

# Multilingual Toddlers in Swedish Pre-schools: What is the Role of Language in Initiating and Maintaining Pretend Play?

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# Preschool in Sweden

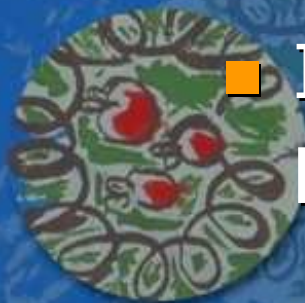
- Children 1 to 6 years old.
- 45 % of 1 year olds & 87 % of 2 year olds (2004).
- 90 % public
- National *Curriculum for Preschool* was implemented in 1998.
- 15 hours/week free of charge (from age of 4).





# *Young Children's Learning*

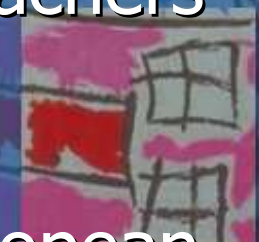
- A Swedish longitudinal research project (2005-)
- Variation of learning environments in preschool – children's knowledge and learning within four areas: language & communication, mathematics, creativity and interaction.
- Includes 230 children (born in 2004/05) in 38 preschools in a larger city in Sweden.





# My thesis in progress

- To study multilingual toddlers language learning (Swedish) through social actions and activities in the preschool context.
- 10 focus children at age of 2 in 8 different settings.
- Video-recordings during a period of six months.
- Interaction with other children and teachers in a variety of everyday situations in preschool contexts.
- Children's first languages; Nordic, European, and African.





# Language is essential in learning

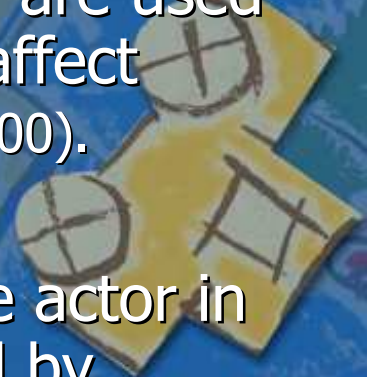
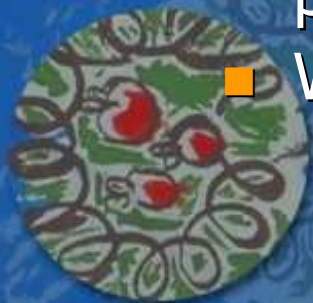
- When entering preschool
  - children take part in expanded social and language/communication contexts.
  - children with Swedish as second language meet a new language.
- Second language learning (language environment).
- Play especially is important for children when learning a new language  
(Aronsson, Grover Aukrust, 2004).





# Theoretical framework

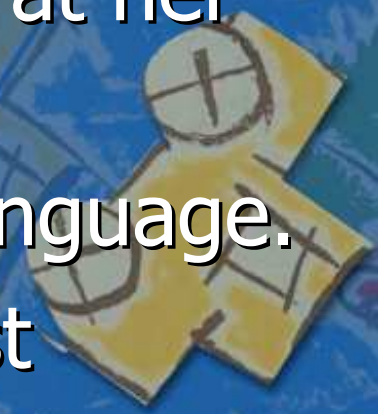
- Socio-cultural perspective on learning and development (Vygotsky 34/1986; Säljö 2000; Rogoff: 2003).
- How tools (language and physical artifacts) are used in a specific practice, and how these tools affect people's ways of talking and acting (Säljö 2000).
- 'Individual – social practice – artifacts'
- The child is seen as a competent and active actor in interaction, who both shapes and is shaped by participating in an activity.
- What does the situation offer for children to learn?





## Mandisa, Hanna & Daniella

- Mandisa; 2.8 years. 3 languages (2 African and English) are spoken at her home.
- Hanna; 3.3. Arabic is her first language.
- Daniella; 3.2. Swedish is her first language.





