



## Brief

# Not One Right Way. Professional (Translanguaging) Judgement in Early Childhood Language Teaching

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How can early childhood education be performed to provide young children with decent possibilities to develop in and through the languages they live by? This burning question occupies teachers in Nordic preschools, where the societal majority language is only one of many languages that children use in their daily lives. The relation between the majority language and other languages, as it is presented at policy level in the Swedish curriculum for preschool, and as it emerges among young children in real educational contexts, provide multifaceted challenges as well as possibilities regarding early childhood language teaching. How such challenges and possibilities can be dealt with specifically in educational settings where the linguistic variation among children is large, needs further attention without reducing the complexity of the problem with simplistic answers. This study is a contribution inspired by posthumanist applied linguistics, a contemporary philosophical discussion around professional judgement, and post-qualitative methodology.

Working with early childhood educators in Sweden with specific experiences of and interest in language teaching and linguistic variation, the article explores different dilemmas and professional standpoints at the intersection of early childhood language policy and concrete educational practices in Sweden. The aim is to create qualitative knowledge on professional judgement regarding language teaching in preschools with great linguistic variation among children. Parting from a focus group interview and using abductive analysis, different conversational clusters are created by which a picture of different dilemmas and associated professional judgement regarding language teaching transpires. Emerging dilemmas regard the intertwining and tension between language and care, a range of

questions associated to children's use of English as a lingua franca and the responsibility and vulnerability related to the democratic assignment of linguistically preparing children for school. Professional judgement regarding early childhood language teaching appears as contextually and collectively composed by different practical, theoretical, emotional, and sensory knowledge dimensions, which further motivate a discussion on its translanguaging proportions. A professional translanguaging judgement works both within and beyond the sphere of verbal language and gets both didactic and ethic-political relevance. The study highlights the importance of the complexity of early childhood educational practice and the professional perspective forming a central basis when language teaching in preschool is debated.

**Keywords:** *language teaching in preschool; multilingualism; professional judgement; translanguaging*