Multilingual children’s voices in semiotic landscapes

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how materiality frames multilingual children’s participation in Norwegian ECEC institutions. ECEC in Norway has a strong focus on children’s participation and democratic community (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Wagner and Einasdottir, 2006). Nevertheless, Norwegian policy documents indicate a dichotomy between Norwegian and multilingual children (Bubikova-Moan, 2017).

Materiality in ECEC has a multi-dimensional aspect referring to both physical and psychosocial understandings (Løkken & Moser, 2012). Objects, materials, human and non-human elements influence children’s meeting with their surroundings and open for different ways of positioning (Nordtømme, 2012).

The study is based on Bakhtinian concepts of voice and multivoicedness (Bakhtin, 1986, White 2016) and Gibson’s (1979) theory of affordances. It is related to research on semiotic landscapes in ECEC institutions and schools (Laihonen & Szabó, 2017; Szabó, 2015; Brown, 2012).

The project’s design has a micro-ethnographic research approach (Le Baron, 2011) using a tourist guide technique (Szabó, 2015). The data material includes photographs of the ECEC’s semiotic landscapes and interviews with ECEC teachers connected to the photographs.

Informed consent was collected from all participants and it was possible to withdraw at any time.

In our data material, materiality is characterized by predefined artefacts used for specific interactions or activities. Discussion evolves around the question how the predefined artefacts create space for all children’s voices and participation.

Findings might have implications for questioning the types of materiality in Norwegian ECEC, and how materiality can be created and used to include all children in diverse interactions.

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