

Katarzyna A. Tunkiel, Cecilie Dyrkorn Fodstad, and
Trude Hoel

Reading Practices with Multilingual Children in Norwegian Kindergartens

Picturebooks, Tangible Objects, and Playful Bodies

Abstract: One in five children in Norwegian kindergartens are multilingual, and reading practices that promote the use of multilinguals' entire linguistic repertoire can serve as important opportunities for language sharing, which is also encouraged by the Norwegian education authorities. In this study, we initially aimed to explore kindergarten reading practices involving languages other than Norwegian. When it became clear that such practices are rare, we expanded our investigation to include early childhood teachers' experiences of reading with multilingual children more broadly. Our data sources consist of both self-reported data from a nationwide survey on reading practices in Norwegian kindergartens and six semi-structured focus group interviews with kindergarten staff. As reading in Norwegian kindergartens appears to occur in a space between children's right to meaningful experiences in different languages and their need to learn Norwegian, we shed light on what early childhood teachers highlight as central resources for reading with multilinguals. The key resources that emerge in the analyses encompass different forms of expression, hence multimodality is used as the overarching theoretical perspective in the study. Additionally, we discuss how good opportunities for promoting diverse reading practices become evident when kindergarten staff demonstrate curiosity, creativity, and a problem-solving approach to reading with multilinguals.

Keywords: early childhood education, dual-language books, linguistic diversity, multilingual children, multimodality, reading practices, resources for reading, Norway, literary multilingualism

In December 2022, all children in one kindergarten brought a book they enjoyed from home, wrapped as a gift. Day by day, the kindergarten staff unwrapped the books and read them with the children. Most books were in Norwegian, but some were in Italian, Russian, and Swedish. The kindergarten staff explain how they read those books based on the pictures, with the child owner as an active co-narrator. When reading the book in Russian, they also used Google Translate by pointing at the text with a mobile phone camera. In this way, everyone could get a more in-depth reading experience.

This example is from a focus group interview (Interview 1) in which six early childhood teachers share their experiences of reading with multilingual children in a Norwegian kindergarten. In this interview, participants reveal the importance and possibilities of reading images in picturebooks. They also display creativity in an encounter with an unknown language and alphabet. Recent approaches to education for multilinguals underscore the significance of allowing children to utilise and express their entire linguistic repertoire (Cummins 21; García and Li Wei 223–240). Reading practices that include use of various languages can serve as an important opportunity for language sharing, which is also encouraged by Norwegian education authorities (*Framework Plan* 47–48). In this study, we explore early childhood teachers' experiences of reading with multilinguals, aiming to contribute with in-depth knowledge about reading practices with multilingual children in kindergartens in Norway. As demonstrated in the example above, picturebook images may play a significant role in children's reading experiences, but other forms of expression, including story-related objects or body language, may also support reading practices. Therefore, we will also discuss what teachers highlight as key resources for reading with multilinguals.

According to Statistics Norway, 93.8% of all one- to five-year-old children in Norway attend kindergarten ("Barnehager"). One in five of these represent linguistic minorities, meaning that both the child and the parents have a first language other than Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Sami, or English ("Fakta om barnehager 2021"). Although some of these children have just started learning Norwegian as a second language, while others communicate well both in Norwegian and their home language(s), all are referred to as multilingual children in the Norwegian kindergarten context. In this article, we use the terms *multilingual children* and *multilinguals* interchangeably when referring to children who either can speak or are learning to speak more than one language.

All Norwegian kindergartens are required to adhere to *Rammeplan for barnehagen* (Framework Plan for Kindergartens), which obliges

staff to promote linguistic diversity by encouraging multilinguals to use their home languages while actively developing their Norwegian skills (*Framework Plan* 24). It also highlights the importance of offering a variety of books to children (49). However, it is essential to note that the Framework Plan does not directly link educational goals to individual learning outcomes, and that formal reading and writing instruction only begins when children enter school at the age of six. Therefore, a kindergarten's role extends beyond teaching children Norwegian or supporting early literacy development; it also involves providing literary and aesthetic experiences. By sharing literature in multilingual children's home languages, kindergartens can actively contribute to achieving the aforementioned goals. When it comes to the use of books, a crucial factor is having access to them. All public libraries in Norway provide literature in various languages and dual-language books through a national service called *Det flerspråklige bibliotek* (the Multilingual Library). Furthermore, a variety of online resources, including digital picturebooks in different language versions, are available for use in kindergartens, with some being free of charge. Still, we have limited knowledge of whether books, stories, and fairy tales in languages other than Norwegian are accessible in everyday life in kindergartens, and in what way or to what extent they are read with children.

