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Teachers' language practices and choices in a bilingual, co-located kindergarten in Finland

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This article explores the language practices and choices of four teachers in a co-located kindergarten in Finland. Following Finland's official bilingualism, the education system is built on two tracks – Finnish and Swedish. As official languages of Finland, the two languages share the same status, but since Finnish is the registered language of the vast majority of the population, Swedish can be seen as a de facto minority language – one reason why Swedish education has been seen as an important space for maintaining Swedish language and culture. This constitutes an important perspective for research on Finnish and Swedish early childhood education units that are located in the same building. In this article, the language practices and choices of four kindergarten teachers are examined. The teachers worked in different groups: two of them in Swedish groups and two in Finnish groups. These teachers' everyday activities were observed and recorded, and the teachers were interviewed about their language practices and choices. Through data source and methodological triangulation, this article illustrates how the teachers worked side by side in collaboration and across language borders, and thus created a feeling of community between the Finnish and Swedish groups. Sharing some of the spaces and activities broadened the space and made it more bilingual. At the same time, the teachers' language practices gave extra support to Swedish, which was used not only in the Swedish groups but also with bilinguals in the Finnish groups.

Keywords: early childhood education, language choice, language practices, teachers

1 Introduction

In today's world, language diversity has become one of the key features of education. Bilingual and multilingual perspectives, especially in school contexts but nowadays also increasingly in early childhood education (henceforth ECE), have been given a lot of attention in the research field. Supra-national and national recommendations underline the need to acknowledge language diversity in education (see e.g., Alisaari et al., 2019; Le Pichon-Vorstman et al., 2020), but national policies are often based on a monolingual norm (García, 2009; Hornberger et al., 2018). Different models for language pedagogy have been introduced and experimented with to support children's languages and identities as well as their (emerging) language skills and language awareness.

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Research on multilingual practices in education often concentrates on how to make space for minority languages in majority language classrooms. Examples of how to do this could be acknowledging and supporting the many languages of the children in mainstream education given in the majority language (see e.g., Kirsch & Duarte, 2020), or using a language in minority position in education alongside the majority language (García & Tupas, 2019). However, it might be harder to give space to other languages in education given in a minority language, as this space is often seen as an important arena for language maintenance (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Oker-Blom, 2021). To protect regional minority languages and to create a safe space for minority language use without fear of a majority language taking over, these minority languages are often kept separate from majority languages (Fishman, 1991; Jones, 2017; Leonet et al., 2017). However, these monoglossic perspectives (García, 2009) are challenged today as classes become more diverse; dynamic and heteroglossic perspectives are called for to acknowledge the heterogeneous backgrounds of the children and to prepare children for today's globalized world. The question is how to give the necessary support for minority language and minority language maintenance while at the same time leaving space for co-existence and co-operation between languages and, more importantly, for children with different language backgrounds. Here, teachers' language practices play a significant role.

Teachers' language practices in kindergartens and schools vary from context to context, from using only one language to the dynamic use of multiple languages (see e.g., Alstad, 2013; Gort & Pontier, 2013; Palviainen et al., 2016). This article will focus on teachers' language practices and language choice in one co-located kindergarten (Fi. *kieliparipäiväkoti*, Swe. *samlokaliserat daghem*) in Finland. Finland, a multilingual country with two national languages – Finnish and Swedish – offers an interesting context for such a study, as both languages have equal status as official languages but there is a vast difference between the languages in terms of number of speakers. Traditionally, ECE is provided either in Swedish or in Finnish, but so-called co-located kindergartens, where a Swedish and a Finnish unit operate under the same roof, have become increasingly common during the past decade. This article aims to give some insights into teachers' language practices and language choice in one such kindergarten by answering the following research questions: How do kindergarten teachers in a co-located Finnish-Swedish kindergarten use languages, and what may lie behind their language choices? In the following, research on teachers' language practices will be discussed, followed by a presentation of the context. After that, the participants, the data, the research methods, and the main findings of the study will be presented. In the conclusion an overview of the results will be given, and the possibilities and limitations of the study will be discussed.

2 Research on teachers' language practices

Teachers' language practices and choices as well as the reasons behind them have become a focus of research interest in ECE settings (e.g., Pontier et.al., 2020; Schwartz, 2018, 2020). According to Spolsky (2004), language practices are impacted by language management, such as laws or other steering documents, and by ideologies about languages and language use. Language management and language ideologies can be found on a micro, meso, and macro level – that is on a

personal, institutional or national level (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), which all can influence language practices.

Education has been one of the key domains for the implementation of national language policies, especially in decisions about the medium of instruction (Spolsky, 2004, pp. 46–48). These policies are often based on monolingual ideologies (García, 2009; Hornberger et al., 2018). Yet the number of multilingual children in ECE has been increasing (e.g., Honko & Mustonen, 2020; Oker-Blom, 2021; Pontier et al., 2020), and various measures have been taken in consequence. To recognize the heterogenous backgrounds of the children in the groups, various language learning programmes – such as dual language programmes (Gort & Pontier, 2013), co-teaching (Mård-Miettinen et al., 2018; Pontier, 2014), and content and language integrated learning, CLIL, (Nikula, 2016) – have been created and widely used in different contexts. Characteristic of these programmes is separated bilingualism, when the use of a language is restricted by person, time, or activity. This can mean that one language is used for a certain activity, for a certain time, or by a certain person, and another language for other activities, at another time, or by another person (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, pp. 104–105).

Lately, more dynamic models for language use in education, especially translanguaging, have received more attention all over the world (see e.g., García, 2009). Jaspers (2018, p. 2) describes translanguaging as a broad perspective that can refer to "all speakers' innate linguistic instinct, to bilinguals' spontaneous language use, to everyday cognitive processes, to a bilingual pedagogy, and to a theory of language and education". Translanguaging can also support students' bilingual practices, and bilinguals' socio-emotional development and identity (García & Tupas, 2019). Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 112) argue that by using two languages flexibly, teachers can "make links for classroom participants between the social, cultural, community, and linguistic domains of their lives". Translanguaging can also raise language awareness and awareness of diversity, and support language learning and vocabulary (García & Tupas, 2019).

