

# Shaping participation

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# **SHAPING PARTICIPATION**

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in Linguistically Diverse  
Early Childhood Education and Care*

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# SHAPING PARTICIPATION

*Children's and Teachers' Language Practices  
in Linguistically Diverse  
Early Childhood Education and Care*

DISSERTATION

to obtain the degree of Doctor at Maastricht University,  
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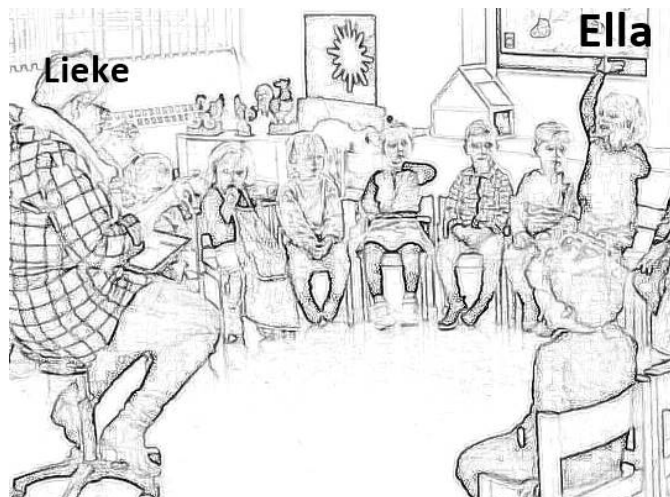
# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Research Problem and Research Question

### *Vignette 1: 12 April 2021, Preschool Little Sprouts<sup>1</sup> (Limburg, the Netherlands)*

---

Circle time. As every morning, Teacher Lieke reads out the list of children and greets every child in the circle individually. Now it's Ella's turn. Immediately, Ella jumps up, says "Hier ben ik!" ('Here I am!' [in Dutch]) and sits down again.



*Figure 1: Morning circle at Little Sprouts (NL)*

Lieke reacts: "Ja! Ella is daar ook" ('Yes, Ella is also there' [in Dutch]), and then proceeds to call Jeroen. Only on his second visit today, Jeroen is relatively new in the preschool. When Lieke says "En Jeroen" ('And

---

<sup>1</sup> All names of institutions and individuals have been pseudonymized. For the sake of readability, English names which compare to the style of the actual names of the German and Dutch ECEC centers have been chosen.

## 2 *Shaping Participation*

*Jeroen*) while looking around the circle, he does not react. Lieke goes on: “Waar is Jeroen?” (*Where is Jeroen?* [in Dutch]). Jeroen quickly turns down his gaze. Four of the peers point their finger to Jeroen, and Emily, who sits next to him, repeatedly touches his shoulder. The children Ilyas and Leon start to exclaim enthusiastically while pointing: “Daar is Jeroen” (*There is Jeroen* [in Dutch]), “Daar!” (*There!*).

Looking at Jeroen now, Lieke switches from Dutch to Limburgish, the regional minority language: “Jeroen? Wo bisse?” (*Jeroen, where are you?*). Jeroen keeps looking down and softly shrugs his shoulders.



*Figure 2: Downward gaze*

Lieke notices his movement, laughs, and shrugs her shoulders as well. Then, Jeroen looks up to Lieke and smiles. The teacher puts up her hand as in a greeting: “Hi Jeroen!” Eventually, Lieke checks Jeroen off her list: “Jeroen is daar ook, goed zo, Jeroen” (*Jeroen is also there. Well done, Jeroen* [in Dutch]).

---

***Vignette 2: 1 December 2021, Kindergarten Good Shepherd (North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany), based on audio recording and field notes:***

---

I sit at the breakfast table with three-year-old Amy and five-year-old Nura. The window is open for air circulation as is common practice these days because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Amy crosses her arms and says, “It’s getting cold” in her family language, English. I reply in a mix of German and English: “It’s getting cold, ouuhh. Ich glaub, (*I think, [in German]*) we will close the window soon I think.” Some seconds later, Nura tells me in German: “Red doch Deutsch” (*Do speak German*). Next, she leans towards Amy and says with a low voice: “Apfel” in German (*apple*). No reaction on Amy’s side, who keeps eating her sandwich. Nura translates: “Apple. Weiß ich” (*Apple [in English]. I know, [in German]*). I laugh and confirm: “Mh-mh.”

---

These two scenes originate from early mornings in two Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centers situated on opposite sides of the German-Dutch border. Children and teachers at Little Sprouts, a preschool located in a medium-sized city in Limburg, the Netherlands, begin their day with a joint morning circle. Meanwhile, at approximately 45-kilometer distance, another group of children starts off their day with a joint breakfast at kindergarten Good Shepherd in an urban environment in North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

While brief everyday moments like greetings during circle time or chatting during breakfast might seem mundane, there is more to them than meets the eye. Attention for the fine-grained details of the interactional trajectories of these scenes can reveal the manifold ways in which children’s, teachers’ and also the researchers’ participation unfolds. These nuances can be as subtle as a downward gaze or a switch between languages. During linguistic ethnographic fieldwork at Good Shepherd (DE) and Little Sprouts (NL), I have recorded numerous such

interactions which capture the diverse ways in which teachers and children *shape participation*. This dissertation draws on this data to explore the dynamics of participatory language practices in linguistically diverse ECEC centers like Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd.

### ***Different Ways of Participation***

The two opening interactions provide a glimpse into the topic by giving an impression of how children actively participate in the ECEC activities and shape them through engagement with peers, teachers, me (the researcher), and the activity. This dissertation employs a notion of participation as situated in interaction. It follows Goodwin and Goodwin (2004, p. 222), who define participation as “actions demonstrating forms of involvement by parties within evolving structures of talk.” Through participation, participants contribute to the joint co-creation of meaning in collaborative action (Goodwin, 2018a). Consequently, deploying participation as an analytic concept means uncovering the interactive and multimodal work that speakers and hearers do, for example, through using words, pauses, and sounds, but also through positioning their bodies in space, shifting their gaze, or performing a hand gesture (Goodwin, 2000; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004)

In vignette 1, Jeroen shrugs his shoulders and lowers his gaze when it is his turn, thus using embodied resources. His peers at Little Sprouts (NL) and Amy and Nura at the Good Shepherd (DE, Vignette 2) use linguistic resources associated with different languages. To investigate these different ways of participating in interactions further, the analysis in this dissertation pays close attention to the ways in which children use diverse semiotic resources from their repertoires to participate in daily activities in ECEC and co-create meaning.

In childhood studies, children are often described as simultaneously *being* and *becoming* (James et al., 1998). While the notion of *becoming* approaches children as future adults who are

‘incomplete’ until they acquire adult-like features and skills, the notion of *being* acknowledges children as competent in just what they are: children (Uprichard, 2008). This perspective leaves space to understand how children actively construct their childhood relationally with other stakeholders and their environment. Consequently, they are not only passive receivers of education and care in ECEC but active participants.

### ***Experiencing Linguistic Diversity in Childhood***

During childhood, children encounter linguistic diversity in various ways. They are confronted with variation within a language; some also acquire different languages and learn how to use them in daily life. Languages are used in specific ways in societies. Limburg in the Netherlands, for example, where preschool Little Sprouts is located, is characterized by a vital use of the local language, Limburgish, beside the national language, Dutch (Cornips, 2013). Recent statistics show that 48 percent of the Limburg province's inhabitants speak Limburgish (Schmeets & Cornips, 2021). Importantly, however, language is not bound by place: People move and take their languages along. Some children make mobility experiences at a young age or grow up multilingually due to family language practices, requiring them to navigate different linguistic contexts. Therefore, many ECEC facilities host children of linguistically diverse backgrounds. In Germany, for example, 22 percent of kindergarteners primarily speak another language than German at home (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020, p.8), and 29 percent are of migratory background, meaning that that they themselves or at least one of their parents migrated to Germany (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020, p.87).

At the Good Shepherd (DE), around 75% of the children grow up multilingually with German and at least one other language. About half of the children at Little Sprouts (NL) grow up with Limburgish and Dutch, and some also with other languages. The opening sequences already indicate that the two national languages, German and Dutch,



are used in the respective ECEC facilities, but also the regional language Limburgish in preschool Little Sprouts and, in this example, English, which is Amy's family language, in kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE). In the situation at Little Sprouts, teacher Lieke switches from Dutch to Limburgish for one sentence only, to address Jeroen when he does not answer. While this switch in the first example does not have any major consequences for the activity at hand, language use becomes the topic of the conversation when Amy and I use English to talk to each other in the second example. A part of this dissertation will unpack how teachers and children attribute social meanings to children's emergent multilingualism, which, in turn, shapes the linguistic environment of their ECEC setting with regards to linguistic diversity.

### ***Participation in light of ECEC as an educational institution***

ECEC is often the first institutional context that children get to know, and as such, it is structured by many sociocultural practices and rules (Fatigante et al., 2022). The reactions of the young children's interaction partners in the extracts above suggest that certain expectations regarding their participation are at stake: Jeroen does not show himself like his peers did before him when teacher Lieke calls his name. His peer Emily then touches his shoulder to give him a cue to react; teacher Lieke clarifies the question first in Dutch and, after different peers already pointed at Jeroen, once more in Limburgish. In the second situation, expectations that underlie the interaction revolve around language norms: While I speak to Amy in English in alignment with her complaint in English, Nura points both of us to the national language by telling me to speak German directly and by trying to teach Amy a German word. Nura at Good Shepherd (DE), and Emily and Jeroen's other peers at Little Sprouts (NL) have already attended their ECEC settings much longer than Amy and Jeroen and now seem to take an active part in the socialization of their younger peers into the interaction norms of the preschool.

In light of the institutional character of ECEC, the matters of sociocultural competencies and expectations, and how these manifest in social interactions between peers and teachers across relations shaped by relevant knowledge and power, are also central in this dissertation.

### ***Emergent Research Question***

Taken as a whole, these brief initial observations open up a range of interconnected research fields related to language practices in linguistically diverse ECEC in the German-Dutch border area. Amongst others, they draw attention to questions about the utilization of different language resources in these two ECEC settings and the social meanings that are generated in specific ways. At the core, these questions touch upon the ways in which teachers and children actively co-create meaning by engaging in interaction through using diverse semiotic resources, or, through *participating* (see Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Therefore, based on the initial observations outlined here and in close relation with the data generated during fieldwork, this dissertation aims to answer the following question:

*How do children and teachers arrange participation in linguistically diverse ECEC on both sides of the German-Dutch border between Limburg and North-Rhine-Westphalia?*

In each chapter, a core sub-focus is developed, contributing to answering the main question. Throughout, interactional trajectories within the context of a specific ECEC setting, embedded within the societal contexts of either the Netherlands or Germany, are examined.

To do so, I draw upon different methodological and theoretical cornerstones, including Ethnography in general and Linguistic Ethnography in particular, Educational Linguistics (specifically within the context of Early Childhood Education and Care), as well as the Language Socialization paradigm and pertinent approaches to participation. These fields will be briefly introduced in the following

sections, serving as a key foundation for this dissertation. A more detailed discussion of the methodologies deployed in the two focus ECEC centers will follow in Chapter 2.

## **1.2 Theoretical and Methodological Foundations**

### **1.2.1 Ethnography**

Ethnography is grounded in Social and Cultural Anthropology, where it has initially been developed as an approach to study non-Western cultures through the researchers' immersion into, and simultaneous observation of, their group of interest over an extended period of time (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1971; Malinowski, 1922; Mead, 1928). Over time, ethnography has moved away from focusing on what appeared as 'the foreign' or 'the Other' from a Western perspective and grown to include the anthropologist's own cultural contexts, aiming to "mak[e] the familiar strange, and the strange familiar." This phrase, attributed to Eliot (1932 [1921], p. 301), captures the essence of current anthropology. Nowadays, ethnographers commonly do not live with their participants anymore and limit their observations to particular domains or topics in their lives. This reflects a fragmented organization of social life in many societies where people typically, e.g., do not work or pursue education and live all in the same place (Hammersley, 2006). Trained as a cultural anthropologist, I zoomed in on ECEC as a fragment of children's and teachers' lives within this research project. This fragment is connected to their lives outside of ECEC while also having a logic of its own.

Having undergone many developments, what remains at the core of ethnography for the ethnographer Hammersley is "studying at first-hand what people do and say in particular contexts" (Hammersley, 2006, p.4). This first-hand study exhibits two distinctive methodological characteristics: prolonged engagement with research participants, often achieved through participant observation and various methods aimed at comprehending their perspectives, and the combination of these more 'emic' perspectives with analytical

approaches. (Hammersley, 2006). During three months of fieldwork at Good Shepherd (DE) and 4.5 months at Little Sprouts (NL) on two days a week each, I, as an ethnographer, spent a lot of time with the children and teachers, learning about their day-to-day practices. Ethnographic research is particularly well-suited for approaching children's and teachers' language practices in linguistically diverse ECEC due to its non-intrusiveness, leading to a child-friendly way of doing research (Degotardi, 2011). Gradual relationship-building with the participating children and immersion into their daily activities and routines makes ethnography a form of research that can minimize the potential for disruption or stress on the side of the children, while simultaneously providing rich insights into their daily practices (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008). In the process of generating these rich insights, it is essential to balance a certain openness to the field with analytical perspectives, which will be further explained in the following section.

### ***Balancing openness and curiosity with analytical rigor***

An ethnographic approach embraces openness and curiosity, which fieldworkers can leverage to their advantage when conducting research. In the beginning, observations are generally broad and aimed at getting a general sense of 'what is going on,' while they tend to become more focused over time as the researcher learns more about the field site (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, p.29f). Formulating questions and research interests is not only an important step in order to prepare for fieldwork but also during fieldwork. During that stage, mapping 'emerging themes' can enhance the integration of research objectives and what is actually (observed to be) at stake in the field (Emond, 2005). Working with sensitizing concepts, understood as suggested "directions along which to look" rather than "prescriptions of what to see" (Blumer, 1954, p.7) supports such an exploratory approach to the field. In the beginning of this research project, I was aware of sociolinguistic literature and concepts like language education policy and language ideologies, which I approached as potential helpful lenses on the ECEC settings.

At the same time, I kept an open and exploratory stance. Given the high amount of ongoing action in the ECEC centers on a daily basis, language ideologies and language education policies as “directions along which to look” indeed became helpful points of orientation. However, the simultaneous openness also allowed me to notice the relevance of language practices I did not consider before fieldwork, like singing, which will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 5.

I was able to notice this relevance through the development of ethnographic sensibilities, or an “attunement to worlds shared via participant-observation that extend beyond the parameters of a narrowly defined research question” (McGranahan, 2018, p.7). These sensibilities are developed through immersion in the field and through ‘deep hanging out’ with research participants, as Clifford (1997, p.56) called it. Spending time and building rapport with research participants is key to understand how they engage in and give meaning to their practices and lifeworlds. While approaching such a perspective can only be achieved through developing close relations with the research participants and participation in their activities, making sense of what is going on in the field also requires a certain critical distance, as Madden points out: “The ethnographic manner of being with people is finding a way to get close, but not so close one can’t step back again” (Madden, 2017, p. 79). In order to achieve this balance, I became part of preschool Little Sprouts and kindergarten Good Shepherd for a certain time. For example, I joined in children’s games, participated in circle time, and chatted with the teachers during lunch breaks. At the same time, I always aimed to keep an ethnographic focus and spent a lot of time documenting my observations through field notes, audio and video recordings, and discussed my work with colleagues in order to step back.

### ***Positionality and Written Accounts***

While I was becoming part of the ECEC centers, stepping back also entailed a continuous process of reflecting on my own positionalities in

field notes. As first problematized in Anthropology's 'Writing Culture debate' (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), researcher positionality plays a major role in ethnographic representations. Hence, reflexivity is needed to contextualize ethnographic representations, i.e., researchers need to develop a critical awareness of and provide transparency about the ways they position themselves and are positioned in the field (Davies, 2012). I navigated different positionalities throughout fieldwork, ranging from play partner to adult with 'authority' (see also Chapter 2). Taking these positionalities into account in the analysis depicts another aspect of 'researching ethnographically.'

It is important to note that ethnography does not only refer to fieldwork alone but rather to the research process as a whole. As an "all-encompassing and demanding way of knowing," it is also often used to describe the written account of research (McGranahan, 2014). Ethnographic theory frequently employs narratives, often referred to as 'tales from the field' (Van Maanen, 2011) as tools not only to understand social practices through individual stories but also to present research findings in an accessible manner to readers, such as through ethnographic vignettes (Bönisch-Brednich, 2018). Throughout this dissertation, many 'tales from the field' will follow the ones at the beginning of this chapter. They take different forms, like ethnographic vignettes or transcripts, according to the data and analytical focus. These different modes of documentation are intended to yield vivid insights into the day-to-day language dynamics of ECEC centers while simultaneously providing a sound empirical base for the analysis.

This dissertation's thematic focus on language practices is situated in the sub-field of Linguistic Ethnography, which will be introduced in the following.

### **1.2.2 Linguistic Ethnography**

Linguistic Ethnography is positioned at the intersection of sociolinguistic and anthropological research traditions (Shaw et al., 2015). Scholars conducting Linguistic Ethnography integrate linguistic

and ethnographic approaches in their research on social and communicative processes (Shaw et al., 2015). The main synergy between these two fields is that broader ethnographic approaches get enriched by more narrow analytical frameworks of linguistics, and that linguistics, on the other hand, gains transparency from ethnographic reflexivity and sensitivity (Creese, 2010). In that line, Maybin and Tusting (2011, p.437) formulate that Linguistic Ethnography uses ethnography to “open linguistics up” through a focus on context achieved through direct field experience, and linguistics to “tie ethnography down” through precise analysis of language in use. These affordances were also leveraged in this research project, which combines ethnography's exploratory and open character with more systematic analytical frameworks inspired by (multimodal) interaction analysis.

### ***Three Paradigms of Linguistic Anthropology***

While the research tradition of Linguistic Ethnography has been developed mainly in the European context, it shares methodological approaches and theoretical interests with the discipline of Linguistic Anthropology, which originated in the US context as the study of language and culture (Maybin & Tusting, 2011). Duranti (2003) identifies three theoretical and methodological paradigms across Linguistic Anthropology's history:

The first paradigm of Linguistic Anthropology emerged in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when anthropologist Franz Boas conducted his research in North America (Duranti, 2003). Boas and his students documented both Native Americans' languages and cultural traditions, which were thought to be close to disappearing due to colonialization (Boas, 1940). In so doing, these scholars brought forward a view that put language at the heart of fieldwork and cultural analysis.

As Duranti (2003) points out, scholars of the second paradigm moved away from seeing language as a resource for the enactment and study of culture and instead approached the very organization of

language use itself as cultural (e.g., Ferguson & Gumperz, 1960; Hymes, 1963). Around the 1960s and 1970s, this school positioned itself at a distance from the simultaneously unfolding cognitive turn that made popular Chomskyan generative linguistics (Duranti, 2003). Hymes' 'ethnography of speaking' has been influential in studying situated language use rather than formal structure. It is characterized by a turn to context and the 'speech community' in which 'speech activities' take place (Hymes, 1964).

In the third paradigm, which developed from the 1980s/1990s onward, broader developments in the social sciences, especially a rise of social constructionist perspectives and an increasing interest in identities, were reflected in Linguistic Anthropology (Duranti, 2003). The construction of meaning and narratives as an interactional achievement (e.g., Jacoby & Ochs, 1995) as well as matters of language ideology (e.g., Woolard, 2020) and identity (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) became of central interest among scholars in the discipline.

The research presented in this dissertation mainly aligns with the second and third paradigms developed in Linguistic Anthropology and is, as such, also in line with Linguistic Ethnography. Linguistic Ethnography unites different strands of research, which all adhere to two main methodological tenets: First, the investigation of context as essential to approach meaning and second, the analysis of the organization of speech and other semiotic data (Rampton, 2010). The main interest is how individuals and groups use signs and, in so doing, generate referential messages and relations, i.e., the complex interweavement of language in use and social processes and their speakers (Wortham, 2008). In order to approach this dynamic language-cultural dimension, I analyze interactions taking into account the wider context of ECEC, informed by ethnographic fieldwork. The researchers' process of gathering and analyzing data is of central importance for generating knowledge in linguistic ethnographic research; as Blommaert puts it: "the whole process of gathering and molding knowledge is part of that knowledge; knowledge construction is knowledge, the process is the product" (Blommaert, 2006, n.p.).



Therefore, I also devote attention to how the insights presented in this dissertation were generated, for example, through co-creative processes with children (see especially Chapter 3).

### ***Language as Social Practice in the Material and Ideological Environment***

Extending this third paradigm, one strand of Linguistic Anthropology has started to draw on post-humanist theory, approaching language as distributed across different resources (e.g., spatial, material, bodily, linguistic) (Pennycook, 2017). This perspective highlights that meaning is shaped by the complex and emergent interconnections between different resources, which, taken together, form semiotic assemblages (Pennycook 2017). This line of thought pays close attention to the interconnections of the material and the social, and foregrounds relationality and entanglements as key drivers of meaning-making. The children at Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd engaged with the material environment of the ECEC centers, which became a part of dynamic language practices. For example, they meaningfully appropriated objects like a costume (Chapter 3) or toy building blocks (Chapter 5), which will be considered throughout the analysis in this dissertation. They also formed dynamic webs of relationalities with the logics (re-)produced in their ECEC setting, like language education policy (Chapters 3 and 6).

Approaching language as a social practice, this dissertation draws much inspiration from Linguistic Anthropology and Linguistic Ethnography. An important aspect of the present dissertation is, however, its situatedness in ECEC. ECEC presents an educational environment with particular affordances. Hence, this research project also links to Educational Linguistics and the Linguistic Anthropology of Education, particularly in the ECEC domain.

### **1.2.3 Educational Linguistics, The Linguistic Anthropology of Education, and ECEC**

Educational Linguistics is concerned with educational matters regarding language on the one hand and linguistic matters regarding education on the other hand (Spolsky, 2008). It emerged in the late 1970s as a transdisciplinary research field (Alstad & Mourão, 2021).

#### ***Language Education Policy***

One central concern of Educational Linguistics is language education policy (Spolsky, 2008). Spolsky identifies three interconnected elements of language policy: Common language practices, e.g., the choice of varieties, language ideologies, i.e., beliefs about how language should be used, and language management, i.e., attempts by institutions or individuals to influence the language practices or ideologies of a given community in controlled ways (Spolsky, 2004). This dissertation will discuss different ways language education policy can manifest in interaction, e.g., through negotiations in a play sequence (Chapter 3) or through constructing a multi-party participation framework through linguistic and other semiotic means (Chapter 4). As power dynamics between speakers and languages play a crucial role in language education policy processes (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), ethnography was particularly useful in studying the “subtle play of power differences in local and interpersonal contexts” (Canagarajah, 2006).

Linguistic Ethnography can contribute theory and methods to understand the (re-)production of social relations which unfolds across linguistic, social, and cultural processes in educational action (Wortham, 2008). Wortham defines the Linguistic Anthropology of Education as the study of practices in the context of formalized schooling through a particular linguistic anthropological lens that considers (more or less explicitly) the four elements of Silverstein’s (1985) total linguistic fact. Silverstein listed four components that contribute to the ways in which linguistic signs gain meaning in

interaction: form, use, ideology and domain (Silverstein, 1985). Concretely, this means an interest in how specific signs (*form*) are used in real-life everyday school settings by students, teachers and others (*use*), mediated by particular beliefs about language (*ideology*), all of which takes shape in a specific *domain* where individuals and communities recognize and act upon the indexical links between signs and ideologies (Silverstein, 1985; Wortham, 2008). This dissertation foregrounds different dimensions of the total linguistic fact throughout the chapters. For example, it focuses on the social meanings that Limburgish and Dutch generate (*form*, Chapter 4), highlights the *use* of songs as a resource (Chapter 5), discusses *language ideological* negotiations of peers and teachers (Chapter 6), and sheds light on the affordances of ECEC as educational *domain* (Chapter 3). Throughout, interlinkages between these dimensions are considered as well.

This perspective takes into account that, whereas language gains meaning locally in the classroom, this meaning is always linked to wider institutional and societal processes (Wortham, 2008). Educational institutions act upon hierarchical orderings of language, which are also represented in society. Simultaneously, they often contribute to spreading (often dominant) language ideologies in turn (Wortham, 2008). More concretely, educational institutions play an important role in, e.g., standardization processes, and many of them endow national languages with a higher value than students' other family languages (e.g., Moore, 1999; Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023). Bridging studies from two different ECEC settings in two countries, I paid particular attention to wider language dynamics and the respective ECEC systems, which will be introduced more in-depth in Chapter 2. For now, I zoom further in on ECEC research within Educational Linguistics.

### ***ECEC Educational Linguistics***

ECEC has received increasing attention within Educational Linguistics since multiple structural changes happened in the past few decades.

Michel and Kuiken (2014) identify three main changes: Growing numbers of children who attend ECEC, an increasing linguistic and cultural diversity across ECEC in Europe, and a shift from a focus on care to education in order to prepare children for the school system. Topics addressed from the realm of Educational Linguistics include teachers' language training competence (Michel et al., 2014), parental involvement (Cohen & Anders, 2020), early literacy (Holm & Ahrenkiel, 2022) and story-telling with an increasing focus on digital mediation (Merjovaara et al., 2020), support for children with specific language and communication needs (SLCN) as well as linguistic landscapes of ECEC (Pesch et al., 2021).

The research presented in this dissertation is related to linguistic diversity in ECEC, which can be considered an emerging field (Alstad & Mourão, 2021). ECEC is often the first institutional site where children get in contact with teachers and peers, and consequently with their language use as well (Schwartz, 2018). Sequential bilingual children are intensively exposed to the societal language for the first time in ECEC and are expected to acquire it there. It often takes several months until they begin to understand the new language and half a year or more until they actively produce this language themselves (Schwartz, 2020). An open and supportive attitude in ECEC towards the emergent multilingual child's family language(s) plays a central role in children's well-being as well as their language development, both for sequential and simultaneous bi/multilingualism (De Houwer, 2015). In times where many ECEC facilities like Little Sprouts (NL) and Good Shepherd (DE) are attended by multilingual toddlers, it is crucial that teachers are familiar with basic theory on multilingual development as well as language-supportive strategies (Kirsch, 2021). However, this does not always seem to be the case. Studies have found language education policy across different linguistically and culturally diverse settings to be commonly underpinned by what Gogolin (1994) calls a 'monolingual habitus' (e.g., Alstad & Sapanen, 2021; Evaldsson & Cekaite, 2010; Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023). Monolingual ideologies are also not an uncommon feature among teachers (Agirdag

et al., 2014; Young, 2017). At the same time, teachers often need to navigate contradictory institutional policies and linguistically diverse realities, posing a challenge for everyday interactions with children (Thoma & Platzgummer, 2023).

In this context, research highlights the effectiveness of professional development, indicating that teacher's beliefs and practices may transform through their participation in professional development activities, such as receiving theoretical input, observing others, and reflective practices (Kirsch et al., 2020). In addition, there are also examples of multilingual ECEC environments where teachers and children practice translanguaging (Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2020; Kirsch & Seele, 2020; Schwartz & Asli, 2014) or engage in multilingual circle activities, e.g., singing, translating and interpreting songs in different languages (Kultti, 2013; Kultti & Pramling, 2021). Kultti (2013) has shown that such activities can provide opportunities for language learning.

In general, the language education policy enacted is often not clear-cut in many ECEC settings and rather moves on a continuum configured between different ideologies and traditions of knowing (Zettl, 2019). This indicates that social and cultural, including ideological structurings and ideas, are influential for the ways in which speakers use language in ECEC, which will be further explored in this dissertation. The research paradigm of language socialization brings to the fore how these elements interact with the ways in which children become competent members of groups. The next section introduces this research paradigm, laying another key foundation for the dissertation by enriching the framework with regard to the emergent sociocultural dimension of language use, with particular attention to participation.

#### **1.2.4 Language Socialization and Participation**

When growing up, children do not only acquire language but they also get socialized into specific ways of using language entrenched in the intersection of language and culture. This process has been described by Ochs and Schieffelin (1986) as language socialization. Language socialization encompasses “socialization through the use of language

and socialization to use language” (p. 163), which is an essential part of children’s becoming of members of families and communities. The core of language socialization theory is that children and other novices acquire sociocultural knowledge through experiencing their caregivers’ and others’ different forms of language use on a continuous basis.

### ***Dynamic Participant Constellations***

Classical socialization theory has been criticized for implying unidirectionality and goal orientation. Language socialization theory, however, has always foregrounded that children’s participation is promoted but not determined by others (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). In the last decades, children’s participation in their language socialization and their agency have furthermore received increased attention (e.g., Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2013; Knoll & Becker, 2023; Schwartz et al., 2020). In consequence, language socialization has been understood to be a dynamic and interactional process in which children and their interaction partners, like teachers, parents, siblings or peers, influence each other’s actions (Cekaite, 2020). In this dissertation, I approach it as such and use it to understand language use in ECEC as a process in which children actively participate in dynamic ways.

Language socialization processes take place not only in one-on-one interactions like, e.g., mother-child interaction, which is a classical locus of scholarly inquiry, but also in multi-party interactions (De León, 2011). Hence, children acquire sociolinguistic knowledge and sensibilities as addressees but also as, for example, speakers, bystanders and overhearers (de León & García-Sánchez, 2021). Children thus learn across different positions on the participation framework. The analytical concept of participation frameworks, which captures constellations of participants, was originally introduced by Goffman (1979). It aims at capturing the dynamicity and multi-dimensionality of social interaction, proposing that interaction partners constantly move between positions of speakers, overhearers, bystanders, and addressed recipients (Goffman, 1979). Goodwin (1984) and Goodwin and

Goodwin (2004) have developed the concept further to include semiotic resources like bodily and spatial means. Charles Goodwin introduced the term ‘co-operative action’ (Goodwin, 2013) to account for a more fluid unfolding of interaction that exceeds positions described by Goffman, and draws attention to how participants build onto each other’s actions in the spirit of co-creation. Young children, for example, have been shown to co-participate in storytelling through bodily repetitions and choral completions (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018) or to initiate interaction through informings (Anatoli & Cekaite, 2023).

Drawing on this framework made observable the active participation of very young children who do not speak yet but use other resources for jointly shaping collaborative action with peers and teachers. Concretely, I approached their participation as part of interactional trajectories, which will be further explained in the next paragraph.

### ***Interactional Trajectories in ECEC Interaction***

Throughout fieldwork for this dissertation, it became clear that the majority of participant constellations in ECEC contexts is of multi-party nature. During a day at preschool, children are mainly surrounded by others, requiring them to navigate and position themselves in emerging action with peers and teachers as interaction-partners (Pursi, 2019; Strid & Cekaite, 2022). For this reason, studies in child interaction in ECEC contexts embracing the language socialization paradigm often focus on interactional trajectories that unfold either between children and teachers or in peer interaction. A wide range of topics is covered such as emotions like grief (Lipponen & Pursi, 2022) and joy (Strid & Cekaite, 2021), conflict (Burdelski, 2020), inclusion and exclusion (Strycharz-Banaś et al., 2022) or formalized group activities like circle time (Emilson & Johansson, 2013).

From a conceptual standpoint, this dissertation aligns with these studies, primarily focusing on the intersection of participation and linguistic diversity. Interactional child studies have shown that children

actively shape the linguistic environment and language norms of their ECEC group. To that end, Evaldsson and Cekaite (2010), for example, discuss how children in a Swedish primary school ‘talked monolingualism into being’ through corrective peer practices orienting towards ‘correct’ Swedish and through displaying Swedish language competencies. Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2013) describe how the use of the societal language Swedish tied in with the establishment of social order among peers as it came to index local norms of language use. Also in the multilingual Luxemburgish context, children were found to contribute to the maintenance of a monolingual norm by alternating their language to Luxemburgish in communication with the teachers (Simoes Lourêiro & Neumann, 2020). Lourêiro and Neumann’s study, however, also shows how multilingual children manage to carve out spaces to exercise their multilingual agency and, in so doing, undermine the language norms in predominantly monolingual ECEC settings. Cekaite and Evaldsson (2019) had related findings in the Swedish context, where they observed how children produced hybrid language forms and engaged in multilingual play to resist teacher-initiated instruction formats in Swedish. A recent phenomenon reported from ECEC attended by multilingual children in Sweden is the use of English as a lingua franca among certain peers where English is neither family language nor medium of instruction (Larsson et al., 2022). The children use English to shape peer relations, position themselves in social hierarchies, and ‘do friendship’ (Larsson et al., 2022). English has also been found to be a meaningful resource for some children in the scope of the research project at hand, which will be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 6.

