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Code-switching and establishing the power of a dominant language

Issues in the lives of multilingual children in Sweden

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Handledare:	Elisabeth Mellgren
Examinator:	Biörn Hasselgren
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European Masters in Early Childhood Education & Care

Abstract

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In order to help children develop their mother tongue during preschool years, teachers need to have an understanding of how children perceive the function of their mother tongue in institutional settings. This study aims to explore what communicative function children assign the mother tongue. By listening to children this study allows their voices to be heard.

The theoretical starting points are found in the socio-cultural perspectives and in variation theory. They both underpin the environmental and social settings for learning. The socio-cultural perspectives have brought some important understandings of how knowledge is, primarily, shared learning among participants in a setting. Language, from this perspective, is viewed as an individual and collective tool for thinking. The variation theory emphasise the importance of perceiving since how we perceive a phenomenon will affect how we act in different situations.

The data represent the voices of eight multilingual children that are about to turn, or have recently turned, 6 years of age. Data regarding the mother tongue were collected by participating in children's culture and writing field notes. Additionally, interviews were conducted with children, and the field notes were used to facilitate the construction of the interview questions.

The results show that children perceive that there are differences with regard to when to use the mother tongue and when to use the majority language. They were allowed to use their mother tongue in various settings, but not in preschool. The children stated that they did use their mother tongue in preschool but that only occurred when the teachers were not around and was associated with feelings of shyness. As for the Swedish language, it was used in all contexts and viewed as vital as a means of being or becoming an active member of Swedish society. Reading and writing skills in the Swedish language were stressed as key factors in educational success. When it came to the importance of speaking the mother tongue, the children pointed to the significance of culture, identity, and communication with others. Another finding was that none of the children had any difficulty speaking about language as an object or having meta-cognitive conversations about it.

Preface

My journey has been enriched by the many conversations, ideas, thoughts of, and with others. Thank you Ulla Mauritzson for encouraging me to consider further education and for supporting me when it was needed. I am grateful to you Jonna Larsson and Maelis Karlsson Lohmander for your support and help throughout the Master's project. I treasure and thank all you other students and teachers in the Master's project for the opportunity to meet, think and act together, for these many meetings, in real life and not least the virtual world.

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Thank you Elisabeth Mellgren for being my supervisor throughout the work on this thesis. I know it could not have been easy at times to handle the numerous ideas that emerged since the beginning of the study. You did help me to focus on the research aim. At the same time you respected the various ideas and paths I wanted to explore.

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Last, but not least, to all the children that allowed me to enter their culture and made me a part of it: thank you.

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Hiba Abou-Touk

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the last few years Sweden has seen an important change in language choice within different areas due to the increased internationalisation. Over 150 languages are spoken in Sweden, and a concern has risen as regards language choice in different areas (SOU 2008:26). A recurrent issue in the media concerns the achievements of multilingual children during their school years. A report presented by the Swedish National Agency for Education [Skolverket] (2008) shows that the academic performance of multilingual children ranks lower than that of their native Swedish counterparts. In an NGO[1] report by Rädda Barnen (2004) to the UN, the question of the support for multilingual children was raised and concern was expressed regarding the children's educational future. It was also stated that a greater percentage of the multilingual children than those with Swedish as their mother tongue are failing to reach the goals set in different subjects in their later school years. A reason for this is that some of the children are having difficulties processing the information that is being presented to them (Rädda Barnen, 2004). Research emphasises that the learning of new languages is facilitated if children have a well developed mother tongue (Hyltenstam, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1997). There is an undeniable link between language and learning, which, in turn, affects the development of a personal identity (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). Children who get to strengthen their language during their early years develop not only their spoken language but also their cultural ways of thinking. The outcome is a broader and improved perspective of approaching our world (Skolverket, 2002).

As of July 1, 2009, a new act established Swedish as the official language in Sweden (SOU 2008: 26). It was recently suggested that the importance of the mother tongue in preschool[2] as well as the preschool class[3] should be strengthened and established in the Education Act [skollag] (Ds 2009:25). The underlying factor in this new act makes it fundamental that all preschools give children opportunities that maintain and develop their individual capabilities. Further, it is stated that speaking the mother tongue at home is not enough for the children; it should also be encouraged in the preschool. Children should actively communicate in their mother tongue as well as in Swedish in preschool. The suggestion implies a clarification of the roles preschools should play within the context of the Education Act (Ds 2009:25).

Nearly 17 per_cent of preschool children in Sweden have another mother tongue than Swedish. For many of them and their parents preschool is one of their first contacts with Swedish society, Swedish culture and the educational system (Skolverket, 2009). The values and norms that are shared here will be of great importance for the rest of their life-long

[1] NGO – Non-governmental Organization.

[2] In Sweden, preschools are institutions for children aged 1-5. Childcare in Sweden is based on an overall view of the child's development and learning needs. It brings together health care, social care, fostering and teaching. The preschool has its own curriculum which is an ordinance, and the preschool is viewed as a part of a life-long learning process. The curriculum specifies the overall goals and orientation for preschools in Sweden but it is the local authorities that are responsible for implementing them (Ministry of Education and Research in Sweden, 2006).

[3] The preschool class in Sweden is for 6-year-old children and is a voluntary school form. It is attended by almost all of the 6-year-olds and the preschool class follows the same curriculum as the compulsory school (Ministry of Education and Research, 1994).

learning process as individuals. This leaves teachers with great responsibility for implementing the curriculum and working out how to make their preschools a socially inclusive arena for everyone (Cannella, 1997; Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh, 2004).

As an earlier study examined how children use their mother tongue in play, the results that was presented then have been reinforced and new questions have emerged (Abou-Touk, 2006). A returning consideration has been how teachers can support multilingual children in preschool and facilitate their language learning. In order to do this, it is important to have an understanding of how children describe the functions that their mother tongue has in institutional settings.

Aim of the research

The aim of the study is twofold: first and foremost to gain a deeper understanding of how multilingual children perceive the functions of their mother tongue and the majority language. Secondly, to explore what purpose these have for children in institutional settings when it comes to language and communication. The focus will be on the children's own thoughts and ideas about the mother tongue and its meaning.

Key questions

What communicative function do children give their mother tongue and the majority language in institutional settings?

What communicative meaning do children assign their mother tongue and the majority language in general?

Limitations of the study

Conducting research is always challenging, and as a researcher you will need to narrow your study to some extent. One of the main limitations of this study is that the teachers' voices are not heard or present. Having their perspective could have expanded our understanding of how it is for them working in such an institution as the preschool. Their perspectives might have given us some deeper insights into some of the outcomes of the study. Nevertheless, we can not deny the fact that children's voices also echo the voices of others (teachers, parents and people in their different contexts).

Definition of key terms

Some of the key terms used in the study will follow with a discussion and/or definition on how they are being used in this thesis.

Code-switching

When someone code-switches it could refer to switching between two different languages but also different ways of speaking within a language. In this thesis, the focus will be on code-switching between two languages. When it comes to multilingual code-switching, there are different approaches to how to view it, code-switching in conversations, in language and in society (Cromdal, 2000). Of interest for this study is code-switching in society and in conversations. This will be further explored and explained in chapter 3.

Institution

Markström (2007) clarifies the concept of institution as originating from the Latin, and defined as an establishment or arrangement that is organised to fulfil a purpose. The words upbringing, teaching and education are also closely tied to the concept of institution; they give meaning to our human concepts of routine, rules or regulations. Institutions with their routines and rules are organised for certain groups of people. The organisation is built around predefined activities and schedules that people affect. When it comes to educational institutions, there are daily routines where children are expected to do the same things at the same time. Needless to say, individual needs are sometimes overlooked in favour of those of the group. Bourdieu (1991) compares institutions to marketplaces where knowledge, acquired skills, and ways of constructing meanings are being traded between people.

Mother tongue

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) outlines four different definitions of mother tongue. The first one is the origin criterion and refers to mother tongue as the first language we speak. The second one, the competence criterion, implies that the language best spoken is the mother tongue. When it comes to the third one, the competence criterion, this can pose a difficulty since people might use languages in different situations (as this study will show), and develop their languages differently depending on these situations. The function criterion, suggests that the language used most often could be considered to be the mother tongue. This could also be an issue since people might have to speak a language which they would not choose in different situations or domains. The last, but not least, criterion that is described is the attitude criterion, which is related to the language you identify yourself with the most, or if you perceive yourself as being multilingual. Individuals decide for themselves (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

Grosjean (1982) views multilingualism as a constant use of two or more languages in daily life. He defines multilingual persons as those who need and use two or more languages daily. Mother tongue participants in this study refer to children who use more than two languages in their daily lives when they interact with others in different contexts.

Multilingualism

Cromdal and Evaldsson (2003) discuss the prevalent ideas in the domain of multilingualism[4] relating to the mental nature of being bilingual. Taking this perspective, bilingualism is an individual process, and studies focus on what happens inside the head of a bilingual person. Additionally, these studies are based on a monolingual nature where language learning is about learning one language at a time, whereas bilinguals have access to two separate systems (languages). An alternative theory presented by the authors is seeing bilingualism as a social phenomenon, and being bilingual is more related to meaningful participation in different contexts with others (Cromdal & Evaldsson, 2003).

Outlining the thesis

This thesis includes six chapters that all are divided into different parts, with the aim to guide the reader through the different areas. In the first chapter, the reader is introduced to the topic by first being made aware of its relevance and of the need to conduct the study. Some of the key words are discussed, and the aims as well as the research questions are presented. In the second chapter, the main theoretical perspectives are described, including the dialogical perspective on multilingualism. Points will also be put forward that connect some theories to the concept of power. The third chapter offers some of the related research in the area of what has been done in the field. Furthermore, the aim is to portray the different attitudes towards multilingualism from a historical and societal point of view, and the role of preschool as an institution will be further explored. Chapter four will present the methods used in conducting the study and some of the different concerns that emerged through this process. Chapter five is divided into three subparts where the results are presented. This will be visualised by using excerpts from the observations and interviews with the children. In the last part, a discussion of previous chapters in the study will be found, providing a summary of theory and practice.

[4] In this study the terms bi/multilingualism are used to describe the same phenomenon – speaking two or more languages.

Chapter 2

Theoretical perspectives

When describing the theoretical perspectives that have shaped the study, the focus will be on two perspectives, the socio-cultural perspectives and the variation theory[5]. Although these two have different research bases, the *how* and the *what* aspects of learning, they both emphasise the environmental and social settings for learning. Our actions in different situations are affected by how we experience the world. In order to understand how an individual handles a situation, one also needs to understand how he/she experiences the situation. The variation theory is suitable when trying to understand how children perceive the phenomena in focus, and the socio-cultural perspectives underline that knowledge is co-constructed and shared among participants in a setting. According to the social construction theory, it is believed that children can shape their own ways of understanding and use it to influence their surroundings (Mac Naughton, 2008). Children are viewed as active, constantly contributing to their own learning, and through interaction with others they (re)construct their understandings of their surroundings (Mac Naughton, 2008; Säljö, 2000; Sommer, 2005).

Socio-cultural perspectives

As described above and in accordance with the socio-cultural perspectives, knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in interactions with others. Human development is social first and individualised later (Vygotsky, 1978, 1982; Säljö, 2000). Development from this point of view is seen as a result of social, historical and cultural experiences. The cultural-psychologist Bruner (1996) writes: “For its central thesis is that culture shapes mind, that it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers” (p.x). Our ways of thinking are created in the meeting with others and by participating in a culture, we become able to remember, speak, imagine and learn things. Meaning-making is a central keyword and is viewed as an important source for human action. Learning is about the ability to use artefacts within a context with others (Bruner, 1996). According to Säljö (2000), this perspective views learning as embedded in the environment and that the communicative processes are of great importance for children’s learning. Knowledge is created between people. It is mediated to us through others and artefacts to eventually become appropriated. Consequently, this means that the world is interpreted for us and we can not study a context without studying how people communicate through artefacts within the context. Bruner (1996) explains that studying what children do is not enough; he believes that research also needs to include what children think they are doing and the reasons for it. A pedagogical consequence is that learning should not be regarded as passing on information; it is more about creating environments and activities where we familiarise ourselves with different artefacts. Bruner (1996) then suggests that the questions we might consider are what communicative experiences do we allow children and what do the environments encourage them to?

