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# Semiotic landscapes as constructions of multilingualism – a case study of two kindergartens

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the construction of multilingualism in the semiotic landscapes of two kindergartens, one in Norway and one in Germany. *Semiotic landscape* is here understood as the visual linguistic environment, including various semiotic resources, such as texts, symbols, drawings or pictures. In kindergarten, semiotic landscapes construct and transform views on languages and multilingualism as well as pedagogical aims. The data material for this study was collected during ethnographic fieldwork. Using a nexus analytic approach the paper explores which discourses on multilingualism are constructed in the semiotic landscapes, whose voices are represented and which interaction order they involve. While the semiotic landscape in the Norwegian kindergarten constructs the kindergarten as multilingual, the semiotic landscape in the German kindergarten points to a predominance of German. However, a closer analysis also shows practices that erase linguistic diversity and devalue multilingualism in the Norwegian kindergarten and practices that encourage multilingualism in the German kindergarten. An important part of this is the oral communication practice which at times contrasts the overall discourses in the semiotic landscapes.

## KEYWORDS

Semiotic landscape;  
multilingualism; discourse;  
language ideology;  
ethnographic research;  
nexus analysis

## Introduction

In both Norway and Germany, linguistic and cultural diversity in society is increasing, and the number of multilingual children attending kindergarten is rising. In both countries, kindergartens are considered important arenas for children's language development. While there is a growing body of research on kindergartens' work with multilingual children's language (cf. Alstad 2015, for an overview of the Norwegian context), there are few studies on the kindergarten's semiotic landscape. This article explores, how multilingualism is constructed in the semiotic landscapes of two kindergartens<sup>1</sup> and which discourses these constructions involve. First, a brief introduction to the

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kindergarten context in both countries will be outlined and then the theoretical framework and important methodological issues will be presented. The subsequent analysis explores how the semiotic landscapes construct the kindergartens as primarily monolingual and multilingual and examines the differences between official and less official rooms (see Szabó 2015). Eventually, this paper takes up the question of how constructions of multilingualism in semiotic landscapes may correspond to or contrast with oral communication practices.

## Societal and educational contexts

The pedagogical practices in kindergartens in both Norway and Germany are based on a holistic approach that combines education and care and has a special focus on play and children's participation (OECD 2006a, 2006b; Alvestad 2012; Oberhuemer 2015). Norway has one national framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens, which is legally binding for all kindergartens (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017), while in Germany, the responsibility for kindergarten curricula is determined at the county level (Oberhuemer and Schreyer 2010). In both countries, kindergarten is viewed as the first step of the educational system, and even though it is not mandatory, kindergarten is attended by the majority of children below primary school age (Statistics Norway 2020a; Statistisches Bundesamt 2020b).

In Norway, 19% of the children in kindergartens are 'children from linguistic and cultural minorities', which means that they have a different mother tongue than Sámi, Swedish, Danish, English or Norwegian (Statistics Norway 2020b). This definition is problematic, both because of the exclusion of certain languages and because the definition for example does not include children from families with one Norwegian parent and one non-Norwegian parent, who also are potentially multilingual. In Germany, 50% of all 'children with migration background' (*Kinder mit Migrationshintergrund*, my translation) attend kindergarten (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020a). 'Migration background' is defined as having at least one parent born without German citizenship (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019). While this definition has a broader scope, one can question the use of citizenship as a marker for language choice and multilingualism.

## Theoretical framework

This study adopts a socio-epistemological view of kindergarten (Ødegaard and Krüger 2012), in which kindergarten is understood as a social and cultural arena where people (i.e. children, teachers and parents) with various agendas, aims, views and desires meet. These actors have different roles in the kindergarten context, and kindergarten as an educational institution involves different discourses that shape conditions for learning and development (Ødegaard and Krüger 2012, 28). Moreover, the concept of *schoolscape* (Brown 2012; Szabó 2015) is an important theoretical background. According to Brown (2012, 282), the term *schoolscape* refers 'to the school-based environment where place and text, both written (graphic) and oral, constitute, reproduce, and transform language ideologies'. Schoolscapes include educational aims and project ideas and messages about what is officially accepted, legitimized and supported or sanctioned (Brown 2012). The term *schoolscape* refers specifically to schools, and kindergartens differ from schools in