## Before and after...

- The teacher gives the girls the toys within the theme and creates room for the play.
- Hanna & Daniella start playing with the toys while Mandisa is sitting next to them watching.
- Hanna & Daniella tell Mandisa to lay down.
- The play goes on for a while after this sequence.





## The play consists of both;

- The children's knowledge about *the play theme*.
- The children's knowledge about *how to play*.



## The children's knowledge about *the play theme*

- Based on their personal experiences of
  - Being sick and staying at home
  - Going to see a doctor
  - How to use the toys within the theme as a resource.
  - Roles: doctor & patient





# Doctor & patient

DOCTOR:

H: *Open your belly... your belly... there is the belly... like that... xx like that..*

D: *Lay like this. (She lifts her arm to demonstrate.) Medicine... medicine. Lay like this now.*

Hanna takes a stethoscope and holds it on Mandisa's stomach.  
Mandisa drinks out of a bowl.

PATIENT:

Mandisa looks at her but lies still on her back.

Hanna lies down on the mattress and pulls up her sweater.

Hanna 'grimaces' when the syringes are pulled to her stomach.





## The children's knowledge about *how to play*

### ■ Pretending

M: *Really hurt... good with water... good with water.*

Mandisa hold the bowl towards Hanna who takes it to 'drink' out of it.

### ■ To initiate

M: *Wait...get (something) else.*

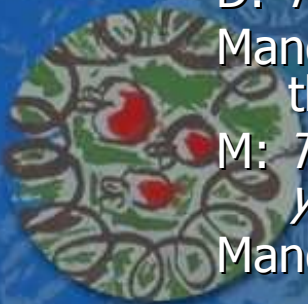
Mandisa turns around to the toys.

D: *Take this.*

Mandisa stands up and takes a stethoscope. She points to the toys and then looks at Daniella.

M: *Take this first... take those yours. (She points to the toys.) Take those yours... xx first.*

Mandisa and Daniela put on a stethoscope on their ears.





## The children's knowledge about *how to play*


### ■ Change the play frame

Mandisa sits up.  
H: *Lay down... lay down.* She claps the mattress.  
M: *Finished*  
H: *Okay my turn.*

### ■ Turn-taking, showing mutuality & equality

D: *Now... now... now it is you again* (to Mandisa) and points at her.  
M: *No it you...lay.*  
D: *No you ...*  
M: *Okay! xx here.*  
Mandisa pulls her sweater up.