Although the Framework Plan seems to promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity, other key policy documents for kindergarten lean more towards highlighting the importance of learning Norwegian, which may reflect a monolingual ideology (Giæver and Tkachenko 255–256). While there was an investment in bilingual assistants to foster multilingual children's full language competence during the 1990s, this subsidy scheme ceased to exist in the early 2000s, and a shift happened towards prioritising kindergarten children's proficiency in Norwegian (Giæver and Tkachenko 253). Overall, the development within early childhood education in Norway has gravitated towards normalisation and standardisation (Nygård 10–11). The prevalent discourse, with its focus on children learning sufficient Norwegian before school entry, reflects a perspective on language that may hinder widespread multilingual practices in kindergarten.

A study by Anna Sara Hexeberg Romøren, Nina Gram Garmann, and Elena Tkachenko indicates that use of languages other than Norwegian occurs in kindergartens, even though it does not appear to be a very common practice. There are also examples of case studies, such as those by Gunhild Tomter Alstad or Cecilie Dyrkorn

Fodstad, showing how teachers may support kindergarten children in using their home languages to facilitate second-language learning, but also as a means of creating multilingual practices where children are encouraged to share their knowledge as language experts (Alstad and Kulbrandstad 54–55; Jæger 82; Pesch 33). Tkachenko, Romøren, and Garmann suggest that book reading is one context in which children may play such a role in Norwegian kindergartens (6). However, among kindergarten activities that regularly involve use of languages other than Norwegian, book reading is very infrequently mentioned (Romøren et al. 12). Existing research also suggests that books in languages other than Norwegian are only to a small extent made available in kindergartens (Hofslundsengen et al., “The Literacy Environment” 420; Maagerø and Øines 126). Teachers may be more likely to support second-language learning through collaboration on book reading with multilingual children’s homes, where parents read in their home language, while the kindergarten staff share the same book in Norwegian. Several intervention studies conducted in Norway, such as those by Vibeke Grøver and colleagues or Katarzyna A. Tunkiel and Adriana G. Bus, illustrate this approach, which separates children’s languages, but also encourages multilingual practices in the home. A recent Nordic survey-based study indicates that teachers, when reading with multilingual children, choose books in the majority language, with simpler content, less text, and more pictures. They also emphasise the importance of talk, labelling pictures, and providing rich explanations when reading with multilinguals (Hofslundsengen et al., “ECEC Teachers’ Reported Practices” 29).

In this study, we started with exploring early childhood teachers’ experiences of reading that involve languages other than Norwegian. For this purpose, we used self-reported data from questions concerning reading with multilinguals, which were a part of a nationwide survey on reading practices in Norwegian kindergartens, answered by 1,192 teachers. However, the survey results indicated very limited existence of such reading practices, which is why we decided to follow up with six semi-structured focus group interviews on reading with multilinguals, conducted in different parts of Norway. Based on the interview data, we also investigate which key resources for reading with multilingual children are highlighted by early childhood teachers. Reading in kindergarten, like all communication in this context, includes different forms of expression, such as verbal language, gestures, and other visual resources. Such resources may play an even more prominent role when reading with children who

are not yet proficient in the majority language in which the book is written. Research from the school context shows that employing multiple modes of meaning-making can promote powerful forms of communication and learning in linguistically diverse student groups (Cummins et al. 153–154). Therefore, multimodality is the overarching theoretical perspective used in this study. In the following section, we present some key aspects of this theory related to reading with multilingual children in kindergarten.

Multimodality and Reading with Multilinguals in Kindergarten

Social semiotic multimodality theory emphasises that communication does not solely rely on verbal language. Instead, it recognises multimodal interaction, where various forms of expression, including visual elements, play a significant role. Multimodality theory provides concepts that enable understanding and analysis of interactions between culture, situation, and multimodal expressions (Kress, *Multimodality* 8–11). Different modes contribute to creating meaning, and Gunther Kress sees both culturally created ways of organisation – such as systems of gestures, body language, and written language – and material form as central aspects of the modes (*Literacy* 171). Furthermore, modes always appear in ensembles, that is combinations of various forms of expression, which together contribute to meaning-making (Kress, *Multimodality* 159). However, each mode has a functional specialisation in the communication process, and one mode may do more of the semiotic work than others in a specific situation, that is, carry major functional load (Bezemer and Kress 24).

Picturebooks are one type of material form often used to express meaning in the kindergarten context. As multimodal texts, picturebooks communicate with different modes, particularly writing and images, which are equally important for children's meaning-making during reading (Painter et al. 1–2). However, visual forms of representation may be more transparent and therefore easier to comprehend than verbal communication. As Kress and Theo van Leeuwen suggest, as long as one is familiar with the cultural codes used to convey meaning in images, they have a more immediate impact on the reader than writing (22–23, 33). This is of utmost importance for multilingual children who are in the process of second-language learning and may not have sufficient linguistic competence in the majority language to be able to make sense of verbal text in picturebooks. In fact, empirical research shows that young children do not need to be fully proficient in their second language to make worthwhile

judgements about complex picturebook images and the word-image interaction (Arizpe et al. 14–15; Daugaard and Johansen 10–11).

