Argumentation in Finnish second language learners’ written production in Swedish

Taina Juurakko-Paavola¹, Sinikka Lahtinen², Outi Toropainen³

¹Häme University of Applied Sciences, Finland
²Turku University, Finland
³Oulu University, Finland

Several studies (e.g. Mikkonen, 2010; Bergh Nestlog, 2012) have shown that writing persuasive texts in L1 is challenging for young learners. In studies of writing argumentative texts in a second language, the focus has mainly been in academic writing in English (e.g. Wolfe, 2011) and research with young learners is sparse. This study focuses on how young Finnish learners of Swedish can write persuasive texts.

In an earlier phase of the current study, 144 persuasive texts (CEFR-levels A1-C1) written by young Finnish learners of Swedish were analysed. The results showed that all the learners are able to express their opinion but with varying linguistic means. The present study aims to explore in greater detail the variation of argumentative structures and linguistic features in the texts rated to be on the CEFR-levels A2 and B1. The new data consists of 100 persuasive texts written by students (aged 18-19) in the Finnish Matriculation Examination test.

The results show that the most typical ways of expressing the opinion are similar in both materials and that the linguistic features show more variation at higher CEFR-levels. The main new finding is that the texts at CEFR-level A2 are more like stories, whereas at CEFR-level B1 the texts have a clearer argumentative structure. The results can have pedagogical implications for the development of the teaching in writing (e.g. Kuhn et al., 2016).

References


Kuhn, D. & Hemberger, L. & Khait, V. 20106. Tracing the Development of Argumentative Writing in a Discourse-rich Context. Written Communication 33(1), 92–121.


Keywords: CEFR, writing, argumentation.