their curricula and pedagogical approaches. When referring to former studies, I adopt the term chosen by the author. However, for my analysis, I have chosen the term *semiotic landscape*, following Jaworski and Thurlow (2010, 2) in their argument that semiotic landscapes emphasize the combination of language with other discursive modalities, as images or non-verbal communication. In the kindergarten context, semiotic landscapes are multimodal and may include various semiotic resources, such as drawings, written texts, symbols or pictures (see Granly and Maagerø 2012).

Studies of semiotic landscapes in educational institutions have pointed out several aspects relevant for this study. As mentioned in the introduction, Brown (2012, 2018) argues that the presence or absence of minority languages in semiotic landscapes contributes to the preservation or decline of these languages. However, human agency and meaning making plays an important role in the transformation and negotiation of discourses embedded in semiotic landscapes (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010; Brown 2012), and this raises the question of which communication practices resources in the semiotic landscape are connected to. Another interesting aspect is whether semiotic resources and practices differ in official rooms addressing, for example, parents and visitors and less official rooms used by students and teachers (Szabó 2015).

A third theoretical element considered in this analysis is views on multilingualism. Garcia and Wei (2014, 11f.) differ between a traditional view of multilingualism as double monolingualism consisting of two or more autonomous linguistic systems, a view of multilingualism as dual with reference to Cummins (1979) dual iceberg model and the idea of interdependence of languages, and a view of multilingualism as dynamic, consisting of only one linguistic system with various features. Behind these distinctions lies the ideological question of whether languages are relatively solid systems or more fluid and dynamic constructions (Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Connected to the first is a common Western ideology of one language uniting and distinguishing a nation (Woolard 1998), while the latter challenges this ideology. Irvine and Gal (2000, 37f.) point to three semiotic differentiation processes that create connections between linguistic phenomena and social groups based on language ideology; *iconization*, *fractal recursivity* and *erasure*. While iconization involves the process of connecting linguistic features to index social groups, fractal recursivity is a process of projecting an opposition, which exists on one level of relationship, to other levels. Erasure as a process simplifies the sociolinguistic field in a manner that renders sociolinguistic phenomena, persons or activities that do not conform to the ideological scheme invisible. These processes may contribute to both inclusion and *othering* (Coupland 2010).

The article explores how multilingualism is constructed through different semiotic resources in the semiotic landscape and how the constructions of multilingualism contribute to forms of iconization, fractal recursivity or erasure. As part of this, it explores differences in the official entrance areas and the less official group rooms of the two kindergartens. Eventually, it discusses whether and how discourses on multilingualism in the semiotic landscapes are negotiated, transformed or contrasted in oral communication practices.

## Methodology

The current article is based on the analysis of 236 photographs of the semiotic landscape in two kindergartens, 118 photographs in each. The photographs were collected as part of

ethnographic fieldwork in Sunflower Kindergarten in Northern Germany and Globeflower Kindergarten in Northern Norway (both names are pseudonyms). Both were public mainstream kindergartens located in medium-sized cities; the staff had several years of experience in working with multilingual children and their families. However, there were also some differences between the kindergartens. At the time of the fieldwork, around 40% of all children in Globeflower were multilingual, as were two of the teachers. Few of the children shared the same mother tongue, apart from Norwegian, and none of the teachers did. In Sunflower, around 90% of the children and 40% of the teachers were multilingual; many children shared languages other than German as did the teachers. This, of course, involved different opportunities, especially for the oral communication practice.<sup>2</sup>