[5] The variation theory has emerged from the phenomenographical perspective.

Thought and language

Säljö (2000) underscores the importance of language. Language and knowledge are developed through interaction with others. The author remarks that by learning a language we also learn to think within a context. From a socio-cultural perspective, language then becomes one of our most important intellectual artefacts that facilitate our cognitive process. It is developed and constructed in interaction with others, and we use communication/language to interact with others (Säljö, 2000). Dialogue remains the primary source of relaying information. Conversations are shared and children construct and co-construct their learning skills (Mauritzson & Säljö, 2001).

Vygotsky's (1978, 1982) research emphasizes language as the primary resource for learning, and as a tool for facilitating abstract thinking. Language is created by thought and words because thought is channelled by words which are the primary mediums of thinking. According to Vygotsky (1978, 1982), language has a double function, an external (Inter-psychological) and an internal (Intra–psychological) one. The external speech function is communicative and we use it in the interaction with others, whereas the internal one is viewed as a tool for thinking. Information is mediated and internalised[6] through external dialogues to become resources for the inner speech (individual thinking). By socially participating in different practical, intellectual contexts we develop our knowledge with the support of more experienced persons[7] (Vygotsky, 1978, 1982).

Säljö (2000) highlights that thought from this approach (Vygotsky; socio-cultural) is social, and that communication becomes the link between thought and culture. Since speech has two functions, and development is social before it is individual, an outcome will be that thinking is primarily a collective process. We think with others as well as with ourselves. With a socio-cultural approach to research with children, we can never make definitive statements about how children actually think, but we can study the collective thinking and comment on how people think together in a social context (Säljö, 2000).

Variation theory

Whereas the socio-cultural perspectives focus on the *how* aspect of learning, the variation theory tends to focus on the *what* aspect. In this study the socio-cultural perspectives have brought some important understandings of context, learning and language theories. It was also necessary to use a theoretical perspective that focused on how children perceive and explain a phenomenon. Using the variation theory made it possible to highlight the child's perspective. It is important to bear in mind that the aim of the study was not to reveal any truths or to explore how things really are; it focuses on how children discern and understand them to be. The variation theory has contributed to some important theoretical starting points for how to understand children's various perceptions of the mother tongue. A central and important feature throughout this thesis is the word *perceiving*.

Pramling (1996) writes about the variation theory approach as a way of understanding learning. The approach, according to Pramling, "focuses on how children experience and

[6] Vygotsky (1978, 1982) used the term internalized, but Säljö (2000) prefers the term appropriation.
[7] Vygotsky (1978, 1982) refers to this as the Zone of Proximal Development. See Vygotsky (1978, 1982) for more information about ZPD.

become aware of phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around them." (p.568). According to Marton and Booth (1997), this is the perspective of the learner, and the research object is the variation in the way that people experience phenomena. Learning becomes a process where the understanding of a situation can not be separated from how the phenomenon in focus is understood by the participant. The authors claim that, by using the variation theory, a researcher can focus on how people perceive and interpret things, how things appear to be, and not how they actually are (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Within the variation theory there is a non-dualistic way of viewing knowledge, that is, the subject and object of learning, are interrelated. Marton and Booth (1997) explain that a true and objective world parallel to a subjective one does not exist. There is one world, and we perceive it in different ways. From this perspective, the focus is on the *how* aspect, since the variation in how we perceive it differs. People are different and have different experiences that will affect how they perceive the world. The emphasis is on variation, which may be viewed as our different ways of discerning a phenomenon. In order to discern something, we must experience variation, and this is crucial for learning and development (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Marton, Runesson and Tsui (2004) state that important features of the variation theory are discernment, variation and simultaneity. They explore the interconnectedness between these three features in the following way:

> However, we can only experience simultaneously that which we can discern; we can only discern what we can experience to vary; and we can only experience variation if we have experienced different instances previously holding them in our awareness simultaneously (in the diachronic sense). (Marton, Runesson and Tsui, 2004, p.20).

Alexandersson (1994) argues that the perceived phenomena are dynamic and constantly changing.

Marton, Runesson and Tsui (2004) explain that learning from this perspective can be viewed as the act of learning (how the learning situation is conducted) and the object of learning (what aspects of learning that are in focus). Accordingly, learning can be analysed from two different perspectives, the first of which is the intended learning (teachers intentions about what should be learned) and second is the enacted object of learning (what children express that they have perceived). The authors explain that the learning object has a capability and that this has a general and a specific aspect. The general aspect concerns the act (indirect object of learning), and the specific aspect focuses on the object that is acted upon (direct object of learning). People understand phenomena in different ways (focus on different aspects of the object of learning), and by understanding the different ways of learning (indirect object), teachers can help students by creating settings that focus on what they want them to learn (Marton, Runesson & Tsui, 2004).

Dialogical perspective on multilingualism

Beside the views on language that are presented with the socio-cultural perspective, there is an approach that discusses multilingualism. Cromdal and Evaldsson (2003) illustrate how multilingualism has been viewed as a cognitive instead of a social attribute. They present the dialogical perspective where language users are viewed as active co-constructors of social situations. Social meaning is, foremost, a result of common work, where participants are constantly coordinating their acts and utterances. Furthermore, each utterance can be seen as both context-dependent, where the utterance only becomes meaningful in its context, and context renewal (each utterance and act becomes a part of the context for the next person's utterance and action). Consequently, this means that each utterance is viewed as specific for the actual receiver in the actual context. Meaning then becomes a constant ongoing result of social interactions. Auer (1984) positions multilingualism as something we accomplish instead of viewing it as something we are born to. From this perspective, being multilingual is learning to participate in meaningful ways in mono as well as multilingual contexts (Cromdal & Evaldsson, 2003).

Foucault's theories about discourses and power

For Foucault (1982), the expressional level of a discourse[8] was of interest, since he believed that certain ways of communicating within a discourse shape the subjects or the group. The focus should be on how different groups are 'created' with knowledge and 'truths'. For Foucault (1982), discourses represented networks of power[9] that we are all a part of, and power exists everywhere. Reason and knowledge are a question of power. Which science and knowledge are of interest is determined by the interests, commands and rulings in certain determined power relations. Having knowledge about people makes the control rational and effective. Produced scientific knowledge about human behaviour can be transformed into 'truths'. Within the discourses these truths are presented and reinforced to become knowledge that is viewed as truths by society (Foucault, 1982).

Discipline, according to Foucault (2004), is used in different institutions and does not include violence. Through discipline, humans can become more effective, and one technique used for this can be surveillance, where humans' actions are studied to give knowledge and information about them. Another discipline is normalisation, where behaviour and actions can be punished or awarded in order to create suitable individuals for the current norms. In this way 'normal' groups are created. Foucault (2004) argued that the ultimate aim is to produce self-controlling citizens who control and adjust their actions. Power relations create certain ways of constructing the individual subject. In return, individuals perceive themselves through the current 'truths' that are offered. By shaping their subjects, humans control their actions to become responsible citizens. It follows that people reinforce power relations and control mechanisms (Foucault, 2004).

[8] Discourse was explained by Foucault (1982) as a whole practice that produces a kind of utterance about how we should think of the world, not how it is.

[9] Power should not be viewed as a group dominating the other. It is a part of control strategies that Foucault (2004) calls governmentality. It can be understood as governments trying to produce desired citizens or organised practices with the aim to govern subjects (Foucault, 2004).

While Foucault's (1982, 2004) theories give us an idea about the construction of the 'desired' citizen through discourses, Bourdieu's (1991, 2002) theories about capital and marketplace might explain the power relations connected with valuing language.

Bourdieu's theories about habitus and capital

Bourdieu's (2002) theories identify all people as positioned in a social space where they are defined by their capital. There are three different forms of capital[10], the economic, the social and the cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 2002, for more information about these). Besides these, there is the overall symbolic capital, which is an important power resource, and when a person holds this capital against someone with 'less' capital, symbolic violence can be exercised. An example of this could be the normalisation of a dominant language. By viewing the dominant language as more legitimate, one can gain greater access to symbolic resources to use in the social field. By refusing the dominant language, one can be marginalised and denied entrance to symbolic resources, resulting in exclusion (Bourdieu, 2002).

Through interaction with others in the social field, people develop a habitus that is typical for participants within the field. For Bourdieu (1991, 2002), an individual's history is related to his/her habitus, which can be compared to experiences, knowledge and life experiences. By our different and practical experiences, we develop skills that affect our way of thinking, understanding and acting in the world. Habitus can be described as the embodied capital that we use in different fields. The ability to use language in different contexts and make new knowledge is one of the most important skills. Habitus is founded through the habits we are incorporated within. A person's habitus is transformed in the social market and results in societal 'advancements' or degradation (Bourdieu, 1991, 2002).

Bourdieu (2002) views the social world as separated into different fields that can be defined as a system of relations where participants are positioned. There is a hierarchical order in the field, and participants struggle to improve or maintain their position in the field. All fields have attributes and are shaped by their participants. No field can be completely stable because of our several engagements in different activities. For new members, these rules have to be applied and accepted in order to enter the field (Bourideu, 2002).

Bourdieu (1991) defines language as a mechanism of power, and language learning exists in a competitive, dynamic market in society. Individuals' are constantly negotiating their social worth in a marketplace where language has different values. By using language in different ways, participants develop their linguistic reserves and completely adjust their words to what is required from the field or market. People's language can be used to determine what position they have in the social space, and all interactions expose the social constructions that they articulate and reproduce. Our habitus, capital and field will result in a market value in the social space where we can advance or not (Bourdieu, 1991).

Inspired by the work of Foucault and Bourdieu, discourses of power influence the postmodern perspectives. A presentation of some of the postmodernists' ideas will follow, and these are further discussed in chapter 6.

[10] Capital – symbolic and material assets.

Postmodern perspectives

Postmodernists view all meaning as socially constructed, unstable, and none is neutral. Change occurs through continuous negotiation and reconstruction (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007; Mac Naughton, 2008). For the last two hundred years poor, immigrant and culturally different groups have been given instructions how to live their everyday lives, as the standard has been that of middle-class families (Cannella, 1997). The current curricula are strengthening these beliefs, and instead of co-operating, teachers are advising parents on how to raise their children. In many ECE[11]- settings, children are supposed to act and behave 'normally' (Cannella, 1997; Baker *et al.*, 2004; Rhedding-Jones, 2001). Practitioners need to question this normalisation to ensure that diversity is the 'usual' in their daily work (Rhedding-Jones, 2005).

Cannella and Viruru (2004) explore the possible impacts of the Enlightenment and (post) colonisation on the many believed 'truths' today and argue that we first must understand the consequences of colonisation in the ECE field in order to deconstruct and rethink the field.
The authors investigate language, literacy and the idea of spoken language as the 'natural' way of expressing ourselves. They believe it is a dominant perspective of colonisation in the ECE field. The authors exemplify how language can be a powerful tool for differentiating between civilisation and barbarism (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). By using written language, one can illustrate power over those who do not, and when it comes to children, they need to be civilised by learning how to use (proper) language (Viruru, 2001). In her article, Viruru (2001) claims that language and text are one of the most important tools for spreading and maintaining colonial authority. She continues discussing multilingualism and notices the amount of attention paid to children's language learning and literacy development in the ECE field. Through rewarding and encouraging (proper) language use, the focus is on children's speech development towards an adult language. Children who are short of the majority language are seen as deficient and in need of support. For multilingual children that do not express themselves through the dominant language, there is a risk that their knowledge will be subjugated (Viruru, 2001).