In line with the holistic approach in Norwegian kindergarten, all children should be able to participate in meaningful communication, and picturebook reading may contribute to achieving this goal. However, reading in kindergarten is not only a matter of sharing verbal text and images with groups of children, but a much more complex activity which involves numerous forms of expression. Story-related materials, usually in the form of three-dimensional tangible objects that can be grasped and manipulated, are often included in reading and storytelling practices in Norwegian kindergartens. Involving such objects, accompanied by speech, gestures, and movement, creates a multimodal ensemble that may facilitate multilingual children's comprehension of a narrative, particularly during their first encounters with a new text (Arntzen and Hjelde 67–68). Therefore, reading in kindergarten may be understood as a multimodal practice in which children's meaning-making is embodied, also taking the form of play (Solstad, "Multimodal lesepraksis" 133, 140; Thuresson 147–148). As Trine Solstad observes, through play children may show their engagement in picturebooks and express an understanding of narratives (*Snakk om bildebøker!*). More importantly, some forms of play do not require use of advanced verbal language, and therefore may connect children irrespective of their linguistic competence – particularly if the story that inspires play has previously been shared using different modes to support multilingual children's meaning-making.

Data Collection and Analysis

The starting point for this study is a nationwide survey in which early childhood teachers reported on their reading practices in kindergarten. The survey was conducted at the beginning of 2022 as a part of the research project Sprell – Shared Reading Practices in Early Childhood Education and Families for Language Learning and Literature Experiences. The survey was sent to 2,500 e-mail addresses of kindergartens in Norway. Out of 1,296 respondents, 1,192 were early childhood teachers, while the remaining 104 were kindergarten principals whose answers were excluded. We extracted the reported answers to four survey questions: 1) How many languages, in addition to Norwegian, are represented among the children in the class? 2) How many languages, in addition to Norwegian, are represented among the staff in the class? 3) When did you last read books in

languages other than Norwegian? 4) Do you have books in languages other than Norwegian?

Respondents were also asked to name at least five books in languages other than Norwegian to which they had access in kindergarten. The first four were fixed-alternative questions, which did not allow for elaboration or nuancing of the answers. The last task, however, was open-ended, and the responses suggested a presence of more varied reading practices than the answers to the fixed-alternative questions did. Hence, a need for a more thorough exploration of reading with multilingual children in Norwegian kindergartens became apparent, and with the survey as a backdrop, we prepared a semi-structured interview guide and conducted six focus group interviews with kindergarten staff about their reading practices with multilinguals.

We chose focus group interviews as a supplement to the survey to gain access to kindergarten staff's own perspectives on reading with multilingual children. Applying a qualitative investigation as a follow-up to quantitative research is a widely recognised strategy for advancing knowledge acquisition (Grønmo 231). Focus group interviews, characterised by a non-directive interview style, involve a group moderator who presents topics and facilitates the elicitation of diverse viewpoints on the focal subject (Brinkmann and Kvale 175). Compared to one-to-one interviews, focus groups offer an increased chance of participant discussion, allowing for more nuanced perspectives (Tjora 145). The aim of the interviews is to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences by having them verbalise their choices of action (Brinkmann and Kvale 30).

Six focus group interviews were conducted by researchers in Southwestern, Central, and Northern Norway, in public and private kindergartens, from January to April 2023. Nearly all interview participants were early childhood teachers working with children aged 0–6, either in the age group 0–3 or 3–6. The participants were recruited through open invitations via kindergarten owners and through direct inquiries to kindergartens with a high percentage of multilingual children. In total 21 kindergarten employees participated in the focus group interviews, which were conducted in Norwegian. Some of the questions asked were: "What is important to you when reading with multilingual children?", "How do multilingual children participate in reading?", "Do you read books or other texts in languages other than Norwegian, and if so, which languages and which books?", "How are the books used/read?". The interviews lasted from 20 to 66 minutes, but the majority were approximately

one hour long. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and anonymised. To distinguish the interviews from each other, they were assigned a number from 1 to 6 (I1–I6). The participants in both the survey and the interviews were informed in writing about the purpose of the study, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without providing any reasons. The study was approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research. Anonymised interview transcripts are stored at Services for Sensitive Data at the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Reading Centre at the University of Stavanger.