### **1.2.5 Interweaving Approaches**

The research presented in this dissertation is situated at the intersection of the introduced approaches. It focuses on children’s participation and, consequently, draws on many research findings and concepts from language socialization studies. Similarly, it benefits from insights from



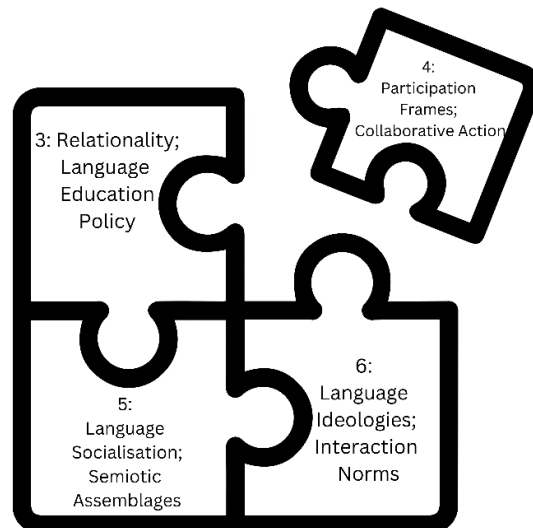
the field of educational linguistics, which provides rich background information on ECEC from a (language-)educational point of view. Deploying an ethnographic approach, the dissertation also builds on my own participation, interactions, and observations in the field.

Throughout this research process, several key concepts from the introduced fields proved helpful in theorizing children's and teachers' participation in linguistically diverse ECEC. As each of these concepts has different analytical affordances, different concepts are in the focus in each chapter. On a larger scale, these key concepts are interconnected, as discussed above regarding the chapters' relation to 'the total linguistic fact,' so that the concepts are addressed in different ways throughout the dissertation.

Taken together, the concepts and approaches of

- relationality and language education policy (Chapter 3)
- participation frames and collaborative action (Chapter 4)
- language socialization and assemblages (Chapter 5)
- language ideologies and interaction norms (Chapter 6)

serve as complementing puzzle pieces that, as a whole, form the dissertation.



*Figure 3: Conceptual puzzle pieces of the dissertation*

### 1.3 Roadmap of the Dissertation

After having introduced the research problem and question as well as theoretical and methodological cornerstones thus far, *Chapter 2* will discuss the local contexts of the ECEC centers, the methodological research design and process, and ethical considerations.

The empirical part consists of three chapters about language practices at Little Sprouts (NL), complemented by one chapter based on fieldwork at kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE). It starts with the exploration of the dynamic and situated nature of language education policy in ECEC through the lens of researcher-child relationality (*Chapter 3*). By discussing language education policy processes that manifest in researcher-child interaction, chapter 3 aims not only to shed light on children's enactment of language policy but also highlights the affordances of my own participation in the focus ECEC facilities. This methodological feature of the research project also comes up in the next chapter. *Chapter 4* focuses on multi-party interactions as participatory processes that children and teachers structure through their use of resources associated with Dutch and Limburgish and other semiotic resources. After foregrounding teachers' language use, *Chapter 5* directs the attention to the children as main actors again. Using the example of spontaneous singing in interaction, I analyze how children appropriate (Dutch) linguistic resources for their own interactional aims and creative language practices.

After an extensive discussion of the Dutch focus preschool across three empirical chapters, it results that while children and teachers shape linguistic diversity by exercising their semiotic repertoires in specific ways in participatory processes, they generally do not explicitly topicalize their linguistic diversity and language practices. This stands in contrast to the German case study at the kindergarten Good Shepherd. *Chapter 6*, therefore, highlights the complex meaning-making processes regarding linguistic diversity in this ECEC center. It particularly focuses on the ways in which children

and teachers negotiate language ideologies in daily interaction in the kindergarten.

As this dissertation is article-based, it brings together work accumulated throughout four years of research and, in addition, research from two different ECEC settings in two different countries. In order to benefit from the narrow focus of each article that leads to rich, focused insights while simultaneously mitigating the fragmented nature of article-based theses, this dissertation includes short interludes. These intermediate sections are intended to build bridges between the individual chapters. Finally, the *conclusion* connects the dots from all previous chapters to answer the research question ‘*How do children and teachers arrange for (non-)participation in linguistically diverse ECEC contexts on both sides of the German-Dutch border between Limburg and North-Rhine-Westphalia?*’.

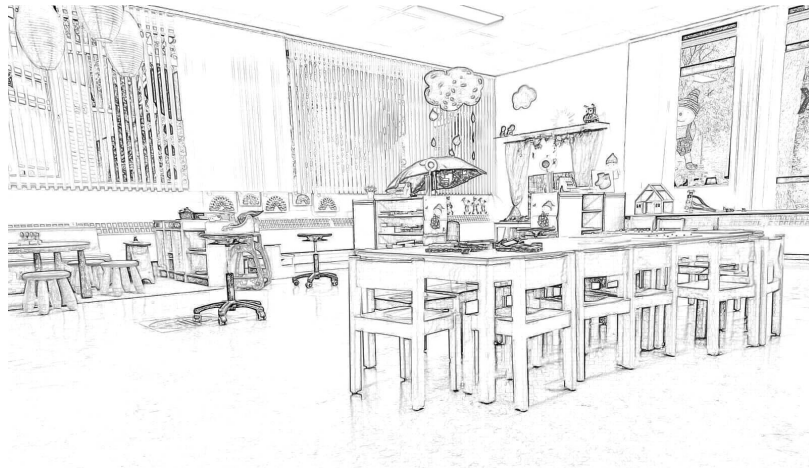
## **2. Research Settings and Methodological Considerations**

### **2.1 Fieldwork in Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd**

Language practices emerge in culturally and socially situated ways in Early Childhood Education and Care. Simultaneously, research on language practices in itself is also a culturally situated practice (Arzubiaga et al., 2008). To shed light on the research's social, cultural, and academic situatedness, this chapter delves into the contextual background of the research sites Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd and presents the research methodologies employed. This includes a discussion of the ethical considerations and analytical approaches. Additionally, I will shed light on my positionality within both the field sites and within the broader academic discipline. This chapter aims to establish a solid foundation for the analysis of the participatory practices involving teachers, children, and myself as a researcher in the ensuing chapters.

#### **2.1.1 The Field Sites Little Sprouts (NL) and Good Shepherd (DE)**

Fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted between autumn 2020 and spring 2021 in preschool Little Sprouts (NL) and in autumn and winter 2021 in kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE). During this time, I conducted participant observation, resulting in a total of approximately 170 hours of observations at Little Sprouts (NL) and 140 hours of observation at Good Shepherd (DE) (Fig. 5).



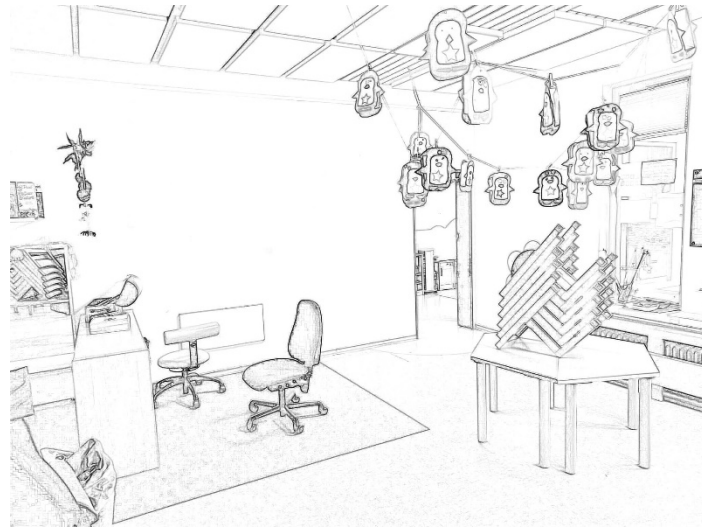
*Figure 4: Main room of preschool Little Sprouts (NL)*

In Little Sprouts (NL, Fig. 4), a team of two teachers was responsible for a group of 16 toddlers between 2;0<sup>2</sup> and 3;11 years old who spent their morning at the preschool. The composition of these groups changed across the weekdays, and children started and ended preschool on a continuous basis according to their age. In total, 23 children at Little Sprouts participated in the research over time. About half of the children at Little Sprouts grew up bi-dialectally with Limburgish and Dutch at home, and six also with other languages (Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, amongst others)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The age is indicated in the format *years;months*.

<sup>3</sup> Additional family languages were spoken by either parents or grandparents.



*Figure 5: Main room of the green group at kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE)*

Kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE, Fig. 5), in contrast, hosted four groups of children who spent their time on a full-time basis at the kindergarten, accompanied by three main teachers per group. Each regular group hosted 20 children between 3 and 6, complemented by one group of 10 children aged between 4 months and 3 years. The research presented in this dissertation focuses on one of the regular groups, named the ‘green group.’ 19 children of the green group participated in the research. Around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the children at the kindergarten grew up multilingually with German and at least one other language e.g., Polish, Russian, Romanian, or Arabic.

### **2.1.2 Observing and Documenting Language and Other Social Practices in the Field**

The processual approach of language as a social practice (Heller, 2007) that guided this research project resulted in a relatively open focus, which gradually got narrower throughout fieldwork. Such development is characteristic of ethnographic research processes, where observations help the researcher fine-tune questions and identify areas of interest that can lead to a more focused data generation (Blommaert & Jie, 2010).

Throughout this process, various modalities of data generation (audio, video, written) informed each other, considering that they each provided different affordances (Coffey et al., 2006).

Initially, I mapped out common daily practices, routines, and structures at the ECEC sites, paying specific attention to language use in a broad sense (see Blommaert & Jie, 2010, p. 29). Initial field notes and insights from conversations were documented in a small notebook during participant observation, following a 'participating-to-write approach' where the researcher demonstrates an orientation toward writing in the field. This approach emphasizes the interconnections between observing, participating, and writing, with the observation process linked to decision-making about what and when to write (Emerson et al., 2011, p.23). In this sense, taking notes was an essential aspect of the research process. At the end of each day of fieldwork, I transcribed the handwritten notes into a field diary, engaging in the practice of 'recalling to write' (Emerson et al., 2011, p.51). This process allowed for a deeper engagement with the observations, given that the field diary provided space for additional reflections, for example, on my own positionality.

In addition to providing researchers with insights into local day-to-day practices, participant observation offers opportunities for discussing observations and field experiences (Pritzker & Perrino, 2021). Hence, to provide context for my observations, I engaged in informal conversations with teachers and children about the practices I observed and made notes during these discussions. My approach was primarily to express interest in their choice of activities, leading teachers to often share their perspectives on specific tasks, their goals for these activities, and their observations of children's participation. The children also shared their perspectives on activities, such as describing their play.

To allow for an analysis of naturally occurring interactions as they unfold turn by turn (Goodwin, 1981; Sacks et al., 1974), I began recording audio alongside my observations several weeks into the fieldwork. I typically carried an audio recorder around my neck to capture various situations throughout the day at ECEC (see Blommaert

& Jie, 2010, p. 31f). When I encountered a situation relevant to my research, such as the use of different languages or comments about language use, I usually noted the time stamp of the recording directly. This allowed me to revisit the recording and make specific references to it in my field diary. Consequently, the audio recordings complemented the field notes, offering more detail on the speech and sound level, which was again enriched by ethnographic knowledge gained through observing and participating (Negrón, 2012).

As a third mode of data generation, I generated video recordings starting from a few weeks into fieldwork. Video recordings can capture the multi-modal organization of interaction and elements like body posture, touch, gaze, and the use of space and objects (Mondada, 2019; Streeck et al., 2011). To determine when to employ video recordings, I relied on previous observations that revealed recurring patterns in situations that would benefit from multi-modal analysis. For instance, I generated video recordings during circle time (see Chapter 1), where the complexity of interactions involving a large number of participating children made it challenging to fully grasp the dynamics through mere observations or audio recordings. Additionally, I ensured that diverse situations across the day were recorded from various perspectives, such as free play, mealtime, and circle time. This entailed filming from ground level, positioned at the same height as the children, as well as from above and from different proximities (Mitsuhara & Hauck, 2021). The placement of the camera certainly impacted the children's awareness of its presence, as the children were frequently drawn to interact with the camera when it was on their level. I often positioned myself close to the camera on the floor to prevent any damage to it when the children engaged with it. Filming from a higher level using a tripod sometimes proved less intrusive and allowed the generation of data on children's play in which the camera was less impactful. While I was typically present in the situations I recorded, I also created a few recordings of situations in which I was absent to gain a deeper understanding of how my presence influenced the data. Employing these methodological approaches, the fieldwork at Little Sprouts and



Good Shepherd yielded a rich ethnographic dataset, as summarized in the overview in Figure 6:

	Little Sprouts	Good Shepherd
Observations	±170 hours	±140 hours
Field notes	±50 pages	±30 pages
Audio Recordings	102:19 hours	68:54 hours
Video recordings	15:01 hours	11:30 hours

*Figure 6: Overview of data*

### **2.1.3 Shifting Positionalities in Participant Observation with Children**

At each visit to the ECEC settings, I learned something about the research participants, language practices and other social practices at the ECEC sites through participating and observing. At the same time, the children and teachers implicitly learned something about me and my research practice, which contributed to normalizing my presence over time (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). Since everyday life in ECEC is relationally constructed and ethnographic researchers in ECEC become part of this process, matters of positionality are insightful with regards to both research practices and the ECEC settings themselves (Raittila & Vuorisalo, 2021, Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Through discussing positionality, I account for “[data being] located on the researcher’s body – a body deployed not as a narcissistic display, but on behalf of others” (Pelias, 2004, p.1). In so doing, I underscore the relationality of ethnographic data, which also includes me as the fieldworker.

Prominent childhood ethnographers have shown that there is a multitude of positions that ethnographers can potentially take in the field. Acknowledging cognitive and physical differences between children and adults, Nancy Mandell (2003) coined the term ‘least-adult role’ in research with children. William Corsaro was accepted by children as a ‘non-typical adult’ whom they referred to as ‘Big Bill’ during his fieldwork in the USA and as an ‘incompetent adult’ by children during his fieldwork in Italy due to his lack of Italian skills (Corsaro, 2003). Ethnographers in educational institutions commonly

describe having a position that falls out of the standard categories of *student* and *teacher* (Lewis, 2003; van de Weerd, 2020). While I join in with this self-description in general, I commonly moved across shifting positionalities during a day of fieldwork. I often helped the teachers with small tasks like tying shoelaces, helping to get the children dressed to go outside, distributing food etc. Importantly, this helping position enabled me to justify for myself and others my presence in the ECEC centers during the COVID pandemic when they were generally closed for externals. At the same time, I also often played with the children in side rooms, on mats, climbing frames and sandboxes – spaces that were predominantly occupied by children. The children accepted me there and often let me be part of their play. In these situations, I could generate data on peer play in ECEC and gain insights through becoming part of these interactions.

In practice and throughout these different positionalities, doing fieldwork in ECEC for me meant *being with* children (Albon & Rosen, 2013). Sometimes, I engaged in *being with* children immersed in joint play, where it did not matter that I was an adult, but sometimes, children turned to me as an adult. For example, they approached me with tasks that were usually the responsibility of the teachers in the ECEC facilities. I decided situationally when to redirect the children to the teachers or when to assist them myself. Generally, I avoided sanctioning the children, so that I usually redirected them to the teachers with more severe conflicts. Sometimes, in heightened situations and when teachers were not in the immediate surroundings, I also mediated peer conflict. In such situations, I mirrored the strategies I observed the teachers deploying. Similarly, when a child was crying or hurt themselves, I consoled them. The children frequently called me ‘juffrouw’ (teacher) at Little Sprouts (NL) but also often invited me to join their peer play. At Good Shepherd (DE), teachers were called by their first names, and so was I. During fieldwork, I moved between participating more proactively and being more in the background, which is relevant information indicated for each case separately in the empirical chapters.

Another aspect of researcher positionality concerns the ways that the ethnographer interrelates with the phenomena they research: van de Weerd (2020), for example, describes how her own positionality as a Dutch highly-educated woman without migration background had an impact on the ways in which she used ethnic categories in interaction. Such ethnic categories (e.g., *Nederlander* ('Dutch person') or *buitenlander* ('foreigner')) were her main research interests. They were common in interactions of the students; however, she avoided them or used them with unease herself, which impacted the interactions she had during her research.

In the case of the research at the Good Shepherd and Little Sprouts, it is relevant to mention that I speak German as first language and learned Dutch starting from age 16. I do not speak Limburgish but understand it for the most part. While I speak Dutch relatively fluently, I started learning it as an adult, so that I lacked certain vocabulary that was relevant in the ECEC setting of Little Sprouts (NL), such as specific animals like hedgehogs ('*egels*') or objects like coloring pictures ('*kleurplaten*'). Additionally, I lacked certain sociocultural knowledge, e.g., relevant children's songs that were sung together. Hence, in Little Sprouts (NL), I sometimes asked the children for the name of something. This usually did not spark any further conversation or hinder our communication. The teachers sometimes commented that the fieldwork immersion in Dutch poses opportunities for me to improve my language skills. However, they only referred to Dutch with these comments and never encouraged me to learn Limburgish. I was also addressed only in Dutch throughout fieldwork at Little Sprouts (NL). This relates to common ideas that tie the authenticity of speaking the regional minority language to nativeness (Cornips, 2020a). At Good Shepherd (DE), I used German, my L1, as a main language. However, I also switched to English with English-speaking children at times in similar ways that I observed the teachers doing it, and sometimes used a few words in other languages when children referred to their home languages. Since I had a good command of the dominant languages of

Good Shepherd and Little Sprouts, my language background did not seem to have largely impacted my research interactions.

I included reflections on the ways in which I became part of the ECEC settings, in which the children, teachers, and I came to relate to one another, in field notes and approached these as valuable data, taking into account the situationally constructed and relational character of data (Bengtsson, 2014). In attending to unfolding (power-)relations between me as a researcher and the children and teachers in the context of Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd, I took seriously Xu and Storr's (2012, p.14) suggestion that "[b]ecoming partners in creation of knowledge means that qualitative researchers must become and develop as research instrument." This approach was central to my research from the very early stages of data generation onwards, which involved selecting field sites and negotiating access. The next section takes a step back to describe these foundations for the daily fieldwork activities, i.e., the negotiation of access.

## **2.2 Accessing Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd**

### **2.2.1 Accessing Preschool Little Sprouts (NL)**

The process of gaining access to ECEC facilities started on the Dutch side of the border in spring 2020. As Wanat (2008) highlights, negotiating access commonly involves several gatekeepers at multiple entry points. My first entry point was my supervisor who facilitated contact with a policy officer in the province of Limburg. Certainly, being affiliated to a local university and referred by a professor added to my trustworthiness. Harrison et al. (2001) identify the relation between trustworthiness and the reciprocity of fieldwork as a key dimension in negotiating access. In this case, the policy officer provided me with the contacts of two managers from different childcare organizations who advocated for integrating a stronger focus on Limburgish in childcare. In return, I promised him that I will inform the Province on my results after the completion of my study. Initial phone calls with the managers showed that, while many of the teachers in these

organizations were interested in the use of Limburgish in ECEC, they had not yet implemented a more structural approach yet. The ECEC facilities seemed suitable since they were bidialectal and also attended by children with other family languages than Dutch and Limburgish.

The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the negotiation of access, rendering research in one organization unfeasible. The manager of the other childcare organization still deemed fieldwork in her organization possible, provided that it would take place at a location where all adults can keep 1.5 metre distance of each other at all times. She recommended the location Little Sprouts and facilitated contact with Little Sprouts' two main teachers Lieke and Helena. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out that gatekeepers have the power to direct researchers towards certain areas of organizations while keeping sensitive areas off-limits. I indeed discovered during fieldwork that the teachers had a reputation for their smooth collaboration and organization of daily activities. However, the manager and teachers commonly emphasized structured language education activities to me, such as rhymes and gestures, as well as changes in children's pronunciation due to speech therapy interventions. While these activities and developments were interesting, the research project focused on participation and everyday language use in various situations, including informal interactions. Against this background, the teachers' reputation within the organization provided valuable information rather than posing an issue in selecting the fieldwork location.

The first visit to Little Sprouts consisted of a meeting with the two teachers. I introduced my research project briefly, explaining that I was interested in the daily ECEC activities and how languages (Dutch, Limburgish, and other family languages) are used in the pre-school. For this reason, I would like to take part in ECEC day-to-day, observe, and conduct audio and video-recordings. I also indicated that it would be crucial that the research stay would take place over an extended period of time, so that I really get to know the children and so that my presence

would be less intrusive. Furthermore, I explained that there will be a second field site on the other side of the German-Dutch border.

I was aware of potential power imbalances which might impact their decision to take part in the research since I had been referred from their manager (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Therefore, I underscored the voluntary nature of their participation. While the teachers were friendly and interested in the research, they presented themselves as a close knit-team and clearly indicated a preference for limiting fieldwork to two days per week. To respect the teachers' boundaries and maintain a positive research relationship, we agreed that I would conduct fieldwork on Mondays and Wednesdays. This allowed me to follow the same group of children who also attended preschool on these days. As I strengthened my trustworthiness throughout my participation during fieldwork, including reciprocal actions like helping out with easy tasks (Harrison et al., 2001), it became possible to extend my research period from initially planned 3 months to 4.5 months spread over 6 months (due to lockdown interruptions). This not only enabled me to observe the same children for a longer duration but also confirmed the feeling that I indeed managed to become accepted as part of the field.

#### **2.1.4 Accessing Kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE)**

On the German side of the border, the negotiation of access was slightly delayed due to the ongoing pandemic. In autumn 2021, I sought contact with a policy officer at the Youth Welfare office (Jugendamt) that I had identified as a potential gatekeeper. I was directed towards childcare organizations participating in a language profile project called 'Sprach-KiTas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist' (*'Language kindergartens: because language is the key to the world'*, own translation). This project provided funding for an additional staff member for the domain of language support for childcare facilities with an above-average proportion of children with a so-called 'special need' in this domain between January 2016 and June 2023. Practically, this

need was largely identified through the criterion of a so-called ‘migration background’, understood in this case as growing up with another language than German at home (Anders et al., 2021). The locations affiliated with the Sprach-Kita project seemed relevant for the research due to their linguistic diversity.

Additionally, they appeared accessible, assuming their interest in language aligned with their participation in the language profile program. This is a similarity with the Dutch case, where employees with a clear interest in diverse language practices facilitated my access. While this topical interest on the gatekeepers’ sides might have contributed to gaining access, the selection of the particular field sites of Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd still aligns with ethnography’s exploratory character with a focus on situated meaning-making (Atkinson, 2007), since they are relevant every-day sites of ECEC.

Initial contact with a speech therapist in a language profile kindergarten, arranged by the Youth Welfare Office, provided insights into the program but didn’t result in concrete fieldwork options. Instead, I independently contacted the manager of a childcare organization to introduce myself and inquire about conducting research there. The manager agreed to forward my email to staff members responsible for language support within the language profile program. A few weeks later, I received a positive response from the employee responsible for the domain of language support at kindergarten Good Shepherd, which eventually became the second fieldwork location. She expressed interest in the project and proposed participation to the location manager. After approval was granted, several visits to familiarize myself with the location and the team followed. The so-called ‘green group’ was chosen for the research because they had fewer children in their first year who were still in the familiarization phase with ECEC, where the research might have been disruptive.

Unlike the Dutch case, where access was more top-down, in this case, I was contacted by an employee of the kindergarten herself after facilitation by the childcare organization’s manager. This bottom-up approach eased potential power imbalances since the interest in my

participation came from within the kindergarten. However, the decision regarding which group I would join was made spontaneously during a team meeting. The kindergarten had a transparent and open culture, as the language support assistant frequently moved between groups and colleagues regularly covered for one another during absences. Nonetheless, I wanted to ensure the main teachers of the green group were comfortable hosting me, so I emphasized that their participation was voluntary (see e.g., Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). I also mentioned the possibility of readjusting the fieldwork plans if they did not give their consent. Fortunately, however, the three main teachers of the green group, were very positive about my fieldwork and agreed to participate, so that I could proceed to negotiating consent with parents/legal guardians.

### **2.3 Ethical Considerations**

Research in the social sciences always brings with it ethical complexities, but certainly, the involvement of children adds another layer of challenges. In order to ensure that this research is constructed in an ethically responsible way, I sought ethical clearance before the beginning of fieldwork. This process required me to carefully consider sensitive aspects of the study, the relationship between the researcher and participants, and data management. The Ethics Review Committee Inner City Faculties at Maastricht University granted approval for the project.<sup>4</sup> However, ethical approval is only the beginning of conducting ethnographic research ethically. As I began fieldwork, it quickly became apparent that I would face a variety of ethical decisions on a daily basis, ranging from considerations of when and what to film, to engaging in care tasks in the field, and explaining recording devices to the children. While some ethical considerations were established as a solid cornerstone of the research design before the start, others emerged

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<sup>4</sup> Reference: ERCIC\_204\_25\_08\_2020



on the spot during fieldwork, requiring me to practice “situated ethics” (Simons & Usher, 2000). This means that ethical decisions had to be taken in spontaneously emerging and unexpected situations. Since I became part of a relational web in the ECEC centers (see also Chapter 3), what ‘being ethical’ situationally meant was also (re-)defined in interrelation with participants (see also Dennis, 2018).

### 2.1.5 Gaining Informed Consent

A legal step that is not negotiable is gaining informed consent of the parents/guardians of participating children and of the teachers. In informing the parents, I took a multiple-step approach involving oral and written information about the research (inspired by Flewitt, 2005). In the Dutch case, in-person meetings at Little Sprouts were not yet possible due to the pandemic. Instead, I had a phone call with a parent of each participating child, in which I explained my research interest and data collection methods in simple (Dutch) language and provided the option to ask questions. Afterward, I sent out written information on the study and a form for informed consent (Fig. 7, see Annex A, B).



Maastricht, 12.10.2020

Geachte ouder(s)/verzorgers,

De Universiteit Maastricht, Leerstoel Taalcultuur in Limburg, is een project gestart met onderzoek naar het **taalgebruik op de peuteropvang** in de Duits-Nederlandse grensstreek. Het doel van het project is om te begrijpen *wanneer en waar kinderen welke talen op de opvang spreken en hoe kinderen samen leren met taal om te gaan*. Hiervoor loop ik gedurende vier maanden regelmatig als gast mee op [naam opvang], observeer en doe mee met de dagelijkse routine. In een latere fase zal ik soms audio- en video-opnames maken. Het management van [naam organisatie], [namen leiders] hebben ingestemd dat ik het onderzoek uitvoer bij [naam opvang]. Met deze brief wil ik graag uw toestemming voor de deelname van uw kind vragen. Deelname is vrijwillig.

*Figure 7: Extract from the information letter for parents of Little Sprouts (NL)*

Being aware of the sensitivity of data on children, I emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and included the option to opt out of specific modes of data collection, such as videos. At Little Sprouts (NL), all parents gave their informed consent, with three children opting out of video collection and/or dissemination. At Good Shepherd (DE), I visited twice before the beginning of data collection to introduce myself and have personal conversations with parents about my research when they picked up their children from kindergarten. These conversations took place mainly in German, and I adapted my language use according to the skills of the parents, who often did not have German as a first language. In two cases, I negotiated consent in English. I handed out information letters and consent forms and aimed to keep these understandable while simultaneously conforming to the formal GDPR which require certain information on data protection. For better accessibility and understanding, they were kept in relatively easy German and included highlighted texts through font sizes and bolding, as well as additional icons for the different modes of data generation (Fig. 8, see Annex C, D). Some parents indicated that they would read the form with the help of translation apps.

**Ich stimme zu, dass**



mein Kind an der Studie **teilnehmen** darf.  
Die Studie wird wie auf dem Informationsblatt beschrieben durchgeführt.



**Tonaufnahmen** von meinem Kind für diese Studie gemacht werden dürfen.  
Die Tonaufnahmen dürfen unter Wahrung des Datenschutzes gespeichert werden und Transkripte hiervon für wissenschaftliche Zwecke gebraucht werden. Die Tonaufnahmen dürfen auf Konferenzen für wissenschaftliche Zwecke abgespielt werden.



**Videoaufnahmen** von meinem Kind für diese Studie gemacht werden dürfen.  
Die Videoaufnahmen dürfen unter Wahrung des Datenschutzes gespeichert werden und Transkripte hiervon für wissenschaftliche Zwecke gebraucht werden. Die Videoaufnahmen dürfen auf Konferenzen für wissenschaftliche Zwecke abgespielt werden, wobei Gesichter unkenntlich gemacht werden.

*(Sie können durchstreichen, womit Sie nicht einverstanden sind.)*

Figure 8: Extract from the form for parental consent for Good Shepherd (DE)

I asked parents/legal guardians to give the letters to the kindergarten or hand them back to me within one week. At Good Shepherd, all parents/legal guardians, apart from one, consented to their children's participation. Both at Good Shepherd and Little Sprouts, I paid attention not to include the children whose parents did not give their consent in the recordings and documentation. For example, I stopped filming when they joined a peer interaction that I filmed or adjusted the camera frame to ensure they are not part of a recording of group interactions.

### **2.3.1.1 Protecting Children and Teachers and Paying Attention to Children's Cues**

I carefully weighed potential consequences for participants linked to their participation, as stipulated by the American Anthropological Association's first ethical principle, 'Do no harm' (American Anthropological Association, 2012). In order to protect their privacy, each participant received a pseudonym and visual data was treated with extra sensitivity, assuring that no information that would put the children's and teachers' welfare or security at risk is made openly available. In this sense, the use of visual images in outreach was limited to the degree relevant to the research communication and dissemination, resulting in line drawings (Flewitt, 2005, p. 559). Through these line drawings, important multimodal features such as body positioning, gaze, and the material environment remained visible and analytically accessible while the participants' identity is protected (see Fig. 9).

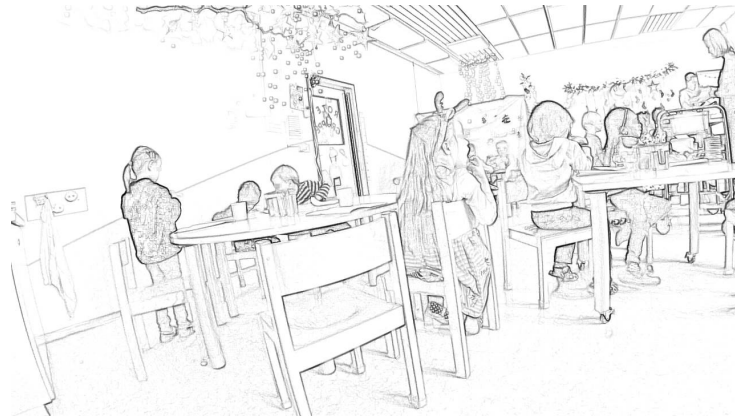


Figure 9: Example of line drawing from *Good Shepherd (DE)*

In order not to overwhelm participants with data generation and to prioritize building rapport, data generation was gradually built up. At both fieldwork locations, I started conducting participant observation and only jotted notes in a little notebook. Later on in fieldwork, first audio recordings were added, followed by video recordings. Since video recordings might be perceived as more intrusive, only specific activities during the videos were filmed and never a whole day (see also Flewitt, 2005). I paid particular attention to any cues indicating discomfort related to data collection on the side of the children, as discussed by Skånfors (2009). I took into account that emotions are expressed multi-modally (Ghaleb, 2021) and looked out for e.g., body postures indicating rejection or changes in facial expression besides verbal comments about the situation. Usually, the children were curious about the devices and recordings rather than at a discomfort. However, in a few instances, children covered the camera or turned away, after which I immediately stopped recording. In such situations, I also made sure to tell the children that it was good that they showed me that they did not want to be on camera so that I could stop filming in that situation. In this sense, what to film and what not to film was linked to my own personal understanding of privacy and respect, but it was also a negotiation of privacy that took place together in interrelation with children and the dynamics at the ECEC field site (Aarsand & Forsberg, 2010). In situations that I perceived as sensitive, e.g., when a child was

in distress, ill and resting, or changing clothes, I usually did not film but rather included observations in field notes if they seemed relevant for my research interest (see also Flewitt, 2005).