Cannella (1997) states that the voices of citizens who represent different cultural strengths need to be heard so that we can transform the ECE field. Deconstructing the ECE field is necessary to reveal hidden meanings and interpretations. The curriculum was constructed with the idea that some "set of values and ways of thinking could be transferred to the child and result in predetermined beliefs, values, and behaviours" (Cannella, 1997, p.99).

[11] ECE – Early Childhood Education

Chapter 3
Related research

This chapter provides an insight into some of the research in the area, focusing on a socio-linguistic perspective. In the beginning of the chapter a historical perspective of the mother tongue instruction development in Sweden is described, followed by current steering documents. Language is also connected with culture and identity. The relation between these will also be illustrated. After that, the preschool as an important institutional place in society will be portrayed. Code-switching from different perspectives will be investigated, with the support of Swedish as well as international research. Negative attitudes towards the mother tongue, as we will read, can have serious consequences for individuals and groups.

Historical perspectives of the mother tongue support: in a Swedish context

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2002) summarised how the mother tongue instruction had developed over the previous 30 years and described how the suggestion from the 'Commission on Nursery Provision' [Barnstugeutredningen] had resulted in a preschool act [Förskolelagen] in 1975. The Swedish government outlined principles that established Sweden as an immigration and multilingual society. Three major guidelines were introduced:

- Equality between immigrants and Swedes
- Cultural Liberty
- Collaboration and solidarity between Swedes and various ethnic minorities

The goals are remarkably similar to the famous words from the French Revolution (Liberté, Égalité and Fraternité), which inspired the mother tongue instruction changes that were made in the years after. In the Preschool Act, it was suggested that immigrant children should be given an opportunity to attend preschool in their early years in order for their Swedish to develop in a 'natural' way. The mother tongue was mentioned as important, but the emphasis was on developing the Swedish language (Skolverket, 2002).

The continued summary by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2002) shows how the mother tongue support was introduced on July 1, 1977, with two different intentions, strengthening the ethnic, cultural identity and supporting a 'normal' cognitive linguistic development of immigrant children. A difference was made from the previous assimilation law, and the individual's development was in focus. The idea of a multicultural society was made official and was widely debated in the media at the time and still continues to be a recurring hot topic. When the municipalities were given money for the specific purpose, they were obliged to organise home language support and additional support in the Swedish language. Additional Swedish language teaching was offered to the children in need, and in some classes teaching was primarily in the minority languages. A dramatic change occurred in the early 1990's, and as a result of a national economic crisis package, most of the funding for the municipalities was cut. At the same time, questions regarding ethnicity, language and integration were raised, emphasising the need for immigrants to learn Swedish.

The background for this was a debate that underlined the declining school results of immigrant children and their poor Swedish language skills. In order for them to be fully integrated into society, their Swedish language skills needed to be strengthened by teaching them more standard Swedish. Fluency in Swedish was viewed as the key to success in the educational system and the labour market in Sweden (Skolverket, 2002). To maintain and develop Swedish language proficiency, an action plan was outlined describing two main purposes, advancing the position of the Swedish language and ensuring that everyone in Sweden was offered the opportunity to acquire Swedish as a second language (SOU 2002:27).

Children's right to their own language, culture and identity

Article 29 in the UN Convention (1989) on the Rights of the Child states that the child has the right to his/her own cultural identity, language and values. This is the most internationally acclaimed document regarding children's rights. In Sweden preschool is mandatory, but has its own curriculum (Lpfö 98), which contains overall goals to strive for. It is up to the teachers to determine how the goals are to be implemented in their daily practice. In the preschool curriculum, it is stated that children should develop an "awareness of their own cultural heritage and participating in the culture of others" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, p.9). Furthermore, the curriculum stresses that learning and language are linked together, and so is the development of a personal identity and language (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006).

In July 1997 the term "mother tongue" replaced the term home-language to stress that a person's first language was not only used in the home domain. In the current steering documents, the mother tongue is stressed as important for the individual's development, and that a well developed mother tongue will facilitate the learning of other languages.

> Children with a foreign background who develop their first language improve their prospects of learning Swedish as well as developing knowledge in other areas. The pre-school should help to ensure that children with a mother tongue other than Swedish, receive the opportunity to develop both their Swedish language and their mother tongue. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, p.7).

Axelsson (2004) establishes that the importance of one's mother tongue is present and is emphasised in the steering documents. She believes it is the knowledge, skills or the will to implement these that are missing, and that this will affect the individual child's possibilities. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2002), the general attitude among Swedish politicians is that they believe that teachers should concentrate on children learning Swedish.

Language and culture

Several studies show the relevance of children learning their mother tongue for children (Hyltenstam, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Learning a language also includes learning cultural codes and ways that exist in a culture[12]. In western societies, the dominating discourses about language are unilingual, but the fact remains that most of the world's children grow up and live in multilingual environments (Viruru, 2001). Language development and communication are embedded in cultural ways of understanding as well as interacting with others. Through language, different groups will project their values, norms and opinions about something. When it comes to language acquisition and socialisation to culture, young children are socialised through language along with the proper ways of using it. Culture is connected with communication through the invincible codes that are created through body language, what is expected in communicative situations, knowledge, values and emotions that are being expressed in each utterance (Skolverket, 2002).

Gibbons (2002) argues that language is involved in most of the things we do, and that when we use language, there are two kinds of contexts involved. In the context of culture, speakers share some assumptions and expectations which facilitate the taken-for-granted ways about how things are done (rules within an institution, how to speak, eat etc). The second one is the context of situation, the occasion that language is being used. It is characterised by three features: topic choice, relationship between the speakers and if the communication is oral or written. These three features can be regarded as a register of contexts that children learn how to use with different people at different times in different places (Gibbons, 2002).

Language and identities

Grieshaber and Cannella (2001) raise the concern that within developmental psychology, normalisation techniques are being used to create the 'normal' child and her identity[13]. As the modernists believe that there is an objective, universal truth, the idea of an essential identity that we can objectively understand follows these beliefs. According to postmodern theories, this is highly questionable, as it is argued that identities are constantly changing because they are dynamic, multiple and complex. Furthermore, identities should be viewed in relation to the discourses in which they are produced (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2006). In accordance, Haglund (2004) views postmodern identities as constructed and mediated through culture. They are developed through socialisation in different contexts, situations and interactions.

[12] According to Säljö (2000), culture can be defined as values, ideas, knowledge and other resources that we gain through interaction with the surrounding world. Bruner (1997) describes culture as the way of life plus thought that we construct, negotiate, institutionalise and call reality (p.87). He views culture as a changing process, a toolkit of techniques and procedures. These help us understand and deal with the world. Daun (2002) gives a short presentation of the concepts of culture and states that, until thirty years ago, the concept of culture meant aesthetical expressions. During the 1970's the anthropological concept spread. Earlier, culture was used in anthropology to describe ways of living, thinking, life goals, values, customs and manners. In recent years, the culture concept has been narrowed to identification with a national or ethnic culture, along with immigrant cultures (Daun, 2002).

[13] Relate to Foucault's theories (2004) about disciplining humans.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2006) explain how individuals continuously interact with others. We express and negotiate perceptions about ourselves, our social status, roles and relations. Hence, the (re)construction and negotiation of one's identity are present in each utterance. For this reason, we should view identities as (re)produced in each interaction and as a social construction influenced by the current discourse. Rich and Davies (2007) argue that these interactions affect our identity formation. We 'construct' ourselves in the dialogue, where other's perceptions and expectations of us, combined with who we believe ourselves to be, affect the process. Hundeide (2006) refers to this as a lifelong, ongoing process where humans shift identity depending on whom we turn to and under what circumstances this is done. How others perceive us can either reinforce or renegotiate the image we have of ourselves.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2006) discuss the relationship between language and identity. They state that language shapes our identity. By learning a language, we can also change the way we think of ourselves and who we are or want to become. Language affects our identity in different groups or gives access to a group[14] where our voices can be heard.

The role of preschool as an institution in society

Grojean (1982) believes that if the government's intentions are to unify a country and spread the national language, this will complicate the educational situation for the children of minorities. Children would benefit more from a policy that preserves and equalises all languages. Linguistic plurality would instil an educational system that includes the children with a minority language (Grosjean, 1982). In view of the rapidly growing global culture, education is becoming increasingly important in our daily lives. Educational institutions have a powerful influence on children and play a significant part in defining who is of cultural worth as well as value (Baker *et al*., 2004). If we want to understand things occurring on a micro-level, we also need to consider the activities on a macro-level. By identifying rules, norms, and the communicative environment of institutions, we can understand what is happening on a micro-level. As schools[15] define what learning is, the students need to learn how to adapt, understand and survive within the institution (Säljö, 2000).

Baker *et al*. (2004) point to several aspects that can play a major part in how the educational system excludes children from their activities and institutions. Through participating in different social activities, children learn the rules and norms within the context. Their language, norms and values constitute capital. Different capitals are used in different settings and children can be marginalised in school if they do not have the expected knowledge. Oral capabilities developed within different classes are not equally valued in school, benefiting those whose class codes have been schoolified (Baker *et al*., 2004; Bernstein, 2000). Children who are not proficient in the language skills required can be defined as failures or lacking in intelligence. Those with skills in their mother tongue do not always get the opportunity to express their knowledge and are silenced when the majority language is viewed as the 'right' language (Rhedding-Jones, 2001).

Baker (2007), as well as Cummins (2000), explains that language attitudes in society will affect attitudes to language and how it is used within schools. The ambivalent attitudes towards the multilingual children's possibilities in school will influence the attitudes of their

[14] Relate to Bourdieu's theories (1991) about capital and market.
[15] Although the different authors discuss and use the term school, it is my belief that this could also apply to preschool, especially since it is viewed as the first step of the educational system in Sweden.

own group and their wishes. Cummins (2000) emphasises that the school's language policy is of great importance for the students and continues by stating that a reason why minority children tend to fail in school is the historical power relation patterns between different groups. Teachers are important mediating channels for these patterns when interacting with students. As teachers have the power to reinforce these patterns, they could also deconstruct them and create new ones. Cummins (2000) believes that the school's most important task is to be more child-oriented and inclusive.

Powers in institutions are neutralised, monolingualism and homogeneity being perceived as the natural truths (Foucault, 1982; Bernstein, 2000; Bourdieu, 1991, 2002). By adopting the majority attitudes, some linguistic minorities are reinforcing the institutions' neutralised power exercise and their own marginalisation (Haglund, 2002). Swedish then becomes the predominant language with its norms, values and attitudes as the 'natural' language. As Swedish becomes a legitimate language, "the pull-out Swedish as a second language program and the after-school home language program remind the students of their lower status and mark them as different from the mainstream students" (Haglund, 2002, p.87). These students are not given a positive impression of being different or having valuable knowledge and worthwhile experiences in the mainstream school context that is dominated by the majority.

Diglossia

The term diglossia refers to using language in different domains, and it is a term used from a societal perspective, mostly within socio-linguistic research. Ferguson (1959) referred to the term diglossia when describing how societies have separated the functions of the same language; these are used in different ways and have a different status. He came to describe different languages as a high and low language variety. The high language variety was used in official and formal domains where it was considered to be a language of prestige. Literature, education, poetry, political speeches and newspapers were some of the areas where the high language variety was used. The low variety dominated in the family sphere and informal environments (Ferguson, 1959). A development of the term was presented by Fishman (1967) when he extended it to include two languages that exist side by side and are controlled by the needs in society. He also discussed the functional bilingualism that concerns when, where and with whom people use their different languages. Both Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1967) emphasise that there are no fixed boundaries that separate the languages. Baker (2007) argues that there is more to the separation between the two languages than what Ferguson and Fishman present. He believes that it is more about status and power than just language varieties (Baker, 2007).