## The children's knowledge about *how to play*

- To make yourself understood & understand others

D: *One more ball.*

M: *Oh, one more ball.*

D: *One more ball*

M: *Oh, one more ball.*

D: *There, one more ball.*

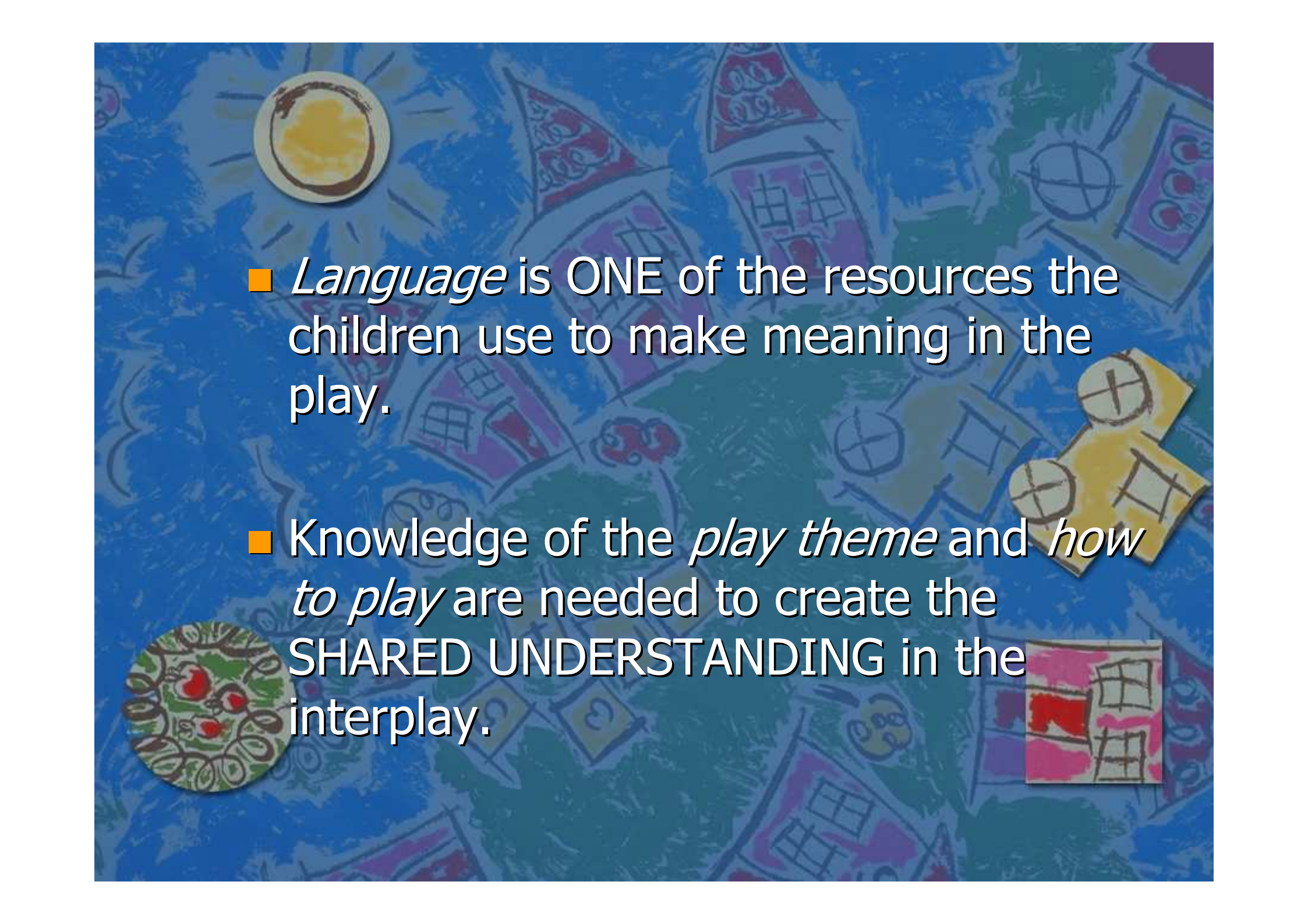
Daniella points to the impressions in the skin and they laugh.