Translanguaging has been highly praised for the way it recognizes and supports multilingualism in the classroom and in students themselves, but recently some scholars (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Jaspers, 2018; Leonet et al., 2017) have raised issues connected to translanguaging and protecting minority languages. According to Jaspers (2018, p. 6), even translanguaging scholars consider monolingual practices to be important, especially in minority contexts. However, even though researchers from different contexts have underlined the crucial importance of protecting a space for minoritized languages, they also mention the importance of creating a bilingual or multilingual space for interaction with other languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Jones, 2017; Leonet et al., 2017). Here, understanding the societal and contextual linguistic situation is important. In such contexts, it is necessary to take several factors into consideration to create a safe space for a minority language and a space where all languages can thrive. According to Jones (2017, p. 214), those factors are the sociolinguistic context and the status of the language or languages, pupils' language backgrounds and language competence, language planning on the macro and meso levels, the language of instruction, and the implementation of the school's language policy.

The interplay between language policies, language programmes, and (teachers') language practices has been studied widely (e.g., Kirsch, 2018; Kirsch et al., 2020; Schwartz, 2020, 2018), showing different decisions about which languages to use

and in what ways. With an analysis of previous research on language practices in ECE settings, Pontier et al. (2020, p. 168) show how teachers use dynamic, bilingual languaging practices even though official policies tend to favour language separation (see also Palviainen et al., 2016). Teachers' practices are driven by their own agency – including their knowledge, skills, abilities, and beliefs – rather than governed by the official language policy of the teaching context (Pontier et al., 2020, p. 172).

This article is based on an understanding of teachers as active agents of language policy (Menken & García, 2010). Teachers navigate and negotiate language practices and choices, on the one hand as a function of official language planning and ideologies (Spolsky, 2004), and on the other on the basis of their own agency and beliefs about what is best for the child. Contextual understanding plays a crucial role, too (Jones, 2017). Official policies and teachers' agentive behaviour often go hand in hand, but conflict between the two has also been found (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Pontier et al., 2020).

3 The Finnish education context

In Finland, the majority of the population (87.3%) has Finnish as their registered mother tongue, and Swedish is a de facto minority language from the perspective of the number of registered mother tongue speakers (5.2%) (Official Statistics of Finland [OSF], 2020). The number of people with other mother tongues has been rising recently, increasing from 4.2% in 2010 to 7.5% in 2019 (OSF, 2020). However, the statistics do not present a clear picture of individual bilingualism or multilingualism as every person can register only one language as their mother tongue (see Hellgren et al., 2019; Tainio & Kallioniemi, 2019).

The education system in Finland is built on two separate tracks, one Finnish-medium and one Swedish-medium, leading to parallel monolingualism on the administrative level (Heller, 2006). A debate about whether Swedish-Finnish bilingual schools should be established has been going on for at least ten years (e.g., Boyd & Palviainen, 2015), but to date there are no administratively bilingual schools or kindergartens in Finland. However, so-called co-located schools and kindergartens, where Finnish and Swedish units share the same building, have become more common during the past decade. Co-located schools have been researched from different perspectives (e.g., From, 2020; Hansell et al., 2016; Kajander et al., 2015), but research on co-located kindergartens is almost non-existent (see however Bergroth & Palviainen, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). This study takes ECE as a starting point; it is seen as an important first step towards lifelong learning (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016, p. 18) and to later options in schooling and life (Karhula et al., 2017).

The vast difference in the number of Swedish speakers and Finnish speakers in Finland has led to various measures to protect the Swedish language (e.g., Prime Minister's Office, 2012). Swedish-medium education has been seen as a good opportunity for so-called *svenska rum* (monolingual Swedish spaces), which can promote cultural knowledge, protect the minority language, and help children to develop their language skills and identity (From & Sahlström, 2017). It can also be seen as a safe space (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Fishman, 1991) where Swedish speakers can use their language without fear of the majority language taking over (From & Sahlström, 2017; Paulsrud et.al., 2020). This is perhaps one of the reasons

why bilingual Swedish-Finnish families tend to choose the Swedish education path in Finland (Oker-Blom, 2021; Bergroth & Hansell, 2020), especially if they live in areas with a relatively small number of Swedish-speakers (Paulsrud et al., 2020).

The diversity in children's language backgrounds is noticeable in different ways. In the Finnish education path, the number of children with first languages other than Finnish or Swedish has increased during the past 10 years (Tainio & Kallioniemi, 2019). The same tendency applies to the Swedish education path although the change has not been as rapid as on the Finnish side (Hellgren et.al, 2019). Yet, the number of Finnish-Swedish bilingual children in the Swedish kindergartens and schools has increased (Saarela, 2021). To acknowledge the increasing number of bilingual and multilingual children in the education system, the new curricula of the 2010s have encouraged the acknowledgement and support of multilingualism in different ways (Alisaari et al., 2019; Honko & Mustonen, 2020; Paulsrud et al., 2020; Sopanen, 2019).

Despite the administrative monolingualism of kindergartens, bilingual kindergartens with different pairs of languages do exist. Immersion, CLIL, and other kindergartens specializing in languages are available especially in the bigger cities. Co-located kindergartens, too, can be seen as bilingual spaces if the language groups co-operate and do not simply operate in parallel under the same roof (Sahlström et al., 2013).

Some co-operation between co-located schools has been reported, in the form of joint activities or joint spaces for pupils and students (see e.g., Helakorpi et al., 2013). However, in some cases it seems hard to overcome the imaginary and ideological border between "the Swedish side" and "the Finnish side" (From & Sahlström, 2017). These two, possibly colliding perspectives on collaborating and creating safe spaces for the Swedish language are discussed in this article by exploring teachers' language practices and choices. These practices and choices are important (e.g., Menken & García, 2010) as Finnish teachers enjoy quite extensive teacher autonomy (Heikka et al., 2016). Since macro-level policy documents leave it rather wide open as to how language policy should be implemented (Alstad & Sopanen, 2021), teachers have a lot of space for implementing policies in different ways.

4 Material and methods

4.1 The kindergarten

The focus kindergarten is located in a bilingual municipality in which, at the time of the data collection in 2017, nearly 2/3 of its inhabitants were registered as Finnish speakers, nearly 1/3 as Swedish speakers, and the rest as speakers of other languages (OSF, 2021). These numbers corresponded quite well with the children's language backgrounds in the kindergarten. However, in the absence of official records of children's language backgrounds, the number of bilingual and multilingual children as well as their language knowledge are based on the estimates of the kindergarten teachers and the researcher.