Grosjean (1982) looked at diglossia as two spoken languages where one has more prestige than the other. He discussed language attitudes among sociolinguists, where language is not only an instrument for communication but also a symbol of social or group identity. Within these groups there are members who share solidarity, attitudes and values. Grosjean (1982) further discussed the consequences of negative language attitudes and the fact that they influence the learning of the first language. Negative attitudes towards people's language can affect how they use their mother tongue in public. The minority speakers can develop a lower self-esteem, and their identities will be affected. The high prestige language can become an ideal, and a possible consequence of this could be that the minority language is used less in addition to fewer learning it as a first language. Assimilation is usual under these circumstances. A conclusion the author makes is that, in order to maintain and develop more

than one language, the speaker needs to feel that it is essential to use all of them in everyday life (Grosjean, 1982).

Another perspective on diglossia was presented by Gumperz (1982), who argued that language can be differentiated into a 'they' and a 'we' code. He saw the they-code as an institutional phenomenon, associated with formality, power and social distance, which was mostly used in official contexts. The we-code, according to Gumperz (1982), is more related to social closeness and used in the intimate sphere. With each code, different social identities and symbolic values follow the languages. By changing linguistic 'codes', the speaker could claim different identities. The conditions of the communication are distinguished by the many meetings between language speakers in different institutional settings, which are affected and reproduced by ideologies in society along with power relations (Gumperz, 1982).

Mysers-Scotton (1993) stated that each language could be connected with a set of established cultural values. Depending on the context, there are cultural expectations of the participants regarding their language choice and language use. Myers-Scotton (1993) outlined a markedness model where she claimed that during a speech situation the participants expect each other to make language choice. By following these expectations, the participants make an unmarked choice of language. By choosing another language, and not using the predicted language, the participant makes a marked language choice.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2006) write that language choice is influenced by politics, power relations, language ideologies, and people's opinion about their own and other's identities. Language can mark national identities, symbolic capital or social control, and these can be interconnected. The authors present a post-structuralist approach to language choice as embedded in social, political and cultural structures. The authors use Bourdieu's theories (1991, cited in Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2006), when describing that language is valued in a symbolic market and legitimated by the dominant institutions or group.

> On the one hand, language is seen as a part of processes of social action and interaction and in particular as a way in which people influence others. On the other, it is a symbolic resource which may be tied to the ability to gain access to, and exercise, power (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2006, p.12).

Consequences of this view would be to investigate code-switching as a part of series of linguistic practices which people employ to achieve their goals and to challenge symbolic domination.

Code-switching on an interactional level

Interactional code-switching focuses on how people switch codes during conversations with others. Here Gumperz (1982) introduced code-switching as a contextualisation cue, where it is viewed as a strategy for reaching certain effects in the conversation. Auer (1984) did not separate language by domain and cultural values. He believed that code-switching can be understood as an important resource or method through which multilingual people organise conversations together. Code-switching can then be recognised as preference-related when speakers prefer one of the languages or adjust to the other participant's preferences.

In a study by Abou-Touk (2006), Arab children were observed in a preschool with the intention to explore how children used their mother tongue in the interaction with others. A

major part of the data showed that children spent a lot of time on play and being with their peers. The mother tongue was used by many of the children as a way of showing that "we" children have a common culture. By using their mother tongue, the children could help each other to translate and explain things. The children also used the advantage of knowing another language to exclude/include others in play. One of the conclusions was that children used their Arabic intentionally and had a purpose in their code-switching. For these children the communicative processes were a part of the context, and meaning was created during interaction with others. Another finding was that children only spoke their mother tongue when there were no teachers present, since they were constantly encouraged to speak Swedish (Abou-Touk, 2006).

Cromdal (2000) examined code-switching in children's play activities, and some of his results show that children do not have any specific play language. Further, code-switching was used to contextualise children's actions. Björk-Willén (2006) conducted similar studies and concluded that code-switching is used by children as a social resource in different activities or as a resource for maintaining or challenging the current order in the preschool.

Language shift and supporting children's mother tongue

Baker (2007) considers language shift to be a threat to multilingual societies and describes the concept as a decreasing language movement. When the language of a number of speakers is reduced in a society, we experience a declining use of language in different domains. The author does not discuss the various reasons for language shift, but irrespective of these, the outcomes are language loss. One reason outlined by the author is when minority language speakers prefer to use the majority language. The consequences might be that speakers use the minority language less, which can result in limited or no use at all. Children soon learn which language is the more powerful, prestigious and preferred one. They understand that they are different concerning spoken language, behaviour, ethnicity and culture. For some children, their language might be perceived as unwanted, so the author stresses the importance of the mother-tongue for children's self-esteem and national identity (Baker, 2007).

In her article, Papatheodorou (2007) explores how the mother tongue can be supported and argues that learning the majority language is something that the educational system in the majority country is doing well. When it comes to the mother tongue, it is up to the families and the community to support it. Fewer children are participating in the mother tongue support, and the author outlines several reasons for this. One of these is that children perceive the mother tongue as less useful and as having a lower status. Another reason for rejecting the mother tongue is that it can be used as a means for being excluded from the peer group. By showing children and building on their different experiences, the functional use of the mother tongue (communicating with the older generation, understanding one's cultural heritage and identity) was highlighted (Papatheodorou, 2007).

Kultti (2009) presents some of her research in which she studies younger multilingual children's communicative patterns. She writes that, when it comes to supporting children's language and identity development in practice, the preschool seems to be responsible for the development of the majority language and the home responsible for the maintenance of the mother tongue. Further, she adds that children can develop their languages in several environments if given the opportunity. A conclusion she makes is that teachers need to take

the children's perspective and have a child perspective[16]. By having both of these perspectives, teachers can find opportunities for children to use several languages in their interactions in an institution like preschool (Kultti, 2009; Kultti, forthcoming).

Objectifying language and metalinguistic awareness

Baker (2007) states that literacy can be of the essence[17] to study in higher institutions or access the labour market. Literacy can be viewed as a key to personal success, economic success, social control and personal empowerment for some language minorities that are marked as immigrants (Baker, 2007). From a postmodernist point of view, literacy can be used as a tool to oppress, but also to liberate language minorities (Cannella, 1997; Cannella & Viruru, 2004). The literacy that is regarded as 'valid' and necessary in order to succeed is widely spread in schools (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

There are overall three important factors in children's literacy acquisition: oral skills, metalinguistic awareness and general cognitive development (Hall, Larson & Marsh, 2006). According to Liberg (2006), it is important to develop children's metalinguistic awareness by talking about the language as an object, since it has an impact on children's reading and writing development. Baker (2007) also discusses the metalinguistic awareness, especially of multilingual children, and presents research that suggests that multilingual children have an increased metalinguistic awareness. Bialystok's (1997, cited in Baker, 2007) results illustrate how bilingual children showed higher metalinguistic awareness than the monolingual children, and that the bilingual children also seemed to understand the symbolic representation of printed words earlier. Metalinguistic awareness is regarded as an essential factor in the development of young children's reading skills. The research results indicate that multilingual children might be prepared to read and write somewhat earlier than their monolingual peers.

[16] See Halldén (2003); Pramling Samulesson, Sommer and Hundeide (forthcoming) for more about child's perspective and child perspective.
[17] Compare with Bourdieu's (1991) theory about language as currency in a market.

Chapter 4
Data collection

The study is empirical and qualitative, using observations and semi-structured interviews as methods for collecting data. The collected data are interpreted by the researcher, and the method of analysis is inspired by the phenomenographical approach when trying to find variations in how children perceive the function of their mother tongue and the majority language.

The researcher's experience of working in various preschools for many years has facilitated her understanding of the preschool's role as an institution in Swedish society. Working as a teacher in a preschool, where the majority of the children were multilingual, offered her many experiences that enriched her understanding of multilingualism. These experiences, combined with further education in the ECE field, are viewed as benefits in this study. The researcher's pre-understanding of the ECE field has been carefully reflected upon throughout the study in order to question and detect assumptions she might have.

Methodology

Hughes (2007) states that the task of the researcher when adopting an interpretivist methodology is "to understand socially constructed, negotiated and shared meanings and re-present them as theories or human behaviour" (p.36). This requires that researchers explain their surroundings by observing how individuals continually negotiate the meaning of their behaviour in the interaction with others, how interpretations can have an impact on behaviour and how these two "re-create the world as a dynamic system of meanings" (Hughes, 2007, p. 54). Language from this approach is viewed as something that constructs our social world.

Sample

As a first step, preschools that had many multilingual children were contacted by e-mail and asked to get in touch with the researcher if there was an interest in participating in the study. In the second step, the researcher chose one preschool with a high number of multilingual children enrolled that would start preschool class in the autumn. After establishing contact with the chosen preschool, a visit was made to inform about the study. Because of the methods used to collect data, it became clear that only one group could participate in the study. One of the groups in the preschool decided to participate. Three teachers worked in the group; two of them had graduated from university less than five years before and had been working in the pre-school for 2-4 years. The third one was a child-minder who had been at the preschool for over ten years. The group included children between the ages of 3 to 6 who represented 7 different linguistic backgrounds. All of the children expect for one girl who recently moved to Sweden, were developing their languages simultaneously[18]. Given that this study is related to an ongoing larger European project (EASE)[19], it was necessary to choose multilingual children that would start preschool class during the autumn, since the transition

[18] If children learn several languages from birth, it is referred to as simultaneous bilingualism. If the child learns the second language after about the age of thee years, this is referred to as sequential bilingualism (Baker, 2007).
[19] Link to the official EASE – site is: http://www.ease-eu.com/partners.html.

from preschool to the preschool class was of interest[20]. In this group, nine children complied with this condition, and by selecting these children to participate in the study, one can say that a purposive sampling was done (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2007a; Robson, 2008). Children and parents were informed about the study and asked to participate. One of the parents said no, for private reasons, so the gathered data represents the voices of eight children. Three of the participating children had Arabic as their mother tongue, and the other five children represented three other mother tongues.

The preschool

The preschool is situated in the outskirts of one of larger cities in Sweden, in the middle of large blocks of apartments, typical of the standard buildings in the area. Most of the people living here have another mother tongue than Swedish. Located around the preschool are a library, a school, several playgrounds, a smaller shopping centre and a fairly large wooded area. Just outside the preschool, a big playground is found where the children spend at least one hour a day. On the playground they also meet and play with children from the other preschool groups. The daily routine in the group usually follows the pattern below:

Time	**Activity**
8.00	Breakfast is served
9.00 – 9.30	Most of the children arrive and join different play activities
9.30	Group activities in smaller groups
10.15	Outside play
11.30	Lunch
12.00	The younger children have a nap while the older ones listen to a story
12.30	The children are allowed to play with any of the activities that are offered by the teachers
14.00 – 16.00	An afternoon snack is offered, and most of the children finish their day during these hours

Taking Johansson's (2003) descriptions of different atmospheres, the researcher would portrait the one in this group as unstable and at times controlling[21]. When it came to the mother tongue, children were allowed but not encouraged to speak their mother tongue with their peers.

[20] The transition between these two institutions will not be discussed in this thesis.

[21] An unstable atmosphere is characterised by the various signals that teachers give the children. The teachers can be close and distance themselves emotionally from the children at the same time. The teachers are present, but also distant. In a controlling atmosphere teachers want to have control, and they distance themselves from the children emotionally. A negative atmosphere, conflicts and anxiety characterize some of the settings (Johansson, 2003).