The generated data was managed with great care, conforming to the GDPR and the Research Data Management Code of Conduct of Maastricht University. Files were stored on the university drive and in a personal cloud for education and research in the Netherlands. For privacy reasons, raw and pseudonymized data were stored in a separate folder. Through these basic considerations, I comply with the American Anthropological Association's statement to protect and preserve the research records, prioritizing the protection of research participants (American Anthropological Association, 2012).

### **2.1.6 Creating Transparency in the Field**

Similar to informed consent, creating transparency is crucial to ethical ethnographic research. This includes both an openness about the research before fieldwork as well as throughout it (American Anthropological Association, 2012). After gaining parental consent, introducing myself in the field site seemed like a relevant opportunity to foster transparency for all participants, including the children. In kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE), I explained during circle time that I am interested in language in kindergarten and want to write a book about it, which is why I come regularly to learn more about the kindergarten from now on. The book became a common topic of conversation with the children throughout fieldwork, and children sometimes commented on my note-taking or asked questions about it.

While I wanted to introduce myself in a similar way in preschool Little Sprouts (NL), I had to reconsider how I could create transparency in alignment with the field site in that case, thus practicing "situated ethics" (Simons & Usher, 2000). There, one of the teachers took the lead in introducing me during a morning circle by simply announcing my name and that I would be joining the children to play from now on, leaving little room for more elaborate explanations. Being new in the

preschool, I felt it wasn't appropriate to interrupt and explain further in this situation. Instead, I sometimes mentioned during free play in smaller groups that I was taking notes for a book about the preschool, but the children's interest varied, as they often focused on their ongoing activities. Given that I had the parents' consent, I continued documenting and later on added recordings.

Regarding the recording devices, the teachers felt it was unnecessary to inform the children unless it was to instruct them not to touch the devices. Like this, I found myself in conflicts between fitting in in the preschool logic, navigating loyalty conflicts with the teachers and prioritizing transparency with all participants, including the children. This is a common concern in ethnographic fieldwork in schools (Russell, 2005). Again, I resorted to explaining children the purpose of my recordings in smaller groups during free play.

Overall, negotiating transparency entailed the constant balancing act between protecting research integrity and ethics while also integrating into the ECEC setting and building relationships with teachers and children. Research in educational settings is a social enterprise and, therefore always involves weighing up considerations that emerge situationally in the specificities of the research settings (Simons & Usher, 2000). Thus, ethical decision-making in this research was rooted in ethical principles of ethnographic research but also occurred on the spot, in interrelation with the dynamics of the field sites.

## **2.2 Data Analysis**

Aligning with the common analytical principles in Linguistic Anthropology, data analysis took place in an “iterative process of selection and interpretation” (Shohet & Loyd, 2022, p. 261). Consequently, initial analysis already began during the fieldwork stage, allowing preliminary observations and the emerging themes to inform subsequent observations and data generation. The iterative process continued in the main analysis phase after fieldwork, where I benefitted from a certain distance to the field to identify new patterns in the data

and employ different analytical angles to shed light on the dynamics of participation and linguistic diversity in ECEC.

### **2.2.1 Analytical Strategies of Coding and Key Incidents**

To follow analytical focal points and identify emerging themes, the field notes were triangulated with the audio and video data. To guide this process, a coding strategy inspired by Grounded Theory was deployed (Charmaz, 2006). Concretely, I first coded the field notes in an open process to capture occurring phenomena. Drawing on field notes allowed for contextualization work through connecting different pieces of information gathered at different times and places. Gradually, through observing on different levels, i.e., different times, locations, and situations, the scope of specific observations became clear in relation to other situations observed (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). For example, the process of coding made clear again the frequency of singing in Dutch only (Chapter 5), which, in connection to the wider observed language disparities between Limburgish and Dutch, became an emerging theme that I continued to pay attention to during observations and analysis.

Audio fragments identified as relevant in the field notes were logged and transcribed (see Section 2.4.2). Particularly, this concerned instances that involved a co-creation of meaning related to linguistic diversity. In addition, I also randomly selected audio recordings of entire days at Good Shepherd and Little Sprouts and carefully assigned emergent codes to the audio sequences using the analysis software ATLAS.ti (Fig. 10). Codes involved a combination of descriptions capturing various activities and events in the data, such as singing or putting on jackets. Intertwined with this, coding encompassed the level of language use, including aspects like repetition, warnings, and speech elicitation. While most of these codes emerged in the analysis process, I also paid specific attention to certain linguistic phenomena like repair, e.g., when a teacher corrected a previous utterance of a child, and code switches, e.g., when children switched between family languages and

the main language of the ECEC facility. Such phenomena were previously identified as potential areas of interest based on the literature indicating their relevance for participation and linguistic diversity processes in ECEC (Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2017; Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023).

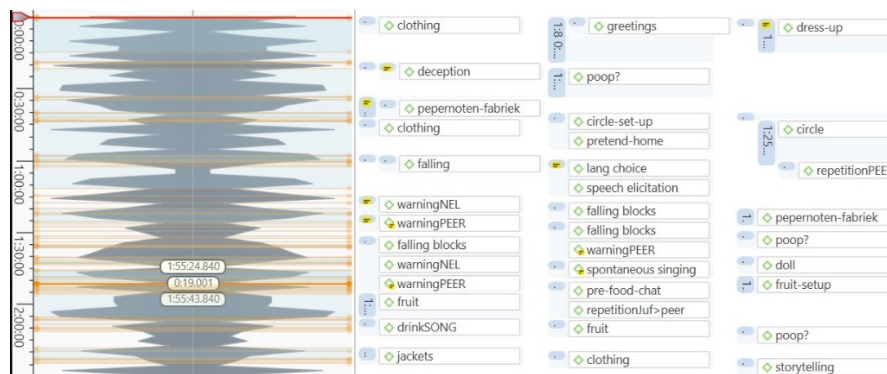


Figure 10: Example of audio coding in ATLAS.ti

Coding in ATLAS.ti allowed me to listen to collections of sequences labeled with the same code, and link these to field notes and video recordings when possible. The video recordings were repeatedly reviewed and annotated with participants' names, activities, and potential analytical foci. In this process, they were also linked to according field notes which often provided context information about what happened before and after a specific recording, what happened outside of the video frame, what was the role of the ethnographer etc. This process allowed a restructuring of the data from recording time to themes in the data. Alongside the re-structuring of the data, I wrote analytical memos which consisted of patterns, linkages between sequences and between codes, as a step towards abstraction (Bryant, 2017). These further elaborated the key foci like language variation in one-on-one and group situations, characteristic language practices in ECEC, like singing, which have a link to language hierarchies, and metalinguistic practices about linguistic diversity.

Complementing this more structural approach to data analysis, I also relied on the development of ethnographic sensibilities



(McGranahan, 2018) through noticing and working with key incidents in the field. Key incidents are suggested by Emerson (2004, p. 427) as “a strategy that honors and grows out of field researchers’ working sense that their analyzes are touched off by and tied to particular in-the-field events or observations that stimulate or implicate original lines of inquiry and conceptualization.” The more time I spent in Good Shepherd and Little Sprouts, the more I understood the meaningfulness of a particular event because I could understand it in context: For example, I classified an interaction with unusual language practices, e.g., the use of Albanian (Chapter 3), as a *key incident* against the background of my previous observations where the child in question had never mentioned Albanian in the ECEC day-to-day. Carefully documenting these key incidents through field notes, recordings and transcriptions and reflecting on them in the field diary and memos allowed me to further ground their meaning for the research and my own interpretations in other research data.

### **2.2.2 Transcription and (Multimodal) Interaction Analysis**

Based on the initial analysis of emerging themes and key incidents, relevant extracts for transcription were identified for each study presented in this dissertation. The transcription process involved multiple rounds, beginning with the production of rough transcripts for a written overview of the data. The early analysis benefitted from the coding of these rough transcripts as described earlier. As the analysis progressed, I generated more detailed transcripts using the software ELAN. The exact format of the transcripts varied slightly depending on the data type (audio or video) and the individual analytical objectives of each chapter.

Given the emphasis on co-creating meaning related to linguistic diversity, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and turn-by-turn. Inspired by the tradition of Conversation Analysis, these transcriptions included pauses, laughter, and other elements to investigate participants’ interactional trajectories (Jefferson, 2004). The

transcription and analysis of the video data were furthermore guided by a multimodal interaction analytical approach (Goodwin, 2000). As such, participants' use of linguistic and other semiotic resources was transcribed to enable an analysis of how the interactions sequentially unfolded, taking into account embodied means like gaze, facial expressions, body posture etc.

Importantly, as Green et al. (1997, p. 172) point out, “a transcript is a text that ‘re’-presents an event; it is not the event itself. Following this logic, what is re-presented is data constructed by a researcher for a particular purpose, not just talk written down”. Consequently, it must be acknowledged that the transcription process already required certain selective choices on my part. Due to the interest in participation and linguistic diversity, the focus of the analysis of the video data was on language use and embodied means like gaze, facial expressions, body posture etc. The level of granularity of the transcripts was carefully adjusted to strike a balance between accurate representation and analysis while also ensuring accessibility for readers (Hammersley, 2010). Different levels of nuance in the transcripts are analytically required to address the varying foci across the chapters, resulting in slightly different transcription styles across the chapters.

### **2.3 Producing Written Accounts**

The core of this dissertation is built upon the situated data generation during fieldwork, as well as the detailed processes of data processing and analysis as outlined in this chapter. These elements have served as the foundation for four academic papers, which have been published in international peer-reviewed academic journals in the fields of Multilingualism, Education, and Ethnography (Rickert, 2022, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c). As highlighted by Hyland (2004, p. 1), texts are the result of interactions. Throughout this dissertation, I do not only base my analysis on interactions observed in the field and interactions with the data, but also actively contribute to a specific scholarly discourse. This entails following a specific structured format of academic articles,

but also engaging in interactions with peer reviewers, editors, publishers, and readers.

Thus, this dissertation primarily represents a reworking of situated research findings into academic knowledge, rather than a mere representation of an external reality (Hyland, 2004). Furthermore, it is important to note that the purpose of my research extends beyond the individual and should not be interpreted as an evaluation of the practices and perspectives of any research participants. By closely examining the phenomena observed in the two Early ECEC settings which the participating teachers and children have shaped, my aim is to provide insights into the practices occurring on the ground and the broader thought structures circulating within the ECEC field.

### **3. “*You Dutch, not English*”: Exploring Language Education Policy in Preschool through Researcher-Child-Relationality**

This paper has been published as:

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It appears in this dissertation in a slightly re-edited form.

#### ***Abstract:***

This paper explores the dynamic and situated nature of language education policy in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centers through the lens of researcher-child relationality. Drawing on data from 4.5 months of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in a preschool in the Netherlands, one extended play situation that emerged between me as a researcher and a multilingual child is discussed in-depth. During our play, we interrelate with the preschool’s dominantly monolingual language education policy in multiple ways, ranging from manifesting it to challenging it, while we also constantly relate to the ECEC environment and each other. Relationality is suggested as a fruitful pathway to understanding processual and dynamic language education policy processes, considering both child agency and researcher agency as it constantly emerges and intra-acts.

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Linguistic diversity is increasingly common in Early Childhood Education and Care (henceforth ECEC) centers, with many of these centers now hosting children with a wide range of family languages (Michel & Kuiken, 2014). Frequently, ECEC centers pursue certain

forms of language management as part of their pedagogical guidelines. This vision, alongside the actual language practices in situ and the beliefs about how language should be used, makes up everyday language education policy (Spolsky, 2004). Language education policies in ECEC are configured at a field of tensions and move on a continuum (Zetl, 2019). Yet, it has repeatedly been shown that restrictive monolingual language education policies may impact multilingual children's well-being and language development (De Houwer, 2020, 2021).

The observation of daily interactions in ECEC presents a promising approach in the emerging field of language education policies and multilingualism in ECEC (Alstad & Mourão, 2021). Researchers conducting fieldwork in ECEC often take on different, sometimes simultaneously unfolding, social positions in interrelation with the participants and practices at the field site (Cekaite & Goodwin, 2021). Examples of such positions range from observers to authority figures and potential play partners, each developing in relation to children, teachers, and the (material and ideological) ECEC environment. From the perspective of Karen Barad's agential realism, it could be said that all of these positionalities, as well as the ECEC environment, are continuously 'becoming,' meaning that they do not pre-exist as independent entities but are rather being shaped in continuous processes of intra-relation. The notion of 'intra-relating' refers to a dynamic production of entanglements and mutual co-constitution (Barad, 2007).

The field of language education policy, thus far, foremost draws on more classical conceptualizations of social interactions. While interactional studies in this field show that children actively co-create, shape, and counter language policies in ECEC in situ with peers and teachers (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Skaremyr, 2021), emergent interactions, or, with Barad, intra-actions between children and researchers, have hardly been analyzed from that perspective (but see Almér, 2017). Yet, recent methodological approaches and theoretical developments in childhood studies have advanced a relational vision of

participation and knowledge co-creation in ECEC, highlighting the complexity of children's day-to-day lives, also characterized by a fluidity of power relations (Dennis & Huf, 2020; Spyrou, 2019). This line of thought might provide new pathways for studying language education policy. Therefore, I set out to explore language education policy processes in an extended play sequence between me and a multilingual child during my fieldwork in a preschool in the Netherlands. In so doing, I aim to explore how researchers and children mutually intra-act together with objects, space and policies involved, and might, thereby, also enact and explore language education policy together.

### **3.2 Language Education Policies in Early Childhood Education and Care**

Children take their diverse linguistic resources along as they move through their daily lives in contexts in which minority languages might be more welcome or less so, according to dominant language policies (Spolsky, 2017). As Spolsky defines, language policy entails language practices, i.e., the distinct use of linguistic varieties, language ideologies, and language management that is constructed in relation to these (Spolsky, 2004). While language education policy interlinks with power relations between groups of people and the languages they speak (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), it is also processual and dynamic and, as such, enacted and produced through language practices. Highlighting this dynamic dimension, McCarty (2011) describes language policy as “a situated sociocultural process – the complex of practices, ideologies, attitudes, and formal and informal mechanisms that influence people's language choices in profound and pervasive everyday ways” (p. xii).

Recent studies on language education policies have highlighted children's and teachers' agency in shaping language practices in classrooms and schools (Menken & García, 2017). In that sense, language education policy takes shape as ‘lived policies,’ which are plural and might be competing in education since they are negotiated, interpreted and implemented in daily life in and through language

practices in the classroom (Menken & García, 2010). Through participation in everyday language use, structured by specific language policies, children get socialized into dominant language ideologies, which frequently entail a status discrepancy between the societal language and minority languages (De Houwer, 2020; De Houwer & Pascall, 2021). Teachers are key stakeholders in language education policy processes, as, for example, Auleear Owodally (2012) shows for the case of multilingual Mauritius. There, teachers reinforce a standard language ideology through, amongst others, correcting children's pronunciation of a word similar in Creole and French to the French variant.

Recent work in the field has established children as agents of language education policy as well. To that end, Boyd et al. (2017) show how children contribute to ECEC language education policy by switching between different languages in ways that correspond to, yet sometimes challenge, the institution's dominant language policy. Also peers contribute to the emergence of language policy practices. An example is the restriction of access to peer play for a peer who lacks proficiency in the majority language of the preschool, which, in turn, hinders the language learning ecology amongst peers (Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2017).

Almér (2017) gained insights into children's beliefs about their own multilingualism by analyzing situations between her as a researcher and children in ECEC. The children raised the topic of their bilingualism in conversations with Almér in contrast to interactions with peers and teachers, as she was perceived and introduced as someone interested in language ("a language person", Almér, 2017, p. 407). This difference in topical choice led to the understanding that these children take their bilingualism for granted. With this pioneering study, Almér (2017) shows that intra-actions between children and researchers can be highly relevant to take into account in the field of multilingualism in ECEC.

Since the ways in which such intra-actions come into being is linked to the researcher's and children's positionalities and

participation, I will introduce recent pertinent debates from childhood studies and their implications for research practices in ECEC contexts next.

### 3.3 Towards Relationality in Childhood Studies

As a counterweight to studies *on* children, e.g., carried out through interviewing adults like their teachers and parents about them, ethnographic studies *with* children brought children into the picture as competent meaning-makers and “experts of their own worlds” (Christensen & James, 2017; Tickle, 2017, p. 66). Child-centered research practices often focus on children’s voices with the intention of creating authentic representations (Spyrou, 2018a). In so doing, they position children as knowledgeable and reflexive beings (Huf & Kluge, 2021; Spyrou, 2018b).

Recent discussions in childhood studies have called into question the understanding of knowledge that underlies such research approaches, which see knowledge as a product portraying a representation of reality rather than a process or practice (Spyrou, 2017). Inspired by posthumanist and new materialist ontologies, this critical movement within childhood studies foregrounds children’s interdependences with their surroundings (Balzer & Huf, 2019) and acknowledges that children are vulnerable and not independent entities (White, 2011). As part of this, it aims to account for power relations as they dynamically emerge in context-dependent ways as part of assemblages, a concept introduced by Deleuze and Guattari to capture the fluid and evolving (re-)configurations of diverse elements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; Spyrou, 2019). Consequently, for the field of childhood studies, post-humanist childhood scholar Spyrou instead suggests that “relationality may provide a fruitful (re)-orientation” (2017, p. 436).

A keen focus on relationality and connectedness yields new perspectives for an understanding of agency in research. Participatory approaches have long claimed to empower children by providing them with opportunities to participate in research, for example, through



drawing, taking photographs or showing the researcher a specific location ‘from their perspective.’ Being designed by adult-researchers, many of those opportunities might run the risk of locating child agency merely in the opportunities that the researcher provides the child with, especially if they are narrowly pre-conceptualized in the first place (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). However, children also exercise agency without the researcher needing to provide for it, and this agency emerges collaboratively as part of interrelations (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) report, for example, how children in ECEC appropriated their research methods and the researchers in unexpected ways, e.g., by demanding to draw on the researcher’s notepads with their pens, managing to direct their attention to specific phenomena and sitting in their laps during circle time when the researcher just wanted to observe and write notes. In this line, Spyrou (2019) influentially calls for researching children’s agency in terms of relational ontologies. As such, agency is acknowledged as relationally produced and enacted dynamically and, therefore, distributed in constantly emerging assemblages. In this line, agency can also be seen as ‘becoming,’ as it is continuously co-constituted in mutual entanglements as part of the according intra-actions (Barad, 2007).

Similarly, social statuses like researcher/participant can be approached from a perspective of ‘becoming’ as relational phenomena. In this vein, Dennis and Huf (2020) challenge adult-child binaries as well as researcher-participant binaries in knowledge production in favor of ‘relational entanglements’, in which the children’s as well as the researcher’s engagement in the research emerges constantly and dynamically in interrelation. Drawing on Barad (2007, p. ix, cited in Dennis & Huf, 2020), who defines being entangled as “not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence,” Dennis and Huf (2020) suggest ethnographic practices of ‘withness’ for research with children. Such an approach reconceptualizes participation as a joint endeavor, i.e., participation of the researcher in children’s practices and children

in the researcher's practices, in interrelation with other stakeholders and the material surrounding in ECEC.

### 3.4 Methodology and Reflections on Fieldwork

#### 3.4.1 Research Context, Fieldwork and Analysis

The empirical basis for this paper stems from 4.5 months of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in preschool 'Little Sprouts' in the southern province of Limburg (NL) between autumn 2020 and spring 2021<sup>5</sup>. During fieldwork, I conducted participant observation as well as audio- and video recordings for multimodal analysis and had informal chats with teachers and children. Parents of participating children and teachers gave their informed consent before the beginning of data generation, and the project received ethical approval from Maastricht University's Ethical Review Committee Inner City Faculties<sup>6</sup>. The main research interest was children's participation and agency in light of linguistic diversity in ECEC.

While I was sometimes more in the background, documenting my observations, the children often engaged me in emergent situational projects like ECEC routines, play, conversations etc. In my pursuit of a more linguistic approach, I was initially unsatisfied with my high visibility in the audio- and video-data. However, after a few weeks of fieldwork, I noticed that becoming part of the field in the ways that I did actually *added* to my research insights. Consequently, I started to pay more attention to situations that emerged between children and me during fieldwork and analysis. Following Emerson's strategy of analyzing so-called key events, I was particularly struck by one 'key event,' a play moment that the multilingual child Daniel and I co-created. This intra-action is the main focus of this paper. Working with

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<sup>5</sup> Data generation was interrupted by a lockdown, so the 4.5 months were spread out over longer. When the current COVID measures permitted, I visited the preschool twice weekly.

<sup>6</sup> Reference: ERCIC\_204\_25\_08\_2020

key events is “a way of grounding ethnography (...) that honors and grows out of field researchers’ working sense that their analysis is tied to particular in-the-field-events that stimulate (...) original lines of inquiry and conceptualization” (Emerson, 2004, p. 427). Drawing on this strategy, I parsed how the sequence unfolds across turns, inspired by an ethnomethodological approach. Ethnomethodology pays close attention to the ways in which participants structure their interactions and assign meanings locally and on the spot (Laurier & Bodden, 2009). Following the new materialist paradigm, I broaden the perspective to include the material surrounding and evolving agencies as well.

### **3.4.2 Introducing the ECEC Field Site and Child Daniel**

The preschool was attended by toddlers between 2 and 4 years old, typically on two to four mornings a week. The pedagogical team consisted of two ECEC professionals who self-identified strongly as working in the domain of Early Education in contrast to ‘just childcare’ (field notes based on informal chat, 02/11/2020). In line with their understanding of their work, the teachers enacted a strong school-oriented ideology. As such, the day at the preschool was tightly structured, and the teachers, for example, sanctioned children who did not adhere to the preschool rules, based on the reason that this would also not be acceptable in school anymore. This school orientation was co-created by the children who regularly uttered their anticipation to finally go to school or emphasized that their siblings, for example, already attended school.

The dominant language of the preschool was Dutch, which was also mostly spoken by the attending children. In addition, the teachers used the regional minority language, Limburgish at times with individual children of whom they knew their parents raised them in Limburgish. The teachers also used Limburgish to communicate amongst each other (Rickert, 2023a). Children themselves commonly

answered in Dutch when addressed in Limburgish. 6 out of 23 children<sup>7</sup> had an additional home language other than Limburgish besides Dutch, but they did not use it in the preschool. Due to the Corona pandemic, parents could not access the preschool beyond the cloakroom. These occasions presented the few times when I heard languages other than Dutch or Limburgish in the preschool: There, I heard parents speaking Spanish and a few words of Arabic to their children. If there was no possible way of communicating in Dutch or Limburgish, the teachers used English to talk to a parent, but never to a child.

One of the few children with an additional language to Dutch (apart from Limburgish) was Daniel, who plays a central role in this paper. At the beginning of fieldwork, I talked to Daniel's father on the phone in the process of establishing consent. He told me that the family mainly used Albanian at home ("our language," as he referred to it) and sometimes also used Dutch. The father also indicated that he found it important for Daniel's bilingual development that Daniel spoke Dutch in the preschool since it is the language of the society in which they live.<sup>8</sup>

Daniel was three years and nine months old at the beginning of fieldwork. As soon as he turned four, he left the preschool to go to elementary school. Besides Dutch and Albanian, Daniel also had limited knowledge of English. On my first day after I got to know him, the teachers, knowing my research interest, informed me that Daniel speaks Albanian with his parents. Following up, they critically added that he watches a lot of TV at home, which is 'where he got his English from' (field notes: 26-10-2020). In fact, Daniel sometimes used a few

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<sup>7</sup> All these children were born in the Netherlands and had parents (respectively grandparents in two cases) who migrated to the Netherlands.

<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, contact with the parents was very restricted in the preschool because of the COVID19-pandemic. For this reason, I did not have the chance to engage in more informal conversations with the parents outside of the initial telephone call.

words of English during play (e.g., ‘granny’ or ‘hold this’; field notes 16-11-2020) with me and with peers, but not with the teachers according to my observations. I never saw the teachers commenting about his English use to him directly, but throughout fieldwork, they repeated their comment that Daniel watched a lot of TV at home to me several times.

### **3.4.3 Researcher Positionalities**

In the field, I constantly re-negotiated my role with the children, teachers, and myself: On one hand, I wanted to be accepted by the children, and, therefore, not take on an authoritative role (Corsaro, 2003), but on the other hand, I was confronted with expectations on the side of the teachers, which I tried to meet by assisting them with easy tasks like helping to set up the arrangement for circle time, encouraging the children to tidy up or even mediating in peer conflict from time to time (see also Chapter 2). As the teachers often reminded me of the educational tasks they perform and expressed that it has consequences for the children’s behavior if I would be too lenient with them, I became part of the (re-)configuration of an adult-child-divide of the preschool.

Despite my orientation to a teacher assistant’s role, I often showed myself available in ‘children’s spaces’ during fieldwork (similar to William Corsaro’s strategy (2003)): For example, I frequently sat down on children’s play mats and engaged with, e.g. building blocks, toy cars or toy animals. In consequence, children also saw me as a possible play partner, allowing me to be part of their peer activities. In the next moment, however, the children approached me with matters that they would not ask from a peer of similar age but rather from a teacher, like fixing toy cars, tying shoelaces or even asking permission to play in a specific area.

Besides, my recording devices as well as my notebook had an impact on how I was perceived in the field. I explained to the children that I wanted to remember what we did at preschool and that I wrote down our activities and filmed for that purpose. The children, who were

very aware of the many rules in the preschool, used these rules to exercise power on me: One day, for example, I asked a group of children if I may join while they played with their toy cars on the mat. After they agreed, I sat down and jotted my notes, following to which one of them told me that “one may only be here if one has toys.” Subsequently, I stopped jotting down notes and started to play with toy cars (field notes, 25-11-2020).

### 3.5 Joint Enactments of Language Education Policy between Researcher and Child

This section presents the analysis of a play sequence between child Daniel and me, captured in a transcript based on the audio recording of the situation. Daniel knew me from my frequent visits to the preschool, which I had been doing for approximately 1.5 months at the time. I had played together with Daniel and his peers, and also with Daniel alone, on regular occasions before. The first time I played with Daniel alone, I approached him and asked if I could join him while was playing in a corner. This time, Daniel had asked me to play together with him in the topical corner of the preschool during free play, and I agreed.

The corner was decorated according to the preschool’s seasonal topic of Sinterklaas, as shown in Figure 11. Sinterklaas is a Dutch festival for the name day of Saint Nicholas on December 6. On the evening before, children (and often also adults) receive gifts, traditionally inside a shoe which they have positioned for Sinterklaas and his helper ‘Zwarte Piet’ to fill, as explained by the teachers<sup>9</sup>. In the

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Zwarte Piet’ (‘Black Pete’), the helper of Sinterklaas, is a controversial figure in Dutch Sinterklaas who used to be (and sometimes still is) portrayed by blackfaced white people (for a critical discussion see van der Pijl, Y., & Goulordava, K. (2014). Black Pete, “Smug Ignorance,” and the Value of the Black Body in Postcolonial Netherlands. *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 88(3-4), 262-291. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134360-08803062> The tradition of Black Pete was almost not problematized in the preschool, except for slight adaptations to one song to a more modern version. There were costumes

preschool, there were extensive preparations for Sinterklaas, including coloring shoes, crafting topical artwork, and singing different Sinterklaas songs throughout multiple weeks. When Daniel and I played in the corner, the children’s shoes were lined out in area C (see Figure 11). Additionally, there was a box with costumes of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas for the children’s free play time. No other children were present in the corner or the immediate surroundings while Daniel and I played there.

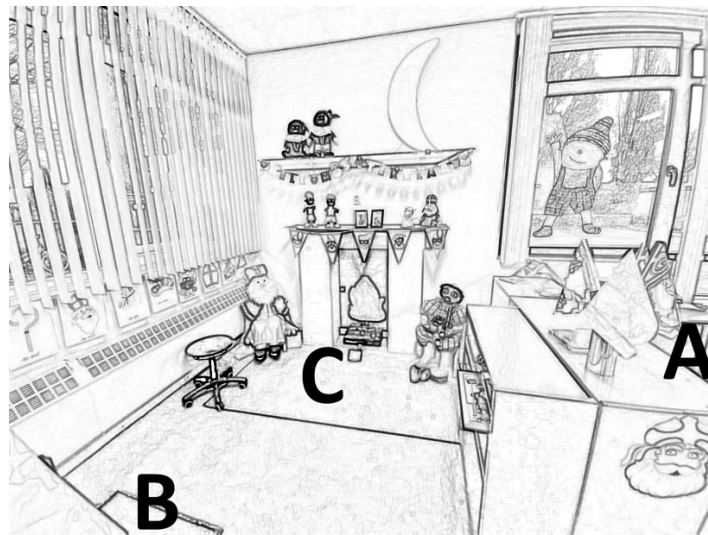


Figure 11: *The Sinterklaas-corner*

### 3.5.1 “So Dutch good”

Daniel and I play in area A (see Fig. 11), when I ask him if he speaks English. This question seems to come unexpected to him as it triggers a strong reaction on his side. In the transcripts and translations, English

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of Zwarte Piet and pictures and puppets of Zwarte Piet with dark skin but no make-up for blackfacing.

speech is marked in italics, Albanian is underlined>, and Dutch is unmarked.<sup>10</sup>

*Transcript 1: 'YOU Dutch not English'*

1	Daniel	Like this, then I can this one	Zo doen, dan ik kan deze
2	Marie	(quiet voice) Thank you. Daniel (1s break) <i>Do you speak English?</i>	(quiet voice) Dankjewel. Daniel (1s break). <i>Do you speak English?</i>
3	Daniel	(unintelligible)	(unintelligible)
4	Marie	(quiet voice) <i>A bit?</i>	<i>A bit?</i>
5	Daniel	(shakes head)	(shakes head)
6	Marie	(quite voice) <i>no?</i>	(quiet voice) <i>no?</i>
7	Daniel	(opens eyes widely)	(opens eyes widely)
8	Marie	<i>I thought you spoke English</i> (1s break). <i>What's your name?</i>	<i>I thought you spoke English</i> (1s break). <i>What's your name?</i>
9	Daniel	Daniel!	Daniel!
10	Marie	Ah heheh	Ah heheh
11	Daniel	Don't do- YOU Dutch not <i>English</i> .	Niet doe-. JOU Nederlands niet <i>English</i> .
12	Marie	<i>Why? Why?</i>	<i>Why? Waarom?</i>
13		then I can, mum, I can tell, 'Mum, Miss Marie says you can <i>English</i> , then says .hh 'not good'	Dan ik kan, mama, kan ik vertellen, "Mama, juffrouw Marie zegt jij kan <i>English</i> ", dan zegt .hh 'niet goed'
14	Marie	Yes?	Ja?
15	Daniel	Yes, not good!	Ja, niet goed!
16	Marie	Ah, okay	Ah, okay
17	Daniel	So, Dutch good	Dus, Nederlands goed

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<sup>10</sup> Languages have been marked in this way due to the proportions that the respective language were used in the preschool.



Knowing about Daniel's multilingual competence from the teachers and parents, I wanted to ask him where he learned English and what he could say in order to get his perspective. As can be seen in Transcript 1, I directly do so in English. With this approach, I initially aimed to include the child's perspective, as foregrounded by many participatory approaches (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). This contributes to my 'becoming researcher' at this point, relating to the ECEC norms by breaking them in terms of language choice, and Daniel's 'becoming participant' due to his reaction, which, in turn, is met with my interest. Instead of verbalizing his perspective, Daniel firstly expresses his orientation to speaking English in the preschool through embodied reactions: He shakes his head in negation (1.5) even though he had already used a few words of English with me on previous occasions, and after I ask 'no?' in English (1.6), he opens his eyes widely. Struck by his negative reaction, I aim to prove that he actually does understand English and probe an answer when I ask him in English what his name is (1.9). After he demonstrated that he understood my question in English by replying with his name, I respond with 'Ah,' followed by approving laughter (1. 10). In this way, Daniel and I co-create a so-called 'Initiation-Response-Feedback' (IRF) sequence. IRF sequences are a common practice in classroom discourse (Sinclair et al., 1975). In this IRF, I take the position classically associated with more institutional power and authority, i.e., the one who performs the question for known information (Daniel's name) and feedback (Mehan, 1979). Huf and Kluge (2021, p. 261) write that in ECEC, "child-centeredness is enacted as a performance of children's need to be educated," and I orient toward this logic through initiating the IRF in English.

