TLC and Functional Grammar Combined in a Teaching Course

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Indholdsfortegnelse

Introduction

Last module I worked with the teaching model called the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC). I found this model very helpful in teaching students a new genre and to enable them to write in this genre. This time I wanted to combine the model with functional grammar to see how grammar can be a natural part of working with language. I did a four-hour course in a 4th grade focusing on persuasive texts in the form of adverts. I find that adverts are a good genre as it's known by all students and the language is excellent for working with graduation. My research question is the following:

How can I combine functional grammar and the Teaching Learning Cycle in the attempt to help students develop small persuasive texts?

Relevance

I find it very relevant to find ways to teach students the English language in a functional way. It's motivating to know why you learn something and what you can use it for. So instead of teaching grammar separate from the other language teaching, I wanted to make it a part of the work with model texts and the production of texts. In the curriculum it says: "Eleverne skal udvikle deres nysgerrighed og bevidsthed om engelsk sprog og kunne vælge egnede sproglærings- og kommunikations- strategier som grundlag for fremmedsprogsindlæringen" (Undervisningsministeriet, 2019). Derwianka describes that the functional model focus on the language as a resource for meaning. With this focus the model helps the students develop their awareness of the language and how to use it in different contexts and using different strategies.
In my work with functional grammar, I will work with Derwianka and Jones' book: "Teaching language in context" and Humphrey, Droga and Feez' book: "Grammar and meaning". When it comes to TLC, I use Gibbon's book "scaffolding language, scaffolding learning" and Derwianka and Jones' book.

Method

I did a four-hour course in a 4th grade the lesson plan is attached as appendix 1. I have chosen not to make corrections in the plan, but I have mentioned my corrections in my field observations that's included as appendix 2. In addition to my observations of my own teaching I have collected students' productions. I will mainly use the finished adverts in my essay as examples of what the students learned during the course. I'm aware that it's hard to observe your own teaching. Østergaard underlines that observations have a duality because you observe what is going on physically in the classroom, but you also observe the interaction with something you can't see, ldynamics, established practice and culture (Østergaard, 2018, s. 30-35). I think it's hard to observe everything that's going on physically, when you observe your own practice, as it's going quite fast and you can't write down immediately, but I think it's easier to observe the dynamics and the culture as you feel it yourself. The frustration when the teaching doesn't work makes you ask questions.

Theoretical perspectives

The teaching learning cycle

TLC has dialogue at its centre of learning as it is a process of individuals constructing meaning together. It builds on observations of how parents scaffold their small children in constructing meaning through dialogue. The teaching learning cycle is divided into 5 stages:

Stage 1: Building knowledge of the field

Stage 2: Supported reading

Stage 3: Modelling or deconstruction - introducing the genre

Stage 4: Joint construction

Stage 5: Independent construction

During the learning cycle there needs to be a gradual release of responsibility and increasing student independence. The gradual handover of responsibility from the teacher to the student is called scaffolding (Derewianka & Jones, 2012, s. 52). This is the thought of Lev Vygotsky who developed the term the "zone of proximal development" which is the gap between what a student can do unaided and with the right scaffolding (Gibbons, 2015). Gibbons claims that an explicit focus on language is important to include all students in the teaching. Students bring very different kinds of language knowledge to the classroom. Explicit language learning makes the expectations of the culture, genre, and assignment clear (Gibbons, 2015).

Functional grammar

The functional model focus on meaning and language as a resource for meaning. Learning is expanding the learners' ability to make meaning using the language. Language is a system of choices.
The language system has 3 major functions:
1.   Expressing ideas (ideational function)
2.   Interacting with others (interpersonal function)
3.   Text structure (textual function)
When we look at the functional model, we can see how the different levels influence each other. The text always has a purpose, and it relates to the context surrounding it (Derewianka & Jones, 2012). Context influence the language we use in two ways: the social purpose, or genre of the text and the immediate context, or register of the text. The register includes field (what is going on), tenor (who is involved) and mode (how is language used?) (S.Humphrey, 2015).
I chose to work with persuasive texts in the form of adverts. The purpose of this genre is to persuade someone to buy a product or a service. The students were working with all three functions in the language system. They had to find a product that they wanted to sell, and I had made a sheet for them that listed things that they should think about before they made their advert and that they should include (ideational function). We had talked about having a target group and using graduation to adjust the strength and focus of their utterances. They should phrase three arguments in the advert, that should persuade people to buy their product (interpersonal function). Finally, we worked with the structure of the text, and I had

made a template for their adverts including room for a headline, a small description of the product or information about the product, room for a picture, a box for their three arguments and a box in the end describing how to purchase the product (textual function). The grammatical focus was on the structure and how to graduate the language and the focus of the genre was using arguments. In my analysis I want to look at two student products.

