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"Wild" languaging: A practice of embodied language learning when integrating dance in early additional language education

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A growing body of research has illustrated that embodied and arts-based approaches can holistically support additional language learning. However, more research on the implementation of such approaches is needed to impact pedagogical practices. This study explores how integrating language and dance can create possibilities for embodied language learning in early additional language education. It is based on a project that combined dance with early Swedish language learning in a Finnish primary school. The analytical focus is on animal-themed language and dance integrated activities held when the participating pupils were in second grade. The study draws theoretically on socio-material approaches to language education, which involves considering languaging an activity that engages the entire human being and relates them to other people, materials, and spaces. The data include video recordings of lessons, lesson plans, and the researcher's embodied experiences and written reflections. An arts-based and post-qualitative research approach is used to analyse and present languaging events. The results indicate that children were activated in languaging through communicative movement exploration that involved children transforming into or becoming animals. The languaging unfolded in unpredictable or "wild" ways in activities that involved repetition, variation, and sense-making with creative movement and sound. Children's agency in languaging was performed collectively in relation to bodies and materialities of the space in an embodied and creative activity involving peer collaboration and performing. To conclude, the study proposes "wild" languaging as a practice of embodied language learning through dance, and discusses its pedagogical potential for early additional language education.

Keywords: early language learning; additional language; dance; embodiment; arts-based; post-qualitative

1 Introduction

An early start to additional language learning is being implemented in the first years of compulsory education worldwide (Enever, 2015; Enever & Lindgren, 2016; Johnstone, 2009). In Finland, additional language learning was recently moved to the first grade of primary school in response to a decreasing interest in studying additional languages other than English (Ennser-Kananen et al., 2023; Vaarala et al., 2021). Hence, there is a need to investigate engaging age-

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appropriate pedagogical approaches that support young pupils' additional language learning.

Research interest in embodied learning as a holistic approach to language education has increased rapidly in recent years (Jusslin et al., 2022). Previous studies have pointed to the benefits of arts-based activities for embodied language learning. For instance, drama and dance can enhance children's oral skills (Greenfader et al., 2015), support their phonological awareness (Sila & Lenard, 2020), and engage beginner learners in authentic multimodal communication (Rothwell, 2011). However, more research is needed to articulate the potential of combining dance with early language learning.

This study is based on a project that integrated dance in early Swedish language education in a Finnish-speaking primary school. Swedish is an official language in Finland, and 5.2% of the population is registered as Swedish speakers (Statistics Finland, 2022). The school was situated in a bilingual Swedish- and Finnish-speaking municipality in which all pupils studied the second national language as of first grade. At a national level, there are concerns regarding comprehensive school pupils' limited overall Swedish proficiency and decreasing enjoyment of studying Swedish as a mandatory subject (Härmälä & Marjanen, 2023). This study addresses the local and societal need to develop new ways for encouraging young pupils in Swedish language learning.

The aim of this study is to explore how languaging through language and dance integration created possibilities for embodied language learning in early Swedish language education. This study is theoretically positioned within socio-material approaches to language education that are currently gaining ground in applied linguistics and language education (e.g., Bangou & Waterhouse, 2021; Ennser-Kananen & Saarinen, 2022; Guerrettaz et al., 2021; Pennycook, 2018). This involves considering *languaging* an activity that engages the entire human being and relates them to other people, materials, and spaces (Toohey, 2019). *Agency* as a potentiality to act is attributed to humans and non-humans in changing collectives (Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Murris & Zhao, 2022). This study draws on data encompassing video recordings of the lessons, lesson plans, and my embodied experiences and written reflections as a researcher and language teacher. It uses an *arts-based* (Kuttner et al., 2021; Leavy, 2018) and *post-qualitative* research approach (Gunnarsson & Bodén, 2021; Østern et al., 2021) to analyse and present languaging events. The following questions have guided the study:

1. How did languaging unfold during language and dance integrated activities?
2. In what ways did children's agency in languaging become performed in language and dance integrated activities?

In the following, I assemble a theoretical foundation for exploring early embodied language learning in language and dance integrated instruction. I then describe the context of the study, the pedagogical activities in analytical focus, and the arts-based and post-qualitative research approach. Next, I present the results, and to conclude, I propose "wild" languaging as a practice of embodied language learning through dance, and discuss its pedagogical potential for early additional language education. To clarify, "wild" languaging in this study refers to the view of language learning that in many respects aligns with socio-material approaches

and not to learning "in the wild" as in outside of classroom contexts (Eskildsen et al., 2019).

2 Early embodied language learning through dance: Theoretical foundations

This section brings together theories and previous research in applied linguistics, language education, and dance education. First, I discuss the role of embodiment in early additional language learning and teaching; second, socio-material approaches to language education; and third, the potential of dance integration for embodied language learning in primary school.

2.1 The role of embodiment in early additional language learning and teaching

Children learn their first language(s) through sensorimotor encounters with their social and physical surroundings (Tomasello, 2003). A growing body of research has also recognised the embodied basis of children's additional language learning (Jusslin et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that meaningful physical enactments (Mavilidi et al., 2015; Schmidt et al., 2019; Toumpaniari et al., 2015), gestures (Andrä et al., 2020; Janzen Ulbright, 2020), and holding objects (Bara & Kaminski, 2019) can enhance children's learning and retention of foreign-language vocabulary. Other studies have delineated more holistic benefits: gestures can support meaning making and problem-solving (Rosborough, 2014), gesture-talk connections can facilitate intersubjectivity and learning expressions (aus der Wieschen & Eskildsen, 2019), and authentic multimodal interaction can expand ways of communicating and making meaning (Rothwell, 2011). Moreover, children find embodied approaches more enjoyable than sedentary ones (Rothwell, 2011; Schmidt et al., 2019; Toumpaniari et al., 2015).

Literature on early language learning and teaching draws attention to teaching strategies using physical action (Pinter, 2017). For instance, the *Total Physical Response* method mimics first language learning processes by involving participants in listening and physically responding to foreign language directives (Asher, 1969). The Finnish core curriculum for early additional language instruction emphasises teaching methods that activate and engage pupils (Finnish National Agency for Education (FNAE), 2019), and the national core curriculum echoes the action-oriented approach of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) that views learning processes as action-driven and learners as social agents (Council of Europe, 2018). Gestures, facial expressions, and "body language" are considered paralinguistic supports for beginner-level language use and meaning making (Council of Europe, 2018; FNAE, 2019). Socio-material approaches to language education have extended these views to language as languaging—an embodied, material, and relational activity involving human and non-human agents.

2.2 Languaging and agency: A socio-material approach

The notion of languaging bears multiple meanings in applied linguistics and language education (Badwan, 2021). The CEFR defines it as a process of

articulating thought or traversing boundaries of language varieties (Council of Europe, 2018). It echoes definitions of languaging as the mediation of cognitive processes in meaning-making, in a Vygotskian vein (Swain, 2006), and translanguaging as practices that work across named languages and modalities (Li, 2018). In socio-material approaches, the verb form is used to view language as "always in the making" (Badwan 2021, p. 84). These approaches extend conceptions of languaging by considering it an activity occurring in entangled relations between entire human beings, materials, and spaces (Toohey, 2019). These different elements are assembling, acting, and changing in learning processes—they are intra-acting (Fenwick, 2015; Toohey, 2019).