Having been approached as a potential multilingual before, Daniel, however, gets involved in 'becoming Dutch speaking' again: He admonishes me, showing awareness that I had breached the informal language education policy to only speak Dutch in the preschool. His language policing extends from the explicit admonishment to a micro level, his use of Dutch instead of English, the language I had used

immediately before (Amir & Musk, 2013). In this situation, Daniel asserts his agency by relating to the language norms which count as valid implicit knowledge in the preschool. In so doing, he presents himself as more knowledgeable about language use in the preschool than I.

Evaldsson and Cekaite (2010) have observed similar practices amongst peers who asserted powerful positions through corrective practices and, thereby, ‘talked monolingualism into being.’ Here, language education policy emerges relationally with the ways in which Daniel and I situationally relate to language norms and each other. Our agential actions of me breaching them and Daniel re-enforcing them by admonishing me situationally makes tangible the language education policy at stake, which is part of a larger framework of intra-actions.

When I react to Daniel’s action by first asking ‘Why?’ in English but then repeating it in Dutch, Daniel refers to his mother. Language policy, for Daniel, is constructed in interrelation with the home and the preschool, where Daniel is supposed to focus on Dutch only. Daniel’s parents indicated to me that whereas they mainly speak Albanian at home, they think of the preschool as a place for Daniel to keep improving and using his Dutch on a regular basis.

Daniel makes the language ideological hierarchization of languages that underlies the preschool language education policy very explicit when he claims that my use of English is ‘yes, not good’ (l. 15) and then summarizes that ‘so Dutch [is] good’ (l.17). Dutch is the language of education, and the teachers in the preschool see it as their task to prepare the children for entering school. In their view, this includes the domain of language and Dutch proficiency, which, as Daniel’s strong reaction shows, might go at the expense of other multilingual resources, promoting an ideology of monolingualism.

**3.5.2 “You also speak Albanian?” – “No. Never”**

Still wanting to inquire about Daniel’s experiences, I subsequently ask Daniel about Albanian, which I know to be his family language. He reacts in strong opposition, as demonstrated in Transcript 2:

*Transcript 2: You also speak Albanian? – ‘No. Never, no.’*

- |    |        |   |  |
|----|--------|---|--|
| 18 | Marie  | And, mh, you also speak Albanian?   | En mh, je spreekt ook nog Albanees?  |
| 19 | Daniel | (looks at Marie with wide eyes) No. Never, no.                              | (looks at Marie with wide eyes) Nee. Nooit, no                             |
| 20 | Marie  | No? (quiet voice) Hey, I find it very nice                                  | Nee? (quiet voice) Ik vind dat heel fijn                                   |
| 21 | Daniel | Nice?   | Fijn?  |
| 22 | Marie  | I find it a beautiful language. But I can’t speak it.                       | Ik vind dat een mooie taal. Maar ik kan ‘em niet                           |
| 23 | Daniel | You speak <i>English</i> ?  | Jij kan <i>English</i> ?   |
| 24 | Marie  | Yes, I speak English. <i>I speak English.</i>                               | Ja, ik kan <i>English</i> . <i>I speak English.</i>                        |
| 25 | Daniel | Okay! Then <i>English</i> . (loud exhales, jumps several times on the spot) | Okay! Dan <i>English</i> . (loud exhales, jumps several times on the spot) |

Daniel looks at me with wide eyes and claims that he would never speak Albanian. Attempting to mitigate the hierarchization inherent in the scope of the language education policy that Daniel enacts, I tell him that I find it a nice language (l. 20), which he questions with “nice”? (l. 21). After I explain, “I find it a beautiful language. But I can’t speak it” (l.22), Daniel gets back to English, which I had used just before, and he eventually suggests that we speak English then (l.25). The relational trajectory in which I exercise my researcher agency by showing appreciation of Daniel’s family language leads to different participatory affordances than those in other social constellations in ECEC, e.g., with teachers.

While it has repeatedly been shown that children orient toward monolingual language education policies, there is also research underlining that children take joy in carving out informal and ludic spaces for multilingual language use (e.g., Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2019 and Chapter 6 in this dissertation). This also applies to Daniel: The idea of subverting the language education policy together with an adult in the preschool and using another language than Dutch leads him to gasp and jump several times on the spot (l. 26), probably as a means of excitement.

### 3.5.3 “Who can I call? My dad or granny?”

As the intra-action further unfolds, Daniel moves to area B in the corner (see Fig. 11) and introduces a toy phone into our play. After he has enforced a Dutch-only language policy, and I have signaled my more liberal language attitudes toward him through my use of English, my continuous interest in his linguistic resources as well as my valorization of his multilingual repertoire, he carefully starts to blend multilingual resources into our play as shown in Transcript 3:

#### *Transcript 3: ‘Who can I call?’*

26	Daniel	(takes a toy phone and sits at a small table, Marie joins him there) <i>Who can I call? My dad or granny?</i>	(takes a toy phone and sits at a small table, Marie joins him there) <i>Who kan ik bellen? Mijn papa of granny?</i>
27	Marie	<i>Mh, granny</i>	<i>Mh, granny</i>
28	Daniel	Okay (pretends to dial a number multiple times, animates the sound of phone dialling, then passes the phone to Marie). Here	Oké (pretends to dial a number multiple time, animates the sound of phone dialling, then passes the phone to Marie). Hier
29	Marie	I will speak? With <i>granny?</i>	<i>Ik ga spreken? Met granny?</i>

- |    |        |   |   |
|----|--------|---|---|
| 30 | Daniel | Okay  | Oké   |
| 31 | Marie  | Okay, <i>hello granny, my name is Marie.</i>        | Oké, <i>hello granny, my name is Marie.</i>           |
| 32 | Daniel | (whispers into Marie's ear) <i>Where are you?</i>   | (whispers into Marie's ear) <i>Where are you?</i>     |
| 33 | Marie  | <i>Where are you?</i> (2.3s break) She, she is home | <i>Where are you?</i> (2.3s break) Zij, zij is thuis. |

In Transcript 3, Daniel initiates a pretend-phone call and assigns me the role of talking on the phone (l. 28). Here, Daniel initiates a pretend-phone call and assigns me the role of talking on the phone (l. 28). When he asks me whom to call, he suggests ‘granny’ (l.26), switching from Dutch to English. Evaldsson and Cekaite (2010) have conceptualized code switches in such contexts as actions of norm-breaking, as Daniel uses a word from the language that he had just told me not to use.

When passing the phone to me (l.28), Daniel positions me as the one in charge of the language of the activity, and I speak in English. Afterward, Daniel subtly experiments with a subversion of the language education policy of the preschool, whispering the question ‘Where are you?’ in English into my ear (l. 32).

Here, Daniel and I carefully engage with one another as well as with the context of the preschool, where “childhood (and also adulthood) is simultaneously structuring and being structured in daily action” (Raittila & Vuorisalo, 2021, p. 360). I follow Daniel’s lead in the play, according to the child-centered logic of ECEC (Huf & Kluge, 2021), but I am in a more powerful position from an institutional perspective. As both of us are also influenced by a sense of the preschool’s language policy, we dialogically challenge this policy in our play: In relation to our positions, Daniel still explores the option to use English resources in play carefully, through whispering in English into my ear what I should say on the phone, and I say it out loud in the pretend phone call.

Yet, I as an adult and researcher, am also influenced by the dominant pre-school language education policy, and my awareness of

it plays a role in the choice of location where I playfully invited Daniel to engage with his multilingual repertoire in the first place. Considering spatial configurations as an important part of how researchers become part of the ECEC settings they are studying (Albon & Huf, 2021), it must be noted that the Sinterklaas-corner is not located centrally in the preschool classroom, so that other children and teachers were out of earshot during our multilingual play.

### 3.5.4 “Now my dad”

*Transcript 4: ‘One, two?’*

- |           |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|
| 34 Daniel | Home okay. Don’t call!<br>Now my dad, you will call                | Thuis oké. Niet bellen!<br>Nu mijn papa, jij gaat bellen.          |
| 35 Marie  | I will call? And what will I say?                                  | Ik ga bellen? En wat ga ik zeggen?                                 |
| 36 Daniel | Now will call, where you are, okay?                                | Nu ga belt, waar jij bent, oke?                                    |
| 37 Marie  | Where I am? Okay   | Waar ik ben? Oké   |
| 38 Daniel | Nee! Dad, my dad where you are, because he is home.                | Nee! Papa, mijn papa waar jij bent want hij is thuis               |
| 39 Marie  | Ah okay, where your dad is, ah! Say the number quickly?            | Ah, okay, jouw papa waar jouw papa is, ah! Zeg je even de nummer?  |
| 40 Daniel | <i>Mummy?</i> Mum? Mum? <i>Mummy?</i>                              | <i>Mummy?</i> Mama? Mama? <i>Mummy?</i>                            |
| 41 Marie  | Mum? <i>Mummey?</i> (pretends to dial a number on the phone)       | Mama? <i>Mummy?</i> (pretends to dial number on the phone)         |
| 42 Daniel | Ahaha (can/not) <i>English</i> speak                               | Ahaha (kan/geen) <i>English</i> spreken                            |
| 43 Marie  | Ah, <i>English</i> . <i>One, two?</i> (keeps dialing on the phone) | Ah, <i>English</i> . <i>One, two?</i> (keeps dialing on the phone) |
| 44 Daniel | <i>three</i>   | <i>three</i>   |

45	Marie	<i>three</i>	<i>three</i>
46	Daniel	<i>four</i>	<i>four</i>
47	Marie	<i>four</i>	<i>four</i>
48	Daniel	<i>five, six</i>	<i>five, six</i>

As Transcript 4 shows, following Daniel's initiation to call his father, Daniel refers to his mother again, this time both in Dutch and English (l. 40). After I questioningly repeat his words, it is unfortunately not clear on the recording if he says "Ah, **can** speak English" or "Ah, **not** speak English" (l. 42). In the situation itself, however, I understood Daniel's reaction as an encouragement to keep speaking English, which is why I subsequently say the numbers "one, two?" in English (l. 43), while I pretend to dial numbers on the phone. Daniel seems to see this as an invitation to continue to count in English, so he complements my counting with "three" (l. 44) and after I confirm through repetition of that number, "four" (l. 46) etc. Thereby, we co-construct the counting sequence as an Initiation–Response–Feedback sequence again (Sinclair et al., 1975). My questioning counting in the beginning (l. 43) forms the initiation, Daniel's continuation of the counting the response, and my acknowledging repetition constitutes the feedback. Giving shape to our intra-action in this classical, educational way, we jointly bring into being child positions and adult positions here, which give rise to 'becoming English-speaking.' Counting is an educational activity that is very frequent, for example, during circle time in the preschool. Through engaging in counting together here, we jointly include an educational activity in our play. Björk-Willén and Cromdal (2009) observed that peers in ECEC frequently engage in activities which "make normative forms of participation (...) relevant" (p.1516), showing an orientation to the instructional and educative preschool culture. Daniel and I do the same here. In so doing, we relate to preschool logic and endow the deployed English resources a value within the frame of the preschool, which they get through an academic activity like counting.

### 3.5.5 “Marie, we will count!”

Continuing the educational orientation, I ask Daniel if he can also count in Albanian next as can be seen in Transcript 5:

*Transcript 5: 'Marie, we will count!'*

49	Marie	And Albanian? Can you do Albanian as well?	En Albanees? Kan je ook Albanees?
50	Daniel	Okay!	Oké!
51	Marie	Ja?	Yes?
52	Daniel	Marie, we will count!	Marie, we gaan tellen!
53	Marie	Yes	Ja
54	Daniel	(starts to count shoes standing in front of a chimney for Sinterklaas) one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, nineteen, twentieth, sixteen, eightten, (nine)teen), ehm <i>nineteen</i>	een, twee, drie, vier, vijf, zes, zeven, acht, negen, tien, elf, twaalf, dertien, negentien, twentien, zestien, achttien, negentien, ehm, <i>nineteen</i>
55	Marie	<i>Nineteen</i> mh-mh, nineteen	<i>Nineteen</i> , mh-mh, negentien
56	Daniel	Nineteen, eighteen, ehm, he	Negentien, achttien, ehm, he
57	Marie	Twenty? And eleven, and twenty-one	Twintig? En elf, en eenentwintig
58	Daniel	And twenty	En twintig
59	Marie	(short break, quite voice) <i>One, two, three</i>	(short break, quiet voice) <i>One, two, three</i>
60	Daniel	(loudly) <i>four, five, six</i> , (more quiet) <i>seven, eight, nine, ten</i>	(loudly) <i>four, five, six</i> , (more quiet) <i>seven, eight, nine, ten</i>
61	Marie	A lot of shoes!	Vele schoenen!



When I ask Daniel if he can count in Albanian (l. 49), he agrees (l. 50) and proceeds to find countable objects, namely shoes which stand in front of a chimney. The children had colored these shoes before, as can be seen on Figure 12, and arranged them in area C of the topical corner (see Fig. 11).



*Figure 12: Colored shoes before they got arranged in the Sinterklaas corner*

Daniel proceeds to count the shoes, first in Dutch. Continuing to ‘seep education into free play’ (Björk-Willén & Cromdal, 2009) with an educational activity, I slowly start to count in English after we finished counting in Dutch together (l. 59). By doing so, I continue the ongoing action of ‘becoming researcher’ of multilingual practices, continuing to enact my interest in Daniel’s language skills. After I reached three, Daniel continues until ten in English (l. 60). Hence, after I gave him another confirmation that he may and is encouraged to use his multilingual resources in our intra-action, he also does so.

### 3.5.6 “Okay, you will be the Piet now”

I am still struck by Daniel’s negative reaction when I asked him about speaking Albanian. Hence, I set out to explain to him that I would also speak another language with my parents (l.65). However, Daniel has already decided on a new activity, so I let go of the conversation about language use, and follow his lead, which is to dress me up with a costume of Zwarte Piet that is available in the Sinterklaas-corner:

*Transcript 6: ‘Okay, you will be the Piet now.’*

62	Daniel	Ehm, Miss Marie	Ehm, juffrouw Marie
63	Marie	yes	ja
64	Daniel	You can (unintelligible)	Jij kan (unintelligible)
65	Marie	Yes, I speak, I also speak another language with my	Ja, ik spreek, Ik spreek ook een andere taal met mijn
66	Daniel	Okay, you will be the Piet now	Oké, jij gaat nu de Piet zijn
67	Marie	okay	Oké
68	Daniel	And take this one! (Daniel takes a costume of Zwarte Piet and puts it on Marie). Okay (short break). And Miss Marie? Now this one (gives hat to Marie)	En pak deze! (Daniel takes a costume of Zwarte Piet and puts in on Marie). Oké (short break). En juffrouw Marie? Nu deze (gives a hat to Marie)
69	Marie	Now this? (puts on hat)	Nu deze? (puts on hat)

In Transcript 6, Daniel wants to transform me physically and decides, “Okay, you will be the Piet now “(l. 66), which I agree to by helping him dress me up with a costume and a hat (l. 67-69). As individuals are formed through constant processes of intra-relating with others as well as the material surroundings (Barad, 2007), Daniel and I jointly transform me here. Relating me to material resources like the hat and the costume, Daniel performs an agential cut by reworking my body in the emerging assemblage.

**3.5.7 “Marie? Okay!”**

At that point, I intended to just continue playing with Daniel without trying to inquire more about his multilingual background. However, I find out that dressing up still relates to our multilingual play when Daniel eventually starts to count the shoes in front of the chimney in Albanian, as captured in Transcript 7:

*Transcript 7: një, dy, tre’*

70	Daniel	Marie? Okay! (Daniel turns to shoes and starts to count shoes in Albanian) <u>one, two, three, four, five, six</u>	Marie? Oké! (Daniel turns to shoes and starts to count shoes in Albanian) <u>një, dy, tre, katër, pesë, gjashtë</u>
71	Marie	<u>six</u>	<u>gjashtë</u>
72	Daniel	<u>seven</u>	<u>shtatë</u>
73	Marie	<u>seven</u>	<u>shtatë</u>
74	Daniel	<u>eight</u>	<u>tetë</u>
75	Marie	<u>eight</u>	<u>tetë</u>
76	Daniel	<u>nine</u>	<u>nëntë</u>
77	Marie	<u>nine</u>	<u>nëntë</u>
78	Daniel	<u>eleven</u>	<u>djëmbëdhjetë</u>
79	Marie	<u>eleven</u>	<u>djëmbëdhjetë</u>
80	Daniel	<u>-sta, eh, st-, eh, thirteen</u>	<u>trëmbëdhjetë</u>
81	Marie	<u>thirteen</u>	<u>trëmbëdhjetë</u>
82	Daniel	ehm	ehm
83	Marie	(tries to start from one again) <u>one, two, three</u>	(tries to start from one again) <u>një, dy, pesë</u>
84	Daniel	(unintelligible) Oh! Miss?	(unintelligible) Oh! Juffrouw?
85	Marie	Yes?	Ja?
86	Daniel	May I this (points at chimney) This one is not good	Mag ik deze (points at chimney) Deze is niet goed

The co-creation of a *Zwarte Piet*, embodied by me, allows Daniel to use his Albanian resources in this specific situation in preschool, something he had been very opposed to at the beginning of our play (Section 3.5.2). After Daniel and I had engaged in ‘becoming multilingual,’ establishing together that the use of multilingual resources is part of our play, he now wants to and does extend our play to include Albanian in addition to Dutch and English. I was physically transformed by putting on a costume, and, as such, became less of a figure related to preschool and more related to play, which, in turn, afforded the use of Albanian. By dressing me up, Daniel agentively arranged for a setting in which he can enact speaking Albanian and, in this sense, become manifest in our intra-action as Albanian speaker.

After Daniel has counted to six in Albanian, I start to repeat the numbers he says (l. 71-79). In so doing, we enact an orientation to instructional activities and learning again, but this time with reversed roles: I, as an adult in the preschool, learn from Daniel, the child. Daniel’s moves to dress me up are part of our play relating to language education policies and the careful in-situ becoming of multilinguals with specific repertoires and interests.

After I repeated the numbers after Daniel, he changes the focus again. Daniel addresses me as “Miss” (l.95), a common form used for the female teachers in the preschool, and asks me permission for something (l. 97). He orients toward me as an adult in the preschool again. This marks the end of our multilingual play.

### **3.6 Discussion and Conclusion**

Paying close attention to relationality in the field, including the researcher’s web of relationalities, is a constructive approach to grasping language education policy’s situated and dynamic dimension. As a researcher, I oriented not only to Daniel but also to the material and ideological environment of the ECEC environment that I was embedded in, and Daniel did so, too. In this way, we became entangled with language education policy as part of the intra-action. Daniel and I related beyond fixed categories of adult and child, researcher and

participant, but more dynamically as play partners and, importantly, as multilinguals with specific linguistic repertoires. As such, our joint play unfolded also in interrelation with language education policy as we engaged with it in a variety of ways through enacting it, challenging it, getting confronted with it, and subverting it. This process gave me as a researcher the chance to ‘become and develop as research instrument’ (Xu & Storr, 2012, p.14), as I related to language education policy in different ways myself, co-constructed with Daniel.

Dynamic language education policy became observable as a process, brought about in a delicate intra-action as part of which our agencies got entangled with one another. Hence, my own relating and becoming a researcher, play partner, and multilingual took shape relationally with Daniel, who enacted multilingual agency and, amongst other actions, performed an agential cut in which he used the material affordances of the preschool’s thematical ‘Sinterklaas’-corner.

Understanding this intra-action in its wider frame of the ECEC dynamics at hand, it became clear that for Daniel, the preschool ‘Little Sprouts’ is constituted as a monolingual (or bidialectal since it includes Limburgish) place to which his multilingual resources other than Dutch do not belong, and where their use is, therefore, ‘not good’ (Transcript 1, l.15). His initial language policing toward me constituted an enactment of a monolingual norm which he, similar as in the study of Cekaite and Evaldsson (2008), appropriated for organizing social relations, in this case with me. However, meaning-making in the preschool takes place as an assemblage, which can evolve and get reconfigured. In this situation, the malleable character of the embodiment of the researcher became visible, and the material environment of the thematical Sinterklaas-corner entangled with multilingual participation. As part of this, counting as an education-oriented format became an accessible way for us to integrate multilingual resources into our play in a way that is meaningful in the preschool context, which mirrors the strong educational orientation of the Early Childhood Education and Care setting in question.

As social settings like ECEC entail highly dynamic relations and processes, and each researcher and participant is an individual person in a different body with a distinct linguistic repertoire, intra-actions like the one analyzed in this paper are not predictable and plannable. An open attitude that accounts for children's agency by acknowledging children's active roles in shaping research encounters is needed in order to make such intra-actions meaningful for research. Such spontaneous, open-ended approaches require and enforce situated ethics, where ethical research is shaped together with participants on a moment-to-moment basis (Dennis, 2018) as researcher agency and child agency dialogically intra-act. When including analysis of assemblages that emerge between researcher and multilingual children as a research site, an open and reflexive attitude toward the researcher's relationalities with the field, the participants, and the phenomena at stake is key.



## **First Interlude**

As the previous chapter underscored, language education policy is a lived phenomenon that takes shape through participation in ECEC. As manifested in our intra-action, Daniel's knowledge of Albanian and English initially seemed out of place for him in the preschool. In contrast to home languages like Albanian, there are two language varieties that are very present in preschool Little Sprouts (NL): the national language, Dutch, and the regional minority language, Limburgish. Previous research revealed that Limburgish is mainly used in play and care contexts, whereas Dutch is used in the educational domain in ECEC (Cornips, 2020b; Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023). Continuing the exploration of children's and teachers' participation within linguistically diverse ECEC environments, the next chapter turns to the interplay of language dynamics involving Limburgish and Dutch and children's and teachers' participation.

Children spend large amounts of time engaging in multi-party interaction frameworks (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002). The following chapter focuses on such multi-party interactions in which different children and teachers jointly co-create meaning. The analysis pays close attention to speech, space, bodies, and material objects as semiotic resources, showing how meaning is co-created multi-modally. In line with the previous chapter, my dynamic involvement as a researcher is also considered.





#### **4. Bidialectal preschool: Enacting participation frames through linguistic and other semiotic means**

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It appears in this dissertation in a slightly re-edited form.

##### ***Abstract***

This paper analyzes how teachers and toddlers enact participation frames in bidialectal Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Limburg, the Netherlands. Teachers' language choice is often context-bound as they use the national language, Dutch, for instruction and the regional language, Limburgish, for playful or social-emotional situations with individual children. Drawing on ethnographic data generated during 4.5 months of fieldwork in a bidialectal preschool, this article addresses how teachers and children use the two language varieties, respectively, as well as other semiotic means to shape situational participation in multiparty interaction. The multi-modal analysis of selected video- and audio-recordings of interactions of two teachers and the target child Felix and varying other participants shows that teachers may use Limburgish to move into a personal conversation amongst colleagues in front of the children. In contrast, they use Dutch to stage conversations that they intend to be overheard by the children. Closely investigating children's orientation towards participatory statuses and their interactional consequences, it becomes evident that children co-create participation frames initiated by the teachers at times and subvert them at other times.

#### 4.1 Introduction

The southern province of Limburg in the Netherlands is known for the widespread use of the regional minority language, Limburgish, which is a cornerstone of the construction of local and regional identities (Thissen, 2018). Local dialects got recognition as a regional language under the umbrella term *Limburgs* (Limburgish) by the Dutch government in 1997. Limburgish may be used in ECEC in Limburg, in addition to the national language, Dutch (art.1.55, "Wet kinderopvang/Law on childcare,").

For children, ECEC, including preschools, constitutes the first step beyond the more intimate home sphere into active involvement in societal institutions. In ECEC, children between 2 and 4 come into contact with the language use of teachers and peers, which plays an important role in their language socialization (Schwartz, 2018). Language socialization is essentially the process of learning *to use* language in ways that are deemed socially meaningful *through the use* of language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986).

As prior research shows, preschoolers in Limburg frequently do not speak Limburgish in preschool but only Dutch, even when both parents and teachers, at least partially, use Limburgish with the child (Cornips, 2020b). Previous research has suggested a link between this phenomenon and the teachers' context-dependent code choice, where Limburgish is commonly used for emotional and one-on-one situations and Dutch for instruction and organization, especially when the whole group is addressed (Cornips, 2020b; Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023).

Such a context-bound code choice suggests varying participatory affordances for different children across daily situations in ECEC, especially since teachers are commonly aware if Limburgish is a home language of an individual child or not. Participation, understood as "actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk" (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p.222), is, however, not predetermined. Instead, participation frameworks are a common effort and achievement by speakers, hearers,

and other participants (Goffman, 1979). Participation frameworks describe the organization of constellations of participants orienting toward one another and toward an action at hand across different participatory roles (Goffman, 1979; Goodwin, 2000). Consequently, these frameworks are evolving situationally and dynamically, not only through linguistic means but also through the use of other semiotic resources such as gaze, touch, gestures, body positioning, as well as spatial and temporal means (Goodwin, 2007b).

This paper addresses how diverse forms and constellations of interactional participation evolve between teachers and children against the particular background of the bidialectal linguistic landscape of preschools in Limburg. Since participation frameworks are pivotal to the organization of language socialization, this paper sets out to investigate the role of Dutch and Limburgish, respectively, as well as other semiotic resources in toddlers' and teachers' shaping of situational interactional participation.

## **4.2 Local Background**

### **4.2.1 Limburgish Dialects and Dutch**

In the following section, I will discuss the use of Limburgish and Dutch in the Dutch province of Limburg and briefly introduce linguistic differences between the two varieties to facilitate a holistic understanding of the data in the local context.

Forty-eight percent of the inhabitants of the province of Limburg speak Limburgish (Schmeets & Cornips, 2021). Speakers may acquire Limburgish as part of their bi- or multilingual upbringing in combination with Dutch and/or other languages (Cornips, 2013; Extra, 2004) or, more seldomly, in the case of migrants from outside Limburg, as an L2 (Vousten, 1995). New speakers of Limburgish might, however, experience linguistic othering as they are not perceived as 'authentic' dialect speakers by the local population (Cornips, 2020a). Limburgish is foremost an oral language, but it is visible on a number of street signs (Thissen, 2018) and used widely on Social Media

(Jongbloed-Faber et al., 2017). Children who grow up monolingually in Dutch are generally likely to passively understand Limburgish due to its high vitality in the public domain (Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023).

On a syntactic level, a phenomenon that distinguishes Limburgish from Dutch (but not necessarily from varieties spoken across the national borders with Germany) includes the Ripuarian reflexive adjunct middle, as reported by Cornips (2013, p. 379) in the following example:

- |     |             |            |            |              |             |             |
|-----|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| (1) | Limburgish: | <i>Der</i> | <i>sal</i> | <i>singt</i> | <i>sich</i> | <i>legt</i> |
|     | Dutch:      | De         | zaal       | zingt        | (-)         | goed        |
|     | English:    | the        | hall       | sings        | (refl)      | easily      |
- ‘this hall has good acoustics’ (lit. ...sings well).’

On a morphological level, Cornips (2013, p. 380) mentions the formation of the plural through an umlaut, as exemplified through the example of the English

“bud/buds”:

- |     |                             |                |
|-----|-----------------------------|----------------|
| (2) | Limburgish (from Tongeren): | “knoep/ knüp”  |
|     | Dutch:                      | “knop/knoppen” |

Limburgish is further characterized by phonological differences to Dutch, which include a voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ in onset position (e.g./ɣ/ember, ginger) in contrast to Standard Dutch as spoken in the North of the Netherlands where a voiceless uvular fricative /χ/ is produced (e.g./χ/ember, ginger). The voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ is, however, also part of a regionally flavored variety of standard Dutch spoken in Limburg and marks Limburgians when speaking Dutch (Cornips, 2020a). Limburgish is an umbrella category that includes six

main variants, and high variation occurs between these variants, especially on a lexical level (Camps, 2018).

Speakers of Limburgish and Dutch commonly perceive the two varieties as “expressions of two distinct linguistic identities” (Cornips, 2020a, p. 7). In that sense, Limburgish is considered a ‘natural’ way of expression, mainly for the everyday informal, emotional, and/or familiar domain, whereas Dutch is understood as a ‘neutral’ language that is more suitable for formal affairs like business and education (Cornips, 2020a). Speakers may code-switch and translate between Limburgish and Dutch in socially meaningful ways (Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023).

#### **4.2.2 Early Education in the Netherlands**

After having introduced the two language varieties and the local context in question, I will now turn to the domain of Early Childhood Education and Care (see also Chapter 2). Official ECEC in the Netherlands includes daycare centers, preschools (so-called ‘peuterspeelzalen’ = toddler play salons), and childminders. Since 2018, all of these different forms have legally been harmonized under the umbrella category of childcare in the legislation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Parents, their employers, and the government share childcare costs by means of childcare benefits. The number of children in official childcare has increased from 447 720 in 2012 to 522 920 in 2019, with an average of about 58.6 hours of attendance per month in 2019 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020; Rijksoverheid, 2019). 89% of toddlers between 2.5 and 4 years old attended some form of childcare in the Netherlands in 2019, which implies that official childcare has a broad reach (Vroom, 2019).

Whereas daycare centers are intended for children between 0 and 4, preschools target children between 2/2.5 and 4. Preschools have a stronger educative character than daycare centers and explicitly aim at preparation for the school. Children enter school upon reaching the child’s fourth birthday. Parents can choose one form of childcare for

their children or combine different forms, so that some children go to both a preschool and a childminder or day-care-center. Additionally, certain facilities carry out specific early and preschool education programs. These programs entail early intervention, such as additional time for engagement in pedagogical activities in the preschool. They are attended by children who are considered to have a so-called ‘developmental delay,’ which might include the domain of language development (Rijksoverheid, n.y.).

### **4.2.3 Language Policies and Ideologies in ECEC in Limburg**

The national law on childcare was put into place in 2005 with the intention to better organize finances and introduce certain quality requirements to childcare (Vermeer & Groeneveld, 2017). The law defines the national language, Dutch, as the working language of childcare facilities and permits the use of the regional languages (Frisian, Low Saxon, and Limburgish) as additional working languages wherever these are “in lively use“ (art. 1.55 "Wet kinderopvang/Law on childcare," own translation). As discussed in section 4.2.1, Limburgish is clearly ‘in lively use’ in the province of Limburg. However, as common for regional minority languages, it is subject to strong language ideologies which attribute it to the family context and the cultural as well as the emotional domain (i.e., the ‘language of the heart’) rather than to educational and economic achievements (Cornips, 2020a).<sup>11</sup>

These ideologies are also reflected in language policies in preschools: teachers commonly use Limburgish to provide emotional support to individual children in one-on-one situations while they use Dutch to address the whole group, in instruction contexts, and to

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<sup>11</sup> It must be noted, however, that the boundaries between Limburgish and Dutch are not always clearly defined, as Dutch can phonetically resemble Limburgish sometimes, and speakers also use mixed forms.

structure the day at preschool (Morillo Morales & Cornips, 2023). This context-dependent language use has implications for the organization of attention as Dutch signals to all children to pay attention, whereas Limburgish only requires individual children's attention. Cornips (2020b) and Morillo Morales and Cornips (2023) have shown that children themselves co-create the dominance of Dutch in childcare facilities. Limburgish-speaking children switch to Dutch as soon as a Dutch-speaking child starts to interact with them. On the other hand, Dutch-speaking children never switch to Limburgish in order to learn it. Socialization into such language hierarchies at that age has been identified to be among the reasons that many children actively only speak Dutch themselves, even if their parents raise them in Limburgish at home (Cornips, 2020b).

This paper takes participation and co-operative action as a lens to better understand children's preschool socialization into the local diglossic situation. The following section briefly introduces this perspective.