Analysis

Learner text 1
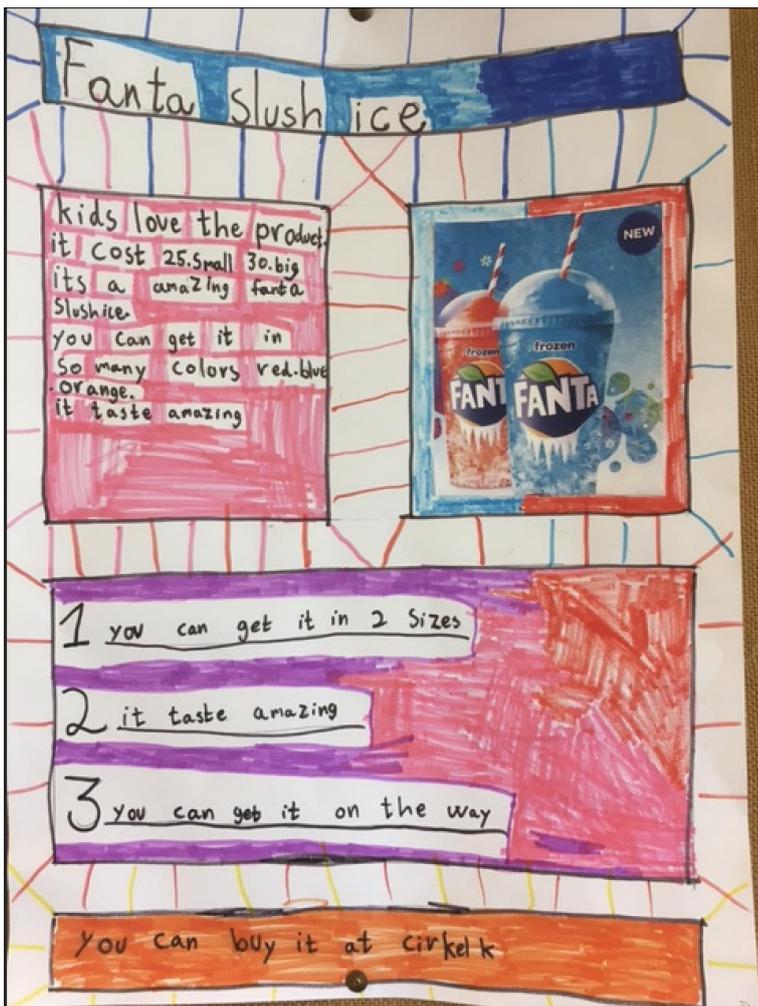
It's clear what the students want to sell, and they have succeeded in addressing their target group in a meaningful way. They have a clear structure of the text, which was a part of the task description, and they have three arguments, which was a part of the description as well. A part of the task was to use graduation and the text has potential for change here. They have used the word amazing three times. It shows that they are aware that adverts often turn the volume up on words, but it would be good to vary their use of words. I would ask the students to find synonyms or other words that could be used.

Furthermore, I would remind them to start their sentences with a capital letter and finish with a period. This is mainly a problem in their description next to the picture. It's not at big issue as they have used statements which is common to adverts, but it's still a good habit to develop to keep the text readable. I would choose these two areas as they were our focus for the task. This learner text doesn't have many mistakes, but I know that one of the students are very challenged by the English language, so my suspicion is, that one of the students has made the text.