The notion of intra-action foregrounds individual agencies as performed into being rather than pre-existing their encounter—as in interaction (Barad, 2007; Murris & Bozalek, 2022). This shifts focus from a static state of being to ongoing processes of becoming different from before in relation to other human beings, material things, and places (Fenwick, 2015; Toohey, 2019). What follows is that agency is not merely understood as an individual's capacity to act, but as a collective's potentiality to act (Murris & Zhao, 2022). Agency is mutually shared and produced in intra-actions between humans and non-humans (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), and both can become agentic in relation to what happens (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Hence, individuals are understood as not being in full control of the unfolding action (Hackett et al., 2021), and learning becomes a question of participating and intervening in ongoing intra-actions (Fenwick, 2015).

In addition, I put the following socio-material concepts to work in analysing languaging through language and dance integration. First, I consider language both striated and smooth in encompassing not only "particular grammars, semantics, and phonologies" (striated), but also "the creative, divergent, or 'wild' ways people actually use language" (smooth) (Toohey, 2019, p. 943; see also Maclure, 2013). These co-existing qualities of language generate different possibilities for participation in communicative intra-actions and joint meaning-making (Toohey, 2019). Second, I explore repetition as a matter of difference rather than sameness, since the same ideas, words, phrases, and events can be understood as always enacted anew (Pennycook, 2007). Repetitive action that intertwines the fixed and playful can support communication and language learning (Budach et al., 2021). Third, language encompasses also "that which is not strictly meaningful" (Hackett et al., 2021, p. 916). The embodied, affective, and sensory aspects of language have been connected to the notion of sense as a "wild element" that animates language (Deleuze, 2004 in Hackett et al., 2021, p. 915). Sense and nonsense can unfold in unpredictable ways in embodied and material encounters and support linguistic creativity (Siffrinn, 2021). Taken together, socio-material approaches foreground language learning as emergent and unpredictable processes (Guerrettaz et al., 2021). Emergence and unpredictability are also central aspects in arts education (Anttila, 2018).

2.3 Dance integration for embodied language learning in primary school

Previous dance educational research has illustrated that dance can support embodied learning when meaningfully integrated in school subjects (Anttila, 2013, 2015). Learning is framed as embodied when embodied activity (e.g., physical movement, sensations, and experiences) is foregrounded in learning processes (Anttila & Svendler Nielsen, 2019). A dance educational take on

embodied learning builds on children's movements and imagination instead of specific dance styles and steps (Anttila & Svendler Nielsen, 2019). Activities involving character building, improvising, creating dances, performing, and witnessing performative acts can support embodied experimentation (Anttila et al., 2019; Giguere, 2021), and collaborative dance creation can involve participants in sharing and negotiating ideas, stating opinions, and making decisions (Anttila, 2015; Giguere, 2011, 2021).

Previous literature has suggested that combining dance with additional language learning can connect verbal communication and movement (Pinter, 1999), tap into the creative and imaginative aspects of language learning (Bell, 1997), support active participation (Nikkanen et al., 2019), and generate authentic learning experiences (Gardner, 2016). Empirical studies have shown that dance and drama can enhance children's second language oral development (Greenfader et al., 2015), and creative movement can support children's learning of foreign language words and alliteration (Sila & Lenard, 2020). Moreover, dance can facilitate embodied communication in children's second language learning processes (Anttila, 2019), create an immersion-like environment for children's encounters with a second language (Zhang et al., 2021), and produce subjective experiences of and positive responses to second language learning among adults (Hanks & Eckstein, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to contribute with knowledge on early embodied language learning through dance. It builds on previous studies carried out in the project, one of which focused on dance integration in early additional language education in an exceptional school reality during the COVID-19 pandemic (Korpinen & Anttila, 2022). The study highlighted the potential of language and dance integration for creating alternative ways of languaging. Another study mapped the process of a multiprofessional team designing language and dance integrated pedagogical activities for early additional language instruction, focusing on events that crossed boundaries between language and dance (Korpinen & Anttila, 2023). It illuminated that the seemingly unconnected subjects became entangled in intra-actions between the team members, pupils, movements, languages, and school spaces. The study yielded examples of integrative practices that laid the foundation for the rest of the project. Although the current study focuses on possibilities, the above-mentioned studies also reported challenges. These include, for instance, the newness of a pedagogical approach that involves spontaneous movement and encounters, and the time and resources required for successful implementation in primary school.

3 An arts-based and post-qualitative approach to researching languaging

This study adopts an arts-based (Kuttner et al., 2021; Leavy, 2018) and post-qualitative research approach (Gunnarsson & Bodén, 2021; Østern et al., 2021) to consider the verbal, embodied, and material in a non-hierarchical relationship (Bradley & Harvey, 2019). The arts are at play in three ways: first, the investigated language and dance integrated pedagogical practice; second, the embodied and emergent research process; and third, the analysis and presentation of languaging events through comics creation. Post-qualitative research comes in when theoretically drawing on socio-material approaches, and enables, for instance, approaching the process of creating comics with data as making and analysing cuts in children's languaging processes.

3.1 Context: The project Dansa språk!

The study is based on my doctoral project titled *Dansa språk!* ("Dance languages!"), which integrated dance in early Swedish language instruction in the primary school *Kiilan koulu*, Raseborg, Finland, during two academic years (2019–2021). Framed by educational design research (McKenney & Reeves, 2019), the project aimed to design new pedagogical practices in collaboration with teachers and in a real-life school context to support and encourage early Swedish language learning.

The analysis focuses on a pedagogical sequence that was held during the spring of 2021[1] as an outcome of the two-year educational design work. The spring term encompassed 11 lessons lasting 45 minutes for each of the two pupil groups in second grade. The project lessons were held approximately once a week as part of the regular Swedish language instruction,[2] and the group that was filmed was composed of 19 pupils.[3] According to their class teacher, the pupils' Swedish-language backgrounds ranged from learning Swedish as a new language to having participated in Swedish immersion in early childhood education or having a bilingual family background (Finnish and Swedish). Other pupils may also have had some contact with the Swedish language outside school given their bilingual growth environment. While dance was not a school subject, the pupils were familiar with dance as they had participated in the project since first grade.

I entered the school as part of the project as a doctoral researcher in language education. I designed and carried out the activities with the two class teachers in second grade and a dance teacher from *Hurja Piruetti Western Uusimaa Dance Institute*,[4] who joined the project team in January 2021. The participating children knew me as a researcher and teacher for the entire duration of the project, and the dance teacher and I shared the main pedagogical responsibility. In instructing, we coupled extensive Swedish-language use with embodied strategies. The class teachers participated actively in the lessons with their own group, and a teaching assistant attended the lessons with one group. The design team—the dance teacher, class teachers, and I—designed the pedagogical sequence thematically. Animals, a success from the previous year, evolved into the main theme.

3.2 Design of the animal-themed language and dance integrated activities

The theme of animals ultimately spread over six 45-minute lessons, which were held for a period of eight weeks. The animal-themed activities included communicative movement exploration and creating movement compositions in different constellations. These activities entangled language and dance related

1 The sequence occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. This context affected the educational design as the activities could not involve touching or the use of materials. The teachers wore facemasks.