Research into schoolsapes has pointed to the challenge of sampling, representativity and categorising (Gorter 2006), and of creating frozen representations of more dynamic landscapes and practices (Gorter 2006, 2018; Blommaert 2013). To meet this challenge, a growing body of ethnographic research on schoolsapes has focused on a combination of methods in order to include both the researcher's etic perspectives and the participants' emic perspectives (Brown 2012; Szabó 2015; Laihonen and Szabó 2017). The current study can be categorized within this ethnographic research. The photographs of the semiotic landscapes were taken at different moments in time throughout a period of six to eight months in each kindergarten. Due to this, the photographs themselves capture both static and dynamic elements. Additionally, the photographs were combined with field notes of the teachers' communication practices and interviews with both teachers and parents (Pesch 2017) to include both emic and etic, perspectives. The photographs were taken based on the question, 'How is multilingualism expressed in the semiotic landscape of the kindergartens?' with the choice of elements documented made by the researcher. Based on the research question, a choice was made to focus on visual and material elements, such as written texts and images, to explore how they interact to construct views on multilingualism (cf. Jaworski and Thurlow 2010). The data is organized as two cases, and the study can be characterized as an ethnographic case study (Davies 2008; O'Reilly 2012; Yin 2014). Nexus analysis is used as an analytical approach. Nexus analysis is a type of discourse analysis that takes human action as its starting point and views practice as action that has sedimented over time (Scollon and Scollon 2004; Lane 2014). This is an important aspect in the analysis since the repeated documentation of the semiotic landscape allows the search for elements that sediment actions into practices as units of analysis. Moreover, practice in nexus analysis is understood as a nexus of discourses that circulate through it, and these discourses are related to three key factors intersecting in practice: the participants' *historical bodies*, the *interaction order* and the *discourses in place* (Hult 2017, 94; Lane 2014, 7-8; Scollon and Scollon 2004, 19-20). While the participants' historical bodies become clearly visible in the interviews and observations, they are less evident in the semiotic landscapes. For this article, the constructions of multilingualism as discourses in place are of particular interest, as is the interaction order involved in the practices of the semiotic landscape.

## Analysis

Following Szabó's (2015) distinction, the first part of this section analyses constructions in the official rooms, while the second part moves to the less official rooms. The

photographs included for closer analysis here, have been selected because they display foregrounded discourses in place and in the interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004). Moreover, they have been selected because they refer to both static and dynamic elements, both in the single pictures and as practice that constructs multilingualism in the semiotic landscape.

### **Constructions of multilingualism in the official rooms**

The entrance to Sunflower Kindergarten in Northern Germany is a door made of glass, sliding to both sides to open (Figure 1). *Welcome* is written on the door in several languages. In the middle we find *Herzlich Willkommen* in German, in bold letters and printed across both sides of the entrance door. Around the German phrase, *Welcome* is written in several other languages. While German is represented once, all the other languages are found twice, once on each side of the door, and in different alphabets, prints and sizes. Inside the front door, one enters a large entrance hall. On the opposite wall, there are five boards with information about various issues (e.g. important dates, the preschool club and the parents' representatives). All information is written in German. Looking to the right, one can see a gate leading to the group rooms (Figure 2). The gate is decorated with sailboats and a lighthouse. At the end of the hall, one can glimpse texts and drawings displayed on the windows and entrance doors to the group rooms. Looking to the left, there are a few sofas grouped around a low table. Coffee and tea are placed on the table, and next to it, there is a bookshelf with books and magazines. In front of these, there is a banner hanging from the ceiling with the words *Parents' Café* written in several languages. In contrast to the entrance door, the words are handwritten.



**Figure 1.** Entrance door to Sunflower Kindergarten.



**Figure 2.** Entrance gate to group rooms, Sunflower Kindergarten.

Globeflower Kindergarten in Northern Norway has two entrances, one for parents, children and visitors, and one for the staff. Approaching the kindergarten from the outside, one of the notable first elements is the flags from various countries hanging in one of the windows, facing outward. As a parent or child, one enters the kindergarten through the gate to the outdoor area. Opposite this gate, on an outside wall of the building, there is a billboard with *Welcome* written in many languages (Figure 3). *Velkommen* in Norwegian and *Bures boahitin* in North Sámi are printed in large, bold letters. While *Velkommen* is placed on the left-hand side of the billboard, *Bures boahitin* is printed centrally on top of the billboard. The other languages are written in different colours, alphabets, prints and sizes.