Learner text 2
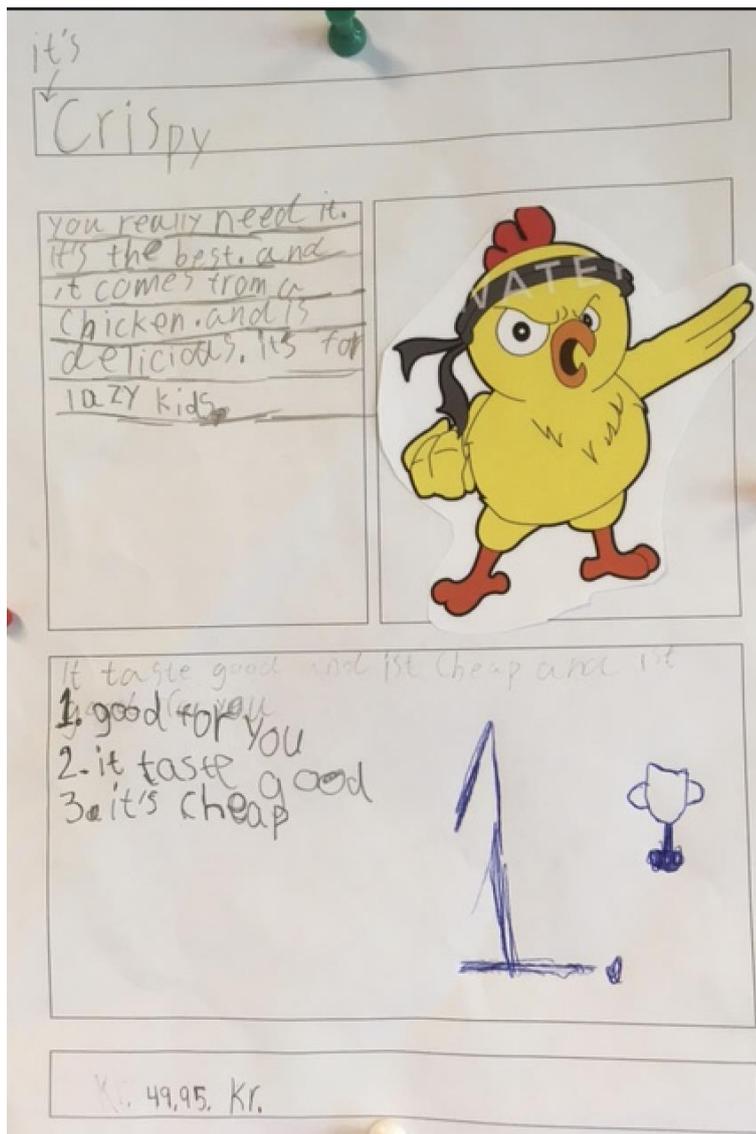
This group have used graduation well in their advert. They have understood that they should have a target group, but their choice for a target group might not sell (lazy kids). As lazy is a negative word to most people. They have three arguments which was part of the task and they have made a description of the product. The biggest problem with this advert is that it's unclear what they want to sell. It's also unclear where you can buy it. My first reply to this

group would be to check the paper with all the things you need to think about before making an advert. Then they should include the missing information in their advert. Next, I would focus on the structure and make them think about what the reader needs to know when. Finally, I would make them start with capital letters and make more room in their description, so it's easy for the reader to read the text.

These topics would be my priority as the most important thing in this type of text is the communication with the reader. It must be organized, easy to understand and persuasive. I would complement them on their use of graduation and that they have made a persuasive text (really need it, best, delicious etc.). Focusing on their language they use "it's" quite a lot which makes it spoken language. They could use phrases such as "our product... try our nuggets they are the best..." They could vary their language a bit more. Also, the argument "good for you" lacks some context. Why is it good for you, what is it that is good for you? The problem in this text is not so much the grammar as the meaning of the text.

Analyzing the course

As I focused on writing abilities and grammar, I didn't include stage 2 in the learning cycle. I also ended up skipping stage 4 as we had to focus a lot of energy on student behaviour and time was slipping away. I also found that a challenge using TLC is that it focuses so much on dialogue and classroom teaching that it's hard in some classes as this type of teaching can cause a lot of unease. The culture I observed and felt in the classroom was that the dialogue was used to make jokes and have fun and for some students to establish their role as the clown of the class. Because of my observations of the class difficulty with this type of teaching. I ended up skipping the joint construction and instead I focused on the structure of the text and the volume button that we already had worked with (Jacobsen, 2021). This is of course done with the risk that some students don't get the right scaffolding.

The learner texts show that the students have been scaffolded to make an advert as both groups are successful in making a persuasive text. They have included elements typical to the genre and they have arguments that seek to persuade the reader to buy their product. It's the first time the students are working with graduation and when I gave them a task using the volume button, I found that it was hard for them to find synonyms for English words. We did some examples together, but we could have worked more thoroughly with it e.g. looking at examples in texts and talking about what type of words we use for graduation. Considering this I think the students did well in including graduation in their texts. The structure was easier to work with as the students had the template and they had worked with structure earlier on. When I want to use functional grammar, it's important to have enough time for the process and if I introduce a new element I should use a variation of tasks, so the students had a deeper understanding before including it in their own texts.