2 The class teachers taught the other weekly Swedish-language lesson in second grade.

3 I filmed the lessons for which the guardians of all 19 pupils gave informed consent for research participation. In addition, informed consent for using visual materials in research publications was obtained from the guardians of 16 pupils. In the figures, participants' faces are blurred to protect their privacy. The three pupils without the consent to publish visual materials are cut out from the figures.

4 The school and dance institute have given permission to use their real names for research purposes.

elements, and involved formulating questions and answers, communicating ideas, and narrating in Swedish. They also drew on elements typical of creative dance, including movement improvisation, creative collaboration, embodied storytelling, play, and performing. Creating movement compositions acted as an introduction to choreographic work and embodied expression. The lessons started and ended with non-thematic routine activities, including greeting and presentation rounds in Swedish with rhythmic clapping and moving, and collectively performing Swedish-language rhymes.

During lessons 1–6, a thematic tuning-in exercise in a circle was followed by a warm-up exercise and involved children jointly enacting a dialogue with the teacher. This was done to choose animals and actions for when moving to music from one side of the room to the other. The exercise was continued in pairs, with children alternating the roles of asking and proposing animals and actions for movement improvisation across the room.

During lessons 1–3, the following creative activity involved developing a movement composition in the whole group. The group, positioned in a circle, created a new composition during each lesson, and pupils' propositions of animals and actions were linked together with teacher support. During lessons 4–6, the main creative activity involved making movement compositions[5] in small groups (3–4 pupils per group). The groups, scattered around the gym, chose an animal and its actions, linked ideas together to form a composition, narrated it in Swedish, and rehearsed. Meanwhile, the teachers moved between groups and supported their creative processes. Finally, the groups performed their compositions, and the performances culminated in a game of guessing the animal in the composition. The children then co-reflected on their experiences of the activity or revised animals in Swedish.

3.3 Documenting languaging

The data include video recordings of the lessons, lesson plans, and my embodied experiences and written reflections of the lessons. I recorded the lessons using a static camera for an overall view and a body-mounted action camera to record events up close. The action camera allowed me to move and encounter pupils relatively freely while filming events from my bodily perspective and at the children's level. I was mainly unaware of the camera, but at times, I used it to document specific intra-actions. The participating children had quickly become used to the cameras and were generally not disturbed by them. They occasionally intra-acted with the cameras, for instance, by looking into the lens and making sounds. Moreover, I documented lesson plans on the project platform on the school's online drive. I met with the teachers directly after the lessons to discuss our experiences and observations of the lessons and plan the next ones. After the meetings, I reflected on the pedagogical activities in writing to document momentary embodied knowing and emerging connections (Ellingson, 2017). I used the video recordings of the lessons to support my memory in writing the reflections.

In all, documenting languaging events was an embodied and material process, which occurred through the intra-actions between my researcher body, the participants' bodies, and recording devices in a specific time and place (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020). As a researcher and teacher, I was "invested in the children's

5 The activity was inspired by Østern (1992, p. 51).

success" (Toohey et al., 2015, p. 469) in learning activities. Hence, I am part of the resulting data assemblage (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020). An arts-based and post-qualitative research approach enables recognising my embodied entanglement with the data as a resource (Østern et al., 2021).

3.4 Analysing languaging events through comics creation

I analyse and present languaging events through creating comics (Kuttner et al., 2018; Kuttner et al., 2021). Applied linguists have used comic-strip-inspired graphic transcripts to present sequences of action in accessible and condensed ways (Jokipohja, 2023; Laurier, 2014; Skedsmo, 2021). However, comics also lend themselves to analysing additional language learning practices (Jusslin et al., 2024). It is in the latter sense that I approach comics here.

A comics-based research approach involves incorporating comics into any stage(s) of the research process (Kuttner et al., 2018; Kuttner et al., 2021). The term "comics" may evoke associations to a humorous literary genre intended mainly for children (Kuttner et al., 2018; Kuttner et al., 2021). I have opted for it to retain a notion of artfulness,[6] and stress that my intention is not to create comical illustrations of languaging events, but to explore comics as a "childlike" research approach that might reveal novel aspects of children's languaging.

In this study, a comics-based research approach makes it possible to explore the multiplicity of events and perspectives through a multilayered approach (Kuttner et al., 2021). As multimodal narratives, comics enable incorporating multiple types of data, including audio-visual, verbal, and embodied (Kuttner et al., 2021). They also help expand the focus beyond words to sounds, bodies, senses, action, and context without reducing them to lengthy verbal descriptions or inconsequential background information (Kuttner et al., 2021; Skedsmo, 2021). From a temporal perspective, they allow scrutinising events of different durations not only sequentially but also non-linearly (Kuttner et al., 2021).

Connecting comics-based research to post-qualitative research strengthens the focus on relationally generated events and practices (Gunnarsson & Bodén, 2021). From a post-qualitative perspective, the analytical process of creating the comic strips involved making cuts in children's languaging processes. The resulting comic strips can be conceptualised as constructed cuts of what happened in the learning events that occurred in a pedagogical space (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). This pedagogically-oriented understanding builds on the notion of agential cuts (Barad, 2007). In post-qualitative research, enacting agential cuts involves provisionally splitting entanglements between subjects and objects (Bozalek & Fullagar, 2022) to create researchable moments (Østern et al., 2021). The cuts are agentially negotiated in that the whole research assemblage, including the theoretical and methodological approaches, influences what aspects become included in and excluded from the cuts (Bozalek & Fullagar, 2022). Similarly, the material documentation of events, such as video recordings, affects the cuts that can be made. In this study, making the cuts involved reading my written reflections of the pedagogical activities, watching the video recordings, attuning to my embodied memories evoked by the data, and making connections to theoretical concepts.

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6 The corresponding term in Finnish, *sarjakuva* ("series picture"), does not bear the same association to comedy.

In practice, I created the comic strips by taking screenshots of the video recordings. I shaped them into comic strips with a comics creator software. The selected screenshots highlight embodied actions and other material and spatial elements that mattered during the events. I used caption boxes for time and narration, speech bubbles for talk, text-on-picture for sounds, and motion lines and bracketed verbal descriptions for specific embodied actions.

Crucially, the resulting comic strips are not intended as exact records of events (Laurier, 2014), but as constructed cuts that show the intra-actions that mattered during the events (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). A single panel is already a cut of the different embodied, verbal, and spatial elements that choreographed the event. The cuts scrutinised in the results section are not chronologically ordered. However, the presentation of the results follows the structure of the educational design to enhance readability. Similarly, the focus is on one analytical insight at a time, although, in practice, they overlapped.

4 Children languaging through language and dance integration

The results section is divided in two. First, the focus is on the unfolding of children's languaging through language and creative dance integration, and second, on the ways in which children's agency in languaging was performed.

4.1 The unfolding of children's languaging in language and dance integrated activities

The analysis indicates that children were activated in languaging through an activity of communicative movement exploration, which involved children transforming into or becoming animals. The languaging unfolded in unpredictable ways in activities that included repetition, variation, and sense-making with creative movement and sound.

4.1.1 Languaging through becoming animals

The comic strip in Figure 1 focuses on the activity of communicative movement exploration in whole group. It introduces the theme of animals in each lesson. The comic strip illustrates how children became activated in languaging, how languaging unfolded as communicative intra-actions, and how it evolved from structured to more unpredictable events.