In contrast to some co-located kindergartens with units that have been merged for purely economic reasons, this kindergarten was built with the original purpose of housing a bilingual, co-located kindergarten. However, the four groups in the kindergarten were not bilingual but had either Finnish or Swedish

as administrative language, as this is required by Finnish legislation (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care §8, 540/2018). Therefore, two of the groups, *Bunnies* and *Foxes*, had Finnish as the medium of instruction and the two others, *Bears* and *Snow leopards*, Swedish (see Table 1). Even though the groups were monolingual on the administrative level, bilingualism was highlighted as an asset for everyone in the kindergarten's plan for ECE.

The building itself was L-shaped. Along one of the corridors were the hall, the rooms for the *Bunnies* (Fi) and *Bears* (Swe) as well as a lunchroom and changing rooms for the teachers. Along the other corridor were the rooms for the *Foxes* (Fi) and *Snow leopards* (Swe) as well as the shared hobby rooms, a meeting room, and the room of the head of the kindergarten. A kitchen, a shared lunchroom and a big hall for shared activities were located where the corridors met. The big yard was shared by all the groups, often at the same time.

4.2 The participants

The staff of this kindergarten were hired for either the Finnish or the Swedish side. However, because of the diverse language backgrounds of the children in the groups, the teachers often worked in pairs with knowledge of both Swedish and Finnish. In this way, they could help in interactions if the children did not share a language. In the groups, there were also some children with mother tongues other than Finnish or Swedish, but as this study is interested in the use of official languages in the kindergarten, the perspectives of other languages are not considered here (see however Sopanen, 2019).

Four teachers – one from each group – participated in this study. Information about the teachers, the groups as well as the language used by the teachers is given in Table 1. The information about the teachers' language background and language use is based on their own descriptions.

Table 1. Teachers' language background and language use as well as background information about the groups.

Name	**Language background**	**Group Children's age**	**Administrative language of the group**	**Teacher's language use in the group**
Ulla (U)	Finnish	Bunnies (*Puput*) < 3-year-olds	Finnish	Finnish (some Swedish)
Marianne (M)	Swedish	Bears (*Björnar*) < 3-year-olds	Swedish	Swedish and Finnish
Anna (A)	Finnish	Foxes (*Ketut*) 3–5-year-olds	Finnish	Finnish
Emma (E)	Bilingual (Fi–Swe)	Snow leopards (*Snöleoparder*) 3–5-year-olds	Swedish	Swedish

As shown in Table 1, Ulla, Marianne, and Anna reported their language background as either Finnish or Swedish, whereas Emma came from a bilingual family. In the interviews, Marianne explained that she had become bilingual through her work experience in bilingual kindergartens and had no trouble using both languages. Ulla said that she understood Swedish well and even used it a little with Swedish-speaking children and their families, but she did find it hard

to concentrate if there were many overlapping discussions going on at the same time. Anna explained that she understood Swedish well and would like to use it more in the kindergarten, but she spoke mainly Finnish. All the teachers had learned some Swedish or Finnish at school, as Finnish is a mandatory subject in Swedish-medium schools and Swedish in Finnish-medium schools.

4.3 Data collection procedures

The data for this article come from a case study research project focusing on Swedish and Finnish in a co-located kindergarten in Finland. Because the focus is on the two languages, bilingualism in this article refers to Swedish and Finnish. The data collection was inspired by ethnographic research (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Davies, 2008): the data for this article consist of participant observations, recorded video and audio data of everyday activities, and semi-structured ethnographic teacher interviews. This dataset is complemented by the researcher's field notes and research diary.

One teacher from each group was recorded and observed for one day to see and hear how they used language(s) in different situations. The teachers wore a microphone to enable audio recording during the day. The activities were video recorded only in Anna's group. Some of the staff in the other groups wished not to be video recorded, so to avoid possible ethical dilemmas, the activities in these groups were only audio recorded. The data were collected over a two-week period.

Table 2. The data used in the study.

Teacher / Data type	Ulla	Marianne	Anna	Emma
Observations in the group	5h 45 min	6h 45 min	6 h 45 min	7 h
Video recordings	-	-	1 h 37 min	-
Audio recordings	1 h 35 min	1 h 56 min	1 h 17 min	1 h 10 min
Interview	23 min	21 min	28 min	18 min
Field notes / Research diary	+	+	+	+

One month after the fieldwork, the teachers were interviewed about their language use, teacher collaboration, and language awareness, in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the teachers' thinking (see Sopanen, 2019). The interviews were conducted as semi-structured ethnographic interviews (Tolonen & Palmu, 2007) with three main themes – language use, cooperation, and language awareness. These themes arose from the data collected during the period of fieldwork and were seen as important topics for detailed discussion in order to create shared understanding of what was going on. This also enhanced the reliability of the study. Central to ethnographic interviews are shared experiences in the field and the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Tolonen & Palmu, 2007, pp. 110–112). As the teachers were interviewed after the preliminary analysis of the collected data, the teachers could get their voices heard in the interviews and explain how they saw shared activities, the ways they worked and the ways they thought. In this way, it was also possible to look at the similarities and differences between what was said and what was done (see also Yussof & Sun, 2020).

As a researcher, I know both Finnish and Swedish, which made it possible for me to conduct the interviews and do the data collection in both languages, according to each participant's wishes. I should mention, however, that my background is Finnish, and the way I see the data may be affected by the fact that I was raised and went to school in the majority language in a relatively monolingual context. However, my contextual understanding of especially Swedish in Finland, but also of minority languages in general, has improved considerably as a result of many years of study in the Swedish language and previous research projects with a focus on Swedish and multilingualism in Finland and Europe.

4.4 Data analysis

The data for this article were analysed with the help of data source and methodological triangulation. Data source triangulation refers to data collected from different people, that is, in this study the four teachers, while methodological triangulation allows one to triangulate between different data collected by different methods (see e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2016). Although triangulation has been the target of some criticism (for more discussion see Flick, 2017; Hammersley, 2008), it can add to the trustworthiness of the research and create a more comprehensive picture of the topic being researched (Meijer et al., 2002). In this study, triangulating between the audio and video recordings, a research diary, observation table and interviews gave a rich picture of the teachers' language practices. It also allowed investigation of the differences and similarities between the different groups and teachers.

