The roleplaying variety of Northern Norwegian preschool children: The methodology and some preliminary findings

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In Norway, children outside of the capital dialect area code-switch between their local dialect and 'Standard East Norwegian' (SEN) when they engage in peer socio-dramatic play/roleplay. SEN is used in their role-utterances, while their local dialects are used in negotiating the play. Although this is a well-known phenomenon, it is an under-studied subject. Two PhD-theses have looked at bilingual code-switching, with English (Guldal, 1997) and Sami (Kleemann, 2015), but with the exception of an MA thesis (Eliassen, 1998), the subject has not been studied in a monolingual/bidialectal context. More specifically, the acquisition and attainment of SEN has not been studied.

The main research questions are:

1) Is there an order in which features from SEN are acquired?
2) How competent are the children in SEN?

To answer these questions, we use spontaneous speech recorded in specific peer-interacting contexts. As this is not available existing Norwegian child language corpora, the data collection is done specifically for this investigation. In this paper/poster, we will present the methodology of the project: Three cohorts of children (3;0–3;11, 4;0–4;11, 5;0–5;11) from Northern Norway (Tromsø) are video and audio recorded interacting around different doll houses with different dolls (see Auwärter, 1986; Guldal, 1997 for somewhat similar approaches), in dense recordings (approximately each fourteenth day) in their day care. The data are transcribed and coded for different activities pertaining to roleplay (i.e. role-utterances and negotiation), in order to assess the development of the SEN/roleplaying register. The combined longitudinal/cross-sectional design allows for comprehensive developmental data collected in a third of the time. As this is spontaneous speech, the data can also be used to answer other research questions regarding roleplay and/or child language acquisition.

Some preliminary findings will also be presented.