Reflection

I would say that TLC and functional grammar can be combined easily when teaching a genre. Based on my experiences from my teaching course I would say that it's important to calculate enough time for the process. TLC is quite comprehensive, and students need a variation of tasks to be able to master new grammatical elements. TLC and the work with genre provide a meaningful context for the work with grammar. Grammar becomes a part of the language learning as the functional model aims at. I think the students were able to use graduation because they understood the purpose of adverts and the tools that the advertising uses for persuasion. This means that it's important to pick up on the work with graduation for them to be able to understand the element and to be able to use it in other contexts. The volume button was very helpful, and in order to establish the students use of graduation they should work with more tasks.

When I look at my teaching course it's hard not to include some didactic reflections as well. As my field notes reflect a lot of time was spend on other teaching than language and grammar. We spend a lot of time adjusting student behavior and I found that classroom teaching was hard in this class. This became a problem as TLC includes a lot of dialogue and working with the text together. Poulsen claims that students are preoccupied with something else than the teachers and parents. To them the fellowship and social aspects of school are more important than the professional aspect. They seek to participate in the fellowship and establish their place in the fellowship. Sometimes their methods can seem inappropriate, but they always have a purpose for their participation (Poulsen, 2021). Furthermore, Oettingen claims that there is a tension in learning in school because you have to learn, but students can't be forced to learn. There is a tension between wanting to learn and that you must learn (Oettingen, 2010). When I have a student that refuses to participate, I must spend time solving that problem. I can't just focus on the professional aspects of my teaching and the goals I have made for my teaching. When my planning meets the students, unexpected things happen, and I must adjust my teaching. I realize that the teacher-student relation is very important for the teaching to work, so I can't avoid their agenda, I need to meet them somehow. It's clear that when I plan a teaching course I focus a lot on the content, but when I recall the didactic triangle it's important to include the teacher and the student as well. My abilities to lead the classroom and the dialogue is important and the student's motivation and participation is equally important.

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Appendix 1

Lessonplan

Lesson 1+2

Sekvens En lektion opdeles i sekvenser – kald dem 1, 2, 3...	Varighed Her skriver du, hvor lang tid den enkelte sekvens varer	Indhold Her beskriver du, hvad sekvensen omhandler	Formål/mål Her skriver du, hvad formålet og målet/målene er for den enkelte sekvens	Materialer Her beskriver du, hvilke materialer og læremidler, der skal bruges	Aktivitet Her beskriver du undervisnings-, arbejds-, og organisationsformer U: underviser E: elever	Evaluering og feedback Her beskriver du, hvordan du vil arbejde med evaluering og feedback af elevernes læingsudbytte og læringsproces
1	10 min	Introduction to the theme advertising

Dialogue about their knowledge of advertisement | Activate the students prior-knowledge | A blackboard to write down the students thoughts | U: introduce theme and the goal for the course. Then ask the students of their knowledge about advertisement

E: students share thoughts

U: teacher write it down on the black board | Sum up their knowledge and add if there's important knowledge they haven't mentioned |
| **2** | 20 min | Introduction of some adverts | Introducing common language in adverts | Adverts found on the internet | U: reads advert that is shown on the whiteboard and underlines some words that's typical in an advert

U+E: Dialogue about the function of the words | Students' engagement in the dialogue and whether this shows understanding |

					E: reads another advert and underlines typical words. Students explain why they are typical\n\nU: explains the purpose of persuasive texts.	
3	15 min	Introduction of graduation using the volume button	Making the students aware that they can turn the volume up and down by using different words	Volume button\n\nPractice sheet	U: introduce volume button and give examples of words that vary in volume and what it means for the construction of the sentence.\n\nE: work in pairs with examples on a practice sheet\n\nU: wrap up: what did you learn?	Result on practice sheet and answers to what they have learned.
4	10 min	Movement	To keep the students focused		U: make students choose different exercises to do	
5	15 min	Introduction of the structure of a text (paragraph openers, paragraphs, sentence openers)	Students know how to structure their own texts	An example text	U: reading the example text pointing out the structure of the text\n\nU: reading example text with no structure\n\nU+E: dialogue about the importance of the structure	Dialogue about the structure – does the students recognize what the structure does to the text

6	20 min	Construct an ad together	The students get the necessary scaffolding to produce their own ads	White board	U: ideas for a product to sell E: share ideas U+E: find a picture set it into a template. Dialogue about the writing process. What should be shared first? Which arguments are good? How should the language be turned up/down? How should it be structured?	The input from the students