The data were handled in multiple ways. Inspired by the work of Meijer et al. (2002) on triangulating between different data, the steps in the analysis of the teachers' language use are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Steps in analysing the data and combining the results with the help of data and methodological triangulation.

Step	Perspectives on language use	Pre-analysis	Steps in the analysis	Outcomes
Analysing the recordings	Teachers' actual interaction with children and colleagues	Transcriptions Categories of language-in-use in different situations	Describing the interaction between participants Interpreting the interaction	Patterns of language use and choice
Analysing the observation table and the research diary	Researcher's reflections on language-in-use Informal discussions with teachers	Connecting occurring themes with transcriptions and interviews	Describing interactions Describing informal discussions Interpreting interactions and informal discussions	Patterns of language use and choice Teachers' reflections on language use and choice
Analysing the semi-structured interviews	Teachers' reflections on language use and choice	Transcriptions Categories of reflections on language use	Describing teachers' reflections Interpreting the reflections	Teachers' reflections on language use and choice
Combining results of the previous steps	Teachers' language practices and language choice (as recorded, reported and reflected)	Combining and connecting the outcomes of previous steps	Describing and interpreting each teacher's language practices and choice Combining the results to describe overall language practices	Description of teachers' language practices and choice Overall language practices in the kindergarten

After carefully listening to the recordings and making notes about their content, categories of language use and choice in different situations were created in order to compare data from different groups. This analysis functioned also as a starting point for the interviews (see Sopanen, 2019 for an analysis of the teacher interviews). The important parts of the recorded interactions, as well as the interviews, were all transcribed. As with the recordings of the interactions, the content of the interviews was categorized thematically. Thematic categorizing made it possible not only to describe the content, but also to compare the similarities and differences in teachers' reflections. The interviews were analysed using discourse analysis (Blommaert, 2005; Gee, 2010).

Through the three first steps of the analysis, a picture of the patterns of teachers' language use and choice and the possible reasons behind them was formed, leading, finally, to an overall picture of the language practices in the kindergarten. Because of the complexity of language practices and the differences between the teachers and the groups, the results will be presented separately, followed by a summary of the teachers' language practices in the kindergarten.

5 Findings

5.1 Bears and Bunnies: Extensive collaboration over language borders

The two groups of Bunnies (Finnish) and Bears (Swedish) were collaborating at the time of the fieldwork, and had been doing so for about one year. The collaboration was visible in many everyday activities: the teachers took care of all the children together, the groups shared the rooms for most of the day, and even the meal and rest times were arranged according to the age of the children instead of by group. The groups were separated only during teacher-led activities. This collaboration was quite exceptional for the kindergarten and was the result of an attempt to balance out the different numbers of Swedish- and Finnish-speaking children in the groups. There were only a few children enrolled in the Swedish group, which could have been seen as problematic for even starting the group; the collaboration between the groups helped to ensure the provision of day care in both languages. The collaboration also facilitated language support for both the languages of bilinguals in the groups. The collaboration, as well as the extent of their language skills in each language, also affected the teachers' language practices, which are discussed next in the light of extracts from the interviews, audio data, and field notes.

5.1.1 Ulla (Bunnies)

Ulla mostly spoke Finnish, her mother tongue, during the days, but she also used some Swedish when collaborating with the Swedish group and when she was outdoors, with all the children around. When her group had teacher-led activities Ulla spoke Finnish, as this was the language of the group, but otherwise she described her language choice in the following way (see Appendix 1 for transcription key):

Extract 1

eeh no mä pyrin siihen et mä käytän sitä kieltä mitä lapsi mulle tarjoaa (…) mut aika nopeesti (…) niin puoltoist vuotias jo huomaa et toi puhuu tota suomee paremmin jos on kaksikielinen ja sit se kääntää sen automaattisesti mulle suomeks	*ehm well I aim to use the language the child offers (…) but quite soon (…) a one-and-half-year-old will already notice that that person speaks Finnish better if ((the child)) is bilingual and then (s)he automatically switches to Finnish with me*

(Interview with Ulla, June 2017)

Ulla saw a shared language as an important part of a teacher-child relationship. She wondered if her knowledge of Swedish was good enough to give children a rich language base or to create a trusting relationship with the child. However, she had turned these doubts into her realization of the possibility of being a positive role model for the children: by her actions she showed that even adults can learn if they do not know how to say something, and that making mistakes is alright. Perhaps more importantly, she let the children be language experts. In this way, Ulla acknowledged the children's language knowledge and skills and supported their identity as well as their self-confidence (see also Palviainen et al., 2016).

The following extract shows how Ulla uses both languages with a bilingual child when talking about animals (see Appendix 1 for transcription key).

Extract 2

"Mikäs se on?" Ulla kysyy.	*"What's that?" Ulla asks Elias.*
"Igelkott", *Elias vastaa.*	"Hedgehog", *Elias answers.*
"Igelkott*i se on, siili. Missäs on toinen* igelkotti", *Ulla kysyy uudelleen.*	"Hedgehog *it is, a hedgehog. Where's the other* hedgehog?" *Ulla asks again.*

(Researcher's notes, May 18th 2017)

Here, Ulla is languaging with the two languages. As Elias responds to Ulla's question in Swedish (*igelkott*), Ulla first repeats the word Elias used in Swedish and then gives the Finnish translation for the word 'hedgehog' (*siili*). After this, she continues on the same subject in Finnish, but still using the Swedish word (*igelkott*). In this way, Ulla can build up Elias' vocabulary, make connections between the two languages and support his language learning (see also García & Tupas, 2019). Ulla also shows that this kind of languaging is acceptable.

Extract 3 shows the complexity of the language choices that are made between teachers and children. A group of children from the Snow leopards (Swedish) are planning to perform outside in the playground as a band. The children are trying to get an audience to watch their performance and have asked other children, Ulla, and Camilla, a teacher in the Snow leopards, to come to the show. The teachers and some of the children waiting are becoming impatient.