Collecting data

As the study is an empirical one, visits were made to the preschool once or twice a week over the space of 15 weeks. Each visit lasted from 1.5 – 2.5 hours. The researcher joined activities where the older children would participate, and this meant that the times for visiting could be either in the morning or in the afternoon.

The documentation process consisted of field notes that were made over a longer period of time. The field notes resulted in interpreted data, from which the researcher chose several episodes and dialogues that were used later in the interviews with the children. In the last three weeks, interviews were conducted with the children, using some material from the field notes as a starting point. The interviews were semi-structured and included some predetermined questions[22], but during the interview the order of these questions could change depending on what seemed most appropriate. Questions were removed and others added depending on what happened during the interview (Bell, 2008; Robson, 2008). Consequently, this also meant that two of the interviews and parts of a third interview were conducted in Arabic as some of the children preferred to speak to the researcher in Arabic[23]. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Field notes

The writing process started as soon as contact with the group was initiated, and by using a running record (writing short notes as it happened), anecdotal records (written summaries after the event), 2-5 pages were written during each visit (Rolfe, 2007). According to Kullberg (2004), the field notes are the researchers' way of making the implicit become explicit. In the beginning, the notes were of a descriptive nature as there was a wish to understand the settings and explore the context. This also made the notes interpretive, and as time passed the notes developed and became more analytical, inquisitive and interpretative in essence (Kullberg, 2004).

Participant observations

The socio-cultural perspectives state that since we think together with others, the act becomes central. What people do is important if we are to understand their life experiences (Mäkitalo & Säljö, 2004). One of the techniques that was used was direct observations. For this study, observing the shared actions turned out to be important to gaining an understanding of and interpreting how language was used in preschool. The observations in this study were made with the aim to be *supportive and supplementary* (Robson, 2008, p. 312), and that is what they later came to do, support and supplement the interviews. By making participant observations, the researcher wanted to become a member of the children's group[24] and be able to understand their ways of communicating as well as make meaning out of their surroundings (Kullberg, 2004). A researcher in this situation becomes involved in children's lives, at the same time as he/she is interpreting it. The observations were documented by field notes. Audio and video tape were considered but ruled out, since the observations were made in a supportive and supplementary way.

[22] These questions are given in appendix 1.
[23] The researcher's mother tongue is Arabic.
[24] For further details on this, read about the researcher's role.

Interviews

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) declares that children, who are able to form their own views, have the right to express these and to be heard. Brooker (2007) explains that interviewing young children has become more accepted since the view of childhood and children has changed. The author discusses how childhood is thought to be (by most in the Western world) a unique human phase and that children have their own perspectives that need to be heard and respected. Brooker (2007) describes how interviews with children can give us information that would have been more difficult to record, and the advantage of using interviews with children is that the children can give their perspective on different phenomena. Bell (2008) acknowledges the potential difficulties that interviews might have for a researcher, especially if working under a tight schedule. This does not mean that it can not be regarded as an appropriate approach to the topic of interest. Bell (2008) also sees the adaptability in interviews as one of the major advantages. A researcher can follow up ideas, thoughts and develop the questions in several ways. Robson (2008) discusses different circumstances in which interviews in qualitative research are most appropriate, and one of the areas is "where a study focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants" (p.271).

Interviews seemed to be a suitable method for accomplishing the aim of focusing on the functions of language with the children and understanding how they expressed their views. By asking the children indirect questions, the researcher was able to gather data in a more informal way (Robson, 2008). The use of semi-structured interviews (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2007a) allowed some general questions to be outlined and raised with all of the participating children. The observations were used as a starting point for the interviews since the gathered data from the field notes provided useful information. Each interview also added new questions, and others were followed up using the guidelines outlined by Doverborg and Pramling Samuelsson (2000). The topic frame for the children was set up by the researcher, and by reminding the children of previous conversations or events that had occurred in her presence, she was able to explore a question or a statement further. The children were given tools such as drawings they had made or making new ones, looking at pictures and books throughout the interview. Brooker (2007) emphasizes the role of the interviewer and argues that his/her skills will have an impact on the children's answers. The interviewer may facilitate the process by giving the child control, a familiar place and asking indirect questions (Brooker, 2007).

The researcher's role

Corsaro and Molinari (2003) describe the field entry in ethnographic studies as crucial since the researcher plays an interpretive role with an insider's perspective on the issue. Furthermore, they underline the significance of dealing with 'gatekeepers' (p.182), the acceptance and participant status in the peer culture. The authors examine the role that 'Bill'[25] had (a foreigner with limited Italian language skills and new to the school system), and conclude that this assisted his entry in children's culture as they viewed him as an 'incompetent' adult that needed to be protected and helped (Corsaro & Molinari, 2003). The role the researcher in this study wanted to have is similar to the one Corsaro (2003) describes,

[25] *Bill' is William Corsaro (Corsaro & Molinari, 2003).

i.e. entering the children's culture, being someone who wanted to participate in and learn more about a specific phenomena. The researcher was an adult, but not a teacher. The advantage and what is believed to have facilitated the entry into these children's culture was her background. The children viewed her as one of 'them' (a multilingual person that needed guidance in understanding the rules and settings). During the observations the researcher's role was made clear from the start, she was someone that was there to observe. The children viewed the researcher as Hiba, someone that was there to write about them. They also knew what the research focus was, although the specific questions were never described. Robson (2008) explains that the role a researcher takes in these circumstances is difficult, and how the group accepts you might change depending on who you are. In this study, it is believed that being a young woman of Middle Eastern descent, with her background as an Arabic speaking and multilingual person, was to the researcher's advantage. This fact also affected the research process since speaking Arabic in general became more 'accepted' by the children.

Equity Issues

The researcher affecting the process and 'disturbing' the context by speaking Arabic was initially a concern, because it would influence the results of the study. The question was in what ways. Exploring equity issues became significant. Grieshaber (2007) explains equity as the concept of being attentive to justice and fairness. She further views equity as awareness of the research process, the participants and how the research is being conducted. An important matter that the researcher needs to pay attention to is considering the power relations and detecting bias. It is also important to consider how the researcher could have affected the process (Grieshaber, 2007). Consequently, it must be stated that the researcher's background did affect the process, but in what ways it is difficult to say.[26] An important conclusion is that the researcher's role in the study can not be separated from the research process itself.

Analysing gathered material

The gathered material was analysed in different ways, and the steps that ultimately led to the result will be presented in the next chapter. A first step of the analysis was to transcribe the field notes into a description of the setting and the culture-sharing participants. The search for patterns began with analysing events, dialogues between and with the children and interpreting them. Different utterances or events that indicated a pattern were written down and were used to facilitate the construction of the interview questions.

The analysis of the interviews was influenced by the phenomenographical perspective, which involved trying to find patterns in the variation of how children perceived the functions of their mother tongue in preschool. Patel and Davidson (2003) explain that by using this perspective in the analysis, the researcher focuses on how people perceive a phenomenon. Perceiving is a keyword that facilitates the researchers understanding of how others make meaning (Patel & Davidson, 2003). To Marton and Booth (1997), the phenomenographical approach is a research method where one can address individual, qualitative, differences in the way of understanding. It is not about revealing how something truly is; it is how we perceive it to be. How we experience the world will affect our actions in different situations, and in order to be able to recognise how someone handles an action, we need to understand

[26] Apart from the described effect explained under the researcher's role, where it was noticed that among the children it became more accepted to speak Arabic in the researcher's presence.

how he/she experiences the situation. Marton and Booth (1997) view this as a suitable approach when identifying different learning situations.

The phenomenographical approach served as a tool for perceiving phenomena and their variation. Although the researcher did not follow the different steps in the phenomenographical approach, it is still believed to have helped her to reach an important understanding of children's various ways of perceiving the phenomena in focus.

Reliability and validity of the data

Golafshani (2003) states that the quality of qualitative research the purpose of which is to generate understanding is among the most important tests that can be made. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2007a) argue that reliability in qualitative studies is a question of presenting the research so that it is open to various interpretations. Consequently, the research process needs to be well described, and the choices made by the researcher, including a clarified research purpose, need to be explained. Robson (2008) discusses another aspect of reliability, which is if the instruments used in the research process produce consistent results. Brooker (2007) writes that the reliability in interviews with children might be difficult to assess because children develop rapidly, making this exact replication difficult.

For Larsson (1994), an important criterion when judging the quality is if the reader can see some aspects in a new way through the way the study is presented. According to Edwards (2007), the validity of qualitative research concerns giving representation to the field of study, based on the research methods used. She further states that validity is about to what extent a researcher has captured important features in the studied field and the integrity of the analysis. When it comes to interviews with children, Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2007a) explain that one obtains more information when the interview follows a less structured pattern. However, while this makes it more valid it is less reliable. Brooker (2007) suggests that validity would increase if a triangulation method were used. The author emphasises that misunderstandings are 'faults' one the part of the researcher and not the children. Further, Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2007b) argue that the validity of empirical studies is a question of presenting children's understanding as it appears to them. Robson (2008) interprets the term validity in qualitative studies as something that refers to the correctness, accurateness or trueness of the research and goes on to discuss the difficulty of ensuring these aspects. He argues that an alternative would be to discuss the threats to validity, the main ones being description, interpretation and theory (Robson, 2008).

In this study the field notes and interviews have provided most of the data. One could question the lack of video or audio taping in the daily activities, which means that the interpreted field notes are the main source for collecting data. Robson (2008) writes the following about interpretation: "The main threat to providing a valid interpretation is that of imposing a framework or meaning on what is happening rather than this occurring or emerging from what you learn during your involvement with the setting" (p.171). When it comes to theory, Robson (2008) emphasises how not taking into account other understandings of, or reasons for, the phenomena can be a threat to accurate research.

One aspect that needs to be mentioned here is that interviews were conducted in Arabic with the Arabic-speaking children. By using Arabic and asking children about its function, the interview might benefit the Arabic language (read; mother tongue). On the other hand, the researcher would have been able to grasp linguistic, cultural understandings of different

words that the children might describe, and this would have benefited the content of the data. The validity is strengthened by the use of triangulation in the data collection[27], although this was not the intention behind using different methods. As mentioned previously, the aim was to capture children as they 'think' together with others in a specific context and listen to them during the interviews.

Ethical considerations

During the entire research process the guidelines outlined by the Swedish Research Council [Vetenskapsrådet] were used (Vetenskapsrådet, 2009). Seeking consent from the people involved in a project, along with other questions, needs to be carefully considered. The circumstances for presenting the project to involved participants should be regarded as crucial as well as what information is to be given (Coady, 2007). The consent from the teachers was given at the start of the project as they were informed of the intentions and aims of the study. Before starting to visit the group, information about the project and asking for the families consent was handed out to the teachers to give to the families. This turned out to be a mistake on the part of the researcher as the first family said no. Later it appeared that this was due to suspicions about the project. After that glitch, the researcher informed the families in person about the aims, and before they gave their approval, she made sure that they knew what was being written. If the families wanted to change or add anything in the paper, they were free to do so.

Coady (2007) argues that there are cultural issues that should be reflected upon when it comes to research projects, and that these can have an impact on the process as well as the outcomes of the study. The cultural differences in this study concerned trust issues between parents and the researcher as a representative of the 'majority society'. Some of the parents raised questions about why this project was being conducted and for whom. Another fear was that the children's skills were tested when it came to their languages, but, as with all of the questions that were raised, they were carefully discussed. The information collected was kept in a safe place, and the voice-recorded files were deleted after transcription. The names of all the children were changed to similar cultural names, and the amount of information given about them was limited to protect their identities.