The staff entrance is accessed through a door at the back of the building. In the first room one enters, flags from many countries are placed at the top of the walls right beneath the ceiling, on both sides of the room; the name of the country is written beneath each flag (Figure 4). On a shelf on the righthand side is the UN flag. On one of the walls, there is a large map of the world and a shelf with books and props used for storytelling. At the end of the room, there is a door to the hallway with the group rooms for the children. On the door, there are two hand-made notes. The upper one consists of the phrase *Velkommen til lekegata. Mangfold i bevegelse* (*Welcome to the play street. Diversity on the move*, my translation) and circles made of hands in various colours. The lower note depicts a reminder from a lecture, saying: *Takk for at du forteller dette til meg ... Dette skal vi snakke mer om ...* (*Thank you for telling me this ... We shall talk about this more*, my translation). Both notes are put up at typical adult eye height.

According to Szabó (2015), the described entrances are official rooms. Their semiotic landscape indicates both similarities and substantial differences between the



**Figure 3.** Welcome billboard, visitors' entrance, Globeflower Kindergarten.

kindergartens. Welcome signs in different languages are a predominant semiotic resource in both kindergartens. Moreover, one can argue for similarities in how the official languages are highlighted. While German is placed at the centre of the entrance door in Sunflower, Norwegian is positioned to the left, according to the reading direction



**Figure 4.** Flags in the staff entrance, Globeflower Kindergarten.

in Norway in Globeflower kindergarten. Both languages are given prominent positions, also stressed through the choice of bold, large letters. Moreover, in Globeflower kindergarten, North Sámi is printed in bold letters on top of the welcome sign and is given a similar position as Norwegian. This emphasizes the official status of the three Sámi languages in Norway (Øzrk 2016). However, the two other Sámi languages, Lule- and South Sámi are placed further down and in smaller size. This difference between the Sámi languages and the prominent position of North Sámi connects to the regional context of Globeflower kindergarten where North Sámi is the most spoken Sámi language. These manufactured signs may contribute to a static construction of linguistic diversity, but taking a closer look at Figure 3 also reveals dynamic elements. For example, *kinyarwanda* seems to have been added afterwards and indicates a practice (Scollon and Scollon 2004) of adjusting the languages presented to the group of children in the kindergarten, to welcome new families.

As the description of the landscape of Sunflower indicates, the parents' café and the entrance door are the only semiotic resources that point to the fact that multilingualism is an issue in the kindergarten. The predominant language is German, while another important element in the semiotic landscape is the presence of local connotations, for example, the sailboat and the lighthouse. This may emphasize localness as a joint element for all children and families, regardless of their linguistic and cultural background and thus prevent othering (Coupland 2010). However, it also contributes to an iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) of the kindergarten as a predominantly German arena. While some of the elements in the semiotic landscape, for example the texts on the information billboards and magazines in the parents' café, changed during my fieldwork, the predominance of German and local connotations prevailed. Thus, more dynamic actions were part of more static practices (Scollon and Scollon 2004).

To this, the entrances to Globeflower emerge as a contrast, with the flags as one of the most salient semiotic resources. Considering that the official names of the countries represented by each flag are written below, the use of flags may involve the ideological idea of one flag uniting a nation and its people (Woolard 1998). Flags may also be used as direct symbols for languages (Brown 2018), and thus, the flags in Globeflower kindergarten may be understood as representing children and their languages, connected to their families' country of origin.

Both the use of flags in Globeflower and the absence of them in Sunflower can be characterised as culturally embedded (Garvin and Eisenhower 2017). In Norway, national flags are prominent semiotic resources to express diversity (Sollid 2019) based on a positive attitude towards flags as national symbols, while this is not the case in Germany (Pesch 2017). However, the use of flags may contribute to processes of othering (Coupland 2010), identifying children with languages and nationalities which they not necessarily identify with themselves (cf. Sadownik 2020) and to erasure of linguistic diversity within countries. Still, connected to the positive attitude towards flags in Norway, I interpret the multitude of flags in Globeflower kindergarten, in combination with the multilingual billboard, as a construction of the kindergarten as multinational and multilingual arena. As in Sunflower, actions of adding or replacing flags contributed to certain dynamic in the semiotic landscape, while the practice of using flags prevailed.