Extract 3 (transcript of audio recording, time 11:15-11:57)

1	Nea	jag har långt tålamod	I am really patient
2	Camilla	har du (.) långt tålamod	are you (.) patient
3	Nea	jå just det (.) xx har väntat två **timmar**	yes exactly (.) xx I've been waiting for two **hours**
4	Camilla	för va (.)	for what (.)
5	Nea	nå för att jag ska få ta såna här mediciner (1)	well so that I would get permission to take some medicines (1)

6	Camilla	ohhoh det är nog långt långt tålamod (0,5) *onks sulla Ulla pitkä niinku (1) pinna (.) sä jaksat odottaa tässä (0,5)*	oh wow that is being really really patient (0,5) *are you Ulla really like (1) patient (.) you can wait here (0,5)*
7	Ulla	*no ei oikein (1,5)*	*well not really (1,5)*
8	Camilla	*mä huomaan mulla ei [xxx*	*I can see that I'm not [xxx*
9	Ulla	[kommer (bli) trött [om du måste vänta så lång	[are (getting) tired [if you have to wait for so long
10	Felix	[Camilla (1) Camilla (.)	[Camilla (1) Camilla (.)
11	Camilla	va (.)	what (.)
12	Felix	dom har ännu sagt dom kommer ändå kommer dom int (1)	they said they're coming but they still aren't coming (1)
13	Camilla	ja: vet du då dom om dom int kommer så kan man int tvinga nån annan men att vi som står här nu väntar [på att	ye:s well do you know what if they don't come so one can't force them but we who're standing here now we're waiting [for
14	Ulla	[men vi är här	[but we are here
15	Camilla	ja vi [vill titta på Hevisaurus	yes we [want to see Hevisaurus
16	Ulla	[du kan börja (1,5)	[you can start (1,5)
17	Camilla	vi vill (.) *on muuten tomaatintaimet saanut kukkia x*	we want (.) *by the way my tomato seedlings have come into flower x*
18	Ulla	*hyvä (.) ihana*	*good (.) lovely*

Here, the teachers switch between languages according to their conversation partner. The bilingual teacher Camilla talks first to Nea, from the Snow leopards, about being patient while they are waiting for the show. As she turns towards Ulla, she switches to Finnish. They chat in Finnish until Ulla turns to the boys (line 9) and tells them and Camilla, this time in Swedish, that she and the others are getting tired of waiting. The discussion between Camilla, Ulla and Felix continues in Swedish (lines 10-16) until Camilla turns to Ulla to talk about a more personal topic – the tomato seedlings she has been growing – and they carry on talking in Finnish.

Later, Ulla described this situation to another colleague and was apparently happy to have been personally invited to the performance. Ulla perhaps saw this as a sign of being able to connect with the Swedish-speaking children despite her language background. This also reflects her thoughts about the importance of teaching the children to play together even if they do not share the same language. According to Ulla, the most important aspects of working in this kindergarten were its child-oriented approach, the sense of community, and bilingualism. All of these can be seen in the way she herself acted.

5.1.2 Marianne (Bears)

During the data collection period, Marianne actively used both Swedish and Finnish. She reflected on her language use and choices in the following way:

Extract 4

alltså jag tycker jag pratar hela tiden båda här (…) men då när vi har haft för min hemgrupp har ju vari den svenska (…) så när jag har haft med dom nån slags verksamhet eller samling eller sångstund då går jag (åt) på svenska (…) och det har jag nu vari jätte viktig med att med dom som har svenska som sitt dagisspråk så pratar jag bara svenska (…) annars är det nog så där det råkar det vara vem jag svänger mig till att svänger jag mig till ett finskt barn så pratar jag finska och annars Svenska	well I think I speak both of them all the time here (…) but when we have had because my home group has been the Swedish one (…) so when we've had some kind of activities or get-togethers or singing then I use Swedish (…) and that has been really important that with those who have Swedish as their day care language I speak only Swedish (…) otherwise it's well so it depends on whom I turn to so that if I turn to a Finnish-speaking child then I speak Finnish and otherwise Swedish

(Interview with Marianne, June 2017)

The collaboration between the two groups and the sharing of spaces had made the everyday activities of the two groups bilingual, and Marianne was translanguaging between the languages most of the day. However, it was important for Marianne to use only Swedish when she was with just her own group. This may be a sign that she was following the language planning policy of the Finnish education system, which guarantees ECE in both national languages, or that she saw the group as an important space for Swedish. Otherwise, Marianne explained that she used Finnish only with children with a Finnish-language background. The importance of using Swedish was based not only on the fact of its being the group choice of those parents for their children, but also by the concern that Finnish could take over if it was used more:

Extract 5

man märker nog att det blir lätt så också nu under det här året där har vari så många mera finska i vår grupp (.) än svenska (1) så det blir lätt så där att (0,5) har man nånting (…) så blir det liksom på finska också där för att fast man har det svenska men det är (1) det kommer starkare fram den där finskan liksom (…) och jag tror att blir det ännu mindre svenska barn ((i framtiden)) så (…) så dom blir liksom x lilla en liten minoritet	well one notices that it will easily happen so now when we've had so many more Finnish-speakers in our group (.) than Swedish (1) so it easily happens that (0,5) if one has something (…) to say so it comes out in Finnish even there so even though there's that Swedish so it's (1) it's becoming more strongly Finnish (…) and I think that if there are even fewer Swedish-speaking children ((in the future)) so (…) so those will become just x a small minority

(Interview with Marianne, June 2017)

Here, Marianne brings up a possible disadvantage of collaboration between the Finnish and Swedish groups. As the number of Finnish-speakers exceeds that of Swedish-speakers (and bilinguals) when the two groups are collaborating, she seems to use more Finnish in the groups' shared spaces because of her decision to use Finnish with Finnish-speakers and Swedish with both Swedish-speakers and bilinguals (see Extract 4). Marianne also seems to be worried about the future if the number of Swedish-speakers in the whole kindergarten falls even further. This shows Marianne's understanding of the sociolinguistic context and the relevance it has for education.

In Extract 6, Marianne and her colleague Lena were supervising a mealtime with children from both groups. The children were eating a snack between the afternoon nap and other activities, and Marianne and Lena were talking with them.