### **4.3 Conceptual Background: Participation and Co-operative Action in Language Socialization**

Children's socialization takes place throughout their participation in a multitude of situations across different participatory roles (De León, 2011). This is in line with Goffman's notion of footing (1979), which constitutes a diversification of the traditional model of hearer and speaker, acknowledging that participation in multiparty interaction can entail different statuses. These different statuses, as they stand in relation to each other, can lead to a variety of participation frames (Goffman, 1979). Goffman's classification of different types of speakers mainly relates to intertextual complexities, calling into question who produces the talk (i.e., the "animator") and who is being quoted (i.e., the "author"). With regards to hearers, Goffman distinguishes between ratified and unratified hearers. The ratified category includes 'addressed recipients', i.e., those expected to orient toward the talk and take the next turn, and 'official hearers,' those who



are expected to listen but are not addressed directly. Bystanders whose participation is not ratified are divided into ‘inadvertent hearers,’ who overhear the talk, and ‘advertent hearers,’ who intentionally listen and eavesdrop on the ongoing conversation.

Language socialization studies have established that children are socialized into participation across different statuses of hearers, even when they are not in the position of the addressed recipient (Blum-Kulka, 1997; Chaparro, 2020; de León, 2011). Despite a long-lasting strong focus on dyadic interaction in language socialization studies, children commonly spend more time as participants in multiparty interaction than in dyadic interaction, which requires them to navigate different participatory statuses (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002). Children are also socialized when they are bystanders as they can pick up on social roles and different ways of talking, including the situational use of different language varieties, through observing changes in talk that produce (and are produced by) changes in participation framework (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002). In addition, overhearing has been found to be a robust means for vocabulary acquisition, and even children as young as two years old can closely focus on third-party interaction and draw from it for their own (language) development (Akhtar, 2005).

Multimodal studies have highlighted that participation relies on more than talk alone but is rather achieved through a combination of linguistic and other semiotic means like body positioning, gaze, touch, and gestures (Goodwin, 2007b). Furthermore, occasions for participation are dynamically emerging between speakers, hearers, and other participants and are not limited to the predetermined roles Goffman defines. To grasp the situatedness of participation as a common achievement by all participants who engage together in “constitute[ing] their life worlds” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p. 240), Goodwin has reconceptualized participation as co-operative action, a perspective this paper embraces. Accordingly, as people interact, they “inhabit each other's actions” (Goodwin, 2013, p. 15). This reconceptualization draws attention to the collaborative nature of participation and highlights the constant reflexive orientation processes

that speakers and hearers engage in (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p. 235). For example, Goodwin has shown how a teenage girl and her father collaboratively organize a homework activity interactively, using bodily, material and other resources to organize their participation and the activity (Goodwin, 2007b). Building on data of archaeologists making a map of dirt, Goodwin shows how gestures function in an environmentally-coupled manner when they operate on speech and other semiotic resources and vice versa (Goodwin, 2000, 2018b).

To that end, socialization sites that were traditionally seen as classical one-way-input settings have recently been reconceptualized from a co-operative perspective. For example, researchers have described how also young children agentively participate in early literacy practices like parental or caregivers' storytelling through gaze, verbal completions, and gestures (Burdelski, 2019; Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018; Evaldsson & Abreu Fernandes, 2019). As such, participation can take many forms, and language socialization is co-created on a moment-to-moment basis across a variety of participation frameworks across time (de León & García-Sánchez, 2021).

## **4.4 Methodology**

### **4.4.1 Research Objectives**

Based on the discussed research problem and literature, this study has the following research objectives:

- Understand the potential consequences of the use of Dutch, Limburgish, and other semiotic resources for the organization of collaborative action and participation frameworks, and investigate how children orient to different participatory statuses in bidialectal multi-party interaction in ECE.
- Understand how participation in everyday multi-party interaction in ECE contributes to children's language socialization into the diglossic situation of Dutch Limburg.

#### 4.4.2 Methods

Data for this study stems from 4.5 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a preschool in Limburg, the Netherlands, spread out between October 2020 and May 2021. I generated linguistic ethnographic data (field notes, audio- and video-recordings) in the preschool on two mornings weekly<sup>12</sup>. This study is part of a larger project on language socialization in the Southern German-Dutch border region, which has received ethical clearance by the Ethical Review Committee of Maastricht University.

The preschool is attended by toddlers between the ages of 2;0<sup>13</sup> and 3;11, most of whom attend twice a week, while some (those with an indication for early intervention) come four times a week. The usual group size is 16 children with two teachers.

While I conducted participant observation and generated data, my own role in the preschool used to shift situationally. Whereas I was mainly an observer in formalized situations like morning circles, I also assisted the teacher in easy tasks like handing out food etc. This facilitated my access in the preschool. On yet other occasions, I blended in with the children during free play when they welcomed me, which they commonly did— with or without my video camera. I took an ethnographic ethics approach of ‘practices of *witNESS*’ (Dennis & Huf, 2020), foregrounding my involvement with the community of the classroom. Such an approach leaves room for different positionalities at different times as a chance for building relationships with the children and teachers, and for learning through my own relational entanglements with them (see Chapters 2 and 3). I myself am not a speaker of Limburgish and usually actively used Dutch (my L2) in the preschool. In doing so, I certainly contributed to the (re-)production of linguistic

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<sup>12</sup> The data includes 102:19 hours of audio-recordings of formal and non-formal activities throughout the day and 15:01 hours of video data complemented by extensive field notes.

<sup>13</sup> The age is indicated in the format *Years;Months*.

hierarchies and specific participatory frames, which I will take into account whenever relevant in the following analysis sections.

The analysis section presents three extracts of multiparty interaction between the two teachers, Lieke and Helena, and a child, Felix, as well as other participants who vary across the extracts, including myself. Child Felix is raised with Limburgish at home, and the teachers are aware of this. In one-on-one situations, the teachers commonly address Felix in Limburgish. Felix himself predominantly uses a regionally flavored form of Dutch with a few words of dialect sometimes. Felix generally took a dominant position amongst the children at preschool as he was very proactive and talkative, and the teachers devoted a lot of attention to him. Focusing on his case provides for consistency in investigating participation frames as they emerge in multiparty interactions that include a child who understands both Limburgish and Dutch.

The examples presented result from reviewing multiparty-interactions between the target child, the teachers and others in the audio and video data. Upon making a collection of occurrences (see, e.g., Burdelski, 2021), I was on the lookout for changes in participation frames co-created between teachers and children that occur linked to code switches as I had observed its relevance for the organization of participation throughout my fieldwork. The cases discussed in the analysis section were chosen since they were found to be particularly rich for an analysis of the processes of intimation, staging, and subverting frames, which were a common theme throughout the data and will be discussed more in-depth in the upcoming sections.

## 4.5 Analysis

### 4.5.1 Switching Languages, Shifting Frames

In the following section, I discuss a situation in which teachers, children, and I co-create and orient toward different action that is unfolding simultaneously. Transcript 8 shows the transcript of a video-recording. In the translation, Limburgish is underlined with partly

dotted lines, while Dutch is not. This mode was chosen as Dutch occurs more often than Limburgish throughout the transcripts.

The situation at hand takes place just before the daily fruit break, which constitutes a relevant socialization site (mealtime, e.g., Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2019). Teacher Lieke and child Felix (3;6) stand at the classroom door and look outside to see if they can spot an easter eggs. The other children are seated around a table. Teacher Helena sits on a stool in the second row, and I stand on the opposite side of the table. All children, teacher Helena and me (the researcher), direct their attention to teacher Lieke and child Felix, who are initially looking for the eggs.

*Transcript 8: Hidden easter eggs*

*Lieke and Felix look for Easter Eggs at the door. All children sitting at the table look toward them.*

*Felix goes back to the table, Lieke toward the researcher.*

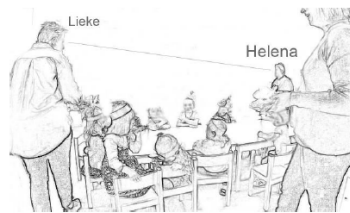
1 Felix ze zijn echt verstoppt. want ik zie ze niet  
They are hidden for real.  
Because I don't see them

*Lieke addresses Marie (researcher) and repeats that the eggs would be hidden, [Marie confirms.*

2 Helena [ze zijn echt verstoppt, want hij ziet ze niet.  
They are hidden for real,  
because he does not see them.

*Lieke walks back to her chair, Helena and Lieke keep gazing at one another.*

3 Lieke [had ik ook altijd  
I always had that as well



4 Helena [ja, maar daarom zie jij ze niet, ze zijn echt verstoppt.]  
yes, but therefore you also don't see them, they are hidden for real.

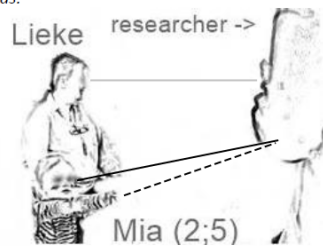
5 Lieke [ik kon ze NOOIT vinden nooit thuis. Nooit]  
I could NEVER find them at home. never

As teacher Lieke walks back to her chair, she gazes at her colleague to identify the intended recipient of her subsequent speech (Goodwin, 1981). Lieke says in Dutch that she always has the same experience (l. 3), i.e., as she explains, that she could never find eggs at home (l. 5). As can be seen in the picture, teacher Helena and teacher Lieke look at one another while teacher Lieke walks to her chair. Thus, they

“simultaneously display (...) and propose (...) a state of coparticipation in collaborative action” (Robinson, 2006, p.88). Teacher Helena expands her engagement in the ongoing action between the teachers through recycling child Felix’s explanation of why eggs could not be found. Felix explains in line 1: “They are hidden for real,” and Helena subsequently draws on this explanation when she tells Lieke: “(...) therefore you also don’t see them, they are hidden for real” (1.4). The repetition is used to enforce Felix’s reasoning in a joking way, as is common in recycling in classroom interactions (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004). Whereas the two teachers already talk to one another as Lieke and Felix walk back toward the table, this conversation remains linked to the prior action of looking for eggs as well as Felix’s (the ‘author’ in a Goffmanian sense, (Goffman, 1979)) involvement. As Helena connects to Felix’s prior talk and uses his sentence for her own interactional goals, she engages in a form of ‘format tying’ (Goodwin, 1990). Format tying is a form of imitating a prior speaker’s talk in a slightly adapted way in order to fit the current project. As the conversation, in this way, links to Felix’s involvement, children may, and also do, listen to the conversation. This participation frame changes when teacher Lieke sits down again, as can be seen in the next part of the extract:

*Transcript 9: 'These were the most beautiful moments'*

→ *Lieke sits down, looks to Helena. Mia (2;5), after turning around to look at Lieke, reaches out to Marie (researcher) who has wet wipes in her hands.*



→

*Lieke tells Helena how her father used to hide raw eggs on top of the door and asked the kids to open the door. Story entirely in dialect, only Helena orients toward it.*

*The children orient toward the distribution of the wet wipes and clean their hands at the same time. Child Felix initiates singing a song for cleaning the hands.*

6 Lieke m'n vader die, [echt, die zat daar zó kei in ah;AH ((DIA:)) dit woarn die sjoonste momenten hé, bie ons oh:: ja  
My dad, he, really, he was so into it ah;AH, these were the most beautiful moments huh, [at ours oh:: yes

7 Mia *(((turns around to look at Lieke, then immediately turns to Marie (researcher) who has wet wipes in her hands))*

8 Marie *(((starts to distribute wet wipes to the children))*

9 Lieke ((DIA)) en dan en dan waor het zo dat het en dan zagde de groote waoren bie oma (((DIA)) and then, and then it was like and then said the big one we were at granny's place ((keeps on telling story, shortened in transcript))

When teacher Lieke sits down, she keeps talking to her colleague Helena and also looks at her, i.e., away from the children, as can be seen in the picture of Transcript 9. Now, she starts to tell a story about personal Easter memories, directed at her colleague Helena. Teacher Lieke's switch from Dutch to Limburgish (1.6) marks the opening of a frame of personal storytelling amongst colleagues, in front of the children. Conversational storytelling can contribute to identity and group membership building (Dressel & Satti, 2021). Here, it contributes to the situational construction of adult and child identities, leading to a shift in the participation frame. This is co-constructed through topical choice as the theme of nostalgia that the two address by means of the story is not very accessible for the children.

While the two teachers speak in Limburgish, child Mia (2;6) initiates a second, simultaneous collaborative action. In the embodied participation framework, I stand in front of the children while child Mia faces me and the two teachers are located behind her. I have wet wipes in my hands as I am assisting the teachers with some tasks. Cleaning

the hands with wet wipes is part of the routine before eating fruit at the preschool.

As can be seen in the picture in Transcript 9, child Mia quickly turns around to look at teacher Lieke only to orient toward me afterward again. While gazing at me, she also reaches her arms out to me. Mia's reaching out can be considered an 'environmentally-coupled gesture' (Goodwin, 2007a) as it emerges and only becomes meaningful in interrelation with the material environment, i.e., it aims at the wet wipes in my hands. Following child Mia's embodied turn, I orient toward the collaborative action she suggested and start to distribute the wet wipes (1.8).

While teacher Lieke tells the story in Limburgish to her colleague, the children and I direct our attention to the activity of cleaning the hands now. In the sense of 'guided participation,' i.e., interactional routines that structure children's participation in multi-party interaction (Rogoff, 1990), the teachers usually sing a song while cleaning the hands with the children. Felix now agentively breaks with the hierarchy in the preschool. He supposedly remarked that the teachers themselves were not orienting toward the activity of cleaning the hands and would not initiate the song as usual, and consequently, he reinforces the activity himself through singing in Dutch (1.10).

The situation continues as portrayed in the following:



*Transcript 10: Song for cleaning the hands*

*Throughout her storytelling, Lieke gets up and demonstrates the location at the door. Child Finja wants to show something on her arm to Helena, who turns toward her and touches Finja's arm*

*while Lieke walks to the door. Helena keeps listening to Lieke and when Marie (researcher) approaches Finja, Finja turns around and shows her arm to Marie.*



10 Felix ♪ritz ratz roetze we gaan  
de handjes poetsen, ritz  
ratz ra, we zijn nog  
helemaal niet klaar♪  
((sings song for cleaning  
the hands, repetitively))

11 Leon & ((join in Felix' singing))  
Marie

Expressing our orientation toward the collective action of cleaning the hands, the child Leon and I start to join in Felix's singing in Dutch. Simultaneously, teacher Lieke keeps addressing her colleague Helena in Limburgish, keeping up the story-telling amongst colleagues the two have moved into. I, the researcher, actively participate in co-creating the simultaneous participation frames. I turn my focus away from the storytelling frame between the colleagues, which is co-created in Limburgish and actively shape the simultaneous participatory frame of cleaning the hands. Adding to this, I reinforce the activity by joining in child Felix' singing in Dutch. In this way, I also orient toward the action taking place in Dutch rather than to the one-on-one interaction co-constructed in Limburgish between the teachers.

At some point, the child Finja tries to claim teacher Helena's attention by showing her something on her arm (see picture, transcript 10). Only when teacher Lieke walks to the door for demonstration purposes related to her story-telling does teacher Helena take a quick

look at child Finja's arm. As soon as her colleague starts talking, she directs her attention to her again and keeps the connection to child Finja merely by touch. Teacher Helena thus engages in 'bodily emotion socialization,' mediated by the touch with child Finja (Cekaite & Holm Kvist, 2017), and simultaneously orients to her colleague's storytelling by gaze and body positioning. Looking away can communicate a low engagement in the collaborative action (Goodwin, 1981), and Helena shows a higher level of engagement in the storytelling of her colleague.

Shortly after, teacher Lieke's story comes to an end, and she bodily orients toward the group of children again:

*Transcript 11: 'I will never forget this'*

Lieke sits down again and turns body and gaze in direction of the table where the children sit.

12 Lieke hoa dit zal ik nooit vergäten RITS RATS oh heel goed poetsen, heel goed!  
 ((finishes story in dialect:)) hoa I will never forget this, ((NEL:))RITS RATS oh clean very well, very well

When Lieke sits down again in Transcript 11, she also gazes toward the children again (see picture in Transcript 11). She closes her story, and consequently the one-on-one-frame, in Limburgish: "Hoa, I will never forget this" (l.12). Then, when she redirects her attention to the collaborative action of cleaning the hands, she switches to Dutch by first joining in our singing: "♪RITS RATS♪," followed by the instruction "oh clean very well, very well" (l.12).

The example shows how the teachers might use Limburgish, in combination with other semiotic resources such as gaze, to move from a conversation in which the children are ratified into a personal dyadic conversation amongst colleagues. In contrast, they may use Dutch to signal their involvement in co-operative action with the whole group.

The example also illustrates that even very young children like Mia (2;6), who do not speak much yet, can successfully initiate new collaborative action through environmentally-coupled gestures. My position as an adult who orients toward this newly initiated action, as well as the subsequent singing in Dutch, legitimizes child Mia's embodied turn and responds to it.

#### **4.5.2 Staging conversations**

Regarding the topic and form of storytelling, the conversation between the teachers in the example of Section 4.5.1 showed many similarities to the personal conversations the teachers (and I as a fieldworker) had during lunch after the children had left. The two teachers are also good friends and warmly included me in personal conversations throughout my fieldwork. Usually, the teachers used Limburgish in such situations but sometimes switched to Dutch for me. I conclude that the personal conversation Lieke and Helena move into in Section 5.1 could also have similarly taken place, and importantly also in Limburgish, between the two of them independent from their communication with the children. However, in their work with the children, the two teachers also engage in another form of dyadic conversation. Namely, they commonly *stage conversations* between each other, which would never happen in the same way if the children were not present. In such conversations, the message the teachers aim to bring about is actually intended for the children to be overheard (Goffman, 1979) rather than solely directed to the other teacher. The teachers say to one another, in Dutch, e.g., statements like "I don't know what we can still teach them. They really know *everything* about the animals on the farm" (from field notes 05-05-2021).

The following situation is an example of such a staged conversation. At first, Felix explains to the teachers why you should run away when the Easter bunny comes, and subsequently, the teachers Helena and Lieke engage in a dyadic conversation about the same topic

as well as about the children's performance on the subject of Easter in front of the children.

*Transcript 12: 'When he comes we gotta run away'*

	<p>1 Lieke ((points to Felix and looks at Helena)) als hij komt moeten we wegrennen when he comes we gotta run away wegrennen?</p> <p>2 Helena wegrennen? run away?</p> <p>3 Felix JA DAN MOET JE EVEN STOPPEN want anders ziet hij ons en dat mag niet YES YOU GOTTA STOP because otherwise he sees us and that's not allowed</p>
	<p>4 Lieke ((looks at Helena)) wij mogen niet zijn wat hij verstoppt we may not see what he is hiding</p> <p>5 Felix nee. dat dat is een verrassing no. that's a surprise</p> <p>6 Lieke ((looks at Helena)) ja: ze hebben gelijk Ye:s they are right</p> <p>7 Helena ((looks at Lieke)) is een verrassing is a surprise</p> <p>8 Lieke ((looks at Helena)) ~ja ~yes</p> <p>9 Helena ((looks at Lieke)) dus ja, dan weten ze weer alles van het volgende thema so yes, then again they know all about the next topic</p> <p>10 Lieke fja sorry, f maar ze vroegen het. fja ik moet toch antwoord geven. fyes, sorry, f but they asked it. fyes, well, I have to give them an answer. f</p>

All speech takes place in Dutch in this extract. In the first part (l. 1-5), teacher Lieke aligns with Felix, who explains that you would have to run away when the Easter Bunny comes so that he does not see you. Teacher Helena takes a questioning position (l.2: “run away?”), leading to Felix's and Lieke's collaboration on the reasoning (l.3, Felix: “(...) because otherwise he sees us and that's not allowed.”; l.4, Lieke: “we may not see what he is hiding”; l.5, Felix: “no, that's a surprise”). Lieke and Felix enforce the argument mutually here, resulting in a triadic constellation in which Helena pretends to be in the learning position. Some of the other children follow the conversation and look toward the speakers, respectively, while others focus on finishing their fruit or taking looks into each other's fruit boxes.

In the second part, Lieke introduces a change in participation frame by starting to talk *about* the children to Helena rather than *with* them. This manifests in her use of the third person plural when she says “(...) they are right” (l. 6). With the personal pronoun ‘ze/they’, Lieke refers to all children here, even though it was only Felix who explained how to behave when seeing the Easter Bunny. Now, a participation frame unfolds in which the two teachers play an active, conversing role while the whole group of children becomes intended overhearers. From a language socialization perspective, overhearing is an exercise in observation, attention, and inference as well as participation for young children (De León, 2011).

Helena again animates Felix’s prior explanation of hidden eggs being a surprise (l. 7). By then, most children direct their attention toward the teachers’ conversation, as seen in the second picture. One child even turns around to look to the teachers and participate in the ongoing action in an embodied way. The two children who do not seem to follow the teachers’ conversation are aged 2;6 and 2;8, respectively, and are not yet socialized into the organization of attention to the same extent as the others. In the last two utterances of the excerpt, the teachers indirectly praise the children for their knowledge, jokingly expressed in the form of a pretend complaint by Helena: “(...) then again, they know all about the next topic” (l.9), and a pretend-justification by Lieke: “yes well, they asked (...) I have to give them an answer” (l.10). I suggest the terms ‘pretend-complaint’ and ‘pretend-justification’ here as the acts are clearly staged and performed on issues which do not require a serious complaint or justification.

In contrast to the situation discussed in Section 4.5.1, where the teachers moved into a personal conversation in front of the children, the conversation between the teachers in the example at hand is not intimised as they seem to intend the children to hear their praises. This is enacted, in one way, by the use of Dutch instead of Limburgish. Dutch is the variety the teachers usually use to communicate to the whole group, and Limburgish is the teachers’ default variety for personal conversations. The teachers’ bodily orientation also suggests

ratified participation on the side of the children. This can be seen in the second picture of Transcript 12, in which Lieke and Helena do not change their body positioning but just gaze at one another as they move from the triadic conversation with Felix into the part where only the two of them speak. Their way of talking *about* the children using the third person plural, however, makes clear that the situation turned into a dyadic conversation between the teachers now. The children may and should participate as ratified *listeners* but are not expected to participate as *speakers*, also since the teachers do not gaze at the children but instead at one another. Most children take up their role as *overhearers* by silent participation as well as their bodily alignment and gaze toward the teachers.

### 4.5.3 Subverting Frames

The previous examples demonstrated how participation frames initiated by the teachers were largely co-created by the children who (re-)organized their attention in correspondence to the emerging frames. However, children are agentive beings who can also challenge frames and claim different forms of participation for themselves (Schwartz, 2018). Section 4.5.1 showed how children actively initiated and co-constructed a simultaneous frame to an intimated one between the teachers. In what follows, I discuss how a child challenges a frame that is being established between the adults in the preschool and claims participation in their interaction.

The audio-recorded situation takes place during pick-up time at the end of the day at preschool. The children and teacher Helena stand in front of the window to spot arriving parents. Teacher Lieke accompanies children whose parents have arrived at the gate. In the following, Felix and teacher Helena discuss by which means of transport Felix's mum would come when teacher Lieke enters the classroom after having brought the child Ilya to his dad:

*Transcript 13: 'That's not possible!'*

A: child-teacher NEL	{	1 Felix	denk jij dat dat mama met de auto ( )? Dat mama met de auto komt_
			<b>Do you think that mum ( ) with the car? That mum comes with the car?</b>
		2 Helena	Nee! Mama, misschien misschien komt Mama toch met de fiets, heeft ze de jas aan
			<b>No! Maybe maybe mum will come by bike, she wears the jacket</b>
B: teacher/colleague-frame DIA	{	3 Lieke	((enters the classroom; DIA)) den Ilya kennse den gansen dag hier laoten
			<u>((DIA)) You can leave Ilya here the whole day</u>
		4 Helena	ja
			<u>yes</u>
		5 Lieke	((DIA)) dat maakte [dem [niets oet
			<u>((DIA)) that would [not [bother him</u>
		6 Marie	[nee?
			[no?
		7 Helena	[[((DIA))gijt met jou mee zääter al
			<u>[[((DIA)) he goes with you he already said</u>
		8 Lieke	((DIA)) dat maakt'm allemaol niks oet. hōbben die allemaol gehad
			<u>((DIA)) All of this doesn't bother him. all of them had that</u>
C: child claims participation NEL	{	9 Felix	((turns around)) ECHT??
			<b>((turns around)) REALLY??</b>
		10 Helena	((flinches and looks at Felix)) p[s:::
		11 Marie	[hehehehehe
		12 Felix	°dat kan toch niet.° juffrouw Helena >je hebt toch< een heel klein autotje
			<b>° but that's not possible° teacher Helena &gt;you do have &lt; a very small carDIM</b>
		13 Helena	°ja°
			<b>°yes°</b>
		14 Marie	AH dat kan niet
			<b>AH that's not possible</b>
		15 Helena	↑↑ik heb toch een hele kleine auto
			<b>↑↑I do have a very small car</b>

As annotated on the left side of the transcript, the situation unfolds in three major frames. In part A, child Felix discusses with teacher Helena if his mother will pick him up by car or rather by bike. The conversation between the two of them takes place in Dutch. When teacher Lieke enters the classroom (part B), she starts to engage her colleague Helena in a conversation amongst colleagues and adults in Limburgish. Here, the two teachers comment on the child Ilya's positive attitude toward

staying at preschool. Helena reports that Ilya would even have already said he would go home with teacher Lieke, information that child Felix alludes to subsequently. Part 3 of the situation is marked by Felix turning around to orient to the teachers and loudly, in Dutch, asking, “Really?” (1.9). After he joined the conversation, it proceeds in Dutch.

When teacher Lieke first enters the classroom, she and her colleague Helena enact an inter-adult/colleague frame in a comparable way, as discussed in Section 4.5.2. They talk in Limburgish and additionally embark on a topic pertinent to their teacher role, i.e., an observation of the children’s behavior. I, as an adult in the preschool, feel eligible to participate in the conversation and contribute with a confirmative question “No?” in line 6. While my participation seems legitimated as it does not lead to any emotional interactional consequences by the teachers, Felix’s sudden active participation seems out of place in the conversation. As he turns around and suddenly asks, “Really?” in Dutch (1.9), he subverts the participation frame that was previously mainly achieved by the teachers in Limburgish. The teachers’ co-creation of a participation frame that is set up amongst the colleagues then makes him an eavesdropper in part B of the transcript, the part the teachers observably may make sense of as ‘their’ conversation. Compared to overhearers, eavesdroppers take this role in the participation framework without the speakers being aware that someone is listening to them (Goffman, 1979).

Besides the code switch that Felix introduces when he enters the conversation, his position as a child also plays a role in his making of participation statuses. It is usually not in his capacity to evaluate his peers’ behavior. Goodwin and Kyratzis (2007) note that children in peer conversations frequently make use of linguistic resources from the adult culture, like control act forms to contest social hierarchies. During fieldwork, I have observed several instances where Felix commented on a peer’s behavior and was indirectly or directly told not to do so by the teachers. Now, he claims ratified participation in a conversation in which the teachers discuss the case of a particular child, which contributes to the subversion of the frame.



The unexpectedness of Felix's claim of (focal) participation manifests as teacher Helena flinches and makes a surprised "ps:::"-sound (l.10) at the same time as I, who observe the situation, start laughing (l.11). Felix' initial question seems to require explanation after teacher Helena's and my reactions, so that Felix subsequently elaborates on the reasons why you cannot take children home in a low voice (l.12). Teacher Helena aligns with his explanation and confirms, in Dutch, that she has a very small car. Child Felix has successfully subverted the participation frame, and his contributions as a – now ratified – participant get taken up by the adults who continue with him in a triadic participation frame in Dutch.

#### **4.6 Discussion**

Official language policies in Limburgish Early Childhood Education and Care centers commonly only distinguish between Dutch as main language and Limburgish as a language that might be used with individual children, without considering the complexities of multi-party frameworks. As common in diglossic situations, this language policy reflects an ideologically grounded local status imbalance (Schiffman, 1993) which children are socialized into. Scholars of language socialization and language shift have brought to the fore that children are socialized into ways to handle this imbalance, e.g., "restricting use of a particular language to particular domains (...) and cultivating proficiency in a particular language as a means of coping with entrenched social hierarchies" (Garrett, 2011, p.516). As the data shows, both cases apply in Dutch Limburg: The intimization of a participation frame performed by the teachers in Limburgish indexes the use of Limburgish for the private domain, whereas the use of Dutch for staged conversations enforces the status of Dutch as a relevant language in the educational domain. This confirms Cornips' (2020b) results, which show that Dutch is the dominant language in bidialectal preschool in Netherlandic Limburg and the language used for group situations. These, as I have shown, also include situations that might on

the surface look and sound like conversations between teachers but in which the children take the status of intended overhearers (see section 4.5.2). In such situations, silence constitutes a relevant form of participation (see Schultz, 2009).

Previous literature on bilingual preschool has demonstrated how children constantly move in and out of one another's conversations (Chaparro, 2020). My analysis shows that teachers engage in similar practices when they move into more private/intimate or professional conversations amongst colleagues and then move back to another participation frame, engaging with the children. When doing so, they use linguistic resources in distinct ways to construct their professional identities as educators (Ochs, 1993) and their identities as befriended colleagues. 'Teacher talk' (Huth, 2011) is performed in Dutch, while '(semi-)private talk' may happen in Limburgish.

The child Felix's participation in all cases presented in this paper highlights the complexity of the co-creation of participation frames: As Felix knows Limburgish, it becomes clear that opportunities for participation are much more complex than just being a matter of language variety. Felix is expected to react in situations where he himself is addressed by the teachers in Limburgish but not when Limburgish is used as a means that the teachers deploy to enact a personal or professional conversation amongst colleagues or adults.

In this line, previous studies have shown how overhearer statuses can be socialized (de León, 2011; de León & García-Sánchez, 2021; Miller & Sperry, 2012). Chaparro (2020, p.14) found such overhearer statuses and their inherent silent participation to be "a critical part of both second language socialization and socialization into a bilingual classroom community." While my findings resonate with this, it remains important to note that in preschools in bidialectal Limburg, Limburgish may also be used to arrange for non-participation in a particular frame, as demonstrated in Section 4.5.1.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This article discussed how teachers and children use their linguistic and other semiotic resources to shape situational interactional participation in preschool interaction in Limburg, the Netherlands. I investigated the role of Dutch and Limburgish, respectively, as well as that of other semiotic resources, for the co-creation of participation frames.

It resulted that teachers may use Limburgish to move into a one-on-one conversation in front of the children, whereas they use Dutch for staged conversations, which they intend to be overheard by the children. Hence, code switches, in combination with other interactional resources, have consequences for the organization of attention. Participation involves constant attentiveness and attuning of the participating actors (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018). A child suddenly claiming focal participation in a way that is not attuned to the current participation framework might, therefore situationally seem out of place for other participants, like in the situation in Section 4.5.3. The way the teachers switch from Limburgish to Dutch when child Felix enters the conversation confirms the importance of code choice for establishing participation frames.

Children actively co-shape participation frames and thereby inhabit the action of peers and teachers (Goodwin, 2013). While such a co-shaping can, in practice, mean an orientation toward a certain frame, and a reproduction of it, it is also characterized by children's agency (Schwartz, 2018). Children can, e.g., subvert participation frames which are set up amongst adults and claim ratified participation. Furthermore, children succeed, even at a very young age, in initiating new collaborative action through embodied means and performances of environmentally-coupled gestures. The analytic approach of participation frames and co-operative action provides a way not to prioritize speech by starting from a specific linguistic code (Chaparro, 2020) but rather to embrace the multi-modal dynamic organization of interaction. As such, it can account for young children's ways of communicating through embodied means and their ongoing language

socialization. For example, in situations that entailed staged conversations, the children's silence constituted a relevant form of participation. While this paper focused on multiparty interaction which include teachers, the question as to how peers enact similar shifts in participation frames remains open for future research.

Socializing interactional participation is an important part of children's becoming of members of the bidialectal community they live in. A socialization into a specific code choice across participation frames and contexts thus impacts children's own bidialectal competences and language attitudes, ultimately in favor of the national language Dutch.



