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Worlds of many Languages: Learning from Fiction in Multimodal Text Universes

Most young people in their late teens in Sweden, and probably also in many other parts of the world, devote several hours every day to fictional stories. The stories help them to construct realities, create identities, and can, in the most concrete sense, be used as tools in different ways, Bruner (1986) claims. Narrative forms of expression are, however, currently in transition. Novels become games, games become movies, movies become TV-series and so on, and everything is mediated digitally and globally in a convergence culture (Jenkins 2006). This cultural transfer places great demands on young people's cultural, medial, and linguistic skills.

Based on studies conducted through surveys and media journals among people aged 17-18 years, the paper discusses theoretical aspects relevant for literary studies and foreign language learning in a broad sense. The first aspect is *transformation* (Brummett 1991), that is, the usefulness of combining fragments of different cultures, languages, media, and modalities into text mosaics. This transformation is made possible through various transferal processes, such as the transfer of a story from one medium to another, from one genre to another, from one culture to another etc. Transformation is an essential part of a second aspect, *narrative competence* (Lundström & Olin-Scheller 2014), which is needed to become a participant in so-called multimodal text universes. In these, an initial story, for example, the story of Harry Potter, is in a constant move between different cultural spaces, semiotic systems, and languages in a way that makes it impossible to isolate the learning of a single language in the way that is or was often achieved in the organisation of institutionalized language teaching. Hence, this paper shows and discusses how the use of fictional stories functions as a way to transgress through different cultural and linguistic systems, and in extension functions as a means for language acquisition.

References

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