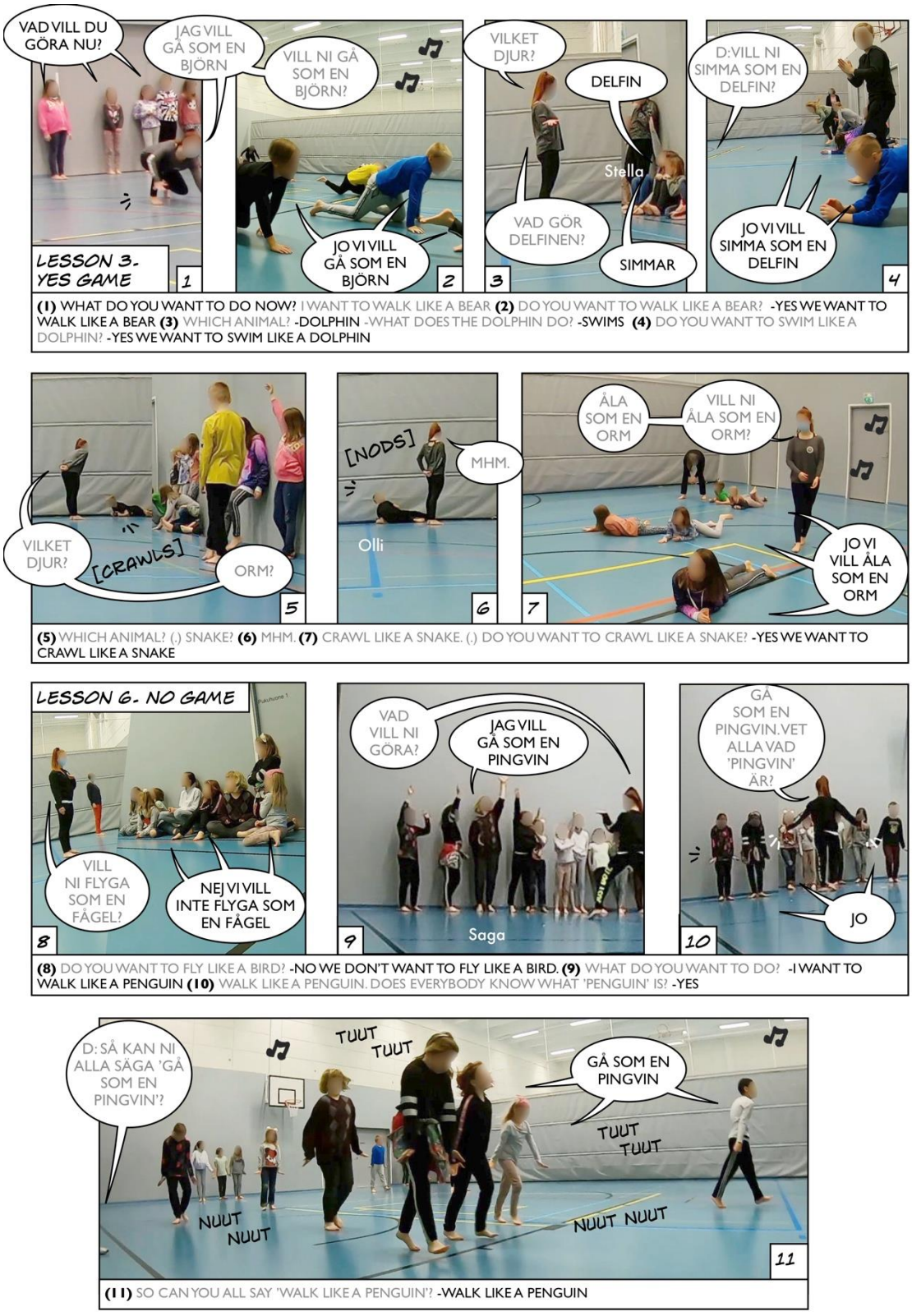

Figure 1. Languaging through becoming animals

Note. The speech bubbles show the verbal utterances in the original language, with upper case for Swedish and lower case for Finnish. The pupils and teachers' utterances are in black and gray, respectively. The English translations are in the captions below the frames. The speech bubbles read left-to-right and top-to-bottom, and overlapping speech bubbles indicate overlapping talk. Speech bubbles with dotted lines are for talk that is quiet or produced at a

distance. Gutters indicate pauses within one turn or connect several turns by a speaker. Pseudonyms starting with S are for pupils with Swedish immersion or Finnish and Swedish bilingual background, and O for pupils with other language backgrounds, including Finnish and other languages. The abbreviation D is for the dance teacher and R for myself as the researcher. For consistency, I refer to myself as "the researcher" throughout the results section.

Creative movement exploration with animal figures opened a smooth space of transformations or becomings. If transforming refers to changing into somebody similar, becoming differs slightly in emphasising difference (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022). The children seemed not to be merely imitating animals, but momentarily "*[b]ecoming-animal[s]*" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004 in Snellman, 2018, p. 85, original emphasis), which involves attuning to otherness, such as different and even strange sensations and experiences (Snellman, 2018) when creatively moving with peers and teachers in the school gym. The big open gym space, music, and the team members' verbal encouragement and embodied examples appeared to support the pupils' creative movement experimentation. In becoming-animals, the children experimented with creative movement in relation to space, time, and effort (e.g., crawling on the floor, Pictures 5–7; walking slowly and with small movements, Picture 11). Occasionally, they spontaneously vocalised like animals (Picture 11). Their unruly eagerness to start moving during the dialogue are further indications of such becomings (Snellman, 2018). Crucially, becoming-animals materialised both as big and small, and fast and slow movements (Picture 11).

The children were activated in languaging by embedding communicative elements in the creative movement exploration. At first, it was necessary to insist on the joint enactment of the whole dialogue as part of the activity. The teacher-pupils dialogue that was enacted at the sides of the room set off the embodied experimentation. The children started the dialogue by asking the dance teacher *Vad vill du göra nu?* ("What do you want to do now?"). The dance teacher made a suggestion to which the pupils responded agreeingly *Jo vi vill gå som en björn* ("Yes we want to walk like a bear") (Pictures 1–2). However, the children became more engaged in languaging when they were involved in choosing animals (e.g., *delfin* ("dolphin")) and actions (e.g., *simmar* ("swims")), and their propositions were integrated into the dialogue *Jo vi vill simma som en delfin* ("Yes, we want to swim like a dolphin") (Pictures 3–4). What seemed particularly engaging was adding negation as an act of disagreement *Nej vi vill inte flyga som en fågel* ("No, we don't want to fly like a bird"), followed by pupils' suggestions for alternative actions *Jag vill gå som en pingvin* ("I want to walk like a penguin") (Pictures 9–11). In this way, becoming-animals generated novel opportunities for languaging and learning (cf. Fenwick, 2015).

Moreover, becoming-animals seemed to create a desire to participate in languaging. The pupils with a strong Swedish background were especially active in making verbal propositions (Pictures 3, 9), but other pupils also suggested ideas when the activity became more familiar. For instance, Olli made a proposition by silently performing "crawling like a snake" (Picture 5). Olli also affirmed the dance teacher's Swedish translation of their embodied proposition *Orm?* ("Snake?") with a silent nod (Picture 6). The dance teacher wove the proposition into their turn, to which the group responded *Jo vi vill åla som en orm!*

("Yes, we want to crawl like a snake")[7] (Picture 7). As such, the activity seemed to encourage different forms of participation in languaging.

