didaktik 2.0 – et nødvendigt paradigmeskifte, in: Gynther, Karsten (ed), *Didaktik 2.0 – læremiddelkultur mellem tradition og innovation*, Akademisk Forlag 2010, 43-56

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