Alderson (2003) outlines three different levels of including children in research. Children can be seen as unknown objects, as aware objects and as active participants (Alderson, 2003; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2003). By engaging in research, children can become active participants and their voices can be taken seriously. Consequently, this calls for researchers to listen to children and reflect on power issues during the process. Children need to give their consent and have the right to withdraw at any time (Alderson, 2003). The children in this study were all informed of the researcher's presence. They were asked to give their permission so the researcher could participate in their daily activities, play and interview them. On one occasion, one of the girls threatened the researcher by saying that, if she did not play with the girl, she would withdraw from the interview. This can be interpreted to mean that the girl understood the importance of the interviews to the researcher, but also as a way of marking that she had power to control her participation in the study.

[27] The methods used to collect data were: participant observations, field notes and interviews.

Chapter 5

Results

The result will be presented as descriptions of the different functions the children assign their mother tongue and the majority language. The variations in how children perceive the functions of their mother tongue and the majority language will be described in different patterns.

The results of the study are divided into different parts, where a major result that soon appeared will introduce this chapter. In the second part, the answers concerning the functions of the languages will be revealed. In the last part, other results that emerged from the data related to language objectifying and meta-cognitive conversations about language will be brought out. The outcomes presented in this chapter are the data collected from the observation, field notes and interviews. The researcher has chosen not to separate and discuss the data collected with the different methods since the results are very similar; instead, they will be interwoven.

Mother tongue and the Swedish language: two languages that are distinguished by use

One of the overall results of this study is that children identified differences in *when* to use the different languages. Swedish was the language to use in preschool, but it could also be used in other areas. As for the mother tongue, it was something that should be spoken outside the institution. The major result from the observations and field notes shows that children do use their mother tongue in the interaction with their peers in preschool at different times. What is important to remember is that we can not separate the languages at all times, but we can recognise patterns in the way the children perceive that the different languages should be used.

Two children described it like this:

Excerpt 1 – From the interview with Dardan.

Hiba[28]	Who do you speak Albanian with?
Dardan	My family when we are home or out somewhere.
Hiba	What about your friends?
Dardan	Here (preschool) we speak Swedish so everyone understands. When I am playing outside (home), I speak Albanian and Swedish.

Excerpt 2 – The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place as the Arab children were having mother tongue support with their mother tongue teacher.

Ali	This is the only time we can speak Arabic when a teacher is present (referring to the context and speaking in Arabic).

[28] The researcher's name, Hiba, will be used in the excerpts due to the fact that it is believed that the children viewed the researcher as Hiba.

Mariam Silly (replying in Arabic)! It is because it is an Arabic lesson now; you are supposed to speak Arabic. Like when you are home; you speak Arabic right? Here (preschool) you speak Swedish and that is it.

Ali My brother and I speak Swedish at home too!

These two different excerpts indicate how children describe when to speak the different languages. In the first one, Dardan explains that he speaks Albanian with his family, but with his friends in preschool he prefers Swedish so that everyone understands. Dardan admits to using both of the languages when playing outside, and in the second excerpt Ali does the same when telling Mariam about speaking to his brother in Swedish. In the dialogue between Ali and Mariam that occurred during their mother tongue support (Arabic) Ali is emphasising how he is actually supposed to speak Arabic with a teacher present[29]. Mariam argues that it is an obvious situation and continues by giving him another 'obvious' example; when to speak the two different languages.

Swedish as the majority language in the preschool: mother tongue as a leisure time language

What most of the children said repeatedly (as seen in the examples above) and from what I observed, Swedish was the acknowledged spoken language in the preschool. When it came to the mother tongue, some of the children told me that they did speak it, but this only occurred under particular circumstances.

The following excerpts will illustrate this:

Excerpt 3 – From the interview with Ali.

Hiba Are there any other children in your group that speak Arabic?

Ali Yes, Mariam.

Hiba Do you speak to her in Arabic?

Ali Yes, if there are only a few of us (children) present.

Excerpt 4 – From the interview with Shirin.

Hiba Do you speak Kurdish with you friends here?

Shirin Yes, I do, but only when we are outdoors or playing in the doll corner.

Excerpt 5 - The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place outdoors as the researcher and Yara were playing and discussing different things in the sandpit.

Yara I can speak Arabic and Swedish with you.

Hiba Yes you sure can! You could also speak to Leyla, she would understand you.

Yara Yes, but I am shy when I speak to her in Arabic. If she wants to speak to me in Arabic she needs to begin the conversation.

Hiba Why don't you begin the conversation?

Yara Did you watch Beb-el-Hara? (Yara changes the topic by speaking about an Arabic TV show).

[29] It is not clear if he referred to the researcher or the mother-tongue teacher.

All of the excerpts above have one thing in common; the mother tongue is used when there are no teachers around. Furthermore, it demonstrates that children might feel shy when speaking the mother tongue and this indicates that it is not used on a regular basis in preschool when interacting with peers.

Mother tongue and majority language: different powers in various settings

This part of the result shows that when children reflect upon the importance of the languages, they describe different meanings for them. This is how the children perceive it, and by summarising field notes and interviews I have chosen to present the differences/similarities by dividing them into two different categories.

The importance of knowing the mother tongue

All of the children acknowledge the mother tongue as an important language for different reasons. The children's answers show that there is a variation regarding the importance of speaking their mother tongue. These variations are divided into different categories that will be presented here.

Cultural reasons

Some of the children described that the mother tongue was important to know for cultural reasons. Cultural here is mostly referred to as family and popular culture, but also culture in the broader sense.[30]

Excerpt 6 - From the interview with Ali.

Hiba	Why do you find it important to speak Arabic?
Ali	Because I like Iraq and the Arabic TV shows. My parents let me stay up late sometimes to watch some of the shows with them.

Excerpt 7 - From the interview with Shirin.

Hiba	Why is it important for you to speak Kurdish?
Shirin	You would know how to bake those cakes my mother makes. If you know Kurdish, you can learn our traditions and you know when there is a big party. And what you can not do!

Excerpt 8 - The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place during a conversation between the researcher and Nathalie as they were having a short fruit break. Apart from the researcher and Nathalie, the small kitchen was empty at this time.

Hiba	Why is it important for you to speak Kurdish?
Nathalie	If I speak Kurdish I know the rules we have. I could help my relatives if they are sick and need help. And I get to eat candy whenever I want, Swedish children only get to eat it on Saturdays!

[30] See definition of culture on page 13.

In all of the examples above the children relate mother tongue with culture. To be a part of and participate in the family culture is a significant reason for speaking the mother tongue. As Nathalie also puts it, rules are important to know and they imply what is acceptable within different cultures.

Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity is used to describe a feeling of belonging to another geographical country than Sweden. The children felt that having an ethnic identity was of importance. For some of the children this was not a major issue, but for others it could be confusing. Ali and Nathalie described it like this:

Excerpt 9 – From the interview with Ali.

Hiba	Why is it important to speak Arabic?
Ali	Because I do not know what country I want yet.

Excerpt 10 – From the interview with Nathalie.

Hiba	Why do you want to speak more Kurdish in the preschool?
Nathalie	Because I like it and I am Iraqi.

During my time at the preschool, Ali showed this identity struggle several time, and he seemed to believe that it was a question about being either Swedish or Iraqi when answering that he did not know what country he wanted yet. Nathalie told me that she wished she could speak more Kurdish in preschool, and when I asked why, she gave the impression of connecting language and identity. In the excerpt that will follow, Leila is also struggling to confirm her Arab identity. Because of her Arabic dialect she was excluded from the mother tongue support, but she was persistent in showing her friends that she also spoke Arabic.

Excerpt 11 - The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place during a conversation between the researcher and Leyla as they were walking to the library one day with the rest of the older children and two of the teachers.

Hiba	Do you speak Arabic with your friends here?
Leyla	Yes I want to, and I sometimes try, but I do not know if they understand me like you do. I mean, I speak Arabic even if they do not think I do. But I do speak Arabic, right? I do it all the time with you!

Communication with peers and relatives with the same mother tongue

Almost all of the children emphasised the communication with family, relatives and friends as an important factor in learning their mother tongue.

Excerpt 12 – From the interview with Shirin.

Hiba	Why is it important to speak Kurdish?
Shirin	Well if you know everything you can teach people…I taught my younger sister, when she was a baby she could not speak. Or she did speak baby talk, gooagaga,

like babies do talk and that is when I and my brother taught her how to speak Kurdish. One day she started to speak for real!

Excerpt 13 – From the interview with Dardan.

Hiba Why is it good to speak Albanian?
Dardan Because it is good, my mother taught me and now I can talk to her and the rest of my family! Sometimes I can speak to some of my Albanian friends when we are on the playground.

Excerpt 14 - The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place during a conversation between the researcher and Ali as he was playing a computer game.

Hiba So in what language do you speak with your cousins?
Ali Iraqi, of course. Or, sometimes they speak Swedish with me, but most of the times Iraqi. They also love Iraq. It is our country you know.

As many of the children put it, speaking a language is communicating with others, many of whom are close family members and relatives. Shirin also saw the importance of teaching others what she spoke so that they could learn to communicate in Kurdish.

The importance of knowing Swedish

As we can read above, the children discussed different essential areas that they identified as important for learning their mother tongue. When it came to Swedish, the children also talked about the communication with peers and teachers as vital for learning the language, but there were other reasons as well.

Communication with peers and teachers using the Swedish language

A similarity between the use of languages lies in the importance of communicating with others. The children talked about how important it was to speak Swedish so that they could understand and communicate with others.

Excerpt 15 - The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place during a conversation between the researcher and Dardan as they were playing a memory game.

Hiba Why is it important to speak Swedish?
Dardan I want to have many friends and I speak in Swedish to them. They do not understand Albanian, so what else can I do?

Excerpt 16 – From the interview with Shirin.

Hiba What language does your younger sister speak?
Shirin When she wants to be tough she speaks Kurdish, or I mean Swedish and when she speaks Swedish she is very irritating because she thinks she knows everything in Swedish. In her preschool everyone speaks Swedish and she is learning it fast, so fast. But it is good because now she understand what they are saying to her.

Excerpt 17 – From the interview with Leyla.

Hiba Why is it important to speak Swedish?

Leyla If you do not know anything then you will learn and you have to learn so you can understand what the teacher says. If the teacher says something difficult then you do not know and then you have to learn what the teacher is saying.

The communication with peers was given as the main important motive for speaking Swedish, but to understand teachers and instructions was another key purpose.

Being an active member of society

Many of my field notes and a recurrent topic in the interviews concerned the importance of speaking Swedish in order to be an active member of Swedish society. While some children already viewed themselves as active citizens, others felt the importance of developing tools for becoming active members of society.

Excerpt 18 - The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place during a conversation between the researcher and Jinan as they were sitting around a table drawing with some of the other children.

Hiba So why do you think it is important to speak Swedish?
Jinan So that the doctor could understand me! When I want to tell him something he has to understand me. And what would happen if I go to the shop and can not speak to them? They might refuse to sell me anything.

Jinan already views herself as an active citizen by speaking Swedish. She finds it important when visiting authorities and other places to make yourself understood or understand what you are being told. For other children reading and writing skills were viewed as crucial tools for being active citizens. Many of these children expressed that knowing how to read and write is important and especially as they are starting preschool class in the autumn.

Excerpt 19 – The following excerpt is taken from the researcher's field notes. It took place during a conversation between the researcher and Nathalie as they were playing outside.

Nathalie I have to learn how to write good Swedish because in school they will give you plenty of homework and I have to do well or the others will tease me.
Hiba So reading and writing is good to learn because you want to be able to do your homework?
Nathalie Yes and if I want to have a driver's license I need to know how and if I want to read all signs.
Hiba What about Kurdish?
Nathalie Kurdish? When I grow up I will understand that, not now.

