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Scaffolding students' assignments

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Abstract

This article discusses scaffolding in typical student assignments in mother tongue learning materials in upper secondary education in Denmark and the United Kingdom. It has been determined that assignments do not have sufficient scaffolding end features to help pupils understand concepts and build objects. The article presents the results of empirical research on tasks given in Danish and British learning materials. This work is based on a further development of my PhD thesis: "Learning materials in the subject of Danish" (Slot 2010). The main focus is how cognitive models (and subsidiary explicit learning goals) can help students structure their argumentative and communicative learning processes, and how various multimodal representations can give more open-ended learning possibilities for collaboration.

The article presents a short introduction of the skills for 21st century learning and defines, on the shoulders of linguistics research, results of "assignment-didactics" as a useful but also very tentative term in the context of the assessment of design principles for the design of assignments. Based on empirical studies, I discuss cognition, multi-modality and collaboration as crucial types of scaffolding in students' assignments. Finally there will be a discussion of learning materials.

Keywords: student assignments, scaffolding, cognitive tools, multimodality, collaboration