

Teachers' response to multilingual practices in mainstream Norwegian preschools

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Due to immigration and globalization, Norwegian preschools are increasingly multilingual, especially in urban areas. Many teachers and children can speak several languages, despite Norwegian being the dominant language in ECEC settings. The Norwegian framework plan for kindergartens calls the teachers to ensure "that linguistic diversity becomes an enrichment for the entire group of children" (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2017). Various pedagogical approaches stress the need for multilingual pedagogies to activate and promote children's multilingual resources (Cenoz et al. 2017, Chumak-Horbatsch 2012, 2019). Previous research shows that use of multiple languages can strengthen the children's home languages (Skans 2011), make children curious about languages (Alstad 2014), promote their competences and bridge the gap between majority and minority languages (Olausson 2012, Kanstad 2018). However, there is little research from the Norwegian context on how teachers react to children's multiple language use and how multiple languages are used as pedagogical tools in ECEC settings.

We have collected about 40 narratives from practice written by ECEC students, which constitute windows into multilingual practices. What can these narratives tell us about the teachers' perceptions of the use of multiple languages in Norwegian ECEC?

Preliminary analyses suggest that teachers have positive attitudes to the use of multiple languages. However, in many situations they might not feel safe and sure of whether their pedagogical choices are right. These findings stress that there is need to strengthen multilingual perspectives in professional training in order to prepare the preschool teachers for the multilingual reality met in preschools, especially in urban areas.

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