The verbal elements of the languaging emerged in the communicative intra-actions encompassing embodied, verbal (mainly Swedish), and spatial elements. They related to animals (nouns), actions (verbs), and the phrases of the dialogue (the pupils' turns included complex interrogative, affirmative, and negative statements). The pupils' verbal responses to the dance teacher's single-word elicitations and more open-ended questions stretched from individual words (e.g., *delfin* ("dolphin"), *simmar* ("swims"), Picture 3) to complex verbal constructions (e.g., *Jag vill gå som en pingvin* ("I want to walk like a penguin"), Picture 9). Crucially, verbal languaging was always entangled with bodies and space as the dance teacher and children often changed their bodily positions or moved on the spot in performing the dialogue. This happened not only when proposing animals and actions (e.g., "walk like a penguin," Picture 10), but also during the rest of the dialogue. For instance, pupils expressed negative statements by crossing their arms and verbally stating *Nej vi vill inte flyga som en fågel* ("No, we don't want to fly like a bird") (Picture 8). This embodied dimension of languaging facilitated joint understanding in a group with diverse Swedish-language backgrounds. Pupils modelled meanings for peers through embodied actions (Picture 10). In addition, pupils with more Swedish-language experience spontaneously translated words for their peers. The dance teacher also used embodied strategies to verify comprehension and engage all pupils *Vet alla vad 'pingvin' är?* ("Does everybody know what 'penguin' is?").

Over a period of six lessons, the structured languaging evolved into more unpredictable events. Starting with a teacher-led dialogue served to introduce the task and related verbal constructions, and more verbal elements were added step by step. Collectively performing striated acts with pre-given verbal elements supported learning longer verbal constructions and expressions. The languaging became more living or smooth (Toohey, 2019) when incorporating children's ideas, encouraging different ways of participation, and developing the so-called "yes game" (Pictures 1–7) into a "no game" (Pictures 8–11). This movement between striated and smooth languaging was also present in the following in pairs communicative movement exploration activity in which pupils alternated between asking and proposing animals and actions.

4.1.2 Languaging through repetition and variation

The comic strip in Figure 2 presents how languaging unfolded through repeated and varied communicative intra-actions involving a pair of pupils, peers, team members, and space.

7 The Swedish expression *åla som en orm*, alternatively *kräla som en orm*, can also be translated as "slither like a snake."

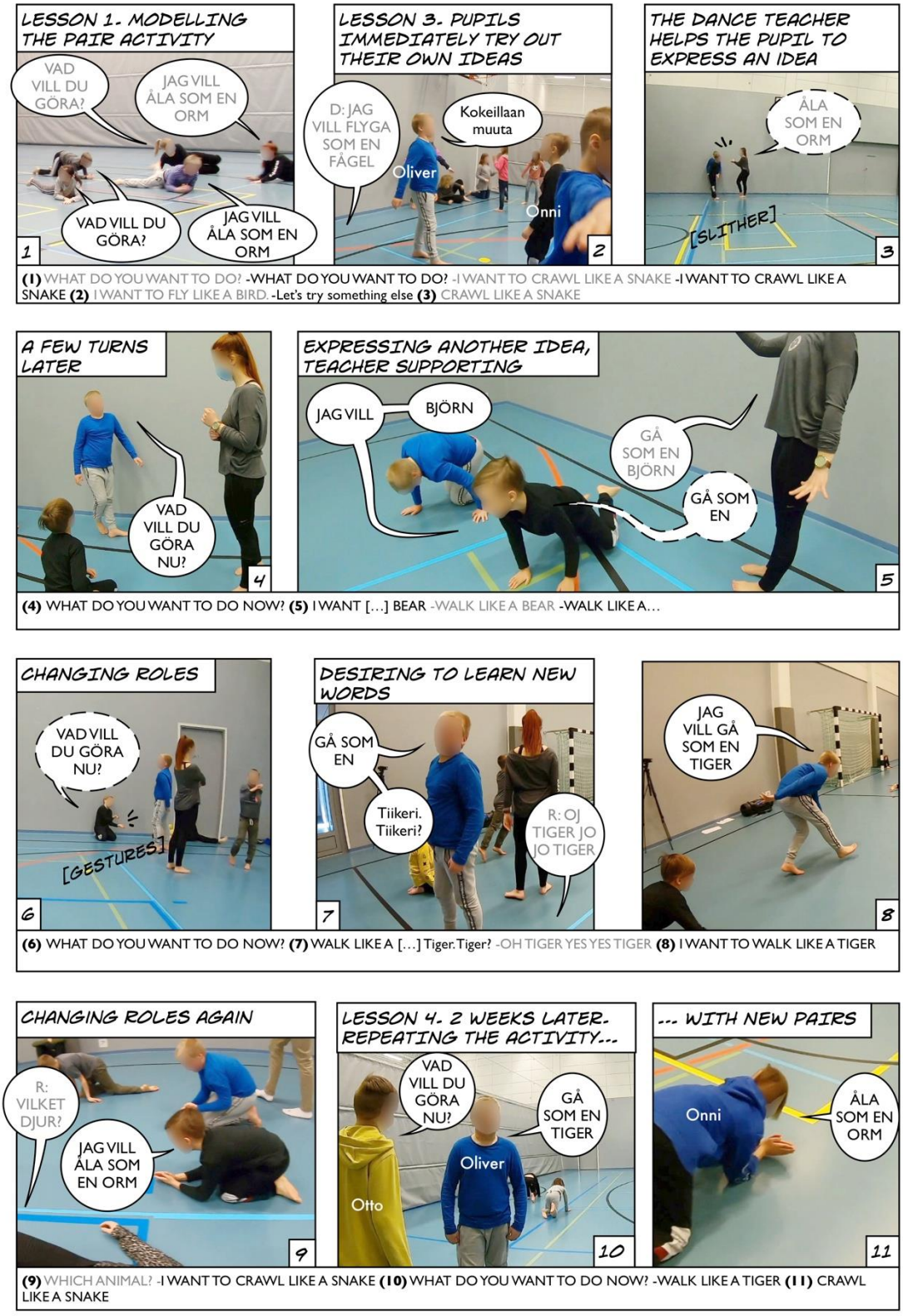

Figure 2. Languaging through repetition and variation

The in pairs communicative movement exploration activity was repeated during all animal-themed lessons. Repetition of the same activity seemed to become meaningful through exploring various animals and actions with a peer. When

modelling the task during lesson 3, Oliver and Onni, among other pupils, were not satisfied with repeating the dance teacher's and researcher's suggestions, as done previously (Picture 1), and instead started exploring other options (Picture 2).

The verbal turns included familiar expressions from the whole group activity *Vad vill du göra?* ("What do you want to do?") *Jag vill åla som en orm* ("I want to crawl like a snake") (Picture 1). On their turn, Onni enacted the verbal interrogative statement while reaching arms with palms open toward their partner (Picture 6). In doing so, Onni repeated the same gesture that was often performed by the dance teacher and researcher to indicate a question or the pupils' turn (Figure 1, Picture 3; Figure 3, Picture 1). This exemplifies how languaging unfolded holistically as communicative intra-actions encompassing verbal, embodied, and spatial elements.