Extract 6 (transcript of audio-recording, time 12:48-14:13)

1	Marianne	har du smaka på en banan (1,5) näe (1) vill du smaka på en banan eller appelsin (2) du kan ta riktig sån här mini mini bit (2) eller vet du vad så kan man också smaka på den här saften (2,5) vill du smaka på den hellre (x) näe (1) där kan du ta en mini bananbit så får du en **smörgås** sen (1,5)	have you tried banana (1.5) no (1) do you want a taste of a banana or an orange (2) you can take this kind of a mini mini piece (2) or do you know what you can also try this juice (2.5) would you rather try that (x) no (1) you can take a mini piece of banana (.) and then you can have **a sandwich** (1,5)
2	Ilona	*lisää (3)*	*more (3)*
3	Marianne	*mut sul on vieläkin banaania [Ilona*	*but you've still got some banana [Ilona*
4	Lisbeth	[Marianne (0,5)	[Marianne (0.5)
5	Marianne	nå (1)	what (1)
6	Lisbeth	jag vill ha mera (2)	I want to have more (2)
7	Marianne	jå du kan nog få mera nu också om du vill (1) sku du vilja ha banan då (0,5) eller melon	yes you can get more too if you want to (1) to have banana then (0.5) or watermelon
8		[…]	[…]
9	Marianne	det är bra att äta frukt för då får man **så** mycket vitamin (där) och så blir man frisk (9)	it's good to eat fruit because then you get **so** many vitamins and then you get healthy (9)
10	Ida	*lisää x*	*more x*
11	Marianne	*haluatko lisää hedelmäsalaattia* ((vänder sig till Lena)) (2,5) har hon ätit allt	*do you want to have more fruit mix* ((turns to Lena)) (2.5) has she eaten it all
12	Lena	jå	yes

This extract illustrates the way Marianne uses languages in the two groups – depending on who she turns to. Marianne is first speaking with a bilingual child in Swedish. On line 2, Ilona, a child from the Finnish group, asks for more in Finnish, which leads to Marianne answering in Finnish. This, again, is followed by interaction in Swedish with another girl on lines 4–7. This kind of translanguaging continues throughout the extract. When using languages in a dynamic way, the bilinguals in the groups can get support in both their languages and all the children can pick up words and phrases both from each other and from the adults. As Marianne mentions, it is, however, also important to create enough space for Swedish, so that Finnish does not become the language of interaction.

5.2 Foxes and Snow leopards: Working side by side but separately

Compared to the groups above, the two other groups, Foxes (Finnish) and Snow leopards (Swedish), did not work as collaboratively. These groups had their own entrances and rooms, and their daily in-door activities were mostly done in their own groups; the groups also ate at separate times. However, both groups' rooms, the corridor and the hobby rooms were shared at playtime, and children from

both groups could gather there. In the following, the language practices of Emma and Anna are presented through extracts from the interviews, audio data, and field notes.

5.2.1 Emma (Snow leopards)

In her work, Emma frequently used both languages, and chose the language depending on the situation and the child's group and language background. She discussed her language choices as follows:

Extract 7

nå alltså jag har bestämt så att till exempel nå med egna gruppen så så klart så talar jag svenska för att det är en svensk grupp och så finns här ganska mycket liksom annors också tvåspråkiga familjer liksom i i huse så då som jag vet att liksom dom har två språk så jag brukar välja den där svenskan (…) jå alltså finskspråkiga barn finska och svenskspråkiga barn på svenska och tvåspråkiga på svenska	well I've decided that for example well with my own group well of course I speak Swedish because it's a Swedish group and otherwise there are well quite a lot of bilingual families here in this building so with those who I know have two languages then I tend to choose Swedish (…) yes I mean Finnish with Finnish-speaking children and Swedish with Swedish-speaking and Swedish with bilinguals

(Interview with Emma, June 2017)

Emma has taken a similar language strategy to Marianne's. In her group, Emma used only Swedish, even with those children for whom Finnish was the stronger language. Emma continued:

Extract 8

men sen om man riktigt på riktigt märker att nu kanske det här barne förstod så kan man kanske säga ett ord då på finska men att alltså 99% av tiden tycker jag nog att det liksom går på svenskan	but if one really really sees that now this child didn't understand then one can perhaps say one word in Finnish but like 99% of the time I think that everything happens in Swedish

(Interview with Emma, June 2017)

Emma's reflections correspond with the observations and recordings of her language use in the group: she was not recorded using Finnish in her group even though a couple of times she responded in English to children's use of some English words. Even if Emma did not use Finnish in the group, it did not mean that the spaces for the group were monolingually Swedish. In ECE in Finland, children are allowed to use their whole language repertoire, and in this group, some of the children chose Finnish when playing and doing counting tasks, thus making the space more bilingual (see also Bergroth & Palviainen, 2016a, 2017). In situations like these, the teachers could subtly try to encourage the use of the group's language in order to promote and support the language (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2016b, 2017). However, actions of this kind were not recorded in Emma's group.

As Emma mentioned in the interview, she used Finnish when in interaction with children and colleagues who did not have a Swedish or bilingual background and were not in her group, as the following extract from the playground shows. Emma is walking around the yard when she notices that some older children are

using the swings that are meant for much younger children. She mentions this to one of the teachers, in Swedish, and then goes across to comment in Finnish to the children about their behaviour.

Extract 9 (transcript of audio recording, time 05:34-06:09)

1	Emma	vi har fått riktigt bebisar dit i babygungarna	we have some real babies there on the baby swings
2	Anne	jå xxx	yes xxx
3	Emma	jag far å kommentera ((går till gungarna)) (9) *no ni nyt saa isot vauvat tulla vauvakeinuista pois (.) että sitte (1) nää pienemmät lapset mahtuu sinne keinumaan*	I'll go and say something ((walks to the swings)) (9) *now then the big babies should come away from the baby swings (.) so that (1) the smaller children can use these swings*
4	Nea	*meki halutaan*	*we want to as well*
5	Emma	*no te ette oo vau- vauvoja nyt ni tulkaa pois (.) te saatte mennä muihi keinuihi*	*well you aren't ba- babies now so come away (.) you can go on other swings*
6	Nea	*mä en haluu*	*I don't want to*

The extract shows not only Emma's flexible language use, but also how the children are taken care of collaboratively, as these children were not from Emma's group. The fenced yard is big, and the children are allowed to move freely inside the area, so teacher co-operation is needed when all the groups are outside together. This of course sets demands on the teachers' language skills. For Emma with her bilingual background, this was not a problem and she moved smoothly between the two languages when needed, with colleagues, children, and parents.