An interesting element is the notes on the door between the staff and the group rooms. Teachers passed through this door many times a day, and the notes served as a reminder

of the correct practice to meet and expand on the children's communicative initiatives. In general, the staff entrance seemed to be a strong reminder for the teachers, and by the teachers, of the kindergarten as multilingual, legitimizing or supporting a certain interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004) of communicating with the children.

### ***Constructions of multilingualism in the less official rooms***

#### ***Globeflower Kindergarten***

The group rooms for the children in Globeflower are connected by one corridor, which all parents enter when delivering and picking up their children. This area can be characterised as less official, according to Szabó's (2015) distinction. One salient type of semiotic resource in the corridor is posters of important items of clothes for the children. These include pictures of the clothes with the correct Norwegian term below (Figure 5 depicts one of several).



**Figure 5.** Poster with important items of clothing, Globeflower Kindergarten.

The poster had been attached to the wall by the staff and was often used to communicate with multilingual parents. It shows important items of clothing that children should bring to kindergarten. Each item is displayed by a picture and the correct Norwegian term. While the pictures might make it easier to inform parents with limited knowledge of Norwegian, it also implies the idea that these parents have to learn both the correct term and which clothes to bring. This involves a specific interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004), which is characterised by both information and instruction to parents by the kindergarten. The interviews and observations of the teachers show that the intention of this practice was to create equality and to include all parents (Pesch 2017). Though the poster itself may be rather static, the communication practice connected to it was more dynamic, adjusting to individual parents' needs. However, the interaction order and the underlying assumption of differences in knowledge about kindergarten within the group of parents also contributes to processes of othering (Coup-land 2010).

Also, in the less official rooms, flags are a salient semiotic resource. One example from inside one of the group rooms is a wall that is covered with numbers from one to ten, written in five different languages; Norwegian, Finnish, Dari, North Sámi and Somali. Above each row of numbers, the words for *Welcome* are written together with the flag and prominent animals of each country (Figure 6).

Similar to the flags in the entrance, this wall can be interpreted as an ideology of one language uniting one nation (Woolard 1998), enhanced through the prominent animal. It can also be interpreted as an erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000) of linguistic diversity within the countries. For example, under the Finnish flag, words are written in Finnish only, despite Finland having two official national languages—Finnish and Swedish.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 6. Numbers on the wall, Globeflower Kindergarten.

However, the row of numbers to the left, written in figures, may indicate a joint element for all languages and for the children speaking them. Hence, the wall denotes a picture of multilingualism as belonging to individual children on the one hand, and to the group on the other hand. It is interesting that there is no animal above the Sámi flag, as the reindeer is connected to Norway. As on the welcome billboard, the choice of including the Sámi flag and North Sámi language, may be an indication of officialness (cf. Pesch, Dardanou, and Sollid 2021), positioning Sámi languages as a natural part of multilingualism in Northern Norway. This interpretation is supported by the fact that none of the children or teachers identified as Sámi. Again, the choice of North Sámi indicates the kindergarten's regional context, at the same time it erases the diversity of Sámi languages connected to the Sámi flag. The interview with the head teacher in this group explains the wall as a project to develop parental involvement, based on the intention to show their languages and to include them as part of the kindergarten. The signs, flags and pictures of animals were chosen and made together with the parents. This indicates a different kind of interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004), characterized by invitation, in a similar vein as the welcome billboard in the visitor's entrance. Even though the semiotic resources on the wall seem rather static, they are based on a dynamic practice representing and involving the actual children and parents in the group.



**Figure 7.** Children's texts, Sunflower Kindergarten.

## **Sunflower Kindergarten**

In Sunflower, one prominent resource in the semiotic landscape of the less official rooms is the stories told by the children and written down by the teachers, which are hung up on the walls and doors to the entrance of the group rooms (Figure 7). Another salient resource is artwork created by the children, mainly found on the walls inside the group rooms. Figure 8 shows an invitation for the parents to join the Christmas breakfast, created by children and teachers together.