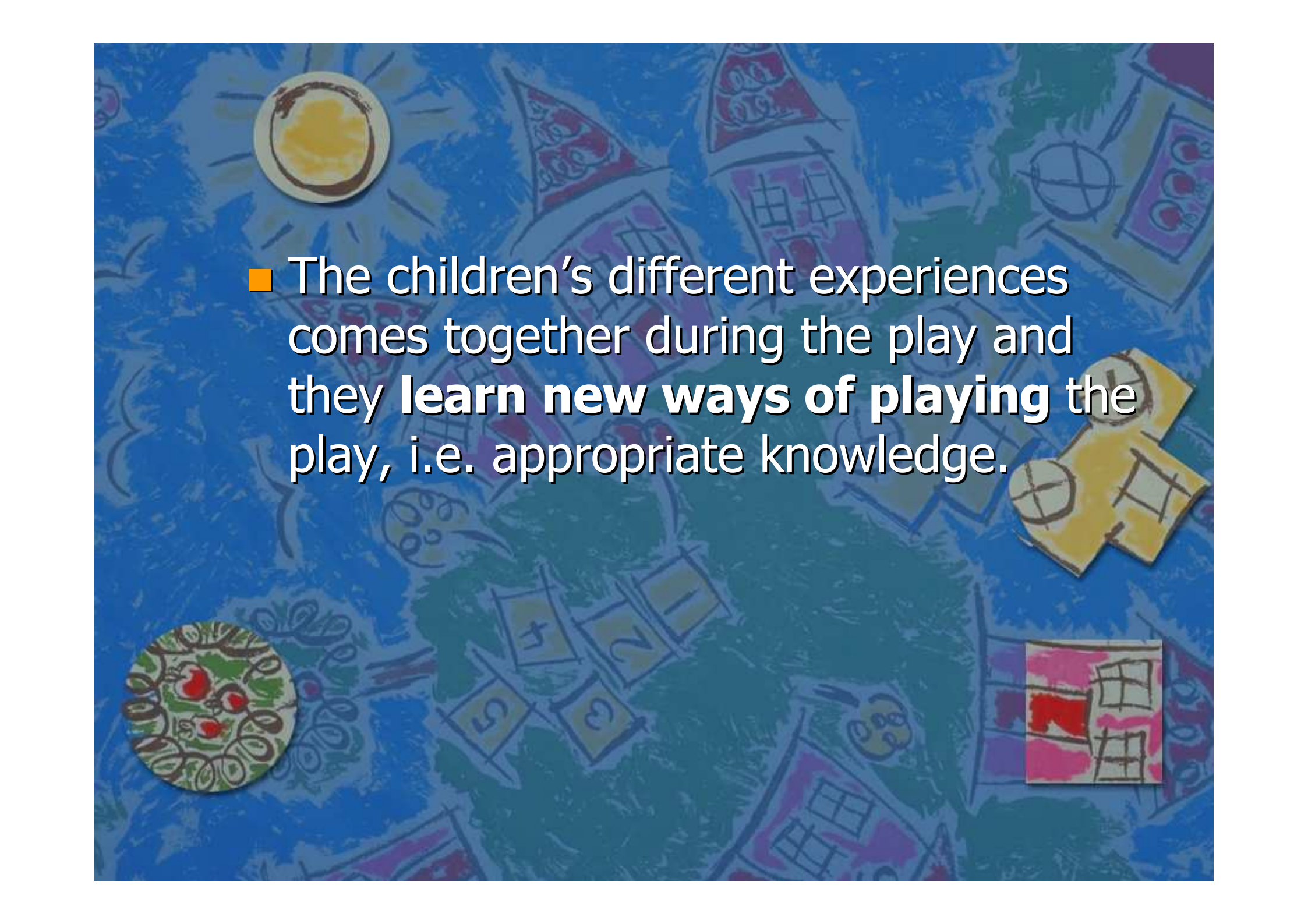


D: *Now it is ready!*

M: *Now it is ready!*



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- *Language* is ONE of the resources the children use to make meaning in the play.
  - Knowledge of the *play theme* and *how to play* are needed to create the **SHARED UNDERSTANDING** in the interplay.

