



Brief

Playing in Several Languages: Supporting Multilingual Participation in Preschool

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Swedish preschools are obliged, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to support the language development of all children, including those whose mother tongue is different from the majority language. Previous research indicates that play serves as an important medium for language development, yet the role of the teacher in this process remains underexplored.

The aim of this study is to explore how preschool teachers can support multilingual children's participation in preschool through play. The following questions guide the analysis:

- In which situations do more than one named language occur in narrative play activities where preschool teachers and children participate together?
- How does the preschool teacher contribute on these occasions?

Video observation was employed as a method to examine the interactions of a multilingual preschool teacher during narrative play where translanguaging was evident. The empirical material consists of six hours of video recordings generated over five separate occasions spanning two months. The data were analysed using Socioculturally-informed Interaction Analysis (SIA) and grounded in a theoretical framework of play-responsive teaching, focusing on key concepts like metacommunication, the *as-if* and *as-is* dimensions of play, as well as scaffolding and triggering.

The findings reveal that translanguaging occurs when discussing the rules of the play and narratives, during meta-communication about the language used in the play, when referencing specific cultural experiences and in connection to popular cultural experiences.

The languages involved in these scenarios are Arabic, English, and Swedish. The teacher actively initiates and responds to translanguaging, thereby validating the use of multiple languages. The study highlights the teacher's role in coordinating and establishing intersubjectivity between the participants in play activities. The discussion suggests that many of the strategies could also be applied even if the teacher is not multilingual.

Keywords: *participation; play-responsive teaching; narrative play; translanguaging; in early childhood education*