Both text and invitation are dominated by the German language, as are many semiotic resources in the entrance. This constructs a picture of Sunflower as predominantly monolingual. Simultaneously, regarding the children's texts, the choice includes the desire to show the parents the linguistic competence of their children in the German language. Many parents expressed concern about their children's development in German, and the texts were one resource the teachers used to address this concern. With reference to the interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004), these semiotic resources invite parents to read and enjoy, rather than inform and instruct them, in contrast to the information billboards in the entrance hall. Moreover, the practice of exhibiting the children's texts and artwork also included the aim to acknowledge their achievements and include their voices as a salient part of the semiotic landscape in the less official rooms.

Another semiotic resource confirming the dominance of German, is the poster with letters and connected words in the writing corner (Figure 9). The writing corner is composed of a round table with chairs, an old-fashioned typewriter, stamps with letters and other equipment usually found in offices. The bookshelves next to the writing corner, in contrast, include a range of books in different languages, some of them bilingual (Figure 10).



**Figure 8.** Invitation to Christmas breakfast, Sunflower Kindergarten.



**Figure 9.** Poster and magnetic board in the writing corner, Sunflower Kindergarten.

Since the Latin alphabet is used in various languages, the magnetic board shown on [Figure 10](#) can be used for more than the German language. However, the poster refers to German through the pictures next to the letters and also includes typical German graphemes, for example, *sch*. The bookshelves ([Figure 10](#) depicts one of several) were the only clearly visible reference to multilingualism in the less official rooms of Sunflower. However, the semiotic landscape in Sunflower also included some elements that



**Figure 10.** Bookshelf, Sunflower Kindergarten.

belonged to a bilingual Turkish and German semiotic landscape. This was, for example, visible on the dustbins, which had the correct words in both languages attached (Pesch 2017). Sunflower had started as a bilingual Turkish and German kindergarten, and over the years developed to be a multilingual kindergarten attended by children with diverse languages. The bilingual elements in the semiotic landscape gave a diachronic hint of this development. Data from the interviews state that as part of this process, the semiotic landscape had developed to be predominantly German (Pesch 2017). In contrast to the entrance, the semiotic landscape in the group rooms was more dynamic. Invitations to parents and children's texts and artwork was exchanged regularly. Still, the dynamic elements consisted of single actions, while the practice of exhibiting children's achievements and the predominance of German prevailed.

## Discussion

Interpreting the semiotic landscapes, the discourses in place (Scollon and Scollon 2004) that emerge in Globeflower point to an iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) of the kindergarten as a multilingual arena (Ødegaard and Krüger 2012). The flags and various languages point to multilingualism as a shared element of the kindergarten and to a dynamic view on multilingualism (Garcia and Wei 2014), allowing for the acknowledgement and use of various languages. However, also an ideology of one language distinguishing and unifying one nation and its people (Woolard 1998) is evident, and this may point to a construction of multilingualism as an individual value connected to single children. The ideology of unifying one nation through one common language also contributes to processes of erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000) of linguistic diversity. This is, for example, visible in Figure 6 where Finland is solely represented with the Finnish language, and Swedish is not mentioned. An interesting point in the official entrance rooms is that they seem to function as a reminder of the kindergarten's multilingualism for children, parents and staff, and this raises the question why they need to be reminded. An evident interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004) in the entrance is to invite parents and children into the kindergarten by welcoming them in many languages.

However, in the less official rooms, some semiotic resources point to a different discourse in place (Scollon and Scollon 2004). The dress poster in Figure 5 conveys the idea of difference in knowledge within the group of parents and may contribute to processes of othering (Coupland 2010), where multilingual parents have to learn what kindergarten staff and Norwegian parents know. Discourses circulating through these resources refer to an interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004) where parents who are assumed not to have the relevant knowledge about Norwegian kindergartens are informed and instructed. Inherent in these semiotic resources and the practices connected to them is the idea of Norwegian as the most important language, which constructs a hierarchic order where multilingualism is positioned as less valuable.