The interview transcripts were analysed in two stages. First, we identified descriptions of use of languages other than Norwegian in the context of reading. Inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 83) of the relevant excerpts was performed independently by the authors to ensure analyst triangulation (Patton 1193). This led to identifying the following themes: *different languages in book reading*, and *multilingual resources and resource persons*. The results of the first analysis did not indicate an extensive presence of reading practices that involved using languages other than Norwegian. Therefore, we decided to perform a new, analyst-driven, theoretical analysis of the whole interview material (Braun and Clarke 84), this time focusing on different approaches to reading with multilingual children. At the same time, we were open to additional perspectives emerging directly from the material (Creswell and Poth 193). As a result, another three themes were identified: *reading pictures, books and playful bodies*, and *tangible objects in reading*. All five themes will be presented in detail below, following a descriptive presentation of the survey results.

Survey Results

Most of the 1,192 early childhood teachers who responded in the survey reported that two or three languages other than Norwegian were represented among the children in their class, and 64% answered that languages other than Norwegian were represented among the kindergarten staff. To question 3 – “When did you last read books in languages other than Norwegian?” – 1.1% answered that they had done it today, 1.8% answered that they had done it yesterday, 10.7% had done it last week, and 64.4% stated that they had never done it. Additionally, 23.6% of the respondents reported that they had books in languages other than Norwegian in the kindergarten, while 76.4% answered that they did not. 268 teachers responded to the question

in which they had to name at least five books in languages other than Norwegian that were available in their kindergarten. This was an open-ended question with no predefined answer options. Very few named any book titles, while several replied that there were some books in languages other than Norwegian in the kindergarten, but they did not remember the titles. The languages most often mentioned were English (109), Polish (51), and Swedish (31). A few respondents stated that there were dual-language books in their kindergarten, and seven reported to have access to books in several languages through a digital streaming service.

Although not asked directly, some of the respondents also chose to describe how they used books in languages other than Norwegian, for example: "We have one book in English about Christmas that we translate simultaneously," "there are many toddlers with us, and we read books by pointing and talking about the pictures," "we have a whole range of Polish books, and we also have a Polish assistant who reads to the children who have parents from Poland," "we usually have a small library of books in different languages for parents and children to borrow," and "we have theme work about the countries the children come from, and then we use typical fairy tales in the relevant languages, then we try to read." Unlike the answers to the fixed-alternative questions, these statements suggest a presence of more varied reading practices in which different languages are involved. The focus group interviews we conducted enabled a more thorough exploration of such practices in Norwegian kindergartens.

Interview Findings

Our analysis of the interviews shows great variation in reading practices in the kindergartens involved. Overall, the participants in Interview 1 reveal complex reading practices with multilinguals. In Interview 2, 3 and 6, an awareness of the value and possible ways of conducting reading with multilinguals is highlighted, while such awareness is hardly visible in Interview 4 and 5. Moreover, when talking about reading with multilingual children, the teachers generally do not differentiate between their levels of proficiency in Norwegian. Our impression is that the participants talk about the group as a whole, but at the same time seem to refer to the children who need extra support during reading, that is, possibly multilinguals at early stages of learning Norwegian.

Although not prominent in the data material, use of *different languages in book reading* was identified as a theme in the interviews. Some teachers talk about parents borrowing books in languages

other than Norwegian to read at home. More specifically, fairy tale books and a multilingual picture dictionary are mentioned as text examples. In one kindergarten (I3), books in Russian were borrowed from a multilingual resource centre, and the teacher had just started to use Norwegian versions of the same books in their class. In another kindergarten (I1), parallel use of Norwegian and another language is described as a relatively common practice, both in reading and oral storytelling. The fairy tale “Three Billy Goats Gruff” told in some of the most represented languages in the kindergarten, in addition to Norwegian, is specifically named. In the kindergarten from Interview 2, where the staff refrain from reading in languages they do not master, books in Norwegian have inspired children to talk and play. One teacher recalls a situation in which multilingual children stopped in the middle of a story and started discussing and expanding it, using some words from their shared first language. Overall, the teachers try to facilitate use of languages other than Norwegian in an extended context of book reading, even though it may not occur in kindergarten or during read-alouds.