5.2.2 Anna (Foxes)

The language use of the teachers in Anna's group differed from that in the other groups. In the interview, Anna explained her language use in the following way:

Extract 10

siellä mä käytän vaan suomea koska meillä on me ollaan sovittu niin et jokainen käyttää sitä omaa äidinkieltään että et niinku puhuu omaa äidinkieltään lapselle jos on niinku kakskielinen lapsi niin sitten sitten tota noin mh meiän ryhmässä niinku niin mä oon käyttänyt koko ajan suomea (…) se mun työpari hänen äidinkieli on ruotsi ja sitten meillä on ne muutamat kakskieliset lapset (…) niin sitte se on niinku luontasta et hän puhuu ruotsia niille (…) ja sitte mä puhun suomea ja molem- molemmat kielet sit sillä tavalla näkyy siinä meiän ryhmässä (.) mut vaan niinku näiden muutaman lapsen osalta joilla oli tää kakskielisyys	*I only use Finnish there because we've decided that each of us will use their own mother tongue so that one speaks one's mother tongue to the child if it's a question of a bilingual child so then mh in my group I've like used Finnish all the time (…) my colleague's mother tongue is Swedish and then we have that couple of bilingual children (…) so it's natural for her to speak Swedish with them (…) and then I speak Finnish and both languages are in that way visible in our group (.) but only when it comes to these children who are bilingual*

(Interview with Anna, June 2017)

Following the one teacher, one language (OTOL) principle seems, in Anna's words, a natural course of action with the bilingual children in the group. This principle is common in bilingual education models, in which the use of language is often

restricted either by time, user or space (Gort & Pontier, 2013; Gort & Sembiante, 2015). During the data collection, Anna stuck to Finnish while she was teaching, and during meals and free play. She also took extra care of the bilingual children's language skills in Finnish by different activities.

The next extract shows Anna's and her colleague Nina's language use with a bilingual child, Eemil, in the group. Eemil was very interested in the data collection and all the equipment used and wanted to know if the microphone Anna was wearing would record all that he was saying. This was commented on by both Anna and Nina.

Extract 11 (transcript of audio recording, time 02:43-03:05)

1	Eemil	*tuu alemmas mä haluun puhuu siihen (2) tuu alemmas* ((åt Anna och hennes mikrofon))	*come a little bit closer I want to speak to that (2) come closer* ((to Anna and her microphone))
2	Nina	va du är (tasso) (1) [är du tasso ((åt Eemil))	are you being (silly) (1) [are you being silly ((to Eemil))
3	Anna	[*se kyllä kuuluu siitäki* ((åt Eemil))	[*your voice can be heard from there too* ((to Eemil))
4	Nina	Jå	Yes
5	Eemil	*heippa: heippa: [heippa heippa heippa heippa heippa heip* ((ropar))	*bye then bye then [bye then bye then bye then bye then bye* ((shouts))
6	Nina	[int behöver du skrika (uppåt) (2) tänker du skrika *heippa* hela dagen	[you don't have to shout (2) do you plan to shout *bye then* the whole day
7	Eemil	((springer till forskaren för att fråga om kameran har spelat in hans röst))	((runs up to the researcher to ask if the camera recorded his shouting))

As shown, both teachers used their chosen language with Eemil with the exception of Nina's "bye then" on line 6, which was said in Finnish in response to Eemil's shouting into the microphone on the previous line, 5. The jointly made decision to follow the OTOL principle in this group shows the differences in language use between the groups. Firstly, in this group, both of the languages of the bilingual children were used with them. Even though the neighbouring group Snow leopards included bilingual children, there the teachers used only Swedish. The use of Swedish in Anna's group might indicate that the teachers and the kindergarten wanted to give extra opportunities for the children to use the language that was spoken less both in that area and in Finland generally. As these bilingual children were enrolled in the Finnish side, which is a relatively unlikely choice in bilingual families in Finland (see e.g., Oker-Blom, 2021), the teachers and the kindergarten could still support both languages when some of the teachers chose to use Swedish with them.

Secondly, had there not been children with a bilingual or Swedish background in the group, the teachers would probably have used only Finnish. This assumption was backed up in the recordings, in which Anna and Nina both used only Finnish in situations where there were no bilingual children nearby. This language use, where languages are kept separated, corresponds with previous research on co-located units (From & Sahlström, 2017). In their study on Swedish-

medium ECE teachers' reflections on language awareness, Bergroth and Hansell (2020) found similar results about the use of languages other than Swedish in Swedish ECE in Finland. One of their conclusions was that the language background of the children and the teachers seemed to have an influence on whether or not other languages were used in the groups. This seemed to be the case in Anna's group, too, but not in Emma's. This indicates an explicit policy of giving extra support for Swedish in the kindergarten.

5.3 Collaboration and extra support for the Swedish language

As presented, there were some differences in teachers' language use in this kindergarten, although similarities could be found, too. Teachers in both the Swedish groups (Bears and Snow leopards) used Swedish with the children in these groups, regardless of the children's background (Finnish, Swedish, bilingual). In the Finnish groups (Foxes and Bunnies), the language choice seemed to depend on the language background of the child and of the teacher (Finnish, Swedish, bilingual). Figure 1 illustrates the teachers' language choices and language use.

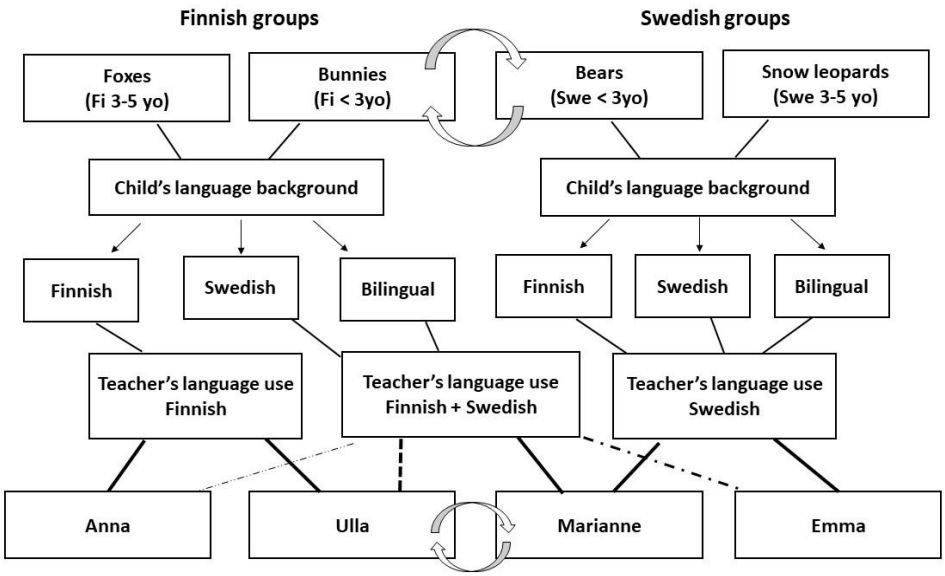

Figure 1. Focus teachers' language use in the kindergarten.