The semiotic landscape in Sunflower points to an iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) of the kindergarten as a predominantly German arena (Ødegaard and Krüger 2012) since the semiotic resources displayed are mainly written in the German language. This may read as a view on multilingualism as double monolingualism (Garcia and Wei 2014). Here, this view does not refer to the number of languages, but to the underlying idea that languages are autonomous systems that are to be kept strictly apart. Moreover,

one can interpret a strong emphasis on the majority language erasing the linguistic diversity that exists in the kindergarten. This iconic picture (Irvine and Gal 2000) seems to be constructed in both the official and less official rooms of the kindergarten. However, there are some semiotic resources that give a glimpse of a different discourse in place (Scollon and Scollon 2004)—the entrance door and the parents' café in the entrance hall and the bookshelf in the group room. This discourse seems to acknowledge multilingualism as a natural part of the kindergarten. Moreover, there is the question of which communication practices are connected to the semiotic resources.

Following Szabó's (2015) distinction, there is a noticeable difference between the official and less official rooms in both kindergartens. This difference is related to the voices of the actors (Ødegaard and Krüger 2012) represented in the semiotic landscape and to the interaction order (Scollon and Scollon 2004) between the kindergarten and parents. In both kindergartens, the semiotic landscape in the official rooms is filled with the voices of the kindergarten addressing parents or visitors. In Sunflower, the semiotic landscape in the less official group rooms is filled with the children's voices in the form of texts and artwork. Even though these do not represent different languages, they show the children's multiple voices and thus depict diversity within the group of children. In Globeflower, it is the parents' voices that are involved in the less official rooms; however, here the difference between official and less official rooms is less distinct. The semiotic landscape in Sunflower denotes different interaction orders—both inviting, informing and instructing parents in the entrance hall and mainly inviting them in the group rooms. In Globeflower, the entrance is characterized by invitations, while the less official rooms include invitations, instructions and information.

The findings related to the semiotic landscapes seem to give a clear picture of the constructions of multilingualism in these two kindergartens. My analysis of the oral communication practice (Pesch 2017) however, changes the picture. While the oral communication practice in Globeflower was predominantly Norwegian, the oral practice in Sunflower was multilingual and dynamic (Garcia and Wei 2014). The predominance of German in the semiotic landscape in Sunflower was negotiated by contrasting discourses inherent in the oral communication practice, which supported the use of various languages and disregarded a focus on German. In Globeflower, the oral communication practice involved a strong focus on supporting children's learning of Norwegian, contrasting the dynamic view on multilingualism inherent in the semiotic landscape. Thus, the diverging constructions on multilingualism in the semiotic landscape on the one hand and in the oral communication practice, on the other hand, involved constant negotiations between different views on multilingualism and transformed contrasting language ideologies for children and parents. Drawing upon Brown (2012), it also raises the question of which semiotic practices in kindergarten may contribute to strengthening or weakening children's minority languages. While semiotic landscapes may seem to ignore children's languages, the oral practices may contribute to strengthen them, or vice versa. The semiotic practices in kindergartens may differ in their constructions of multilingualism, and arguing with the terms of Irvine and Gal (2000), an official visual iconization of the kindergarten as multilingual might not necessarily prevent erasure of the linguistic diversity represented by the children attending it. On the other hand, an official predominantly monolingual semiotic landscape that erases linguistic diversity, may actually preserve this diversity on the oral

communication level. The complexity of connections between multilingual semiotic practices in kindergarten is a question for further research and also for discussion of practices in kindergartens. Another important question is how semiotic landscapes in kindergarten can be used by practitioners to promote multilingualism as a truly dynamic phenomenon. My analysis points to how both actions and practices involve static and dynamic elements. Thus, to discuss both levels and the interplay of action and practice would be one important aspect in addressing this question.

## Notes

1. I use the term kindergarten because it is the term used for ECEC institutions in both countries.
2. The photographs were collected as part of my Ph.D research project, which was approved by the Norwegian Data Protection Service (NSD).
3. Finland also recognizes several national minority languages, as does Norway, but to discuss this would exceed the possible length of the article.

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