Lesson 3+4

Sekvens En lektion opdeles i sekvenser – kald dem 1, 2, 3...	Varighed Her skriver du, hvor lang tid den enkelte sekvens varer	Indhold Her beskriver du, hvad sekvensen omhandler	Formål/mål Her skriver du, hvad formålet og målet/målene er for den enkelte sekvens	Materialer Her beskriver du, hvilke materialer og læremidler, der skal bruges	Aktivitet Her beskriver du undervisnings-, arbejds-, og organisationsformer U: underviser E: elever	Evaluering og feedback Her beskriver du, hvordan du vil arbejde med evaluering og feedback af elevernes læingsudbytte og læringsproces
1	10 min	What did we learn last time?	Refreshing the student's memory of the knowledge from the last lesson	The jointly constructed advert from last time	U: showing the advert on the white board and asking what did we learn last time? Writing down answers and refreshing memory, where something important has been forgotten	How much do the students remember from the last lesson?

2	50 min	Make an ad in pairs	Students should be able to construct small persuasive texts on their own	Template for an ad with space for a picture, headline, and paragraphs	U: introducing the task and answering questions. Introducing what the adverts will be evaluated by. E: working in pairs making adverts	How is the process for the students? Are they equipped or is it hard for them? How much guidance do they need?
3	20 min	Evaluate each other's adverts	Students should be able to see whether the other group has used the knowledge that has been shared in class	An evaluation sheet	U: Introducing how the students should evaluate each other's adverts and how to do it respectfully E: swapping adverts whit another group and fill out the evaluating sheet. Give the group oral feedback as well.	Looking at adverts and evaluation sheets
4	10 min	Wrapping up what they have learned	Getting feedback on the teaching course	White board to write down reply	U: Asking questions about their learning E: sharing U+E: hanging up adverts in the classroom	Students' answers

Appendix 2

Field observations

Observations from the teaching 26/4 2022

There was engagement from the beginning, but it quickly developed into fooling around and making jokes. We had to focus a lot on behavior and some students got frustrated with others as they wanted to engage. Two boys talked constantly. They were also very engaged in answering they just didn't raise their hand and made many jokes about adverts they knew. When we had a break to play Simon says two students left the class. They found the class too noisy and were very negative. One of the girls is moving to another school the following Thursday and she sees no reason to participate as she's not going to be there next time. They enter the class again and I talk to the class about their behavior, but it doesn't improve much. I talked to the teacher afterwards and she suggested that I should talk to the two boys before the teaching next time about their behavior and my expectations. I also made the consequence that if they didn't behave, they had to make another task in the corridor on their own.

The task with the volume button was too difficult. In the end we had to do it together on the blackboard as most students found it too hard. They seemed to understand the concept quite well, but it was hard to find synonyms for words. A lot of the teaching was based on dialogue as TLC includes a lot of dialogue about prior knowledge, example texts, language use etc. This seemed hard for this class as it caused a lot of chaos. It was mainly the same students that participated, and they were the same that caused the chaos. Because of this I consider leaving out the joint construction of an advert (that we didn't get to do) and instead start the group work next time.

It was very difficult to do the teaching in English. First, I tried to speak in English and translate to Danish, but gradually more and more was in Danish. The topic seemed to be difficult to talk about in English. The topic is new to them, and I don't know their level of English. Some students seemed capable of doing it in English and others not. The students gave answers in Danish a few in English. Sometimes I asked them to try in English.

How can you make teaching when so many students need special attention?

Observations from the teaching 3/5-22

It started as last time the students had a hard time keeping quiet during our wrap up of last times learning and one girl was negative just from the beginning. When I split them into groups, they were very engaged in making their ads especially as I told the boys, that was fooling around, that if they hadn't finished their ad by breaktime they would have to do it in the break. I also told the negative girl

the same and she came around and I helped her make her ad and she was happy and proud in the end. She ended up making the ad on her own as her partner asked for another group and I found this okay as she couldn't cope with her negativity. Another boy also worked on his own as he was frustrated, that he was the only boy who had to work together with two girls.

Only two groups finished in time to evaluate each other's ads. We could easily have used two more lessons as we had to spend some time especially the first two lessons to talk about the student's behavior. I had to cut out the construction of an ad together. Both because of time but also because the students found it hard to concentrate on classroom teaching for so long (one of the negative sites to TLC is, that it has a lot of working with the text together. If I had had more time, then I could have varied the activities more). I prioritized to talk about the structure of the text and to remind them of the volume button instead. As I had to help two students quite a lot and help all the students to choose pictures for their ad's and print them. I didn't have time to get around to all the groups to observe how they worked. Only two groups got around to evaluate each other's ad's and we didn't get around to evaluate the course. But it was so good to see their engagement and to see their finished products. And it was a success that everyone ended up making an ad.