Excerpt 20 – From the interview with Ali.

Hiba Do you remember when you drew the Iraqi flag?
Ali Yes.
Hiba How did you know what it said in Arabic?
Ali My brother told me that, but I do not know how to write it.
Hiba So why do not you learn to?
Ali I will later on.
Hiba Later when?
Ali When I am 20 years or older. In school you need to know how to write in Swedish and all the books are in Swedish, so I need to know that first. I already know how to read and write, but not that much.

Excerpt 21 – From the interview with Shirin.

Shirin	When I start class zero I will play a lot and then I will start in the ABCD school and that is when I need to write it all. That is when the teacher will tell you how good you are and if you are good you will write numbers and letters and everything and write.
Hiba	But you already know how to read and write?
Shirin	In school I will learn to become faster, I think.
Hiba	Do you know how to read and write in Kurdish?
Shirin	Oh no! Never ever, ever.
Hiba	Why not?
Shirin	Well you know what. Kurdish is not like, it is not like. Kurdish is written like Arabic, with the same letters, that is how it is and that will take you so many years to learn. Swedish is easier and more important to know in school.

All of the examples point to the importance of knowing how to read and write in Swedish in order to be an active member of society. When starting preschool class the children feel a responsibility for learning how to read and write, or as Leyla puts it, becoming faster at it. Learning to read and write in the mother tongue is something that the children would like to do, but is not raised as an important question in my data, and it is not as important as knowing how to read and write in Swedish.

Language objectifying and meta-cognitive conversations about language

Part three of the result will show a general result that emerged from the data, and that is the children's ability to objectify the language and to have meta-cognitive conversations about it.

Excerpt 22 – From the interview with Shirin.

Shirin	Sorani. I know. Kurdish. And I do not speak the same Kurdish that Nathalie does, she speaks Sorani and I speak Kurmanji.
Hiba	So, what is the difference?
Shirin	There are many differences but I still understand her sometimes. Teacher, I mean Hiba, I know English, Kurdish, some Arabic and I speak Swedish.
Hiba	That is many languages you know there.
Shirin	Yes, I listen to the others when they talk and I just learn it and when I start school I will learn even more!

As many of the excerpts above demonstrate, the children were able to objectify the language, have meta-cognitive conversations about it and give their views of different languages. The ability to talk about the language was something that even the youngest children in the group (3-year-olds) did with their peers, teachers and me. It is also of interest to understand the children's definitions of speaking a language. To Shirin, knowing a language was learning a few words in this language to use in the communication with her peers, and several other children had the same definition for it.

Summary of results

When it comes to the communicative functions that children assign their mother tongue and the majority language in institutional settings, the results show that the children perceived that there is a difference between when to use their mother tongue and when to use the Swedish language. The mother tongue could be used in several contexts, but not in preschool. If and when children used their mother tongue in preschool, it was not in the presence of teachers and with the awareness that it might be unsuitable and associated with feelings of shyness. The official language, Swedish, is also the dominant majority language in preschool and used in the communication with others. Unlike the mother tongue, there were no specific areas where one could not speak Swedish, and this indicates that children do use it more or less in all contexts that they participate in.

The communicative meaning that children assign their mother tongue in general is that they described it as important to speak for reasons relating to culture and ethnic identity. Communicating with family and peers was given as another reason and, using Gumperz' (1982) term, speaking the mother tongue seemed related to social closeness. When it came to the communicative meaning of the official language in general, the importance of speaking Swedish also indicated social closeness (relations to peers), but it was overshadowed by the associations with being or becoming a member of society. Accordingly, reading and writing skills were outlined as a key factor in educational and societal success. Moreover, reading and writing skills in the mother tongue were found to be important, but nothing one needed to learn within the near future.

An overall finding that emerged was that all of the children were able to objectify language and speak about language as an object. Most of the children were able to have meta-cognitive conversations about language and discuss their different knowledge of different languages, indicating that the social aspects[31] of it were important.

[31] Social aspects refer to the dialogical perspective of multilingualism where 'knowing' a language could be viewed as learning a few words in this language to use in the communication with peers.

Chapter 6
Discussion

This chapter raises two different issues, the first one about the methodology used and the second about theoretical perspectives, related research and the results. Worth mentioning is that the discussions involve many parts of the total study, but this does not mean that the rest is not worth discussing.

Discussing methodology

The considerations on the data collection did affect the outcome of the results, and this section will feature some thoughts that need to be discussed. As written above, a limitation of this study is that the teachers' voices are not present in the thesis, which reduces our insight into how the goals concerning multilingualism in the curriculum, are being implemented. Adopting the socio-cultural approach about learning, we believe that children are strongly influenced by the different contexts they participate in (Säljö, 2000; Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978, 1982), which will reflect how they perceive different phenomena. Although the teachers' voices are absent, we can still gain some understanding of the pedagogical environments that the children are a part of.

The variation theory has been an important perspective for this study, where parts of the theory have been used with the aim to explain what it could mean to perceive something. Although the variation theory is not further discussed in the thesis, it is necessary to remember that how children perceive the function of their mother tongue will affect how they use it in preschool.

The methods for collecting data were observations and interviews. The observations offered sufficient information to afford an understanding of when children use their mother tongue in preschool. Looking back at those data, it would have been enough to analyse them and get a similar result. The interpreted data supported and supplemented the interviews, and later it was the other way around (Robson, 2008). The interviews were based on the data collected from the observations, meaning that the questions asked were interpreted and influenced by the researcher. By connecting the observations with the interviews, the researcher hoped to have genuine and meaningful conversations with the children. This might have affected the reliability of the data and strengthened its validity (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2007a). The reason for using two different methods is for them to be viewed as two supplementary parts of one whole.

Another consideration regarding methodology involves how the data were interpreted and analysed. As the results were analysed, inspired by a phenomenographical approach (Marton & Booth, 1997), the thoughts about doing or reason for not doing led to a discourse analysis. Throughout this thesis the postmodern ideas have been raised, and so have some of Foucault's (1982, 2004) and Bourdieu's (1991, 2002) theories. Deconstructing preschool as an institution might enable us to identify and reveal hidden meanings about its discourse, which might increase our awareness and make us rethink what we are doing. The aim of the study, though, is to highlight the children's perspective, and if a discourse analysis had been made, the focus would have been on a macro-level. This does not mean that the issue of preschool as an

institution is not discussed, rather that the starting point is on a micro-level, which generates questions about the macro-level.

Grieshaber (2007) reminds us to explore equity questions when conducting research, and this has been a constant aspect of the study. Before visiting the preschool, the researcher thought about power issues between her and the children, not forgetting the fact that she is a multilingual herself speaking Arabic. This turned out to affect the children's attitudes towards using their mother tongue in the preschool when she was there, and some of them even seemed proud when sharing information about 'their' language/s. Rethinking this, the researcher would still not persist in speaking Swedish in order 'not' to disturb the study and its outcomes. Her presence would have affected the research irrespective of what language she spoke. The challenge, as she viewed it, concerned trying to identify in what ways she could have 'disturbed' the 'balance' of the preschool.

Empirical discussion

This discussion highlights some parts of the results in relation to research and theoretical perspectives. No attempt has been made to give the 'right' answers to the question of how to implement the goals in the curriculum, rather the aim has been to underline the fact that the pedagogy we have today prevents us from doing this.

The importance of the mother tongue

Sweden today is a multilingual country and the preschool is a place where many children meet for the first time in larger, diverse groups and take their first steps towards an educational future. The research presented in this thesis attempts to illustrate, not only how important it is for children to develop their first language, but also that learning begins with the younger children. Documents on early childhood policy give children the right to their own cultural identity and language, although statistics for Sweden still show that only 17. 8[32] per_cent of the preschool children in Sweden of other ethnic origins receive the mother tongue support they are entitled to (Skolverket, 2009).

In an NGO report to the UN, the question of the support for multilingual children is raised and concern is expressed regarding the children's educational future. In the NGO report, it says that Sweden needs more resources to support these children, and an important task is to educate teachers from minority populations (Rädda Barnen, 2004). Many teachers and politicians talk about the importance of the mother tongue, but there is still a need for a deeper understanding of why it is significant and how it can affect children's educational future as well as their participation as citizens of democracy.

Ambivalent attitudes towards multilingualism

Just as the historical perspective of the mother tongue shows the ambivalent nature of it, mother tongue support has shifted along with the different attitudes towards it (Skolverket, 2002). Several documents stress the importance of the Swedish language, and it is now established as the official language in Sweden (SOU 2008:26). In current steering documents,

[32] This is the total number for children between 1 and 5 years old.

the emphasis is laid the importance of knowing one's mother tongue for several reasons (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). The ambiguous attitudes shown by the present government can create confusion for teachers working in different institutions. This leads us to ask how the steering documents are being implemented, and more specifically, to ask what the children perceive when it comes to their mother tongue in institutional settings?

According to variation theory learning can be examined from two perspectives, which are the intended learning and the enacted object of learning. This study focuses on the enacted object of learning, as children are expressing how they perceive the function of their mother tongue. The teachers' intentions i.e. the intended learning, do not figure in the study. We can still draw the conclusion that the outcomes of the act of learning are perceived by children as keeping the mother tongue outside preschool, and that prompts questions about the pedagogy that is being used. As Axelsson (2004) states, the knowledge, skill, or will to implement the curriculum goals seem to be missing, and the question we should ask ourselves is how we can support multilingualism in the preschool.

Code-switching from a societal and interactional perspective

Diglossia refers to how language is used in different domains, as one language (Ferguson, 1959), or several languages (Fishman, 1967; Grosjean, 1982). The differences in when to use the mother tongue and when to use the Swedish language were an evident outcome of this study (see excerpts 1 - 5). This indicates that children perceive the Swedish language as more powerful than the mother tongue in institutional settings. According to Gumperz (1982), the children relate their mother tongue to social closeness (see excerpts 12 - 14) and associate the Swedish language with formality and power (18 - 21). Unlike Gumperz (1982), the results of this study show that the Swedish language could be associated with social closeness if the peer group is considered, and the fact that some of the children spoke Swedish with their siblings at home (see excerpt 2). As Mysers-Scotton's (1993) research shows, there seemed to be cultural expectations within the institution regarding language choice and use. Mariam in excerpt 2 outlines these for Ali when referring to language choice within the institution. Additionally, all of the excerpts 3 – 5, indicate that speaking the mother tongue in preschool is not expected. Just as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2006), the results show that children's language choice is affected by politics, power, attitudes and relations.

In line with what the children express and what the observations show, children did speak the mother tongue in preschool, but under limited circumstances. While the children perceived that the mother tongue should not be spoken in preschool, they still admitted speaking it when there were no teachers present. Cromdal (2000), Björk-Willén, 2006, Gumperz (1982) and Abou-Touk (2006) all see code-switching as intended to accomplish something in an interaction. In a previous study (Abou-Touk, 2006), the children were repeatedly encouraged by the teachers to speak Swedish, and the consequences were that they only spoke their mother tongue in the absence of the teachers, similar to the children in this study.

