Preschool literacy and second language learners

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In order to understand literacy and language in education it is no longer enough to direct research attention to schools and universities. In the Nordic countries, preschools have become important arenas for numerous political initiatives intending to enhance children’s language and literacy learning. The poor results of the PISA-measurement have in Denmark, Norway and Sweden drawn much attention to literacy and language in day-care centers and kindergartens and resulted in the development of a considerable number of social technologies (programs and concepts) intended to improve pre-school children’s literacy and language skills. Seen in a knowledge-society perspective the development might be characterized as an expansion of a life-long-learning evidence-based strategy into early childhood.

The importance of development of early childhood literacy is discursively related to research in ”precursors” to literacy and to a functional understanding of literacy. The research in precursors to literacy identifies teachable and generalised preconditions for being successful in regard to school literacy. The precursor-strategy makes it important to examine what happens when transnational and generalised assumptions about language and literacy learning meets linguistic diversity and second language learners. One central issue in relation to a linguistic diverse context is to investigate the distinctions and categorisations established in and around the different programmes. Another issue is to examine the impact of the programmes and concepts for institutional practices. How do children with diverse cultural and linguistic background learn about reading and writing, and what are the rules for socially interacting and sharing knowledge in the literacy events they meet in their day-care centers and kindergartens? Examining these social practices in pre-schools might illuminate the interplay between language and literacy and the learning processes of second language learners and contribute to the discussion about the need for re-conceptualizations of the relation between language and literacy.

Keywords: ”language and literacy”, ”distinctions and categorisations”, ”social technologies”, ”second language learners”, ”preschool literacy”.