Producing the whole verbal response was more challenging. Peer and teacher support facilitated communicating ideas (Picture 3), as did the repetition of familiar examples and the entanglement of verbal elements with embodied action. For instance, Onni expressed the idea of walking like a bear by moving on all fours while verbally stating *Jag vill björn* ("I want bear" [sic]) (Picture 5). While Oliver repeating the same movement materialised comprehension, the teacher support facilitated expanding the verbal elements of languaging (Picture 5). Later, Onni produced the entire verbal construction upon the researcher's elicitation (Picture 9). The question required only a single-word response, but Onni answered with the entire verbal expression *Jag vill åla som en orm* ("I want to crawl like a snake")—the same as in the beginning of the activity (Picture 3). Onni repeated the same expression with another partner two weeks later (Picture 11). Repeating the same languaging events seemed to support learning longer verbal expressions.

Repeated communicative intra-actions involving embodied experimentation with animal figures also seemed to generate a desire to learn new verbal elements. Oliver turned to the researcher to incorporate a new noun *tiikeri* ("tiger") (Picture 7) into their turn *Jag vill gå som en tiger* ("I want to walk like a tiger") (Picture 8). Oliver repeated the verbal expression *gå som en tiger* ("walk like a tiger") with a different partner during the next lesson (Picture 10). Nurturing children's desires seemed to matter for expanding their languaging.

Overall, languaging unfolded through repeated and varied action. Repeated communicative intra-actions in pairs with room for improvisation created a smooth space for languaging. It seemed to support learning longer verbal constructions and expressions, potentially generating a desire to learn more (cf. Toohey, 2019). The languaging occurred within the set, striated frames of the activity, but variation within these frames generated more varied languaging. Even when repeating the same languaging events, repetition produced difference rather than sameness, as ideas, words, phrases, and events were each time renewed (Pennycook, 2007). Repetition with variation seemed largely supportive of sustaining pupils' focus on the task. However, the communicative intra-actions involving talk and movement also generated noise and occasionally even chaotic moments. A closer investigation reveals that "unruly" movements and sounds could also matter for children's languaging.

4.1.3 Languaging through movement and sound

The comic strip in Figure 3 focuses on sense-making with creative movement and sound when co-creating compositions in whole group. It shows how languaging unfolded in unpredictable and "unruly" ways in creative intra-actions.

Figure 3. Languaging through movement and sound

The pupils occasionally vocalised spontaneously during the creative movement exploration activities (Figure 1, Picture 11). Creative movements and sounds also emerged when co-creating movement compositions in Swedish. Onomatopoeia started echoing in the space when the researcher combined Oivi's single-word proposition *katt* ("cat") (Picture 1) with the sound of a cat *Katten jamar mjau mjau* ("The cat miaows miaow miaow") (Picture 2). Next, Saga suggested *hund* ("dog") while running like a dog by rhythmically clapping their palms or "paws" on the

floor and "chasing" their imaginary tail. Other children not only joined in acting like dogs, but also started barking (Picture 3). The next line *Hunden springer spring spring* ("The dog runs run run")[8] combined Saga's proposition and a verbalisation of the children's spontaneous movements (Picture 4). The repetition of the words, movements, and sounds at the end of each line created a rhythm to the composition. When rehearsing and dancing the composition, the children's movements persisted, some of the sounds re-emerged, and the verbal elements became more prominent (Picture 5).

The movements and sounds that emerged in such creative intra-actions seemed to invite peer participation. They spread in an unpredictable or even "unruly" manner between children's bodies and space. It was as if children's languaging unfolded through collective sense-making, which the adult team members were not fully part of. Languaging through these sense processes can seem meaningless from the perspective of additional language learning, but it seemed to make sense to the children (cf. Hackett et al., 2021). More specifically, it was not only the words, but the words in relation to the movements and sounds that seemed to matter for children's languaging. Their embodied and vocal actions materialised joint sense-making. Embracing the spontaneously emerging movements and sounds created a smooth space for participating in languaging that became increasingly verbal (Toohey, 2019).

Combined, the unfolding of children's languaging seemed to be connected to their opportunities to act and affect action. The question of children's agency becomes crucial in considering how languaging through language and dance integration can create possibilities for embodied language learning. The ways in which their agency became performed is particularly tangible in creating movement compositions in small groups.

4.2 Children's agency in languaging in language and dance integrated activities

The analysis indicates that children's agency in languaging became performed collectively in relation to bodies and materialities of space in an embodied and creative activity involving peer collaboration and performing. From the children's perspective, creating compositions in small groups seemed to involve "being allowed to" act more spontaneously.

4.2.1 Children's agency in languaging

The comic strip in Figure 4 demonstrates how children's agency in languaging became performed when creating compositions in small groups. The focus is on the creative process of four pupils who gathered by the wall in one corner of the school gym. The group was formed spontaneously, contrary to the class teachers' customary practice.