In Interview 1, 2, 3 and 6, books in different languages and employees who can read in different languages are viewed as resources for reading, which is why the second theme we identified is called *multilingual resources and resource persons*. At the same time, many participants mention an absence of multilingual resource persons. Only in the kindergarten from Interview 1 are there numerous multilinguals in the staff, while one employee who can read Arabic is mentioned in Interview 2. In Interview 3, the participants discuss that they feel a lack of multilingual resource persons to which the kindergarten had access earlier. For one of the teachers, it includes a municipal resource centre with which they used to collaborate, and which would provide ambulating bilingual assistants who brought books in different languages to the kindergarten. Furthermore, parents are highlighted as crucial multilingual resource persons in the same four interviews. In Interview 1 and 3, it is emphasised that parents should read with their children in their home languages, preferably about the same topics on which the kindergarten currently works. One participant explains that this is essential for activating children’s prior knowledge as a basis for understanding and participation in reading in kindergarten. If parents or children wish to borrow books from the kindergartens, they are allowed to do so. Additionally, the library is highlighted as central to parents’ access to literature in the families’ home languages. In Interview 2, one participant talks about the parents’ own commitment to reading. In this kindergarten, parents

are regularly informed about “the book of the month” and about free access to digital dual-language books. If it is not possible to obtain the book of the month in the child’s home language, parents translate it themselves. In another kindergarten (I6), parents have been invited to visit for singing and reading activities in Romanian, as a part of celebrating the Romanian national day.

Pictures often form the starting point of a dialogue about a book, and thus also of the meaning-making process. In Interview 3, *reading pictures* is linked specifically to multilingual children. In this kindergarten, multilinguals are prepared for new books by reading in small groups with an emphasis on the illustrations, before the book is presented to a larger group. A participant in this interview explains: “It is extremely important that there are books with lots of pictures and preferably little text. It is not always the text that is important. Because we usually talk about the pictures.” Another person in the same interview confirms that they “use mostly pictures with the multilingual children, which leads to a lot of singing.” In other interviews, the participants mention that some multilinguals need more support from the pictures than others (I2), that the multilingual children need to see the pictures better than others (I6), and that the children, when captivated by a book, like to comment on the pictures (I5).

Book reading in multilingual kindergarten classes is largely characterised by a whole-body approach, in which the use of various bodily expressions is encouraged and practised by children and adults alike. For this reason, this theme identified in the material is called *books and playful bodies*. An example of such a practice may be the words of one teacher who recalls their work with a non-fiction book about the human body: “we used in a way the whole body, we clapped, we jumped, we danced, we sang” (I3). Another participant from the same kindergarten mentions using their body to enrich children’s reading experience by making sounds related to the picturebook story. More importantly, however, the staff create an environment that invites children to explore the book in multiple ways through play: either by providing book-related toys and costumes or shaping a book-themed space for playing. A participant in Interview 4 summarises their work with “Three Billy Goats Gruff”, both the fairy tale and the picturebook *Bukkene Bruse på badeland* (2009) by Bjørn F. Rørvik and Gry Moursund: “We read the book, we heard the audiobook, we also had the one with the water park. So, when they in a way got tired of the traditional one, then they started playing” – using costumes provided by the kindergarten staff. Facilitating play related to the books read in Norwegian is of utmost importance to

the teachers, many of whom stress the role of book-related tangible objects which the children can handle and use in free play. "When we're done with reading, or they get bored during reading, anything can happen, they get the tangibles and play with them," as one of the participants expresses it (I2).

In all interviews, the teachers talk about how essential it is for them to use tangible objects, such as small figures, as well as illustrative images, in their work with children's literature. Some choose prefabricated packages with books and related objects, some collect or make various figures themselves, others prefer laminated illustrations photocopied from the books, used in a similar way as the three-dimensional materials. The use of *tangible objects in reading* is described in three different ways in the interviews. The first is to contribute to children's understanding of both the words and the narrative, bridging the gap between the child and the text, because "some children need more support from images or tangibles" (I2). The second way is to include the diverse group of children in reading, using tangible objects as one way of conveying the story. One teacher says: "we've read, watched films, and used the figures [...], because then it's easier to get everyone involved, those who don't speak Norwegian. We tell the story in different ways" (I5). The third way of using tangible objects that we identify in the interviews is when the objects are made available to children in their own book-inspired play. One of the participants says that "the children really want to play with tangibles and the best way for them to learn is to play out the story [...] And then they use words in their own language, too. Then I can come and ask what it means" (I2).

Discussion of Non-Verbal Modes of Meaning-Making in Reading with Multilinguals

Our material offers scant evidence of reading that utilises multilingual children's full linguistic repertoire. Similar to earlier studies, such as those by Romøren, Garmann, and Tkachenko, Hilde Hofslundsengen and colleagues ("The Literacy Environment"), and Eva Maagerø and Anne Øines, the nationwide survey reveals limited availability of books in various languages in kindergartens, and little reading that involves other languages than Norwegian. This pattern persists in our interview findings. However, in one interview (I1), there are examples of practices such as the one opening this article, in which three children chose to bring books in their home languages when given the opportunity through a book Advent

calendar. Moreover, this kindergarten owns dual-language fairy tale books, primarily intended for home use, and utilises multilingual resources available online. Apart from the examples from this kindergarten, which we will highlight in the discussion, the most prominent strategy for early childhood teachers' reading with multilingual children is extensive use of modes other than verbal language.