The important task of preschool as an institution in society

The Swedish curriculum overall contains sets of values and tasks for teachers to strive for, and teachers then have the responsibility of interpreting and implementing these goals in their institutions (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). Language attitudes in society will affect how language is approached and used in preschools. According to Cummins (2000) and Baker (2007), teachers can either reinforce these attitudes or deconstruct them. Educational institutions have a powerful influence on deciding who is of cultural worth and define what learning is, which can lead to children being excluded (Säljö, 2000; Baker *et al*., 2004). As the results of this study show, Swedish is the institutional majority language and necessary to speak in order to understand others. In excerpts 16 - 17, Shirin and Leyla emphasise the importance of speaking Swedish to understand what teachers are saying. In a setting like preschool where many children come together, the majority language becomes the common language, and the Swedish language is used to communicate with others. Having said this, we still need to reflect on children's statements regarding feelings of shyness about using their mother tongue in preschool. This indicates that children perceive their mother tongue as having a lower status, reinforcing the Swedish language as the valuable and 'right' one (Bourdieu, 1991; Haglund, 2002; Rhedding-Jones, 2001). Foucault's (1982) theories about power within discourses are interesting to consider, related to the fact that Swedish is being perceived and reinforced by the children as the 'true' institutional language. This is strengthened in institutional settings and has eventually become recognised as a societal truth. When children are disciplined through surveillance and normalisation techniques, the individuals eventually become self-controlling, and adjust their own and others actions (Foucault, 2004). The dialogue in excerpt 2 could be interpreted as an outcome of this normalisation, as Mariam is making the obvious visible to Ali. She is establishing Swedish as the 'normal' language to speak within the preschool.

Language shift and encouraging children's mother tongue

Many children in Sweden are still encouraged to speak Swedish, with the motivation that Swedish is the official language spoken in Sweden. By encouraging children to speak Swedish or by not supporting the mother tongue in preschool, we (teachers, politicians, society) are giving children the impression that their mother tongue is less valuable. Language is culture, cultural codes and identity (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006; Skolverket, 2002). It is a part of us and who we decide to become. When we take language away from children, we might exclude them from being active citizens (Viruru, 2001). From the results of this study, it becomes clear that an important task for teachers, politicians and society is to understand the likely consequences of encouraging multilingual children to speak only the official language. A question one could raise is: what is taken away from children when their mother tongue is lost?

Baker (2007) considers the consequences of language shift as a threat to multilingual societies. If children perceive the majority language as the more powerful and preferred one, they might favour it instead of their first language. Papatheodorou's (2007) research shows how fewer multilingual children are participating in the mother tongue support, and she states that one reason for this is that children perceive their mother tongue as less useful and as having a lower status. The outcomes of this study imply that the Swedish language is being spoken in various contexts and perceived as more important when it comes to being a participating citizen in society. It is the child's right to have his/her own cultural identity,

language and values. When multilingualism is not reflected upon or valued in the preschool and the mother tongue's importance is not appreciated by children, it might lead them away from their right to be active citizens. Subsequently, it might have a negative impact on their future, life-learning process, as individuals and as members of society. In the long run, the Swedish language might be preferred to the mother tongue. The focus needs to be switched from what children lack and should develop in their second language acquisition to how we can help children to preserve and develop their first language.

Language and culture

Säljö (2000) describes culture as different ideas, values, knowledge and other resources gained through interaction with the surrounding world. Shirin (excerpt 7) and Nathalie (excerpt 8) both express that it is important to speak their mother tongue because it facilitates their understanding of knowing how to practise their culture, learning traditions and knowing what is expected of them. Nathalie says further that knowing her mother tongue could enable her to help family and relatives in different situations. This shows that language is a way for different groups to express values and norms about something, but also that there is a proper way of doing it (Skolverket, 2002; Viruru, 2001). Culture and communication become important since what is expected in communicative situations, knowledge and values are expressed in utterances, and the children seem to have similar ideas about this.

When we learn a language, we also learn cultural codes and ways that exist in a culture. Here Nathalie's (Excerpt 8) last utterance is of interest. She clearly distinguishes herself from Swedish children, by stating that it is okay for her to eat candy whenever she wants. According to her, Swedish children only get to eat candy on Saturdays. For Nathalie it was a Swedish 'way' to eat candy only one day of the week, but as she did not belong to this culture, it did not apply to her. Gibbons (2002) refers to the contexts involved when we are using language, and the author observed that children learn how to use the different registers of contexts with different people. As the children in this study state, there are shared assumptions about how things should and can be in preschool as an institution. The Swedish curriculum clearly states that children should be aware of their own culture, participate, and have empathy, as well as understanding other's circumstances and values (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). In order to understand other people's cultures, we have to face our many differences and discuss these. Our different capital and habitus should be embraced, present in preschool activities and experienced concretely by participants in preschool (Bourdieu, 2002). Maybe then diversity would become the 'usual' and being normal would be questioned?

Language and identities

Learning to speak the mother tongue was found to be important by some of the children for the development and confirmation of their ethnic identity. In excerpt 10, we can read how Nathalie shares Lpfö 98's understanding of connecting language and identity (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006). She believes that when she speaks her mother tongue, she is also expressing an ethnic belonging. For Ali (excerpt 9), it is more difficult since he seems to be struggling with choosing an identity: Swedish or Iraqi. Ali's confusion can be understood from the modernists' viewpoint, i.e. that there is one essential inner identity we can truly understand. Ali further confirms what Pavlenko and Blackledge (2006) claim, that learning a language also enables people to change the way they view themselves and who they are or

want to become. The postmodern theories offer an alternative idea about identities as constantly changing and should be viewed in relation to the discourses in which they are produced (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2006; Haglund, 2004).

As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2006) state, knowing a language does affect our identities in different groups or gives access to a group. Bourdieu (1991) also discusses the importance that language has as a means of gaining access to a particular group and having one's voice heard. Leyla was one of the Arabic-speaking children that were excluded from the mother tongue support, and the reason given for this was because of her Arabic dialect. Consequently, this also made Leyla insecure about her ethnic identity (excerpt 11). She continually tried to speak Arabic with the other Arab children, but they excluded her by ignoring her or replying in Swedish. The peers' reactions and how they perceived Leyla made her question her identity (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2006; Rich & Davies, 2007; Hundeide, 2006). As the postmodernists speak of reproducing identities, they believe that renegotiating one's identity is socially constructed, influenced by discourses and present in linguistic utterances (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2006). Excerpt 11 can be analysed as a negotiation of Leyla's Arab identity and how it can shift depending on who she is speaking to. Leyla's situation also shows how the current discourse had created her insecurity given that she was regarded as Arabic-speaking, yet not (Foucault, 1982, 2004).

Being a member of society

On the one hand, Lpfö 98 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other documents are empowering the children by stating their right to be active citizens and voice their opinions. On the other hand, children are constrained from influencing their lives in several ways. The contradiction between these demands that professionals question and deconstruct their field (Rhedding-Jones, 2005; Cannella, 1997; Cannella & Viruru, 2004). ECE practitioners need to reflect on the impact of the curriculum and their own decisive role in its implementation. When it came to speaking the Swedish language, many of the children emphasised that being an active member of society was important (excerpts 18-20). Reading and writing skills were spoken of as key tools for an educational future and active participation in Swedish society. For these reasons, it was crucial for the children to develop their reading and writing skills in Swedish. Baker (2007) discusses how literacy can be essential when studying in higher educational instances, and this is also maintained by Viruru and Cannella (2001), who also mention that the 'right' language is the one spread in schools. Bourdieu (1991) compares languages with currencies in a market where the more valued ones give you greater access to the educational system, and later on the labour market. It is remarkable how these young children were so aware of what the 'right' language was and how they associated it with societal success. Children who are not given the opportunity to influence and take responsibility may grow up to be passive citizens in society (Baker, 2007). What raises a concern is not only the fact that the children believe that developing reading and writing skills in Swedish is the only way to actively participate in Swedish society but also that many of them already felt excluded from being active and participating citizens.

Reaching the goals by supporting and involving children

To attain the goals in the preschool curriculum, teachers need to support children's learning and get involved when it comes to the development of their mother tongue. The importance of *awareness* will decide what pedagogy we end up using. Transformation will only be possible when we are aware of what we are doing and understand why we do what we do. According to developmental pedagogy, teachers should encourage discussions about a phenomenon and make children talk about their various understandings of it (Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson, 2003). Using the variation in children's ideas as a starting point, teachers should focus on a content and support children's different ways of learning. Teachers need to create situations where children have to face differences, listen to how others perceive various phenomena and question what we take for granted. Language and communication should be the act and object of learning[33]. The functional use of the mother tongue can be highlighted by building on children's experiences (Papatheodorou, 2007).

From one truth to many: the postmodern perspective

Children should be given the opportunity to feel proud of who they are and where they express a belonging to. Being multilingual is required in a more internationalised world, and learning new languages also involves learning about different cultures and traditions. Shirin (excerpt 22) explained that she speaks four languages. She knew a word or sentence in each language, but for her it was knowledge. Her understanding of languages was learning a word or two in a language, so that she could communicate with others. To her, knowing a language was not about having a certain number of words or pronouncing these correctly, it was about participating and communicating in a meaningful way.

Cannella (1997) encourages teachers to question 'our' values and reflect on how the curriculum can be inclusive for everyone. She sees the curriculum as a construction of transferring values and ways of thinking to the children. The challenge for ECE practitioners and society is not to define what the differences are. It is more about making it evident that we are all different, and the challenge lies in how we use our differences to create a meaningful context for everyone. The colonial discourse, in which the 'other' is envisaged as needy and lacking, needs to be questioned. The reasons behind using techniques such as surveillance and normalisation should be carefully considered and rethought (Foucault, 2004).

Multilingualism as an opportunity for linguistic awareness

Something that needs to be noticed and further examined in future studies is children's ability to objectify language. Hall, Larson and Marsh (2006) claimed that this ability was an important factor in the development of children's reading and writing skills. Bialystok's research (1997, cited in Baker, 2007), shows that multilingual children had a higher metalingustic awareness than monolingual children, and this could indicate that multilingual children might be prepared to read and write earlier. What the result of this study points to is that multilingualism can be viewed as an opportunity for metalinguistic awareness.

[33] Björneloo, Mårdsjö and Pramling Samuelsson (2004) conducted a project with the aim to have communication as the act and object of learning.

Conclusions and implications for ECE

The outcomes of this study show that there seem to be strong indications that it is generally accepted that the mother tongue should not be spoken within the preschool, leading us to believe that the current pre-school pedagogy is preventing children from attaining the goals in the preschool curriculum. These results together with those of earlier studies (Abou-Touk, 2006; Kultti, 2009; Fast, 2007) make it obvious that the mother tongue is viewed as something that should be kept outside the preschool. Furthermore, the children spoke of their mother tongue as used less often than Swedish in institutional settings, and that in order to be able to participate in Swedish society their primary need is to speak, read and write Swedish. This clearly makes it difficult to achieve the goals set up in Lpfö 98 regarding the development of the mother tongue in preschool (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006).

Both ECE practitioners and society at large take responsibility for supporting a multilingual society. Also, given that the educational system has the important task of making preschools socially inclusive arenas for everyone (Baker *et al*., 2004), it is essential that teachers listen to the voices of all the children.

Further research

In the process of answering some of the questions raised, this study/thesis has generated new ones. In a future study it would be interesting to observe and talk to teachers about how the goals regarding the development of children's mother tongue are being implemented in their institutions. Another question that would be interesting to examine concerns children's reading and writing skills in their mother tongue. The author found indications that reading and writing skills in the mother tongue were considered less valuable than knowing how to read and write in Swedish. Moreover, teachers did not notice whether any of the children possessed any skill and experience regarding reading and writing in their mother tongue

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Appendix 1

These are the questions that were drawn up for the interviews. It is important to remember that the order of these questions could vary and that some of the questions were changed.

The child's situation in preschool

What do you do in preschool?

What do children /teachers do in preschool?

Who do you play with and why?

What do you like doing?

The mother tongue and the Swedish language

What languages do you speak?

Who can you speak your mother tongue with?

With whom can you speak Swedish?

Why is it important to speak the mother tongue?

Why is it important to speak Swedish?

Are there any other children in the group that speak your mother tongue?

- Do you speak the mother tongue with them?
- If not, why not?

If I want to learn to speak your mother tongue, what should I do?

What do you do when you have mother tongue support?