8 Following the construction of a noun in definite form, a main verb, and the verb (root) repeated twice.

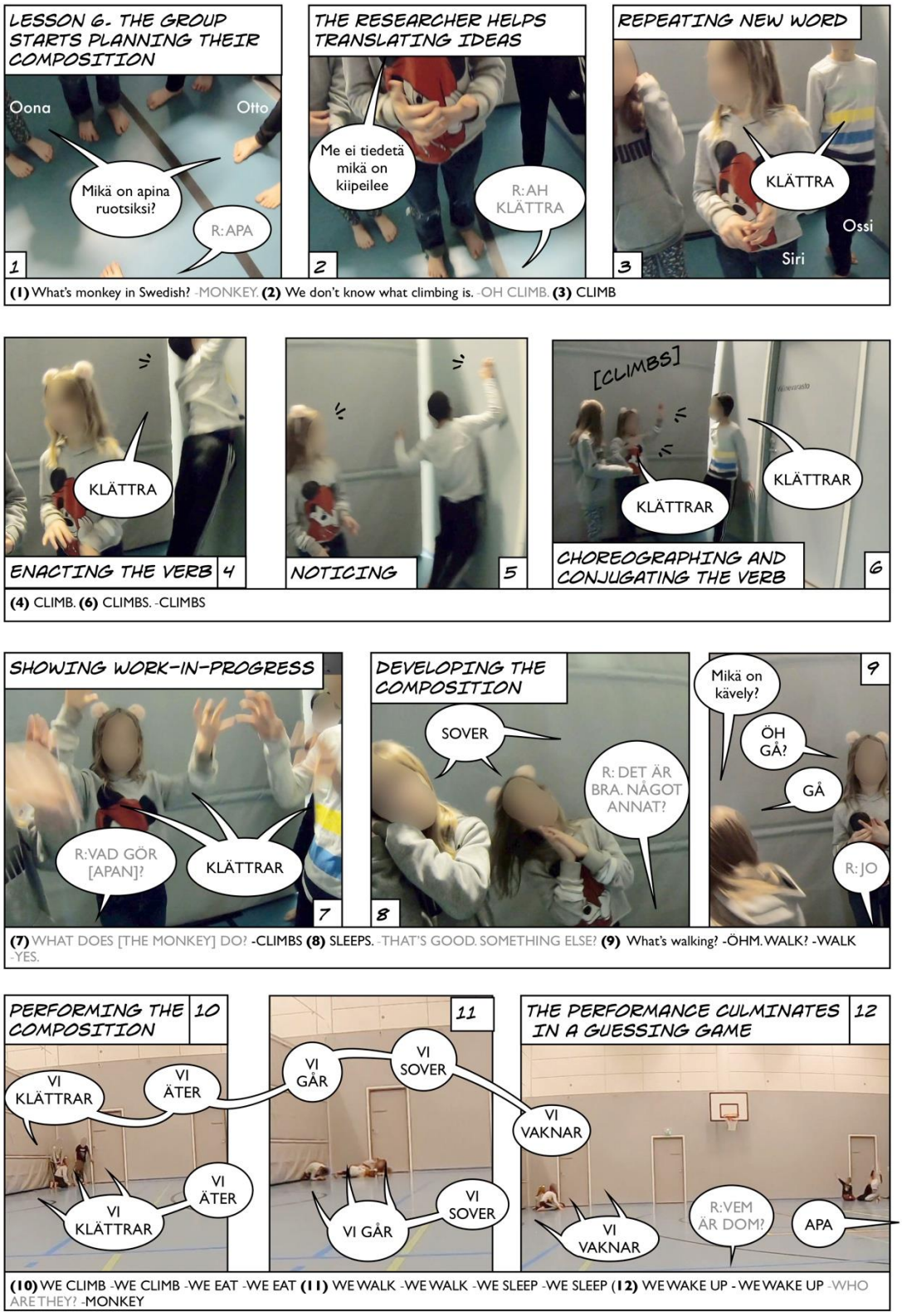

Figure 4. Children's agency in languaging

Here, the teachers took a step back. The groups freely chose animals and actions for their compositions. Activating children's relation to animals as non-human beings appeared to affect the languaging. The process of collectively becoming-animal through creative movement seemed to generate a desire for learning new

words that the pupils also acted upon. The group consisting of Oona, Otto, Siri, and Ossi fetched the researcher from the other side of the gym to help them translate their ideas of an animal (*apina* ("ape")) and action (*kiipeillä* ("to climb")) (Pictures 1–2). The pupils' spontaneous repetition of the Swedish verb *klättra* ("to climb") (Picture 3) indicates that learning the new word mattered for the pupils.

The team members moved between groups and supported them in developing their compositions (Pictures 7–8), but the embodied and creative activity encouraged languaging among peers. Crucially, the activity invited children to act bodily in languaging. Oona suggested a new element for the composition: "walking" through an embodied performance that was accompanied by a question in Finnish *Mikä on kävellä?* ("What's walking?") (Picture 9). Siri spontaneously translated the word into Swedish *gå* ("walk") (Picture 9). The pupil with a stronger Swedish-language background verbalised their peer's bodily and verbally expressed idea in Swedish. This points to a collective agency in languaging.

Creating movement compositions in small groups also let the materialities of the space become active in children's languaging. The gym seemed to call upon Ossi to enact the new verb *klättra* ("climb") by jumping up the wall (Pictures 4–5). Siri built on Ossi's embodied enactment of the verb in creating movement material (Picture 6). When showing the movement to their peers, Siri spontaneously conjugated the verb in the third person singular (*klättrar* ("climbs")) (Picture 6), and Ossi then immediately repeated the conjugated verb (Picture 6). Hence, the activity seemed to create a smooth space that allowed children's bodies, relationships with animals as non-human beings, and materialities of the gym—including the wall—to become agentic in children's languaging. The collective production of agency that these intra-actions made possible (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) seemed to facilitate, for instance, the development of an emerging sense of grammar.

Finally, performing with and for peers also seemed to invite children to act. The groups who volunteered performed their compositions for their peers. Siri led the narration while the other group members repeated the phrases and movements after them (Pictures 10–12). Other ways of performing included jointly narrating and dancing or one pupil narrating in Swedish and others dancing. One group performed the composition only bodily but was also able to spontaneously narrate it in Swedish when requested. Pupils with stronger Swedish-language backgrounds were able to language more freely, but others still participated actively and "perform[ed]" in Swedish (Toohey, 2019, p. 950). Rather than imposing a specific way of performing the compositions, encouraging different solutions generated a smooth space for children's agency to be performed. This space was sustained during the guessing game. The team members stayed in the background, modelling the game (Picture 12) when necessary and encouraged responding in Swedish.

4.2.2 Children on languaging through language and dance integration as a practice of "being allowed to"

Lastly, comic strip in Figure 5 considers children's perspectives on languaging through language and dance integration by presenting their reflections on creating movement compositions in small groups.

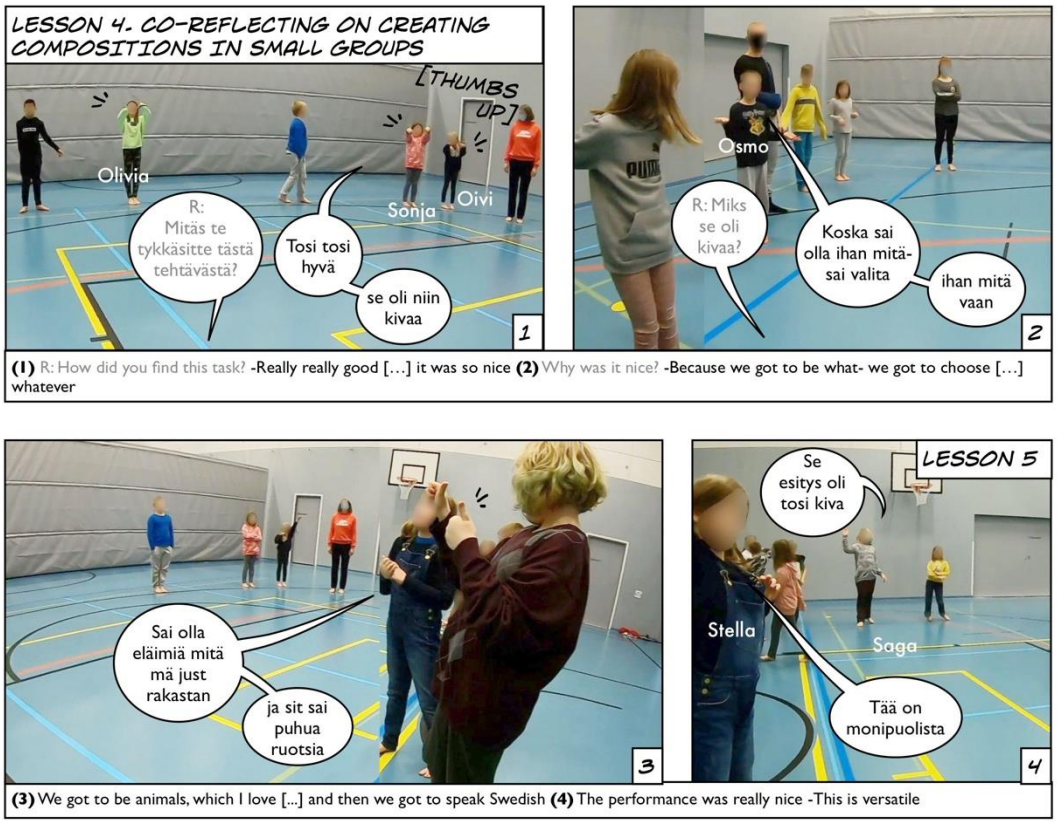

Figure 5. A practice of "being allowed to"