## Second Interlude

The preceding chapter revealed that teachers may use Limburgish and Dutch when co-creating participation frames. The fruit break, discussed in two examples in it, turned out to be a relevant moment of observation. For the teachers, that moment seemed to present an opportunity to take a step back from their teacher role, allowing, e.g., for the intimization of participation frames. These dynamics afforded the initiation of new, parallel participation frames by the children. Interestingly, the fruit break was still very much embedded in the institutional structure. For example, it was always initiated through particular songs. In fact, three different songs were sung throughout the fruit break: one song while cleaning the hands, one just before eating, and lastly, a song before drinking. As can be seen in the last chapter, children were very familiar with the meaning of these songs and sometimes initiated interactions through using these songs as well. During fieldwork, I noticed the frequency that children engaged in singing in the preschool, and that singing always took place in Dutch only, indicating a relevance for practices of participation. This observation led to an interest in the ways in which children co-create meaning through spontaneously using songs in interaction.

For this reason, the following chapter puts the spotlight on singing as a creative language practice and analyzes children's spontaneous singing in non-formalized interactions at preschool Little Sprouts (NL) from a language socialization perspective. In so doing, the chapter builds on the language socialization framework as deployed in Chapter 4 and simultaneously connects to Chapter 3 through the lens of assemblage thinking.



## **5. Singing in semiotic assemblages. Preschoolers' use of songs in interaction.**

This paper has been published as:

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It appears in this dissertation in a slightly re-edited form.

### ***Abstract***

This paper analyzes children's spontaneous singing of songs in non-formalized interactions in preschool from a language socialization perspective. Songs are highly intertextual resources that are interrelated with specific sociocultural contexts and/or communities. Spontaneous singing can take on interactional functions and reflects socialized knowledge, as the analysis of instances selected from audio recordings and field notes from 4.5 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a preschool in the Netherlands shows. Closely investigating song choice and particular times when children choose to engage in singing, it becomes clear that the practice gains meaning as part of co-created assemblages in which material objects, bodies and place stand in interrelation with the deployed musical and other linguistic resources. How children draw on songs as a resource resonates with the socio-cultural environment of the preschool, where singing also comprises a meaningful social practice in formalized interaction between teachers and children.

### **5.1 Introduction**

As Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) often comprises the first step out of the more intimate home-sphere into the educational system, and hence, the wider society more generally (Schwartz, 2018), preschools are influential sites for children's socialization. Children are



immersed in the community of practice of their preschool, which constitutes of interactions with teachers and peers on a regular and long-term basis. Consequently, preschools also contribute to shaping children's language socialization, i.e., their "socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language" (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986, p. 163).

One important element in the day-to-day language use of preschools is singing. Singing has been inherent in ECEC since the pertinent kindergarten pedagogy has first been conceptualized by Friedrich Fröbel in 1840 (Fröbel, 1904; Kalantzis & Cope, n.y.) Throughout a morning at preschool, teachers commonly use songs to create a pedagogical environment. These songs can, for example, have didactical characteristics that are leveraged during morning circles or for instruction (Kultti, 2013).

Yet, singing at preschool is more than just a pedagogical and didactical means within formalized interaction. Through experiencing songs and singing, musical knowledge is socialized, and children get familiar with artful ways of expression. Children also engage in a variety of rhythmic and musical activities in non-formalized interaction. For instance, during free play, children may give character voices to toy animals and dolls, punctuate imaginative events in associative play with noises, or vocalize their own bodies' or objects' movements (Young, 2002).

With these situations, singing, besides presenting an important part of early musical education, also has communicative affordances, which will be the main focus of this paper. From an interactional viewpoint, interaction partners can establish meaning and communicative action through singing (Stevanovic & Frick, 2014). Children may use (parts of) songs in their interactions as well (Young, 2002). From a language socialization perspective, using songs in spontaneous every-day- interaction bridges the situational context with the wider sociocultural one. Therefore, it is contingent upon sociocultural and linguistic sensitivities and socialized knowledge, which is gained through experiences and interactions in preschool.

Singing in interaction comprises a recontextualization of a cultural text (Frick, 2013) which might hold sociocultural implications that it came to be associated with while traveling from singer to singer and from context to context, and which simultaneously regains and renews meaning locally and situationally on the spot.

Consequently, using songs in interaction is a so-called *languagecultural* practice, resulting from and based on the intertwining of sociocultural and language practices, shaped by ideologies (cf. Agar, 1996; Cornips et al., 2017). Rather than being passive receivers, children actively participate in their language socialization (Schwartz, 2018) and consequently also in their socialization into *languageculture*. In the sense of language ecologies, i.e., briefly, the “interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen, 1972, p. 325), language practices become meaningful in relation to the social and cultural environment. When singing spontaneously, children agentively make communicative moves, operating within the languagecultural ecosystem of the preschool. This ecosystem of the preschool, in turn, is part of the wider society the children are socialized into.

Against this background, investigating children’s emergent singing of songs in interaction in the preschool can contribute to an understanding of their socialization into *languageculture*. Given the importance of ECEC for language socialization in toddlers’ lives, this paper zooms in on preschool as a site for language socialization surrounding singing by investigating the following research question:

*How do children agentively use songs within non-formalized interactions in the preschool, and what do they socio-culturally achieve by engaging in spontaneous singing?*

This paper aims to better understand the interactional as well as socializing functions of spontaneous singing and the situational co-creation of meaning in young children’s communication through

drawing on songs as communicative and expressive resources. As such socialization and meaning-making takes place in situated interaction in the day-to-day, I will analyze instances of spontaneous singing that have been observed and documented in ethnographic fieldwork, after reviewing the literature and introducing the methodology of this study.

## **5.2 Singing and Songs as a Resource for Social Practice**

### **5.2.1 Children's Productive Musicality and Spontaneous Singing**

Young children's spontaneous expressions include various kinds of vocalizations that could be considered musical: Amongst others, they engage in chanting, rhythmic and prosodic articulation, making sounds, intoning words, as well as singing in a more classical sense (Forrester, 2010; Young, 2004, 2006). However, the lines between different kinds of young children's vocalizations are often blurred. By the age of approximately 2, children's vocalizations start to be more clearly classifiable as sung and/or as spoken based on a classical understanding of singing and speaking voice (Mang, 2000).

In a longitudinal study in which one child was accompanied with regular video recordings at meal-time between the age of 1;0 and 3;6 years, Forrester (2010) found that expressions of the child's musicality predominantly took place in cooperation with an attuned interaction partner and became more and more self-initiated and self-focused as the child developed. From the age of 2;5, she started to purposefully weave songs into imaginative play and storytelling, e.g., by singing on behalf of her toys (2;5) or producing a story while she engaged in 'pretend-reading' of a picture book, shifting between singing and speaking (3;0). Comparable instances where children exploited singing in meaningful ways for narrative purposes were also found by Mang (2000). In her study of child-adult interaction and play settings, a child aged 4;11 used spontaneous singing of multiple known songs within animated storytelling while looking at a book (p.118). Mang also reports on comparable events with improvised songs.

These examples confirm Young's (2006) conclusion that singing is a means to engage with bodily experience as well as with experience of the material- and the social world. Hence, singing is mostly interwoven with other modes such as physical movement.

While there is a substantial body of work on children's spontaneous singing, this often comes from a musicological, musical-educational or a developmental perspective (for a review see Forrester, 2010). Young (2006) cautions researchers that such work is often based on adult-centric understanding of singing drawn from Western art music, and is not inclusive to children's manifold creative vocal play. Against this background, this article's approach is not to understand children's vocal practices based on normative classifications of singing and speaking, but rather to investigate the social meaning of children's singing of songs, which can be understood as a socio-cultural interactional resource. In order to introduce this approach, I will elaborate on the social meanings of songs in interaction in the next section.

### **5.2.2 The Social Meanings of Songs in Interaction**

Singing songs is a performative act which can have different social meanings and functions, depending on who the singer is, in which context they sing, and who the listeners are. For example, a song during a staged performance usually bears a different range of organizational, social and interactional affordances than a spontaneous performance of the same song in every-day social interaction. As such, the social meaning of songs is contingent upon the situation and social context. While this dynamicity generally applies to other linguistic resources that co-participants use in interaction, too, songs are peculiar since their words as well as other features such as prosody and rhythm are usually pre-given, which stands in contrast to spontaneous, free spoken interaction that is typically less formalized (Stevanovic & Frick, 2014). This shall not imply that singers cannot creatively adapt lyrics, prosody, and pitch situationally, but it makes clear the highly intertextual nature

of songs which carry with them sociocultural and sociohistorical associations. In this sense, from a Vygotskian understanding of creativity (cf. Vygotsky, 2004 [1930], p. 13) spontaneously drawing on songs in interaction, be it with the original lyrics and musical features or with modified ones, is a highly creative way to co-create meaning. It is characterized as creative due to the imaginative process in which elements from past experiences are re-worked into new contexts (on language creativity see also: Cekaite, 2017).

Singing a song in interaction is never just a vocal activity. Instead, it could, for example, be indexical of a certain occasion (e.g. humming “Jingle Bells” could refer to Christmas in a social interaction), and it might rely on a shared repertoire of songs between co-participants, which is culturally and personally influenced. According to Oxbury (2020), interpersonal familiarity between co-participants is (re-)produced when using song references. She has found that co-participants seem to prefer their interactional partners to know the songs that they spontaneously start singing or referring to.

In the same vein, drawing on songs can serve co-participants as a resource for social practice. Hence, they ‘do something’ with and through songs, such as achieving interactional and discursive aims. Prior studies have shown that these aims can be as diverse as indicating sequence closure (Frick, 2013), promoting affiliation, solidarity, and familiarity between co-participants (Oxbury, 2020), contributing to interdiscursivity (Rampton, 2006) enacting the communicative mode of sharing (e.g. emotional stance), and to a certain extent also the communicative modes of informing and requesting (Stevanovic & Frick, 2014).

Based on these considerations, I will approach songs in this article as a semiotic resource which, beside its artful and aesthetic dimension, a) is highly intertextual, b) is interrelated with specific sociocultural contexts and/or communities (of practice, (Eckert &

Wenger, 2005)) and c) holds the potential of serving specific functions in interactions<sup>14</sup>.

### 5.3 Research Methodology

This study is based on data generated during 4.5 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a preschool in the Netherlands between autumn 2020 and spring 2021. Prior to fieldwork, I obtained ethical clearance by the Ethical Review Committee of Maastricht University for ethnographic research on language socialization in ECEC centers in the German-Dutch border area.

Preschool ‘Little Sprouts’ where this study has been conducted is located in the province of Limburg in the south of the Netherlands, a bidialectal region characterized by the use of the regional language Limburgish beside the national language Dutch. A group at this preschool consists of 16 toddlers between 2;0 and 3;11 and two teachers. Most toddlers attend the preschool on two mornings a week, while some (those with an indication for early intervention) come on four mornings a week.

Teachers use both the regional language Limburgish and Dutch, and children mainly use Dutch. I myself do not speak Limburgish and talked to children and teachers in Dutch (my L2). The fieldwork consisted of participant observation on two mornings a week, which allowed me to follow a specific group of children. The observations were documented in several ways (written, visual, audio). Data discussed in this paper stems from 48 pages of typed field notes and 102:19 hours of audio-recordings.

Singing as part of language socialization is a research interest that emerged during fieldwork when noticing its frequency and relevance both in formalized and non-formalized interaction during participant observation over time. Both *participating* and *observing*

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14 This list is not exhaustive but shall rather contain the most relevant characteristics for the analysis in this paper.

were central to that process. While I was in the preschool as a researcher, I also assisted the teachers with several tasks. Upon carrying out certain activities like cleaning the hands, children encouraged me to sing (Rickert, 2023a, see chapter 4 of this dissertation). In these moments of participation, I was confronted with the rootedness of singing in the day-to-day of the preschool, which directed my attention to singing as a communicative practice and enforced my sensitivities for it in my observations. For this reason, I also learnt about the social meaning of songs from moments in which children interacted with me, others, and their surrounding by means of singing. As a result, I will reflect on my own role in the interactions whenever relevant in the upcoming analysis section.

The data presented in this paper is taken from an account of instances of children's singing. After developing the research interest, I devoted more attention to singing in my generation of data, i.e., listening closely to interactions which include singing, including descriptions of these in field notes, and audio-recording them when possible. These instances were coded, and I additionally reviewed and coded a random selection of audio-recordings from the beginning of fieldwork (see also chapter 2, this dissertation). The cases discussed in the analysis were chosen for their salience in showing the diversity of interactional and socializing functions that children's singing can take.

#### **5.4 The Role of Formalized Singing in the Preschool**

Throughout a morning at preschool, a lot of songs are sung in a formalized way, often teacher-led or teacher-initiated. Singing together was generally appreciated both by teachers and children. In order to better understand how the children's spontaneous singing takes shape in interrelation with the sociocultural environment of the preschool, where singing is a common practice, I will briefly introduce the different occasions of formalized singing at preschool Little Sprouts.

A typical day at Little Sprouts starts with free play, then a morning-circle, which is followed by a combination of arts and craft

activities in small groups, and free play again. In the morning circle, for example, teachers and children sing a song to greet everyone and express appreciation of everyone's presence. After a moment of eating fruit together and drinking water, it is time for a toilet and diaper-round, and book-reading. There is a specific song that is sung while cleaning the hands as well as a specific song to kick off the activity of eating fruit, and another song for drinking water. Some form of animated physical movement such as dancing indoors or playing outdoors with toddler bikes or other vehicles follows. All along, there are specific songs teachers use for instruction purposes, like a song that signals that all toys should be tidied up now and a song that signals the children to set up the chairs in a circle. The social meaning of these instructive songs is known to all children and teachers, which is reflected in the children's subsequent orientation toward the instructed activity (or their deliberate ignorance of it).

Children are socialized into these practices within their first few visits to the preschool. Group activities often revolve around a specific topic which the groups work on for multiple weeks. Learning and singing thematic songs pertinent to that topic, and/or cultural festivity, is an inherent part of the group's work on the current topic.

As common in preschools in Limburg, code choice between the national language Dutch and the regional language Limburgish depends on the situation and is highly ideological (Cornips, 2020b, chapter 4 of this dissertation). Teachers may use Limburgish to address individual children but always use Dutch in group situations. I observed singing only taking place in Dutch during my fieldwork both across formalized and non-formalized contexts. Hence, songs are part of a language ideological divide in which Dutch signals all children to pay attention whereas Limburgish indexes an intimised participation framework (Chapter 4, this dissertation). The teachers reported, however, that they sing a local song in Limburgish with the children for the yearly



celebration of carnival<sup>15</sup>. Carnival is a regional festivity with a strong emphasis on local culture, making Limburgish relevant in this context.

Formalized singing is thus firmly integrated into the daily routine at the preschool and it has different, sometimes overlapping characteristic and functions: In general, it forms part of children's musical education, and children also enjoy it as such. If teachers sometimes forget to sing at a given event, e.g., while cleaning the hands, it is not unusual for the children to request them to sing, or initiate the singing themselves (field notes, 21-04-2021, Chapter 4 of this dissertation). Beyond its musical educational character, singing at Little Sprouts can be ritualistic (e.g., every time before eating fruit), instructive (e.g., to set up the circle), a means for knowledge sharing (e.g., a thematical song which contains facts about the current theme), as well as for cultural socialization (e.g., for festivities like birthdays or Christmas). As singing only happens in Dutch, is used in group contexts, and has multiple relevant functions for the organization of attention, it is part of the language hierarchies that Cornips (2020b) describes with regard to Limburgish and Dutch. Consequently, it contributes to the higher vitality of Dutch in the preschool in comparison to Limburgish which is mainly used for emotional situations and in one-on-one contexts.

The frequency and relevance of songs in formalized preschool interaction, initiated by the teachers, shows how rooted singing is in the preschool. Against this background, I will turn to the spontaneous use of songs by children as agents in non-formalized interaction in the upcoming analysis section now. Different functions of singing will be introduced, which relate to yet expand the functions of singing across formalized interactions.

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<sup>15</sup> I could not conduct fieldwork at the time of carnival due to a lockdown during the COVID19 pandemic.









## 5.5 Listening to Children's Use of Songs in Interaction

### 5.5.1 Expressing Expertise

In November, the preschoolers jointly worked on the topic of autumn. Part of this topical work entailed repeated singing of different songs about autumn together in morning circles. The situation in Vignette 3 took place in this time period, during one of my first visits to the preschool.

#### *Vignette 3:*

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1 Free play. I sit by myself in the topical corner which is decorated like a  
 2 forest to take some notes. After a while, Daniel comes to me,  
 3 approaching me slowly. He asks with a low voice if he can play in the  
 4 forest, seems a bit shy. I say that he could, of course, and join him at  
 5 the table with different fall items. He takes different items in his hands,  
 6 touches them, shows them to me and lets me touch them: Leaves, an  
 7 acorn, and also a little figure of an old woman. I ask him who this would  
 8 be. 'Granny', he says in English. 'Granny?' I ask back in English as  
 9 well. Daniel puts down the figure and gives me a pinecone. I really have  
 10 no idea how this is called in Dutch, so I ask him: 'Wat is dat?' [What is  
 11 that?]. He tells me to touch it. I touch it softly and playfully pretend that  
 12 it stings: I take my hand back again quickly. Daniel laughs: 'Nee, kijk.'  
 13 [No, look.] He touches it. Then he takes the shell of a chestnut and  
 14 explains, singing: 'Dit is  prik-prik-prik au-au-au ' [This is]  prick-  
 15 prick-prick ouch-ouch-ouch ']. Daniel uses the hand movements the  
 16 kids have learnt during circle singing as well:  prik-prik-prik  – his  
 17 index finger goes down rhythmically, and  au-au-au , he shakes his  
 18 right hand. I touch the chestnut shell, also exclaim 'au' [ouch] and move  
 19 my hand. We go on with our play. I ask him again about another item,  
 20 and he takes me to one of the teachers and asks her what the item would  
 21 be for me. We find out it is supposed to be a rotten apple. Eventually,  
 22 the teacher interrupts our play with the song for tidying up. Daniel tells  
 23 me that we need to tidy up quickly and asks me to sit next to him in the  
 24 circle.

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When Daniel (3;11) first approaches me, he asks permission to play in the forest corner, which hints at the initial power relations at stake: I am an adult, and adults in the preschool are classically the ones in charge from an institutional perspective, in comparison to the children. The adults who are regularly present in this specific preschool are all women, like me, and include the two group teachers, a speech therapist, and an ergo-therapist, i.e., all guiding and/or leading institutional positions.

Yet, power relations are not static but instead situationally emergent as people renegotiate them in interactions on the spot (van de Weerd, 2019). Also in this situation, the power distribution dynamically develops over the course of the interaction. While the starting point of Daniel asking me permission to play in the corner (1.3f) seems to be based on an institutionalized child-adult relation, other characteristics become situationally more important for the course of the interaction: My succeeding questions about the names of two items on the table (1.7f, 11), introduce the shift in power as they reveal my lack of expertise regarding the topic of autumn, at least in the context of this topical corner. Daniel tells me to touch one of the items that I inquired about (1.11). Showing a pain reaction to my sensation (1.12) becomes indexical of my not-knowingness for Daniel, as can be derived from his subsequent action: He laughs and demonstrates gentle touch of the pinecone, without any indication of pain (1.13). Next, for the sake of comparison, he takes the shell of a chestnut and makes clear to me that this, instead, would be a prickly object (1.14f). Now, the power distribution has shifted as the interaction is not primarily organized around the relation of me as the adult in the preschool and Daniel as the child, but around the relation of Daniel as the expert on the topic and me as the novice.

This shift is co-constructed and brought about by our engagement with sensory experience and multiple semiotic resources: Firstly, our engagement with the objects is mediated multimodally by physical touch, gaze, and hand movements as well as vocal expressions of talk and singing. My lack of expertise is revealed to Daniel as I

playfully take my hand back after touching the pinecone, which leads him to ask me to look at his touch (l.13). Secondly, the vocal part of the interaction is multimodal in itself, i.e., it includes speaking and singing (see Stevanovic & Frick, 2014). Daniel draws on a song about the prickliness of hedgehogs, which he had previously learnt in the circle (l.14) With frequent musical activities (see section 5.4), preschool circle time cultivates singing, entangled with touch as well as other sensory engagements, and movements, as a learning opportunity (Pica, 2015). Now, Daniel draws on singing and the specific song about hedgehogs with its accompanying hand movements to share knowledge to me in the course of a spontaneous interaction. Thereby, singing does not only serve the communicative purpose of informing me, but it also enables Daniel to reinforce his position as the expert and mine as the novice who is listening and learning through his singing and performance. He takes the position that the teachers in the circle commonly take, guiding the exploration of prickly and non-prickly fall items through singing, moving, looking, touching, and speaking.

The distribution of positions of expert (Daniel) and novice (me) remains in place throughout the rest of the interaction after the shift. After I ask another question one more time (l.20), Daniel shows me a way to obtain information and another way to learn: asking the teacher directly. Furthermore, Daniel also shows familiarity with the social meaning of the song that the teacher sings and tells me which consequences hearing that song has for our play, namely that we need to tidy up (l.23f). Even though I am an adult, he asks me to sit next to him with the children in the circle afterward (l.24).

In this interaction, the child Daniel used a song to achieve communicative and interactional aims. The song had been acquired throughout formalized interaction in the preschool before, where it (re-)produced a specific social structuring, which is reflected in this interaction as well. Focusing on peer play, the next section will explore the affordances of songs and singing to structure play activities.

**5.5.2 Singing as Part of Joint Play Action**

One morning during free play, child Leon (3;10) approaches me to show me the high tower he built with his friend Felix (3;6). Some other children are also playing with blocks on the same mat. I stick around, lay down my recording device and start to build as well in order to blend in. At one point, Felix' and Leon's high tower becomes unstable and eventually falls:

*Transcript 14: 'It gets too heavy'*

1	Leon	↑↑HIJ WORDT TE [ZWAAR! ↑↑IT GETS TOO [HEAVY!
2		[((tower falls))
3	Felix	EH:::::!
4	Leon	=<↓#hij [was te zw]aar> =<↓#it [was too he]avy>
5	Felix	[↓oh:::] (ga je) maken, ik [↓oh:::] (will you) make, I
7	Marie (researcher)	oah jammer (0.2) hij was zo [hoog oah too bad (0.2) it was so [high
6	Leon	[kom! Dan gaan we een <u>nieuwe</u> (.) <u>maken!</u>  [come! Then we'll make a <u>new</u> (.) <u>one!</u>
9	Felix	ja! yes
10	Leon	aan de slag! let's go!
11	Felix	ik ik ga niet doen ik heb pijn in m'n handen I I won't do I have pain in my hands
12	Marie (researcher)	wat heb je, met jouw vinger what do you have, with your fingers
13	Felix	PAF zo PAF like this
14	Marie (researcher)	oh is die gevallen op jouw vingers? oh did it fall on your fingers?
17	Felix	nee maar (daar) no but (there)

The falling tower leads to initial disappointment by Leon, expressed through the explanation for the tower's falling delivered with a creaky voice and low pitch (1.4), and by Felix, who utters 'oh:::' with low pitch (1.6) as well as by my verbal commiseration (1.7). Leon quickly finds motivation again and suggests to build a new tower (1.6), which he

complements by exclaiming ‘aan de slag! [let’s go]’ (1.10), a line I had observed Leon and Felix shout rhythmically together over and over again in the past during play with objects like toy train tracks. Whereas Felix first agrees (1.9), he then rejects because of pain in his fingers (1.11–1.17) and eventually, as can be seen in Transcript 15, also encourages him to build a new tower (1.16–19).

*Transcript 15: ‘On the beat’*

18	Leon	Kom <b>come</b>
16	Felix	kom op we gaan een nieuwe toren <b>come on we’ll a new tower</b>
18	Leon	ja, we gaan <u>BOUWEN!</u> (.) oh <u>BOUWEN!</u> <b>yes, we will BUILD! (.) oh BUILD!</b>
19	Felix	op de slag (.)↑op [de slag ] <b>on the beat (.) ↑on [the beat ]</b>
20	Leon	slag!] [°aan de slag° [((rhythmically)) aan de [((rhythmically)) <b>let’s</b> go!] [°let’s go°

Felix picks up on Leon’s exclamation of the rhythmic line ‘aan de slag [let’s go],’ which they often use together, and adapts it to ‘op de slag [on the beat]’ (l. 19). Singing or shouting rhythmically allows the two boys to engage with the blocks in a new, rhythmically structured way, which Felix alludes to with ‘op de slag [on the beat].’

Leon rhythmically repeats the initial line ‘aan de slag [let’s go]’ again (1.20), but eventually, the rhythmic engagement is extended to a new song, which Leon introduces in Transcript 16. This new song, Bob de Bouwer [Bob the Builder], topically matches the core activity of building:

*Transcript 16: ‘Bob the Builder’*

21	Felix	[Bob de BOUWER!
22	Leon	<b>[Bob the BUILDER!</b> ♩ ((rhythmically)) (we) kunnen maken ♩ ♩ ((rhythmically)) <b>(we) can fix</b> ♩

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- 23 Felix *♩* Bo::b de bou::wer, >kunnen wij het maken<, Bo::b de bouwer, nou en of![(.) Bo]  
*♩* **Bo::b the bui::lder, >can we fix it<, Bo::b the builder, yes we can!**<sup>16</sup> [(.) Bo]
- 24 Leon [ of]  
[can]
- 25 Felix o::b de bouwer (.)  
>kunnen wij het m[aken<, Bo::b de bouwer, nou en of! *♩*]  
o::b the builder (.)  
>can we f[ix it<, Bo::b the builder, yes we can! *♩*]
- 26 Leon [a:ke:, Bo::b de bouwer  
kunnen of! *♩*]  
° waar moet die°  
[i:x, Bo::b the builder  
yes can! *♩*]  
° where shall this°
- 27 Felix doe maar die ((unintelligible))  
**put ((modal particle friendliness))this ((unintelligible))**
- 28 Leon deze [kan ]niet  
**this [can ]not**
- 29 Felix [m(h!]  
**(6.0)**
- 30 Felix [(bou:wen)  
[**(bui:ld)**

As singing follows so shortly after the disappointment about the prior tower's falling, it seems to have a motivating function here. When Felix exclaims 'Bob de Bouwer [Bob the Builder]' (1.21), this triggers Leon's association of the theme song of the TV series of the same name so that he subsequently starts singing 'we kunnen maken[we can make/fix]' (1.22). This line reminds of the original song. Leon seems less familiar with the song than Felix in the beginning of the extract. Felix sings the refrain of the song twice (1.23, 1.25). While Leon only listens the first time and repeats the last word of the refrain after Felix sang it (1.24), he slowly joins in when Felix repeats the lines, yet arranging the words in a different way than in the original which Felix sings.

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16 The translation of the lyrics stem from the original version of the song in English.

After some turns of talk revolving around the architecture of the tower (1.26–29), another child comes and plays on the mat, which I try to prevent in order not to make the tower fall again:

*Transcript 17: 'Yes, we can!'*

- 31 Marie ((to another child, Leah who comes and plays  
(researcher) with toy cars on the mat)) niet hier met die  
auto's (.) met die auto's kan je hier, kom  
[not here with the cars (.) with the cars you  
can here, come  
(5.0)
- 32 Leon ♪ Bo::b de bou::wer, >kunnen wij het maken<,  
[Bo::b de bouwer] nou ↑EN OF!♪  
♪ Bo::b the builder, >can we fix it<, [Bo::b  
the builder] yes ↑WE CAN!♪
- 33 Felix ♪ [°↓Bob de bou:wer]
- 34 Felix ♪ [°↓Bob the bui:lder]  
♪ ((rhythmically)) nou en [of! nou en of!  
nou en of! nou en of! nou en of!] nou en  
of! nou en of!  
♪ ((rhythmically)) yes we [can! yes we can!  
yes we can!yes we can! yes we can!] yes we  
can! yes we can!
- 35 Leon ((joins in)) [♪ of! Nou en of!  
Hehehheh of! °heheh of! nou en of!] (2.0)  
nou en of!  
((joins in)) [♪ can! yes we  
can! hehehheh can! °heheh can!yes we can!]  
(3.0) yes we can!

As in Transcript 17, the singing starts again after an interruption by another child and a short silence of 5 seconds (1.31), it seems that singing and rhythmic engagement helps the boys to keep up the good mood and stay motivated throughout building the tower. In this sense, singing very much becomes a central part of the play: It reinforces the activity of building and the building reinforces the singing in turn.

This time, Leon starts singing the song (1.32). He seems to have learned or got reminded of its original lyrics from Felix's prior singing to which he tried to sing along, as he uses the lyrics in their original arrangement now. Felix joins in and starts a variation of engaging with



the song: He keeps repeating the last line of the refrain rhythmically ('nou en of!'; 'yes we can', l.34). Felix joins him in this rhythmic play with the song toward the end of the first repetition (l.35), and then the two boys keep repeating the line together.

Lines 36-44 are excluded from the transcript in order to save space. Across these lines, another child comes and makes a puzzle from a shelf fall onto Felix. While he and me discuss this incident, Leon keeps on rhythmically singing ('nou en of! [yes we can]'). After Felix orients to the tower again, some talk about its construction follows and then, Leon addresses me:

*Transcript 18: 'When you stand, you are super-tall!'*

- |    |                       |   |
|----|-----------------------|---|
| 45 | Leon                  | jij bent hoger dan die<br><b>you are higher than it</b>   |
| 46 | Marie<br>(researcher) | ik ben hoger dan die? maar nu ben ik kleiner<br>dan die ((goes on to her knees)) en nu een<br><u>stukje</u> hoger ((kneels a bit higher))<br><b>I am higher than it? but now I'm smaller than<br/>it ((goes on to her knees)) and now a <u>bit</u><br/>higher ((kneels a bit higher))</b> |
| 47 | Leon                  | ~ en ↑nu ben je, als je ↑↑staat ben je<br><u>supergroot</u><br>~ and ↑now you are, when you ↑↑stand you're<br><b>super-tall</b>   |
| 48 | Marie                 | zo? ((stands up))<br><b>like this? ((stands up))</b>  |
| 49 | Leon                  | ja!<br><b>yes!</b>  |
| 50 | Felix                 | kijk nou, nou wordt hij <u>superhoog</u><br><b>look now, now it becomes <u>super-high</u></b>   |

Leon realizes that I am taller than the tower (l.45), and I adapt my height by kneeling on different levels several times (l.46). After he exclaims that I would be 'superhoog [super-tall]' when I stand (l.47), and I demonstrate this (l.48), Felix seems to be spurred on by the comparison of my height and that of the tower. He relates 'superhoog [super-high]' back to the tower and says that it would become this way now (l.50). The comparison seems to have fostered the motivation once more, which culminates in a canon-like singing of 'Bob de bouwer [Bob the

builder]’ in the subsequent extract. At one point, Felix also makes rhythmic sounds with two blocks, accompanying the singing (1.52):

*Transcript 19: Bob the builder-canon*

- 51 Leon ♪((animated, faster rythm than before)) KUNNEN  
WIJ MAKEN [KUNNEN WIJ (.).Kunnen wij het maken,  
Bob! de bouw:er  
♪((animated, faster rythm than before)) CAN WE  
FIX[CAN WE (.).Can we fix it, Bob! The bui:lder
- 52 Felix [Bo:b de((starts making rhythmic sounds with two  
blocks))BOU:WER (.). Bob!(de bouw:er)
- [Bo:b the((starts making rhythmic sounds with two  
blocks))BUI:LDER (.). Bob!(the bui:lder)
- 53 Leon ♪ [NOU EN ↓OF! Bo:b de bouw:er, kunnen wij het  
maken?]  
♪ [YES WE ↓CAN! Bo:b the bui:lder, can we fix  
it?]
- 54 Felix ♪ [WIJ MAKEN! Bo:b de bouw:er, kunnen wij het  
maken?]  
♪ [WE FIX! Bo:b the bui:lder, can we fix  
it?]
- 55 Leon heheheh heheh (3.2) ((variation in notes)) ♪↑#de  
bouwer >kunnen wij het maken< Bo:b de bouwer  
>kunnen wij het ma:ken •hhh Bob de bouwer kunnen  
wij maken<  
heheheh heheh (3.2) ((variation in notes ♪↑#the  
builder >can we fix it< Bo:b the builder >can we  
fi:x •hhh Bob the builder can we fix<  
((they keep on building, Marie gets a car from  
behind Leon and asks him if she can take it  
(21.0)))
- 56 Felix zet'm (nog) hier op  
put it here on top  
(6.5)
- 57 Leon hij is nog een stuk kleiner  
it's still a bit smaller

During the whole interaction throughout Transcripts 14-19, the boys use a song pertinent to the area of construction work to accompany and reinforce the activity of building a tower and, consequently, their identity as builders. Singing this song adds another layer to their play as it enables them to be fully involved not only through carrying out

physical building with the material blocks but also through relating to it in their singing. While their singing can align with their physical building activities, rhythmic and melodic engagement seem to be an expression of motivation and enhance the motivation at the same time. The two activities of singing and building become no longer distinct from one another but instead, both become central to the play in entangled ways.