The figure shows the four groups in the kindergarten: the two groups that were collaborating are in the middle, leaving the other two groups on the outside. The figure then shows the children's possible language backgrounds, followed by the languages that each of the teachers used with the children. The teachers tended to choose the language of their group (bold lines) especially in their own groups. An exception to this was Marianne, whose Bears group was collaborating with the Bunnies group on a regular basis, which led Marianne to use both languages most of the time. Because of the collaboration between the groups, even Ulla used Swedish, though not as frequently as Marianne. This is marked with a bold dashed line, in contrast to Marianne's solid line. Emma used only Swedish in her group but both languages otherwise during the day. This is marked by a bold dash-dotted line. Finally, Anna explained that she used Swedish alongside Finnish, for

example in singalongs with the whole kindergarten (see also Sopanen, 2019). However, because no activities or events of this kind were recorded during the data collection period, it is hard to estimate how much Anna actually used languages other than Finnish. Her connection to the use of both Swedish and Finnish is therefore marked with a faint dashed line.

The data indicate that there were many factors that influenced the teachers' language choices (see also Jones, 2017). The group, collaboration between teachers and groups, the child's language background as well as the teacher's proficiency in different languages all seem to explain their language choice. In addition, the extracts from the interviews show that the teachers had explicitly decided in what way language(s) would be used in the groups, showing their own agency. The need to give extra attention to Swedish came up both explicitly and implicitly in the interviews, which shows understanding of the societal and contextual linguistic situation.

The data also show that on one hand the teachers followed traditional parallel monolingualism (Heller, 2006), where two languages are kept separate. On the other hand, the teachers – especially in the Finnish groups – supported individual bilingualism by using bilinguals' two languages, creating dynamic practices that took the children's background into consideration. Some of this languaging was based on the OTOL principle, where Swedish was used by one teacher and Finnish by another, and some on a teacher's more dynamic language use.

Ulla, Marianne, and Anna all mentioned in their interviews that it was easier for the bilingual or Swedish-speaking children to pick up Finnish than for the Finnish speakers to pick up Swedish. This underlines the need to find a balance between the two languages, because if not planned carefully, the majority language might take over the one(s) in the minority position (see Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). This is perhaps one of the reasons why both Marianne and Emma considered their use of Swedish important in the groups. Despite the worries about Finnish becoming dominant as the children's shared language, both the Finnish- and the Swedish-speaking children in the co-operating groups were eager to try to use "the other language" with children in the group, as Marianne mentioned. In addition, Anna said that children in her group enjoyed singing in different languages. By creating a safe space for both languages, or even a fluid language space (Hamman, 2018), teachers can make it easier for children to experiment with languages. Although monolingual spaces and activities were clearly important, the kindergarten teachers also considered that supporting bilingualism was important, and they tried to resist any barriers between the two languages. They supported their objectives through their collaboration as well as their attitudes and practices, which helped to create a space where both languages could thrive. Both languages were visible, especially in the shared areas, and joint celebrations, trips, singalongs and other activities added to the feeling of community.

6. Discussion

The focus of this article has been on teachers' language practices and the possible reasons for their language choices in a co-located kindergarten. As Jones (2017) argues, several factors, such as the context, the status of the languages, language policy, and children's language backgrounds, should all be taken into consideration when planning language practices in bilingual settings. This is

considered important especially in contexts where one language dominates and there is a risk of it replacing another.

The teachers in the co-located kindergarten used both monolingual and bilingual strategies for language use. Marianne and Ulla were translanguaging most of the time but used a group's administrative language for teacher-led activities. Anna and her colleague Nina applied the OTOL-principle (see Gort & Pontier, 2013; Gort & Sembiante, 2015), and Emma used only Swedish in her group, but was otherwise translanguaging between the two languages. In line with Jones (2017), the results of this study show that several factors, such as the child's language background and the parents' choice of group (Swedish or Finnish) for their child, influenced the teachers' choice of language in their interaction with pupils. Explicit language policies on the national level, as well as the teachers' own language background, language knowledge and agency also played an important role in their language choice and use. The different choices also tell us something about teachers' understanding of the societal and contextual language situation, as both of the languages of the bilinguals in the Finnish groups were used with them, but only Swedish was used in the Swedish groups. At the same time, the collaboration between groups, shared activities, and shared spaces gave all the children opportunities to see, hear and use both languages. Although a more focused language pedagogy would be needed if the goal was to support monolingual children in learning the other language, at least these teachers were able to create the feeling of a shared unit, a bilingual kindergarten.

As the data were collected from one kindergarten over a rather short period of time, the results cannot be generalized. The results do show, however, that language practices are complex, and the choice of language depends on many factors. The study shows that through collaboration and considered use of multifunctional spaces it is possible both to support the lesser spoken language(s) in an area and to let languages be used side by side without any strict separation between them. The two languages in this kindergarten were in daily contact with each other. Even the layout of the building and the decision to share the corridors between the language groups instead of separating them supported bilingualism in the kindergarten.

These language practices could be transferred to other multilingual kindergartens if several of the conditions mentioned above are met: if the teachers get institutional support, work together and have enough competence in both languages to communicate with each other and with the children. However, as previous research shows, implementing dynamic languaging practices needs to be considered carefully if one (or some) of the languages is in a minority (see also Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Jones, 2017; Leonet et al., 2017). Unlike what has been found in some other co-located units (see e.g., From & Sahlström, 2017; Kajander et al., 2015), this co-located kindergarten showed that through careful planning and collaboration it is possible to function well as a bilingual unit through collaboration.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The transcription key.

Regular text	: Swedish
Italics	: Finnish
(( ))	: comments of the transcriber
:	: long syllable
[ ]	: demarcates overlapping utterances
(.)	: micropause, i.e. shorter than (0.5)
(1)	: pause
x	: inaudible word
(tack)	: unsure transcription
° °	: denotes very quiet speech
=	: denotes latching between utterances
Bold text	: sounds marked by emphatic stress

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