Several children made thumbs-up gestures and gave positive verbal evaluations of the activity (Picture 1). More specifically, the children expressed that they enjoyed freely making choices (Picture 2), be(com)ing animals, speaking Swedish (Picture 3), and performing with peers (Picture 4). These reflections broadly align with the previously presented insights. They strengthen the results that the language and dance integrated activity created a smooth space for children to act, explore different becomings and language, and collaborate and perform with peers. They point to children's close relation with non-human beings outside of school, and co-creating compositions with animal figures brought traces of their encounters with the material world outside of school into the lessons. Although the pupils' responses were mainly positive, one group expressed having opted out of performing because of difficulties in coming up with ideas for the composition. They overcame these challenges during the next lesson. Hence, it seems that children's agency became enacted through repeated opportunities to participate in creative intra-actions in which the teachers were less active. Finally, several of the children's reflections included the verb *sai*, which translates here to "got to" or "was allowed to." This points to languaging through language and dance integration as a practice of "being allowed to" act and language more spontaneously than in customary classroom practices.

5 Discussion

In this article, I have explored how integrating dance in early additional language education created possibilities for embodied language learning. Through an arts-based and post-qualitative research approach, I have unpacked how children were activated in languaging through communicative movement exploration that involved children in becoming-animals. The languaging unfolded in unpredictable ways in activities that involved repetition, variation, and sense-making with creative movement and sound. Children's agency in languaging became performed collectively in relation to bodies and materialities of space in an embodied and creative activity involving peer collaboration and performing. From the children's perspectives, language and dance integration seemed to increase their opportunities to act or perform agency in languaging.

These insights add to prior research on language and dance education that have respectively highlighted the potential of embodied and arts-based activities in supporting children's language learning holistically (Jusslin et al., 2022), and embodied and creative collaboration with performative elements for learning in and through dance (Anttila, 2013, 2015; Giguere, 2021). They extend previous research on embodied approaches to language learning that has focused mainly on vocabulary (Jusslin et al., 2022) by indicating that languaging through language and dance integration can create possibilities for learning words, phrases, complex verbal constructions, and developing a sense of grammar. The children's expressions of "being allowed to" act more freely with peers are consistent with the results of a previous study on comprehensive school pupils' experiences of embodied learning through dance integration (Anttila, 2013). For language teaching and curricula, this implies articulating more strongly the role of bodies and materialities, and collective agency in early language learning. It also highlights the potential of embodied, creative, and playful approaches in early language education.

This article mainly focused on the possibilities of language and dance integration. However, it is important to raise some critical concerns. The pupils' positive evaluations do not necessarily align with all participants' experiences. It is possible that mainly those who enjoyed the activity responded. Moreover, joint embodied activities invited multiple ways of participation in languaging, enabling participation with varied target language proficiency levels. However, some pupils did not participate actively in all activities and needed teacher support. Furthermore, languaging through language and dance integration generated movements and sounds, oscillating between liveliness and restlessness. Challenges with the latter were perhaps not related to dancing or languaging, but to more general social and collaborative skills.[9] Finally, the teaching was carried out by several teachers, which might not be possible in all contexts or without external funding.

Overall, language and creative dance integration strengthened the embodied dimensions of additional language learning in an educational context in which the role of embodiment is not yet fully recognised. As an embodied approach can be implemented in various ways (Jusslin et al., 2022), I propose the notion of "wild" languaging as a practice of embodied language learning when integrating dance in early additional language education.

9 The class teachers reported less collaborative activity and pair and small group work than usual during other lessons due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see also Korpinen & Anttila, 2022).

6 "Wild" languaging: A conclusion

Based on this study, I argue that "wild" languaging:

- entices children's creativity by activating their entire bodies and entanglements with the "wild" socio-material world in and beyond the classroom;
- evolves in unpredictable or "wild" ways in communicative and creative intra-actions;
- unfolds through repeated and varied action and sense-making with movement and sound; and
- allows children to invent, experiment, make choices, collaborate, and perform with peers more freely than in customary classroom practices.

Such "wild" languaging aligns in many respects with socio-material approaches to language learning (e.g., Badwan, 2021; Ennser-Kananen & Saarinen, 2022; Toohey, 2019). It challenges mainstream views of what counts as language and what matters for children's language learning (Hackett et al., 2021; Toohey, 2019). Nevertheless, "wild" languaging is embedded within a structured pedagogical space bound to curricular and institutional requirements regarding, for instance, participation and aims for learning outcomes. Hence, "wild" is written within quotation marks.

Pedagogically facilitating "wildness" in early additional language education involves moving from predetermined or striated to more emergent, unpredictable, or smooth languaging (Toohey, 2019). The point is not to downplay the role of lesson planning or structured languaging exercises. Rather, it is to avoid "getting stuck" in striated acts by building on children's ideas and desires, encouraging different forms of participation, and embracing movement and sound as part of children's additional language learning processes. It involves teachers taking a step back and facilitating embodied and creative collaboration and performing among peers. Instead of "taming" children, their bodies and their languaging, they are "let loose" (cf. Jusslin et al., 2024, p. 665).

However, "wild" languaging generates freer movement and more spontaneous encounters than what is customary in contemporary classroom practices (see also Korpinen & Anttila, 2022). Some pupils might benefit from more striated spaces for languaging, including routines, repetition, and structured activities. Hence, fostering "wildness" in instructed contexts requires ethical consideration. The investigated pedagogical sequence was implemented when the participating pupils were already familiar with the approach. Previously experienced challenges of activities that involved communicating and collaborating with peers more freely were largely overcome step by step. This underscores the significance of a consistent and long-term sustenance of an embodied pedagogical practice.

Arts-based and post-qualitative research (Gunnarsson & Bodén, 2021; Kuttner et al., 2021; Leavy, 2018; Østern et al., 2021) as a creative and "wild" approach to research enabled scrutinising and displaying the embodied dimensions of language learning practices that are often considered subsidiary to the verbal (Bradley & Harvey, 2019). The resulting comic strips contribute to recent efforts in applied linguistics to make embodied and material dimensions of language learning more tangible in research publications (e.g., Jokipohja, 2023; Jusslin et

al., 2024; Laurier, 2014; Skedsmo, 2021). The insights generated from scrutinising the comic strips as constructed cuts of languaging events can be used to develop early additional language instruction (Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

Finally, this study adds to knowledge on the potential of language and dance integration for embodied language learning in early additional language education. However, previous studies on combining dance and additional language learning remain few. There is a need for more research, especially on how individual teachers can implement such an approach, and how pupils experience it. There is also an expressed need for knowledge on embodied learning approaches with older pupils (Jusslin et al., 2022) and the continuation of additional language learning after an early start (Enever, 2015). Hence, future research should attend to if "wild" languaging through language and dance integration can be sustained beyond the first primary school years, and if so, what it can become and do in different educational contexts. This study suggests that it has potential to support young pupils' additional language learning as embodied, creative, and playful processes. This is relevant because of pupils' decreasing interest in learning additional languages in instructed contexts.

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