Furthermore, singing becomes a means for peer socialization in this situation: Felix was the first to suggest building a new tower and interjected the rhythmic line ‘aan de slag! [let’s go!] (l. 10)’. However, it is Leon who subsequently gives the lead and introduces the song. Similarly, Leon starts to adapt it to just the rhythmic exclamation ‘nou en of [yes, we can]’ while Felix’s singing follows in both cases. Peer socialization into and through singing will be further investigated in the next section, which will show how singing can have consequences for opportunities of participation and the organization of attention as well.

### **5.5.3 Singing as Part of Imaginative Play**

The following extract takes place in the so-called ‘doll-corner’ of the kindergarten, a very popular space amongst many children, foremost among girls. The doll corner’s equipment includes a table with four stools on children’s height, a couch, a bed with several dolls, and items like cooking equipment and toy food.

The corner with its particular objects yields very specific forms of play, i.e., mainly imaginative play: Children take up roles of caring mothers and (more seldomly) fathers for the dolls and, for example, take them to the doctor, bring them to bed, and feed them.

Children also pretend to cook and offer food to peers, teachers, and me. In the next situation, however, I was the one who offered toy food to Claartje (3;4), Kim (3;6), and Emily (2;1). Finja (2;4) joined us (l.3).

## Transcript 20: 'Ladies, shall we have cake?'

- 1 Marie (researcher)           ↑Dames, gaan we taart eten? (1.0)  
                                   ↑Ladies, shall we have cake? (1.0)  
                                   Ja? Zul ik die lekker klaarmaken? (.)  
                                   Yes? Shall I prepare it?  
                                   Ja? (0.5) Dan moeten de kaarsen hier nog  
                                   [op]  
                                   Yes? Then the candles have to go here
- 2 Claartje  
                                   [KIJK]  
                                   LOOK
- 3 Marie (researcher)           wa::nt au (.) dat moet (.)↑oh Lea kom je  
                                   mee taart eten?  
                                   si::nce au (.) this must (.)↑oh Lea you  
                                   join us eating cake?
- 4 Finja  
                                   =#nee  
                                   =#no
- 5 Marie (researcher)           =nee!  
                                   =no!
- 6 Finja  
                                   [=NEE  
                                   [=NO
- 8 Kim  
                                   [♪ Lang zal [ze leven, lang  
                                   [♪ ((sings [Dutch birthday song))
- 7 Marie (researcher)           [=Wil je thee drinken?  
                                   [=Do you want to have tea?
- 9 Finja  
                                   =NEE::!  
                                   =NOO::!
- 10 Kim  
                                   ♪ zal ze leven,[lang zal ze leven in de  
                                   o:lia, in de o:lia (.)  
                                   in de o:lia♪]  
                                   ♪ ((continues Dutch birthday song)) ♪  
                                   [ ((joins in with Kim with  
                                   rhythmic sounds))  
                                   [♪ eh eh o:i:a:, ie  
                                   o:i:a., in de o:i:a:♪ ]
- 12 Kim  
                                   hiepe[piep HOERA::, hiephiepiep HOERA::  
                                   ]

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13	Emily	[iepiep RA: (.) ]]	HOE[RA:
14	Marie (researcher)	] hah hah ha •h hhh ((pretends to blow out the candles on the cake)) ↑lekker la:: taa:rt ↑yummy la:: ca::ke	[AH:
15	Claartje	↑oh en dan nog ene bij. ↓nog ene bij. ↑oh and another one. ↓another one.	
16	Marie (researcher)	heh heh heh lekker? heh heh heh tasty?	
17	Emily	°ja° °yes°	
18	Kim	wo:w met slagroom ↑kijk wo:w with whipped cream ↑look	
19	Marie (researcher)	↑oh slagroom? echte slagroom? ↑oh whipped cream? real whipped cream?	
20	Kim	ik ook slagroom me too whipped cream	

Here, my preparation of the cake leads Kim to start singing the birthday song *'Lang zal ze leven'* (1.8). I had previously observed one of the teachers perform the characteristic exclamation *'Hieperdiepiep Hoera* [Hip Hip Hooray] which is used for birthdays in the Netherlands, with the according hand movements to another child when she gave her a piece of the toy cake. It is possible that Kim had also seen this, or she associated the toy cake with candles with birthday celebrations due to other previous socialization experiences, potentially also in the home context. The birthday song *'Lang zal ze leven'* is also sung in the preschool in the circle when it is a child's birthday, however, without a cake involved.

Hence, Kim's singing of this specific song while we are playing with a toy cake thus reflects socialized knowledge about a cultural script of birthday celebrations which include a cake with candles, and the song *'Lang zal ze leven.'* Beyond that, it also has interactional implications: Firstly, it shifts the attention away from Finja's opposition towards becoming part of our imaginative play, expressed in her three utterances

of *'nee [no]'*, which gradually increase in volume (1.4, 1.6, 1.9). I stop asking Finja questions or engaging with her more generally, and she stops expressing her opposition shortly after Kim starts to sing. We both direct our attention to the singing that is going on. Secondly, singing adds a new content layer to the situation: Due to the intertextual nature of the song, which is commonly sung in the context of birthdays, it turns a situation that initially seems to revolve around eating cake in general into a festive birthday celebration. The young peer Emily joins in Kim's singing with own rhythmic vocalizations (1.11, 1.13), even though she generally only speaks a few understandable words. This shows how singing can enable joint peer action and become a means for peer socialization.

Children thus use songs as a resource to shape imaginative play. Consequently, singing can be an expression of and give directions to enacted imaginations like a birthday.

## 5.6 Discussion

Free play constitutes an important site for an exploration of creative language use and language play for young children (Cekaite, 2017; Cook, 2000), and singing can be considered a part of this. The instances presented in this paper explore how singing gains meaning as part of language socialization in preschool. Children use songs as intertextual resources linked to a specific context, like birthdays (Section 5.5.3) or knowledge sharing (Section 5.5.1). These contexts get closely connected to singing and the particular songs through the regular everyday singing that is firmly rooted in the preschool's routines (Section 5.4).

Singing itself is an important means of communication, learning, ritualizing, and celebrating within the preschool's sociocultural environment and also teachers sing frequently. The meaningfulness of singing resonates in children's non-formalized interactions: Songs sung in the preschool serve children as resources which they agentively draw on to make interactional moves (Sections

5.5.1 and 5.5.3). For example, the song about the prickliness of hedgehogs from Section 5.5.1 had firstly been introduced within formalized interaction in the circle, where the song didactically served as a vehicle for learning. The way that the child Daniel uses the song spontaneously to pass on knowledge to me about the fall items at hand reproduces this specific form of conveying information in an accessible way, linking music, factual and sensory information through singing, the engagement with objects and body movements.

By singing spontaneously in interaction, children actively participate in language socialization co-operatively with peers and adults in the preschool: They explore the social functions that singing specific songs can have. When doing so, children use their intertextual affordances, and in so doing not only demonstrate the communicative meaningfulness of songs and singing within interaction to peers but also experience the social consequences of their own singing themselves, e.g., when child Kim manages to recruit peers to sing together with her (Section 5.5.3). In this case, she manages to shape the imaginative play at hand from an eating situation towards a birthday situation, jointly with peers and me, the researcher, upon her initiative, in resonance with the sociocultural framework of birthday songs.

While this paper focuses on singing in preschool, it also becomes clear that the preschool is embedded in a wider societal context and that language socialization happens across this context. As such, it is also mediatized as can be seen in the example of ‘Bob the Builder’, a song that child Felix supposedly picked up in the TV series and introduced into peer play in the preschool in Section 5.5.2.

Singing takes place in Dutch and not in Limburgish, which conforms to ideological language hierarchies in ECEC in Netherlandic Limburg, which Cornips (2020b) describes. Driven by language ideologies rooted in Dutch society, where the national language Dutch is seen as the language for economic (and other) success and upward mobility, teachers commonly exclusively use Dutch in group situations, especially in the context of knowledge transfer and instruction, whereas they reserve the regional language Limburgish for one-one-one

contexts (Cornips, 2020b). Singing within formalized interaction can have instructive purposes and is also used as a way of teaching, e.g., about the seasonal topic of fall and fall items. Within formalized interaction in the preschool, singing is a didactical means to evoke everyone's attention, so that the presence of Dutch and absence of Limburgish in singing in the bilingual preschool in Dutch Limburg contributes to the dominance of Dutch generally, and, more specifically, to the socialization of a language ideology which portrays the national language Dutch as superior in status.

All instances of spontaneous singing discussed in this paper emerged while the children engaged with material objects like fall items (Section 5.5.1), building blocks (Section 5.5.2), or a toy cake (Section 5.5.3) within social interaction. This resonates with Young's (2006) results, who has found that children's spontaneous singing allows for engagement with the body, the social world, and materiality. In fact, in the tower building in Section 5.5.2, for example, singing becomes a central part of play and enables the children to engage with another core activity in new ways through intertwining it with the deployment of a topically pertinent song. The children play with blocks, but they also play with and through the song and its melody and rhythm. Consequently, their play unfolds as an entanglement of these two activities, which merge into one another as the children's bodies move to build the tower, produce sung and spoken utterances, and interact with the surroundings and me, the researcher, in the ideologically structured preschool environment.

From these observations, I come to an understanding of children's singing in the preschool as part of co-created semiotic assemblages (Pennycook, 2017) in which material objects, bodies and place stand in inter-relation with the deployed musical and other linguistic resources. Sensory engagement through touch and gaze, complemented with experiencing the song through singing/listening and body movements, makes the fall item's (non-)prickliness understandable in the interaction presented in Section 5.5.1. Singing as part of imaginative play happens while engaging with a toy cake in the



doll corner, a space which frequently yields imaginative forms of play due to its particular material equipment in general (Section 5.5.3).

Understanding the research setting from assemblage thinking also blurs a separation of the researcher and the research subject(s) (Ghoddousi & Page, 2020). I, the researcher, have contributed to the emergence of the semiotic assemblages discussed in this paper. This contribution not only consists of my verbal participation but also of my embodied presence, e.g., when, as discussed in Section 5.5.2, comparing the tower with my height served as an incentive for further building, enforced by singing and simultaneously enforcing further singing.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this paper, I investigated the meanings and functions of children's spontaneous singing of songs in a preschool in Dutch Limburg. It became clear that children exploit the social and interactional affordances that singing offers within their interactions. The way children use songs as a resource fits into the sociocultural environment of the preschool, where singing also comprises a meaningful social practice in formalized interaction between teachers and children. Within non-formalized interaction, children then use songs in agentive ways to shape their interactions and their play. Children experience socialization in the preschool in an active way, meaning that they take part in their own and their peers' socialization also by singing and by experiencing the consequences of their singing in social interactions. As such, the children agentively participate in their language socialization and the socialization of singing in a way that resonates with the sociocultural arena of the preschool. In the preschool, singing is valued as a musical and artful practice and additionally used for specific social purposes, which intersects with musical education.

Across interactions, singing songs gains meaning as part of co-created assemblages (Pennycook, 2017) in which material objects,

bodies, social and ideological structurings, and places stand in interrelation with the deployed musical and other linguistic resources.

The focus on already established songs highlights intertextual sensitivities children display in their spontaneous singing. However, questions regarding the meanings and functions of songs that children invent themselves and use in their interactions remain open for future research.

Singing as a formalized practice is firmly rooted in the everyday routines of ECEC, and has been an important pedagogical characteristic of the concept of it since its very beginning (Kalantzis & Cope, n.y.). The socialization happening throughout formalized singing contributes to the meanings of spontaneous, non-formalized singing on the spot. As such, spontaneous singing is a result of socialization into *languageculture* (cf. Agar, 1996; Cornips et al., 2017) and constitutes socialization into *languageculture* at the same time.

***Transcription conventions:***

Throughout the extracts, the Jefferson Transcription system developed by Gail Jefferson was used. The conventions are taken from a detailed description in Atkinson and Heritage (1984), and have been lightly adapted for this article.

(.)	Micropause
(0.7)	Timed pause in absolute seconds
[ ]	Overlap of speech
><	Quickened pace of speech
<>	Slowed down pace of speech
()	Unclear section
(( ))	Transcriber's comment
<u>word</u>	Emphasis
↑	Rising intonation
↓	Dropping intonation
WORD	Loud/shouting.
.hh, hh	in breath (with preceding fullstop), outbreath

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#	Creaky voice
~	Shaky voice
♪	Singing voice
◦	Speech quieter than surrounding speech by the same speaker
=	Latching.
:::	Stretched sound

### **Third Interlude**

So far, this dissertation provided insights into the language dynamics at preschool Little Sprouts in Limburg in the Netherlands. It became clear that pertinent language ideologies mediate participation: For example, child Daniel from Chapter 3 oriented to a monolingual ideology when strongly reacting to my questions about his family language, the teachers in Chapter 4 enacted a domain-specific ideology when using Limburgish for intimated frames, and singing only taking place in Dutch, has been shown to become part of language hierarchical orderings in ECEC in Limburg. Interestingly, children and teachers at Little Sprouts (NL) did not discuss linguistic diversity much. This was different at the second research location, kindergarten Good Shepherd on the other side of the German-Dutch border.

The composition of the kindergarten group that participated in the research at Good Shepherd (DE) differed from that at Little Sprouts, given that around 75% of the children grew up with another home language than German or an additional home language to German, and there was no regional minority language at stake. At Good Shepherd, there was a general awareness of linguistic diversity, and explicit negotiations of language norms were not uncommon. These negotiations afforded new ways of participation in ECEC. Linking to the language ideological dimension that helped to approach participation in ECEC throughout the dissertation, the next chapter will complement the research from Little Sprouts (NL) with an analysis of the ways in which children and teachers negotiate language ideologies in daily interaction in kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE).



## **6. You don't know how to say cow in Polish'. – Co-creating and navigating language ideological assemblages in a linguistically diverse kindergarten in Germany**

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It appears in this dissertation in a slightly re-edited form.

### ***Abstract***

This study examines how language ideologies are negotiated and navigated in a linguistically diverse kindergarten group in Germany, focusing on the multilingual language practices of teachers and children. Drawing on data generated during 3.5 months of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork, I analyze situations in which children and teachers actively include languages other than German into the kindergarten discourse through, e.g., translation requests, switches to family languages, and references to family languages. An ethnomethodological approach is adopted to trace how participants locally assign meanings to different languages and language use in interaction. The findings show that teachers and children express various, at times opposing language ideologies, leading to the dynamic formation of language ideological assemblages. Children position themselves in these assemblages by reworking them and/or foregrounding different aspects of their own multilingual identifications.

## 6.1 Introduction

Kindergartens in Germany are attended by children with a great cultural and linguistic diversity: 22 percent of kindergarteners primarily speak another language than German at home (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020, p.8) and 29 percent have an ascribed ‘migration background’, meaning that they themselves or at least one of their parents migrated to Germany (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020, p.87). Linguistic diversity in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings is, much like in any other social context, not a static phenomenon but rather a dynamic one, arising from multilingual practices mediated by language ideologies. At their core, language ideologies are beliefs about language that link to wider social and political dimensions (Woolard, 2020).

Children, in their play, may orient toward dominant language ideologies regarding context-sensitive appropriateness, relationships, and sociocultural meanings of language resources at an age as young as 2 (Cornips, 2018; Paugh, 2012). There has been less research on the ways in which children actively engage with language ideologies and, as such, negotiate social meanings of diverse linguistic resources which they themselves and their peers bring into ECEC contexts, as well as on how teachers take part in such negotiation processes (but see, e.g. Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2017; Zettl, 2019). Against this background the main interest of this paper concerns how children and teachers navigate multilingual language practices and engage with language ideologies in the context of a linguistically diverse kindergarten group in Germany.

Understanding multilingualism as not only a matter of resources but also as an “interactionally-framed practice” (Blommaert et al., 2005) leads me to take into account social processes of (power) positionings both with regards to languages as well as with regards to (non-)speakers of these languages.

## 6.2 Language Ideologies as a Lens on Language Practices

Language ideologies refer to the beliefs individuals and groups hold about language and its use (Schieffelin et al., 1998). Such beliefs mediate social processes of language use and the co-creation of meaning (Silverstein, 1979). Language ideologies emerge and manifest in interrelation with wider social, cultural and political frameworks and processes, as Irvine (1989, p. 255) pinpoints: “[Language ideologies are] the cultural [...] system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests”. For example, an ideology of language purism that favors a standardized variety has been particularly salient in nation-states, where language has typically been linked to national identity (Wright, 2016).

Language ideologies manifest in social interaction in various ways, ranging from explicit talk about language to implicit metapragmatics, marked by, for example, contextualization cues as part of language in interaction, which signal interaction partners how to interpret language (Woolard, 1998). As socially constructed objects, language ideologies are dynamic and multiple. Kroskrity has captured this dimension with the notion of ‘language ideological assemblages.’ In any social setting, various language ideologies might be at stake, alongside other ideologies that simultaneously contribute to social processes of meaning-making within that setting (Kroskrity, 2021). Kroskrity highlights that these become meaningful in assemblages in interrelation with actors’ positionalities in political-economic structures, as well as their own awareness of language ideologies, linked to their experiences of socialization (Kroskrity, 2021). In an ECEC setting, ideas about language use might, for example, emerge in interrelation with educational ideologies (Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2008).

Language ideologies have been used as a fruitful approach to understanding dynamics related to language use in multilingual ECEC and school settings (e.g., Cornips, 2018; Karrebæk, 2013). Through language ideologies, using specific languages or certain ways of speaking come to index, for example, societal positions which get



linked to certain identity characteristics. Closely related to that, indexical orders come into being, for example when specific accents or word choices get to signal someone's ethnicity or regional background, which is then associated with, e.g., social status or level of education (Silverstein, 2003). As part of that process, language hierarchies can emerge, constellations in which one language gets associated with a higher status than another language, and these can consequently shape interaction norms in a given setting, such as in ECEC (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2013).

### **6.3 Children's Engagement with Language Ideologies**

This ideological dimension underlies language practices and manifests in language regimes, shaped by language hierarchies in which children, throughout their socialization, actively take part (Purkarthofer & De Korne, 2020). For example, children in Dominica (Eastern Caribbean) show sensitivities toward power dynamics between languages and their distinct domains of use during play. Paugh (2012) describes that they use English when playing school and use Creole Patwa when enacting adult male roles associated with places beyond the home-/school-context, e.g., farmers or bus drivers. Patwa is the local variety depicted as vulgar by their caregivers. However, children can also resist linkages between domains of use and languages in peer play and rearrange indexical orders, as for example shown for the case of Mayan Tzotzil siblings by de León (2019). These children created ludic spaces in which they commented on and challenged conventional links between Mayan Tzotzil, Spanish, and respective activity domains. For example, as part of their pretend play of mothers responding to an earthquake announcement on the radio, they created parallel constructions in Spanish and Tzotzil, countering regimented patterns and leveling the two languages. Laughter was used to mediate an awareness of disparities between domains, and according lexical gaps.

Taking a look beyond the home context, children often make their first institutional experiences in ECEC. Also in ECEC, language

use is structured in specific ways, often corresponding to dominant language ideologies expressed in language policies and daily interaction. Children actively participate in these language policies (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017). They do so in resonance with the institutional policies, yet, in contrast to simply enacting them, they are also engaged in maintaining, undermining and alternating them (Simoes Lourêiro & Neumann, 2020). These results link to the findings in bilingual communities outside of ECEC that I reported on above. While children across contexts thus co-construct dominant language ideologies as part of their language socialization, they also demonstrate agency through challenging these ideologies at times.

Evaldsson and Cekaite (2010), for example, show how children in multilingual peer groups in primary school ‘talk monolingualism into being’ through corrective practices oriented toward the norm of correct Swedish and through explicit display of Swedish competencies among peers. Children’s corrective practices in peer interaction served to assert powerful positions within the peer group (Evaldsson & Cekaite, 2010). Another study by the same authors (2019), highlights, however, the importance of paying close attention to situatedness and context of interaction. Reporting on a preschool attended by children with diverse family languages, Evaldsson and Cekaite conclude that, while the on-site discourse mostly reproduced a dominantly monolingual language ideology that relied on Swedish, teachers showed appreciation of children’s multilingual competencies in very specific instructional contexts. The children, on the other hand, managed to carve out new spaces for family language use in more spontaneous, ludic contexts, resisting the dominant language ideologies. When doing so, they playfully transformed lexical resources, exploited sounds and used smiles and laughter to co-create multilingual peer language play with linguistic and embodied means.

Taken together, the reviewed literature thus highlights that children’s language (ideological) socialization in multilingual settings is connected to wider power dynamics and indexicalities of language in sociocultural contexts. At the same time, it ties in with local processes

in which children agentively use a variety of semiotic resources in creative ways to make meaning in complex settings, interconnected with the dynamic construction of social positionings within the setting.

## **6.4 Methodology**

### **6.4.1 Methods and Ethics**

Data for this study stems from three months of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in kindergarten ‘Good Shepherd’ in an urban environment in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany. Sixty-two hours of audio recordings and 11.5 hours of video recordings were generated and complemented with field notes documenting participant observation, including informal interactions with children and teachers. Information about children’s family languages was gained both from the teachers as well as during consent negotiation and when parents brought and picked up their children from kindergarten. I took part and conducted research in both formal and non-formal activities in the day-to-day of the kindergarten. During fieldwork, I moved between learning through playing with the children to taking an observing role to assisting the teachers with easy tasks. How these shifting roles impacted the data was taken into account in the field notes (see also chapter 2 of this dissertation).

The study is part of a project on linguistic diversity in ECEC in the German-Dutch border region, which got ethical clearance from the Ethical Review Committee at Maastricht University. Parents/Legal guardians of all participating children were informed about the study in a personal conversation with me, the researcher, in addition to a written description of the study prior to giving written consent. I also explained my presence and reasons for note-taking and audio and video documentation to the children, mentioning my intention to write ‘a book about what children do, play and say all day in kindergarten’. I often asked the children if I could join them for an activity and respected if they situationally disapproved of my presence or documentation of the activity.

### **6.4.2 Data Analysis**

An ethnomethodological approach was adopted in order to investigate how participants locally assign meaning to specific language resources associated with the children's family languages as well as the majoritized language German. The data was analyzed in an iterative process of going back and forth between field notes and recordings alongside the generation of new memos (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation). First, any descriptions of instances where teachers or children engaged in multilingual language practices or referred to family languages were identified in the field notes. In most cases, these contained an approximate time stamp of a matching audio or video recording, which allowed to listen to the situations again and transcribe them. If no recording was available, the field notes were used and reworked as ethnographic vignettes. The field notes or transcripts were analyzed regarding attitudes that interaction partners express toward the family language in question across turns and the way the interaction unfolds across time. Going back to the field notes allowed to understand the interactions in the wider socio-cultural context of the kindergarten.

### **6.4.3 The Kindergarten & The 'Green' Group**

Kindergarten 'Good Shepherd' is located in an urban environment in North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, and is attended by children until six years of age. The high degree of linguistic and cultural diversity in its neighborhood is also reflected in Good Shepherd, where around two-thirds of the children are bilingual or multilingual, and around half of the children exclusively speak languages other than German at home when entering the kindergarten at the age of 3. A wide range of languages is represented. Turkish, Arabic varieties, Russian, English, Kurdish and Polish are the most frequent languages children speak besides German. The majority of the staff is of German background and

knows foreign languages that they learned in school (especially English).<sup>17</sup>

The kindergarten where the fieldwork took place is a language-profile kindergarten, meaning that at the time of data generation, it was part of a program of the German government promoting a focus on language<sup>18</sup>. As such, the the kindergarten was granted one additional part-time staff member whose main responsibility was to create awareness for the domain of language development among the staff. In practice, she provided information about language development and support in the teachers' common room and also occasionally assisted in the individual groups to observe and give feedback but also to provide examples of supporting language development as part of the everyday of the kindergarten group. The additional staff member also organized a wide range of language-based activities for the children. She was trained as a kindergarten teacher and developed an affinity with the topic of multilingualism and language development throughout her professional career. Subsequently, she followed different small-scale trainings.

The main language of the kindergarten was German and the teachers saw it as an important task to help the children speak and understand German well in order to prepare them for elementary school. Children also mainly spoke German among each other. However, teachers sometimes showed interest in the children's home language and asked them for translations. Teachers also sometimes used English individually with children who speak English at home. An openness to

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<sup>17</sup> Since data generation was focused on one specific group in the kindergarten where consent had been established, no exact numbers for the whole kindergarten are known.

<sup>18</sup> The program "Sprach-KiTas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist" ('Language kindergartens: because language is the key to the world', own translation) ran between January 2016 and June 2023 until the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth cut their subsidies for this important domain.

multilingualism was also encouraged through the additional staff member for language support.

## 6.5 Findings

In the following, empirical examples from interactions in which multilingualism was at stake in the kindergarten are presented and analyzed as to how teachers and children navigate multilingual practices and (re-)produce and engage with language ideologies in interaction.

### 6.5.1 Co-creating Language Ideological Conflict

As part of social interactions, the children negotiated the correctness of names for specific things, undergirded by pertinent language ideologies.

In the following sequence, Inga (5;1) comments on an image of a watermelon, naming it with its Russian name *arbuz*, which is followed by negotiations of the validity of the name. Inga was one out of two Russian speakers in the kindergarten group. In the day-to-day of the kindergarten, Russian was usually not very visible/audible, and it was only situationally brought up by Inga or the teachers.

*Transcript 21: This is arbuz*

Emil and Tom empty tissues from their package into a bowl. One of the packages has drawings of a watermelon. Inga sits at the table and observes the two boys.

- |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
| 1 | Tom  | Eine mit Melone<br><i>One with melon</i>            |
| 2 | Inga | Das ist <u>arbuz</u><br><i>That is arbuz</i>        |
| 3 | Tom  | Ne-hein!<br><i>No-ho!</i>                           |
| 4 | Inga | Das ist arbuz, arbuz<br><i>This is arbuz, arbuz</i> |
| 5 | Emil | Nein, <u>Melone!</u>                                |

- 6 Inga *No, melon!*  
 Ich nebe- ich keine auf Deutsch, ich bin keine  
 auf Deutsch. Das ist arbu- arbuz  
*I ne- I not in German, I am not in German. This  
 is arbu- arbuz*
- 7 Marie  
 (researcher) Arbuz?  
 Arbuz?
- 8 Tom NEIN!  
 NO!
- 9 Marie Heißt das?  
*Called like that?*
- 10 Inga Ja!  
 Yes!
- 11 Tom NEIN! Das ist Melone  
 NO! *This is melon*
- 12 Inga Arbuz! Die Melone und das nicht, auf Russisch  
 (.) ist hier ein arbuz, arbuz  
*Arbuz! The melon and this not, in Russian (.) is  
 here an arbuz, arbuz*
- 13 Marie  
 (researcher) Die Melone heißt arbuz?  
*The melon is called arbuz?*
- 14 Inga Ja!  
 Yes!
- 15 Tom Nei-hein!  
 No-ho!
- 16 Inga Ich habe gesagt da- ich bin nicht so auf  
Deutsch.  
*I said tha- I am not this in German.*

The interaction is kicked off by a juxtaposition of two linguistic resources for the same food item: *Melone* and *arbuz*. Integrated in his language stream in German, Tom (5;1) verbalizes what he sees ‘One with melon’ (1.1). Inga then, brings in the Russian name for melon, drawing on her home language. In so doing, she presents the name *arbuz* as a relevant form of knowledge in the kindergarten, and Tom opposes her (1.3). After Inga reinforces the validity of her knowledge

(‘This is arbut, arbut’, 1.4), their peer Emil (3;4) joins Tom’s side, contesting ‘No, melon!’ (1.5).

The emerging conflict leads Inga to give an account for her multilingual language practice based on her own identifications: ‘I ne- I not in German, I am not in German. This is arbu- arbut’ (1.6). Here, it becomes clear that the conflict revolves around naming practices on the surface and relies on language ideologies as a foundation. Clarifying that she does not identify as German, which she links to naming the item *arbut* (1.6), Inga demonstrates bilingual awareness about the item having two different names in the two different languages. Tom and Emil, however, follow a monolingual logic and keep delegitimizing arbut (1.8, 1.11). Inga next goes on to expand the expression of her bilingual awareness, identifying arbut as Russian (1.12). When I, who is also present, ask for confirmation again, Inga aligns with me and the content of my question about ‘arbut’ (1.14) and Tom misaligns (1.15). Inga reacts by reinforcing the link between her use of arbut and her own identification: ‘I am not this in German’ (1.16).

While Tom thus seems to produce strong ideologies of monolingualism, Inga, being as young as five years old, manages to resist the monolingual ideology that devalues her multilingual language practice situationally and, thereby, diversifies the discourse in the kindergarten. She does so not only through her code-switching but also through her metalinguistic action of justifying *arbut* as one possible legitimate name for the food item. The language ideological assemblage that the children co-create situationally is incoherent, which manifests in conflict.

Simultaneously, Inga uses the Russian name to assert the legitimacy of her identity as a Russian speaker, while her peers orient to a monolingual logic that presents German as the only legitimate standard in the kindergarten. Given Inga’s demonstration of bilingual awareness, she does not seem to question the correctness of Tom’s name *Melone*. Yet, she remains defensive to justify her name *arbut*, which gets strongly opposed by Tom and Emil. Furthermore, my own participation in the interaction seems to reinforce the conflict: It leads



both Inga and Tom to reconfirm their individual standpoints to me and afterward go on to oppose one another directly again. Hence, the ideological clash remains unsolved in the interaction.

While the idea that one thing can have two different names was contested in this situation, the bilingual affordances of specific items were exploited as an opportunity to prompt and foreground translation skills on other occasions, as will be discussed in the next section.

### 6.5.2 Translation as a Skill

In educational contexts, teachers might, for example, ask children for translations to their home languages, intending to recognize them as multilinguals. While such occasions might, in fact, provide children with the opportunity to demonstrate their multilingual skills, it can also have opposite effects, e.g., when children do not know the translation (Akbaba, 2014; Knoll & Becker, 2023) or when children do not want to be singled out as someone with a different home language (Thomasske, 2017). Akbaba (2014), therefore, speaks of ethnic differentiation and highlights students' agentive strategies, including humor, to handle such situations.

In the next extract, teacher Iris asks Inga about a translation to Russian after she lacks the word for 'mermaid' in German:

#### *Transcript 22: 'I am still a child'*

Inga asked teacher Iris to draw a mermaid for her to color. She did not know the word for 'mermaid' and described it as someone without legs. Teacher Iris understood from the context, told Inga the word for mermaid and drew one. After Inga colored the picture, Iris asks again how the creature would be called:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 1 Iris (teacher) | Was ist das?<br><i>What is this?</i>                                    |
| 2 Inga           | Eheh:<br><i>Eheh:</i>   |
| 3 Iris (teacher) | Eheh: Was ist das in Russisch?<br><i>Eheh: what is that in Russian?</i> |

- |    |                |   |
|----|----------------|---|
| 4  | Inga           | Ich weiß nicht<br><i>I don't know</i>                                       |
| 5  | Iris (teacher) | Du weißt nicht, und in Deutsch?<br><i>You don't know, and in German?</i>    |
| 6  | Other child    | Meerungfrau [sic!]<br><i>Mer(m)aid</i>                                      |
| 7  | Inga           | Ich bin noch Kind<br><i>I am still child</i>                                |
| 8  | Iris (teacher) | Du bist noch Kind?<br><i>You are still child?</i>                           |
| 9  | Inga           | Ja!<br><i>Yes!</i>  |
| 10 | Iris (teacher) | Ja, du musst das auch nicht wissen<br><i>Yes, you don't need to know it</i> |

Teacher Iris' first question 'Was ist das?' ('What is this?', l.1), asked in German, departs from the interaction norm of the kindergarten, which prioritizes German. When child Inga expresses that she does not know (l.2), teacher Iris asks for the word in Russian (l.3), considering that Inga might, as is common in bilingual development, know words in one of her two languages but not in the other. Inga states that she does not know the answer (l. 4), so that teacher Iris asks once again for the word in German (l. 5). While another child answers (l.6), Inga justifies her unknowingness by foregrounding another aspect of her identity, i.e., that she is still a child (l.7). Teacher Iris accepts her reasoning and confirms: 'Yes, you don't need to know it' (l. 10).

