

The roleplaying register of Norwegian pre-school and early school children: A critical review with emphasis on the structural

It is widely known, albeit not thoroughly studied, that preschool and early school children in Norway outside of the southeastern Oslo area, conduct role-play or make-believe play in what appears to be the southeastern Oslo area dialect (henceforth *Oslo dialect*). The folk-linguistic explanation for this phenomenon seem to be that this is connected to the spread of Oslo dialect through child directed broadcasting. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that this phenomenon or tradition is (more than a century) old (Helge Sandøy, p.c.; Øystein Vangsnes, p.c.), and precedes modern day child directed broadcasting by far. As it now stands, little has been said about the *structural* nature of this register (henceforth *role playing register*, RPR), and whether children's competence in it is comparable to their home register (henceforth *peer* or *parent directed register*, PDR). This question is the impetus and main research question for my PhD-project and this talk.

In this talk I will present a thorough review of the scarce literature on this specific subject (inter alia Eliassen, 1998, and Kleeman, 2015), with some mention of other studies of RPRs and child language registers (inter alia Ervin-Tripp, 1973, Andersen, 1990, and Katerbow, 2013). The focus of the talk will be on the question of the acquisition of, development of and competence in this very context specific register in child language, although other aspects will be briefly covered.

The following reasoning is the basis for the working hypothesis of my PhD-project and this talk. Although I have already presented empirical evidence suggesting that child directed broadcasting cannot be the exhaustive explanation of this phenomenon, it is indisputably the main source of exposure of Oslo-dialect for most Norwegian children growing up outside the Oslo area (unless the children are acquainted to it from their parent(s), day-care assistants, or the like). To what degree children can acquire language through television is disputed (see Rice, 1983 for a critical review of the early literature), but no account to my knowledge propose that children can acquire syntax through broadcasting media (supposedly because of the lack of interaction in viewing television, e.g. Naigles & Mayeux, 2001). The consequence of this should be that children impose Oslo-dialect lexicology and phonology upon their PDR in RPR.

The talk concludes in suggestions for further research questions, hypotheses, and a feasible research paradigm for further investigation.

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