Images are an important mode of meaning-making in picturebooks (Painter et al. 1-2), and in the context of kindergarten reading with multilingual children, they seem to be the most important form of expression, probably due to their immediate effect on the reader (Kress and Van Leeuwen 33). In some interviews, it is emphasised that the role of pictures is greater than that of writing, for example when teachers say that they specifically choose books with little text for reading with multilinguals, which is in line with the findings by Hofslundsengen and colleagues ("ECEC Teachers' Reported Practices" 29). The interviews indicate that picturebook images have different functions in reading – they may be used as a means of familiarising multilingual children with the story before it is shared with a larger group, or as a part of the kindergarten's planned reading activities. This implies that for the teachers, pictures must carry a major functional load in reading, in other words, that multilinguals, to a larger extent than other children, must be able to make meaning from the images alone, and the narrative cannot depend too much on the verbal text read aloud in Norwegian. Nevertheless, by leaving most of the storytelling to the pictures, the teachers run the risk of choosing books that do not provide sufficient cognitive stimulation for the individual child (Daugaard and Johansen 10-11; Maagerø and Øines 131).

However, the interviews show that sometimes relying on picturebook images is not enough, and teachers resort to other modes to facilitate multilingual children's meaning-making, particularly using different types of story-related tangible objects. In Interview 1, for example, the participants describe a practice of copying pictures from a book, laminating them and hanging them on the walls, so that the pictures are visible to the children throughout the day. Other kindergartens prefer tangible book-related objects. The visual and tactile aspects of such materials, combined with speech, create a multimodal ensemble that may support multilingual children's meaning-making in the encounter with a new narrative. Yet teachers must be careful not to rely solely on tangible objects if they want to challenge children cognitively and promote second-language learning that goes beyond exposing multilinguals to single

words in a familiar context (Arntzen and Hjelde 67–68). Still, when book-related objects are additionally used in children’s own play, it opens for a possible extension of the reading experience, in which the aesthetic dimensions of reading are central (Solstad, “Multimodal lesepraksis” 140).

Book-inspired play is an example of a whole-body approach to reading with multilinguals in kindergarten, practised by teachers and children alike. Interview 1 illustrates this approach very well. In this kindergarten, common references established during reading create a community, in which play transcends language barriers. One teacher puts it this way: “a book creates a community which makes it easier for us to speak our different languages.” With the book as a starting point, a common language of play is shaped, where “I understand a little and you understand a little, and then with the book we begin to understand a little together.” The teacher calls it “creating a space for joint play.” Even though incorporating various languages in book reading seldom occurs in kindergartens, this interview demonstrates how reading understood as an embodied, multimodal practice (Solstad, “Multimodal lesepraksis” 133; Thuresson 147–148) does not need to rely on a shared verbal language alone.

Furthermore, the example sheds light on a central point that emerges from our exploration of kindergarten staff’s experiences of reading with multilinguals, namely that despite limited opportunities for reading in languages other than Norwegian, many teachers still find alternative, sometimes quite creative ways of engaging multilingual children in meaningful reading experiences. With limited access to multilingual resource persons, either permanent staff members or ambulating assistants, which may be seen as a hindrance to involving languages other than Norwegian in reading activities, most teachers use various non-verbal forms of expression in an extended context of book reading. As shown in the example from Interview 1 at the beginning of this article, some teachers may also resort to digital technology or involve multilingual children as language experts (Jæger 82; Alstad and Kulbrandstad 54–55), whereas many invite children’s parents, here perceived as multilingual resource persons, to collaboration on reading. This approach can be summarised by a participant who talks about instructing parents to always use their home language when sharing books: “Just talk about the pictures, if they don’t understand Norwegian, just talk about them. Say it in the mother tongue, or if you understand the text and speak Norwegian, take it in the mother tongue instead” (I1). Drawing on the

linguistic resources available in the multilingual children's homes and even sharing books with families, teachers indirectly support first-language use and encourage practices that may compensate for the scarce use of various languages during reading in kindergarten.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that reading in Norwegian kindergartens appears to occur in a space between multilingual children's right to meaningful experiences in all their languages on the one hand, and a need to learn Norwegian on the other. Although it should be possible to make books in various languages available for multilingual children, given their accessibility through public library services and online resources, there is very little reading in languages other than Norwegian, mostly due to an absence of multilingual resource persons in kindergartens. Over the last three decades, a shift happened in the Norwegian policy for multilingualism in kindergarten towards a monolingual ideology (Giæver and Tkachenko 255–256). This shift may partly explain both the lack of bilingual assistants, discussed by some interview participants, and the book selection in kindergartens, with texts in languages other than Norwegian rarely represented. Reading in various languages is a way of acknowledging and utilising the linguistic resources of every child. When the emphasis is primarily on learning Norwegian, and not so much on children's multilingual competence, it can lead to lowered expectations of their capabilities in the context of reading, which is well described in the research field (Daugaard and Johansen 10–11; Maagerø and Øines 131; Arntzen and Hjelde 67–68). However, this study shows that ample opportunities for fostering diverse reading practices become evident when kindergarten staff demonstrate curiosity and a proactive, problem-solving approach. By integrating different resources in reading primarily in Norwegian, early childhood teachers open for meaningful experiences with literary texts for participating multilinguals.