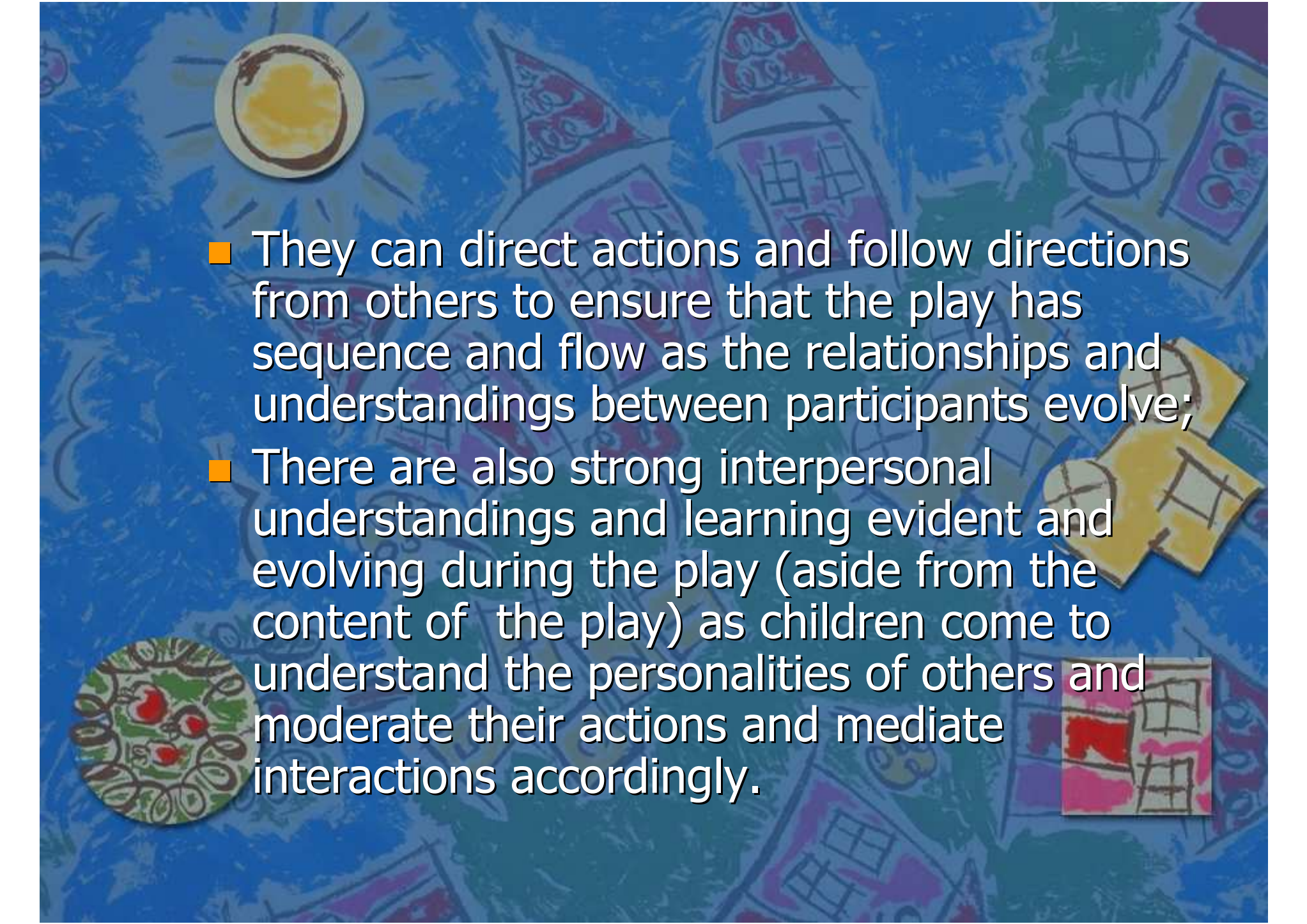
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- The children's different experiences comes together during the play and they **learn new ways of playing** the play, i.e. appropriate knowledge.



# Shared understanding leads to interplay

- The layers and levels of interaction in children's play, expressed in their verbal and nonverbal communications, that demonstrate their understandings of the roles and the scripts of play scenarios:
- These understandings are both independent and shared understandings that enable the children to initiate and maintain play scripts;
- This is learning through play - the children enact cultural scripts which they then appropriate into other play or real-life situations;



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- They can direct actions and follow directions from others to ensure that the play has sequence and flow as the relationships and understandings between participants evolve;
  - There are also strong interpersonal understandings and learning evident and evolving during the play (aside from the content of the play) as children come to understand the personalities of others and moderate their actions and mediate interactions accordingly.



**Thank you!**

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