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Mother tongue maintenance in an international school – Aarhus Academy for Global Education as a privileged research site

In the fall of 2012, data collection for an ongoing PhD project (2010-2015) exploring language teaching in minority languages will take place at Aarhus Academy for Global Education.

The project is carried out by PhD student Line Møller Daugaard and is supervised by associate professor Helle Pia Laursen (principal supervisor) and professor Eva Gulløv (secondary supervisor), Department of Education at Aarhus University, Denmark.

The PhD project investigates teaching of minority languages such as Arabic or Somali in school (in Danish: 'modersmålsundervisning'); a phenomenon which in a Danish context has for decades been at the heart of a heated ideological debate, but which has paradoxically been given very little research attention.

Situated within a sociolinguistic framework and inspired by linguistic ethnography, the PhD project explores language practices in an educational setting through ethnographic fieldwork drawing on participant observation and interviews. The primary data collection has taken place at Søndervangskolen, a public primary school on the outskirts of Aarhus. Focus has been on minority language teaching in Arabic, Dari, Pashto and Somali as it unfolds around a multilingual Year 2 class consisting of immigrant children.

This empirical material will be supplemented by a case study at Aarhus Academy for Global Education with special attention to the school's programme for mother tongue maintenance. Being a private school with an international outlook and an explicit focus on language teaching and learning, Aarhus Academy for Global Education constitutes a rich and privileged research site.

The case study at Aarhus Academy for Global Education is therefore expected to add important nuances to the production of knowledge in the PhD project and to contribute significantly to an increased understanding of minority language teaching in Denmark.



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