Biographical information: Katarzyna A. Tunkiel is Associate Professor in Norwegian at the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Stavanger, Norway. Her main research interests include picture-books and reading with young children, particularly in bilingual and multilingual contexts.

Cecilie Dyrkorn Fodstad is Professor in Norwegian at Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, Norway. She specializes in the fields of children's literature and reading with young children, including multilingual children.

*Trude Hoel holds a position as Professor in Literacy at the Norwegian Reading Centre at the University of Stavanger, Norway. She co-leads the research project *Sprell*, together with Margrethe Jernes, and her main research interests are terms of children's participation and engagement in reading, and reading and implications of digitalisation. Hoel is on the management team of FILIORUM – Centre for Research in Early Education and Care.*

Works Cited

Alstad, Gunhild Tomter. *Andrespråk og flerspråklighet i barnehagen: Forskningsperspektiver på barnehagepraksiser*. Fagbokforlaget, 2016.

Alstad, Gunhild Tomter, and Lise Iversen Kulbrandstad. "Linguistic Diversity and Literacy Practices in Early Childhood Education in Norway." *Literacy in the Early Years: Reflections on International Research and Practice*, edited by Claire J. McLachlan and Alison W. Arrow, Springer, 2017, pp. 43–61.

Arizpe, Evelyn, Kate Noble, and Morag Styles. *Children Reading Pictures: New Contexts and Approaches to Picturebooks*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2023.

Arntzen, Ragnar, and Arnstein Hjelde. "Det var en gang en tospråklig gutt som skulle begynne på skolen: Språkvurdering og språkstimulering før skolestart når norsk er andrespråk." *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift*, vol. 96, no. 1, 2012, pp. 54–69, doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1504-2987-2012-01-06.

"Barnehager." *Statistics Norway*, 1 March 2024, www.ssb.no/utdanning/barnehager/statistikk/barnehager. Accessed 21 August 2024.

Bezemer, Jeff, and Gunther Kress. *Multimodality, Learning and Communication: A Social Semiotic Frame*. Routledge, 2015.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2006, pp. 77–101, doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Brinkmann, Svend, and Steinar Kvale. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 3rd ed., SAGE, 2015.

Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 4th ed., SAGE, 2018.

Cummins, Jim. "The Emergence of Translanguaging Pedagogy: A Dialogue between Theory and Practice." *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*, vol. 9, article 13, 2019, pp. 19–36, research.library.fordham.edu/jmer/vol9/iss1/13.

Cummins, Jim, Margaret Early, Lisa Leoni, and Saskia Stille. "It really comes down to the teachers, I think': Pedagogies of Choice in Multilingual Classrooms." *Identity Texts: The Collaborative Creation of Power in Multilingual Schools*, edited by Jim Cummins and Margaret Early, Trentham Books, 2011, pp. 153–163.

Daugaard, Line Møller, and Martin Blok Johansen. "Tosprogede børns møde med metafiktion i en postmoderne billedbog." *Barnelitterært forskningstidsskrift*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–14, doi.org/10.3402/blft.v3i0.18078.

"Fakta om barnehager 2021." *Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training*, 2022, www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/statistikk/statistikk-barnehage/analyser/fakta-om-barnehager/barn-og-barnehager. Accessed 21 August 2024.

Fodstad, Cecilie Dyrkorn. "Det vet jeg på arabisk': Om tilrettelegging for å lære et nytt språk siste året før skolestart." *Språklæring det siste året i barnehagen*, edited by Ingvild Alfheim and Cecilie Dyrkorn Fodstad, Universitetsforlaget, 2018, pp. 55–73.

Framework Plan for Kindergartens. Content and Tasks. Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, www.udir.no/contentassets/7c4387bb50314f33b828789ed767329e/framework-plan-for-kindergartens--rammeplan-engelsk-pdf.pdf. Accessed 21 August 2024.

García, Ofelia, and Li Wei. "Translanguaging, Bilingualism, and Bilingual Education." *The Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education*, edited by Wayne E. Wright et al., John Wiley & Sons, 2015, pp. 223–240.

Gjæver, Katrine, and Elena Tkachenko. "Mot en ny satsing på flerspråklighet: En analyse av språkpolitiske føringer i barnehagens styringsdokumenter." *Nordic Studies in Education*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2020, pp. 249–267, doi.org/10.23865/nse.v40.2442.

Grønmo, Sigmund. *Samfunnsvitenskapelige metoder*. 2nd ed., Fagbokforlaget, 2016.

Grøver, Vibeke, Veslemøy Rydland, Jan-Eric Gustafsson, and Catherine E. Snow. "Shared Book Reading in Preschool Supports Bilingual Children's Second-Language Learning: A Cluster-Randomized Trial." *Child Development*, vol. 91, no. 6, 2020, pp. 2192–2210, doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13348.

Hofslundsengen, Hilde, Maria Magnusson, Martina Norling, Sofie Tjæru, Hanne Næss Hjetland, and Tarja Alatalo. "ECEC Teachers' Reported Practices and Attitudes Toward Read-Alouds in Nordic Multilingual Classrooms." *Nordic Journal of Literacy Research*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2023, pp. 20–37, doi.org/10.23865/njlr.v9.4035.

Hofslundsengen, Hilde, Maria Magnusson, Ann-Katrin Svensson, Sofia Jusslin, Elisabeth Mellgren, Bente E. Hagtvet, and Ria Heilä-Ylikallio. "The Literacy Environment of Preschool Classrooms in Three Nordic Countries: Challenges in a Multilingual and Digital Society." *Early Child Development and Care*, vol. 190, no. 3, 2020, pp. 414–427, doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2018.1477773.

Jæger, Henriette. "Flerspråklighet og teknologi: Tre barn hører sitt eget språk på iPad." *Digitale barnehagepraksiser: Teknologier, medier og muligheter*, edited by Henriette Jæger et al., Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2019, pp. 73–91.

Kress, Gunther. *Literacy in the New Media Age*. Routledge, 2003.

---. *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. Routledge, 2010.

Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2021.

Maagerø, Eva, and Anne Øines. "Bildebøker og multimodal literacy i flerspråklige barnehager." *Flerkulturelt verksted: Ulike tilnæringer til kompetanse for mangfold*, edited by Stein Laugerud et al., Portal, 2015, pp. 110–134.

Nygård, Mette. "Kvalitet i læring i barnehagen: En analyse av styringsdokumenter fra OECD og Norge." *Nordisk barnehageforskning*, vol. 11, no. 7, 2015, pp. 1–18, doi.org/10.7577/nbf.856.

Painter, Clare, J.R. Martin, and Len Unsworth. *Reading Visual Narratives: Image Analysis of Children's Picture Books*. Equinox Publishing, 2013.

Patton, Michael Quinn. "Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis." *Health Services Research*, vol. 34, no. 5, pt 2, 1999, pp. 1189–1208.

Pesch, Anja Maria. "They call me anneanne! Translanguaging as Theoretical and Pedagogical Challenge and Opportunity in the Kindergarten Context of Norway." *Acta Borealia*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2021, pp. 23–42, doi.org/10.1080/08003831.2021.1911200.

Romøren, Anna Sara Hexeberg, Nina Gram Garmann, and Elena Tkachenko. "Present but Silent? The Use of Languages Other than Norwegian in Mainstream ECEC." *Nordisk barnehageforskning*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1–21, doi.org/10.23865/nbf.v19.310.

Rørvik, Bjørn F., and Gry Moursund. *Bukkene Bruse på badeland*. Cappelen Damm, 2009.

Solstad, Trine. "Multimodal lesepraksis – å gå inn i litteraturen på mange måter." *Lesepraksiser i barnehagen: Inn i litteraturen på mange måter*, edited by Trine Solstad et al., Fagbokforlaget, 2018, pp. 131–142.

---. *Snakk om bildebøker! En studie av barnehagebarns resepsjon*. University of Agder, PhD dissertation, 2015, uia.brage.unit.no/uia-xmlui/handle/11250/297392.

Thuresson, Hanna. *Yngre barns meningsskapande om läsande och skrivande i förskolans literacypraktik*. Örebro University, PhD dissertation, 2021, oru.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1585085&dswid=-3241.

Tjora, Aksel. *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis*. 4th ed., Gyldendal Akademisk, 2021.

Tkachenko, Elena, Anna Sara Hexeberg Romøren, and Nina Gram Garmann. "Translanguaging Strategies in Superdiverse Mainstream Norwegian ECEC: Opportunities for Home Language Support." *Journal of Home Language Research*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1–13, doi.org/10.16993/jhhr.41.

Tunkiel, Katarzyna A., and Adriana G. Bus. "Digital Picture Books for Young Dual Language Learners: Effects of Reading in the Second Language." *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 7, 2022, pp. 1–13, doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.901060.