While German remains the unspoken norm, teacher Iris constructs Russian skills as a valuable resource by including them in the educational format. In so doing, Iris also classifies child Inga as a competent Russian speaker. However, Inga does not know the word in question in Russian and shows resistance to this ascription. She counters by stating that she is still a child, highlighting that her bilingualism is still developing. Iris subsequently confirms that Inga does indeed not need to know the words in both languages yet (l. 10).

How ascriptions by others are handled, e.g., confirmed or resisted, interrelates with self ascriptions and experiences of the self,

including the own sense of agency (Akbaba, 2014). In this situation, Inga is classified as a Russian speaker and actively re-classifies herself, highlighting her identity as a child, when she does not fit the category of a fully proficient Russian speaker. Throughout this process, she and teacher Iris navigate different language ideologies: While a dominant language ideology that favors German is the starting point of the interaction, bilingualism is subsequently recognised by both participants through its inclusion in the educational format, initiated by the teacher Iris. However, Iris initially rather follows a competency ideology here, while Inga's reply emphasizes a processual view on bilingualism which Iris eventually also proceeds to orient to.

While in this situation, one of the teachers made knowledge of a family language relevant situationally, there were also some situations in which children did so themselves. Transcript 23 is an example thereof. Child Martin's (5;3) parents speak Polish, but he himself was raised as a German-speaker and has rather limited knowledge of Polish. Yet, he identifies with Polish and recognizes his Polish skills as one of his characteristics.

*Transcript 23: 'You don't know how to say cow in Polish'*

Lunch time conversation. Some of the children invent new names for themselves. Martin tries to convince his peers to call him 'Fuzzi'.

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Martin | Nein, ich bin Birne. Nein, ich bin Fuzzi.<br><i>No, I am pear. No, I am Fuzzi.</i>           |
| 2 | Nura   | Und du bist Elsa, du bist Elsa<br><i>And you are Elsa, you are Elsa</i>                      |
| 3 | Martin | Nenn mich Fuzzi<br><i>Call me Fuzzi</i>  |
| 4 | Nura   | Du bist Elsa. Hallo Elsa!<br><i>You are Elsa. Hello Elsa!</i>                                |
| 5 | Martin | Kai darf mich, Kai darf mich Martin nennen<br><i>Kai can call me, Kai can call me Martin</i> |
| 6 | Kai    | Hallo Martin-kanu hehehe<br><i>Hello Martin-kanu hehehe</i>                                  |

- 7 Martin Nenn mich Fuzzi!  
*Call me Fuzzi!*
- 8 Eleonore (teacher) Wie müssen die anderen dich denn nennen, Martin?  
*How do the others need to call you, Martin?*
- 9 Martin Fuzzi!  
*Fuzzi!*
- 10 Eleonore Oaah ist doch kein schöner Name. Oder?  
*Oaah but that's not a nice name. Is it?*
- 11 Martin Aber ich will Fuzzi (.) heißen. Kai darf mich Martin nennen!  
*But I want to be called Fuzzi. Kai can call me Martin!*
- 12 Marie (researcher) Woher kennst du den Namen denn, Martin?  
*Where do you know the name from, Martin?*
- 13 Nura MarTIN!  
*MarTIN!*
- 14 Marie (researcher) Kennst du 'n Fuzzi?  
*Do you know a Fuzzi?*
- 15 Martin Der Kai ist 'n Fuzzi!  
*Kai is a Fuzzi!*
- 16 Marie (researcher) Was heißt das denn?  
*So what does it mean?*
- 17 Martin Fuzzi heißt Hallo!  
*Fuzzi means Hello!*
- 18 Marie Heißt Hallo?  
*Means Hello?*
- 19 Martin REINGELEGT!  
*FOOLED!*
- 20 Du weißt nicht was Kuh auf Polnisch heißt!  
*You don't know how to say cow in Polish!*
- 21 Marie Ahh, KUH, auf Polnisch?  
*Ahh, COW in Polish?*
- 22 Martin Ich kann das schon!  
*I do know it!*
- 23 Marie Echt, was heißt das denn?  
*Really, what does it mean?*
- 24 Martin Sag ich dir nicht!  
*I won't tell you!*

In this situation, Martin valorizes Polish, positioning himself as superior due to his knowledge of the language. At the beginning of the extract, he takes the lead in a game in which the peers teasingly invent new names for themselves while sitting at the lunch table and eating pears for dessert. Child Martin repeatedly tells his peers to call him 'Fuzzi' (1.1, 1.3, 1.7), a downgrading name for a person who cannot be taken seriously (see Duden, n.y.). His peers do not follow his rule and either call him Elsa (1.2, 1.4) or a Martin-kanu, a made-up variation of his name (1.6). After Martin appeals again to his peers to call him Fuzzi (1.5), teacher Eleonore chimes in, first with a question for clarification (1.8) and then with a negative evaluation of the resource 'Fuzzi' as a name (1.10). Next, I, who is present as a researcher, display my curiosity. With the questions 'Where do you know the name from, Martin?' (1.12), 'Do you know a Fuzzi?' (1.14), and 'So what does it mean?' (1.16), I go along with Martin's conceptualization of Fuzzi as a name. Yet, I disrupt the play just as teacher Eleonore previously did.

The disruptions which come in the form of critique and questioning index Eleonore's and my positionalities as educators and researchers, which are, from an institutional perspective, more powerful statuses in the kindergarten than those of the children. As a reaction, Martin first takes a ludic stance when giving a wrong explanation of the meaning of Fuzzi ('Fuzzi means Hello,' 1. 17), followed by 'FOOLED!' (1.19). He next refers to his family language when telling me: 'You don't know how to say cow in Polish!' (1.20). Yet completely unrelated to 'Fuzzi,' the reference to Polish enables Martin to situationally position himself as a more knowledgeable subject than me. Martin confirms that he himself knows how to say cow in Polish (1.22) and, upon my question for the translation (1.23), states that he does not tell me (1.24).

In this situation, Martin uses his knowledge of Polish, more specifically his ability to perform specific translations, to distinguish himself from me. Resorting to his family language allows him to empower himself by foregrounding specific multilingual knowledge. He highlights that he is the only one to have this particular multilingual

knowledge at the table and expresses this during language play in German, which underlines his bilingual competence.

Martin leveraged the particular linguistic repertoires of the individuals involved in the interaction for his own interactional aims, bringing forward an ideology that recognizes and appreciates multilingual skills. While knowledge pertinent to Polish gained meaning as a unique feature of him, this was not the case with children whose family language included English. Given that Martin was more competent in Polish than the teachers or me, Polish had specific language ideological affordances of uniqueness that English did not have since the teachers (as well as I, a researcher) occasionally used English in the kindergarten. The next section will focus on language(-ideological) practices which involve the use of English by teachers and/or children.

### 6.5.3 Negotiating the Legitimacy of English

The kindergarten group hosts two children whose family language is English. While Grace (4;10) exclusively uses German in kindergarten, Amy (3;2) does not actively speak German yet and primarily addresses teachers and peers in English. While Amy's peers answer her in German, the teachers sometimes switch to English when interacting with her. According to them, they do so, especially when conveying something they find important for Amy to understand. Teacher Mareen indicated that she often automatically switches to English but that she wants to remind herself to speak more German to Amy so that Amy has better chances of learning the majority language.

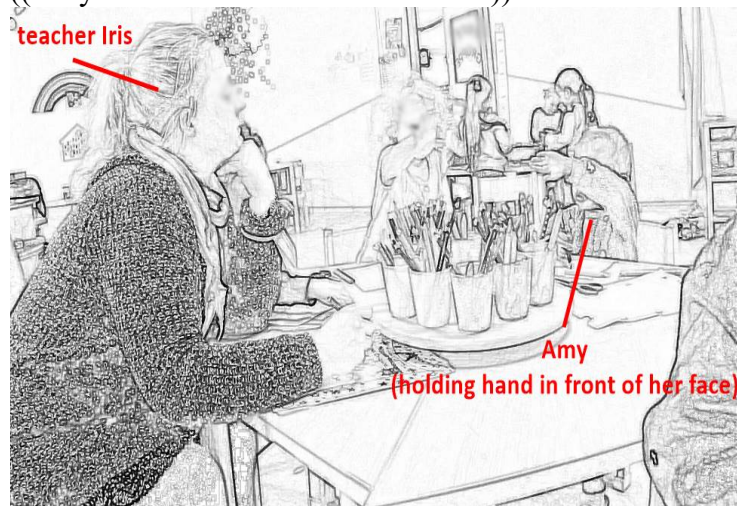
The following example shows how the teachers commonly switch between the two languages with Amy<sup>19</sup>:

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<sup>19</sup> Speech that originally occurred in English is bolded.

*Transcript 24: 'Amy, what did you say?'*

Amy ((unintelligible))  
Iris Amy, was hast du gesagt?  
(teacher) *Amy, what did you say?*  
Amy **No no no**  
Iris **No no no?**  
(teacher)  
Amy ((Amy holds hand in front of her face))



Iris Ehm! ((gets up and takes down Amy's hand))  
(teacher) **If you ask me something, I make this** ((holds hand in front of her face))



Amy **Huh? So that you don't can see me**  
((takes hand up in front of her face again))

- Iris           **Hey! Amy I don't like that! I really don't like that.**  
 Amy           ((puts down her hand and holds up her drawing up, looks  
                   at Iris))  
 Iris           Hast du was gemalt?  
 (teacher)   *Did you draw something?*  
 Amy           ((nods head))

Teacher Iris first addresses Amy in German, asking her what she said (1.2). Amy reacts in English ('No no no', 1.3), and teacher Iris repeats Amy's English words with a questioning intonation (1.4). When Amy shows a behavior that the teacher disapproves of, i.e., holding her hand in front of her face to block a conversation (1.5), Iris mirrors her behavior (1.6) and explains to her in English 'Hey! Amy I don't like that! I really don't like that' (1.8). When Amy puts down her hand again and shows her painting to Iris, the teacher switches to German again, asking her if she drew something (l. 10). Amy reacts by nodding her head (l. 11).

The switch from German to English occurs exactly for the part with educational purposes where the teacher disapproves of Amy's behavior. This educational strategy fits in with the teachers' reasoning that they use English when finding it especially important that Amy understands. In practice, however, teacher Iris uses bodily touch, gestures and facial expressions to express her disapproval as well, rendering the switch to English not necessary for ensuring understanding. When talking about Amy's painting (1.9-11), it furthermore becomes clear that Iris and Amy also manage to engage in meaningful conversation through the use of German in combination with other material resources (the painting), spatial resources (holding the painting, 1.9) and embodied resources (gaze, 1.9, nodding, 1.11). Consequently, the switch in the interaction rather serves the aim of enforcing the disapproval as using English makes the disapproval sequence distinct from the rest of the interaction.

Simultaneously, the teachers invoke a higher value of English in comparison to other family languages not only through using it with



Amy but especially also through deploying it in relevant instructional situations. Morillo Morales and Cornips (2023) have shown that teachers' language choice across educational and more playful situations is directly linked to children's understanding of the social meaning of a given language. As can be seen in the picture in 1.6, also Amy's peer Fiene (3;6) looks at teacher Iris when she speaks in English. In so doing, she takes the position of an overhearer in the embodied participation framework (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002; Goodwin, 2003). In a multi-party conversation, children may take on the role of a bystander who overhears talk not directed toward them (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002). Peers who overhear the teachers' and Amy's use of English also take note of how English is legitimized as a valuable language resource in the kindergarten. Overhearing is an important means to socialize children into indexicalization processes of societal meanings of different language varieties (see also chapter 4 of this dissertation).

Yet, as active agents of language ideological processes, children also negotiate the meanings of English in relation to German, as becomes visible in the next vignette:

#### *Vignette 4:*

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Preparations for Christmas during circle time. Amy opens the advent calendar and pulls out a paper with a story. Teacher Mareen repeatedly tells her in German that she should not pull out the paper. Child Nura observes the teacher's attempt and tells her: 'Die spricht nicht' (*'She doesn't speak'*). Teacher Mareen: 'Die spricht Englisch.' (*'She speaks English'*). Teacher Mareen repeats once more, in German, that Amy should not take out the paper. Child Elise intervenes in English: '**No Amy, no**' and her peer Tom joins her, also in English: '**No, please, no!**'. Teacher Mareen and her colleague Iris look at each other and smile.

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In this situation, teacher Mareen speaks to Amy in German in front of the whole group. Amy's peers intervene as the situation unfolds: When Amy does not react in the way that Mareen intended (i.e., stops to take the paper), peer Nura (5;1), orienting to German as the language norm in the kindergarten, gives the account that Amy does not speak. Following a monolingual ideology, Nura portrays Amy as 'languageless' (Rosa, 2016). In so doing, she also positions Amy as "communicatively incapacitated (...) [and] 'out of place'" (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 198). Teacher Mareen counters by explaining that Amy speaks English and, in doing so, positions Amy as a speaker. However, she proceeds to present German as locally and situationally more important by continuing to address Amy in German. Hence, while recognizing Amy's English language competencies on a more general level, she clearly sets interaction norms that require a passive understanding of German. Here, a language ideological assemblage emerges, which links an educational ideology focused on instructed participation in circle time activities with a language ideology that positions German as the required language for such participation. However, within this assemblage, it is also acknowledged that Amy speaks another language that may be relevant in other contexts.

Amy's peers Elise (4;5) and Tom react to this by engaging in what de León (2019) calls 'playing at being bilingual' and, in doing so, render English locally and situationally relevant. Elise and Tom only know a few words of English but use these purposefully in their communication with Amy here. By addressing Amy in English ('No Amy, no'; 'No, please, no') when she does not react to Mareen's German, the peers Elise and Tom do not only display their own multilingual competence but also, in contrast to Nura earlier, orient to Amy as a competent interaction partner.

In the extracts presented in this section, it became apparent how teachers and children co-create language ideological assemblages in which English was ultimately legitimized as a valuable resource, subject to situational contingencies in kindergarten Good Shepherd.

Yet, English was always positioned in relation to German, which remains the dominant language in the kindergarten.

## **6.6 Discussion and Conclusion**

Just like in many kindergarten groups in Germany, the ‘green group’ of kindergarten Good Shepherd, where this research has been conducted, is a social space in which children with diverse linguistic backgrounds come together. This paper’s main interest was the question of how children and teachers navigate multilingual language practices and engage with language ideologies in the context of a linguistically diverse kindergarten group in Germany.

It became clear that children actively bring languages other than German into the kindergarten discourse in many forms and on different occasions, e.g., when drawing on their family languages in interactions with peers (like child Inga in Section 6.5.1) or through ‘playing at being bilingual’ (de León, 2019) like child Elise and child Tom when they meaningfully mobilize their English resources (Section 6.5.3). These findings link to research highlighting children’s playful multilingual language creativity and multilingual practices in ludic contexts (de León, 2019).

Also teachers bring in languages other than German, mainly in the scope of specific educational interactions. More specifically, this is usually preceded by a child’s restricted language capabilities in German. For example, teacher Iris emphasizes her disapproval of child Amy’s behavior by switching to her family language English, the language Amy also actively uses (section 6.5.3). On another occasion, she inquires about a word in Russian when child Inga does not know it in German (section 6.5.2). In conclusion, the teachers’ use of, or questions about, languages other than German brings these languages into play as meaningful resources when German does not suffice, so that these languages always get positioned in relation to German.

A domain-specific use of home languages within early educational contexts has been discussed in different lights in the

literature. While Cekaite and Evaldsson (2017) concluded that in their study in Sweden, family languages were also mainly valued by teachers in instructional contexts, Morillo Morales and Cornips (2023) found different dynamics in Limburg in the Netherlands. In preschools there, the dominant language variety, Dutch, was used in instructional contexts in contrast to the regional minority language, Limburgish, in interactions geared towards care, the difference being that these kindergartens were bidialectal. Taken together, a domain-specific acknowledgment of a certain language promotes language ideologies that limit the legitimacy of a specific language to a particular context (e.g., towards educational or care ends), and, as such, pertinent ideologies unfold in parallel with educational ideologies.

In kindergarten Good Shepherd, such simultaneously unfolding ideologies took shape in the formation of language ideological assemblages, and teachers and children expressed and negotiated various, at times opposing beliefs about language use. These negotiations were complex and dynamic, and the meaning of using the children's home languages was constantly redefined by both teachers and children on a moment-to-moment basis. At the same time, German rather had a rather normative position, being the stable dominant language in the kindergarten. These findings align with the results of Zetl (2019), who has concluded that language ideologies in German kindergartens move on a continuum.

Consequently, multilingual children were confronted with varying attitudes from interaction partners. Interrelated with this, they had to position themselves on the spot, which they did by reworking the language ideological assemblages in different ways, foregrounding different aspects of their own linguistic identity and taking up or rejecting sociolinguistic identities that were assigned to them by other children and teachers. The children got to experience that the language ideologies their current interaction partners evoke are not necessarily aligned with other present ideologies in the kindergarten and that they are subject to negotiation. For example, child Inga experienced resistance to her multilingual language practices from peers who

positioned a Russian word as illegitimate and presented only the German form as valid, which she, in turn, contested (Section 6.5.1). On yet other occasions, Russian was situationally presented as relevant by the teacher in the kindergarten context if a German word was not known (Section 6.5.2).

All in all, the findings highlight that teachers should be aware of the potential tensions that might arise for children as they need to navigate emerging language ideological assemblages in kindergarten. To foster a language-inclusive space, which ultimately benefits the children's well-being and language development (De Houwer, 2015), teachers could aim to increase awareness about multilingualism within kindergarten groups. This could entail explaining that different children have different languages and that things have different words/names in different languages. All children, whether monolingual or multilingual, can benefit from such a basic understanding, as it can not only lead to a more constructive peer environment but also opens up new venues for language exploration and language play, like the peers Elise and Tom as well as Martin demonstrated.

## 7. Conclusion

This dissertation presented research on participation through language practices in linguistically diverse Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the German-Dutch border area. Particularly, it focused on the ways in which children and teachers use diverse semiotic resources throughout language socialization processes to shape participation. Participation is approached as demonstration of involvement in the joint co-creation of meaning (see Chapter 1, Chapter 4 of this dissertation, Goodwin, 2007b; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Consequently, this dissertation closely investigated the interactional and multimodal involvements of children and teachers, which include, e.g., speech, body positioning and gaze, but also the material and ideological surroundings.

It is based on linguistic ethnographic fieldwork conducted between autumn 2020 and spring 2021 in preschool Little Sprouts in the Netherlands (NL) and between autumn and winter 2021 in kindergarten Good Shepherd in Germany (DE). Preschool Little Sprouts (NL) hosted 16 toddlers between 2;0 and 3;11 on a morning, supervised by two teachers. In total, 24 children at Little Sprouts participated in the research over time. Kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE) hosted four groups of children between three and six years old on a 40h/week basis, and the research focused on one of these groups, named the 'green' group. In total, 19 children, as well as five teachers from the green group participated. Preschool Little Sprouts is located in Limburg, a region in the south of the Netherlands with a high vitality of the regional minority language Limburgish. Also the preschool was bidialectal; around half of the children grew up with Limburgish and Dutch at home, and some also with other languages. Kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE) was located in a diverse neighborhood. Around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the children at the kindergarten grew up multilingually with German and at least one other language.

The fieldwork for this dissertation took place during the COVID19-pandemic, resulting in intermediate interruptions and insecurities about the continuation of fieldwork. Yet, the total number of observation hours amounted to approximately 170h in Little Sprouts (NL) and 140h in Good Shepherd (DE), which have been documented through field notes, audio- and video-recordings. The analysis presented was inspired by the language socialization paradigm, new materialist approaches, (multimodal) interaction analysis, and it is grounded in linguistic ethnography. It aimed to address the following overarching research question from different angles across the four empirical chapters: *How do children and teachers arrange participation in linguistically diverse ECEC contexts on both sides of the German-Dutch border between Limburg and North-Rhine-Westphalia?*

## **7.1 Main Findings**

Throughout the dissertation, it became clear that participation can take many forms and is dynamically emergent in interaction. It is a relational phenomenon, entangled with dynamic language education policy processes as shown in Chapter 3: The dominantly (re-)produced language education policy in Little Sprouts (NL) favors the national language Dutch as language of education. The regional language Limburgish, in contrast, is endowed with value primarily within the realm of the care domain. Other family languages such as Albanian, Arabic, and Spanish largely remain invisibilized in the ECEC context of Little Sprouts. Within this language hierarchical ordering, specific affordances for children's participation emerge relationally: While participation by the children mainly takes shape with an orientation to a monolingual norm, engaging with language education policy in a participatory way can also mean reworking it situationally, relating to the material and ideological ECEC environment and interaction partners. The extended play sequence between Daniel, a child growing up with Albanian and Dutch who also has emerging English skills, and me (Chapter 3) is a clear example of this. Throughout this intra-action,

Daniel, orienting to the institutional logic and monolingual norm, first denies any knowledge of Albanian and English when I ask him about his skills. When we co-construct our play through, e.g., incorporating different institutional formats like counting or Initiation-Response-Feedback patterns (IRF, Sinclair et al., 1975), Daniel's multilingual agency emerges as these events situationally afford multilingual participation. This happens in interrelation with the material environment of the preschool as objects like shoes become countable, and Daniel uses a costume to transform me physically and rework my body in the emerging assemblage of the preschool.

Chapter 4 then added insights into the ways that teachers orchestrated participation in Little Sprouts (NL) when co-creating collaborative action with children and colleagues. It particularly focused on how teachers and children, through using diverse semiotic resources, including Dutch and Limburgish, co-create different forms of participation frames. Participation frames are constellations of participatory statuses which, besides speakers, can, for example, include addressed recipients (those expected to orient toward the talk and take the next turn), official hearers (who are expected to listen but not take the next turn), or bystanders (whose participation is not ratified) (Goffman, 1979). Teachers use diverse semiotic resources including Dutch and Limburgish, when co-creating different forms of participation frames like 'intimized' frames among colleagues where children are not ratified as participants, or staged conversations where children are expected to listen but not react. More concretely, they use Limburgish alongside other resources such as gaze, and position in space to move into a personal conversation among colleagues, excluding the children while these are present. The children understand that their participation in interaction with the teachers is supposed to be on hold and, in the case discussed, for example, initiate another simultaneous collaborative action among each other and with me. When the teachers, however, intend the children to overhear something that is being sad in a supposedly 'private' conversation between the teachers, e.g., a praise, they do so in Dutch as in the example: "Ik weet echt niet



meer wat we ze nog moeten leren. Ze weten echt alles over de dieren op de boerderij” (*I really don’t know what we should still teach them. They really know everything about the animals on the farm*’, from field notes, 05-05-2021). The children get positioned as intended overhearers in the participation framework and participate in this position through, e.g., embodied listening which entails silent participation with the gaze to the teachers.

Underscoring how the creative dimension of children’s participation within the ECEC space is tied to the disparities in the use of Limburgish and Dutch, Chapter 5 focused on the language practice of singing, which children engage in extensively in interaction in the preschool. Singing songs is an important part of daily preschool routines, e.g., in circle time or for instruction by teachers, and singing always takes place in Dutch. In this way, it reinforces dominant language ideologies regarding Limburgish (‘language of care’) and Dutch (‘language of education’). Outside of this more structured interaction format, children also engage in spontaneous singing in the preschool, for example, in interaction with peers. They draw on songs to pursue interactional aims such as reinforcing an expert position when singing a topical song containing factual information, or transforming playing with a cake into pretend-play of a birthday celebration through incorporating a birthday song. Like this, singing also becomes a means, for example, for structuring participation in peer interaction, such as in the case of the song ‘Bob de Bouwer’ (Bob the Builder). The two peers, Felix and Leon, used the song to encourage each other to keep building a tower whenever there was an obstacle, e.g., when the tower fell, or they understood it was not yet high enough. Hence, singing and building unfolded interconnectedly.

Chapter 6 reveals that contrary to Little Sprouts (NL), family languages were often part of the discourse in Good Shepherd (DE), and linguistic diversity was addressed more directly, both by teachers and children, undergirded by various language ideologies. One of these ideologies recognizes translation as a skill, which found expression, for example, when teacher Iris prompted child Inga, who grows up with

Russian and German, to say the word mermaid in Russian after she did not know the German word. This ideology enables the development of multilingual agency, as seen in the case where child Martin (German speaker with limited knowledge of Polish) empowered himself in relation to me through claiming “Du weißt nicht wie man Kuh auf Polnisch sagt” (‘You don’t know how to say cow in Polish’). Yet, German remains the most relevant language in the kindergarten context, so translation requests, switches to English, etc. usually follow mainly when a child fails to express or understand something in German. Children also have to navigate a range of different, sometimes conflicting language ideologies. For example, whereas Inga was asked for a translation of mermaid to Russian by teacher Iris, on another occasion, she confidently called a melon by the Russian name *arbuz*, which was delegitimized by her peers Tom (Polish and German-speaking) and Emil (German-speaking). Co-creating a conflict with child Inga, the peers Tom and Emil opposed the idea that the item melon (*Melone* in German, *arbuz* in Russian) could have two names in the kindergarten context. Children faced such incongruencies in language ideological assemblages by positioning themselves in specific ways. For example, Inga stated that she was ‘not German,’ justifying her lexical choice of *arbuz*, or claimed that she is still a child when she did not know the Russian word for mermaid, implying that her bilingualism is still developing.

## 7.2 Contributions and Implications

Based on the findings of this research, I want to highlight the following four resulting key contributions and implications.

### ***Participation as a Dynamically Emerging Phenomenon That Takes Many Forms***

This dissertation connected to a body of literature that approaches participation in social encounters as interactive work by participants (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation). This interactive work entails the

joint co-creation of action through using diverse semiotic resources, multimodally and embodied (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Within ever-evolving interactions, participants display their involvement with each other and, in so doing, continuously “inhabit each others’ actions” (Goodwin, 2018a, p.11). In the context of ECEC, participation in social interaction has been understood as closely tied to processes of language socialization (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018).

Building on this notion of participation, I underscored that participation is multi-modal and can take many forms. As such, competent participation in an interaction can, for example, take embodied forms and include, e.g., silent participation or performing an action drawing on gestures and gaze or singing. In both research and educational practice, it is therefore important not to over-emphasize speech but instead acknowledge that participation through language practices is dynamic and multi-modal. This is particularly relevant in linguistically diverse ECEC contexts, where children’s language skills are still developing while they are already competently taking part in interactions. Participation is then also, as highlighted throughout this dissertation, mediated by the language ideological dimension of language practices. Throughout their language socialization in ECEC, children encounter a range of institutionalized and local language ideologies and engage with them in participatory processes. By showing how children use semiotic resources in ways that relate to prevalent language ideologies, such as a competence ideology in the ECEC settings, this dissertation has demonstrated the impact of language ideologies for the ways that children’s participation takes shape in ECEC. As a result of these findings, I advocate for attention for the intersection of language ideologies and participation, both in research and professional practice. This includes a nuanced approach to linguistic diversity, which will be further discussed in the following section.

### *A Nuanced Approach to Linguistic Diversity in ECEC*

While Dutch and German as national languages were dominant in Little Sprouts and Good Shepherd, other languages were also situationally at stake, embedded in language-ideological workings. It is thus important for researchers and ECEC teachers to consider that certain family languages may have been rendered invisible and inaudible (see Chapter 3 of this dissertation), or regional minority languages like Limburgish may be used only for certain types of interactions in a bidialectal ECEC center (see Chapter 4 of this dissertation). In this respect, this dissertation also makes a point in studying linguistic diversity holistically, i.e., not with a focus on either regional minority languages, such as Limburgish, or so-called ‘immigrant’ minority languages, such as Albanian or Russian. Linguistic diversity in social realities is complex, and speakers of different languages, including standard languages, regional minority languages and so-called ‘immigrant minority languages’, jointly co-create meaning about linguistic diversity in ECEC. Taking all languages into account and, in fact, employing a broad understanding of *language* in general, as opposed to only a specific type of language, allowed me to map the language-ideological landscape of ECEC with attention to this multi-layered nature. It resulted that in the context of Limburg (NL), the regional minority language Limburgish is still seen as a relevant language for children’s wellbeing and, therefore, receives attention in ECEC, whereas family languages other than Limburgish or Dutch are seen as rather detached from ECEC. In the context of the kindergarten Good Shepherd in North-Rhine-Westphalia (DE), many children had a greater awareness of English than of other family languages of their peers, which is linked to the societal status of different languages. This dissertation has shown that language hierarchical orderings are reproduced through daily interactions in ECEC. Since harmonious bilingual development requires an acknowledgment of a child’s full linguistic repertoire (De Houwer, 2020), a nuanced understanding of linguistic diversity in ECEC acknowledges all languages that children

get into contact with, e.g., at home, also if they are not actively used in ECEC.

In the same vein, this dissertation also showed that children might have varying sensitivities and attitudes towards linguistic diversity: The children in Little Sprouts (DE), for example, actively negotiated if a food item can have two different names in different languages. Space for linguistic diversity can benefit all children, not only multilingual children, since they get to understand linguistic diversity as a normal part of our society, which, in turn, often increases their interest in languages as well as their language awareness (Günther-van der Meij et al., 2022). Therefore, the findings of this dissertation foreground the value of thematizing linguistic diversity together with children, which can strengthen their understanding, support a respectful peer environment, and guide their engagement with language ideologies.

### ***The Participation of the Ethnographer as Central for the Research and Analysis Process***

With regard to linguistic ethnographic research processes, many interactions analyzed in this dissertation involved my own participation as a researcher in the ECEC centers. An interest in language practices requires the researcher's mobility within the field (Cekaite & Goodwin, 2021). Rather than solely focusing on specific moments in ECEC, such as circle time, where I could position the camera on a tripod and then step into the background, I aimed to capture various types of interactions to comprehend the multi-faceted nature of participation during a typical day at ECEC. In this process, it was necessary to become an active participant or, as referred to in the literature, a 'researcher-participant' (Hofstetter, 2021) who takes the documentation tools like notepads, audio- and video-devices along and makes active choices about when and what to document. Particularly in the ECEC context, being the 'fly on the wall' was not feasible because teachers and children actively engaged me in interactions. This process

exceeded relationship building for the mere purpose of gaining access, which has historically been emphasized in ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Instead, interacting with children and teachers gave me unique insights through my own embodied participation. For example, it allowed me to explore the meanings of different languages that child Daniel speaks together with him in the scope of play (Chapter 3). As I interacted with the children, I also related to the prevalent interaction norms in the ECEC centers, which made these more tangible for the research process. In the case of Daniel, my questions about his knowledge of Albanian seemed out of place in the preschool, which was reflected in his strong negative reaction. As such, this experience confirms Downey et al. (2014, p. 185f), who emphasize that “[o]ur errors and misunderstandings in the field, like those of all novices, bring into action local corrective mechanisms.” When my own participation took the form of locally ‘incompetent’ behavior, chances emerged to learn about participation in accordance with language policies and practices in the field.

In other interactions that I became part of, I oriented to local interaction norms, for example, when co-creating parallel participation frames when the teachers were engaging in an intimated participation frame among each other (Chapter 4). Through multi-modal interaction analysis, it then became clear that the teachers, children, and I co-created these interactions according to the local norms and prevalent language ideologies. Against this background, this dissertation underscores the value of harnessing the ethnographers’ participation in the field and involvement with the co-participants for the joint process of knowledge generation. Particularly, it suggests that a combination of linguistic ethnographic methods and multi-modal interaction analysis for relevant situations, which might also include the researcher as a co-participant, offers a powerful combination of specific participant knowledge, affordances resulting from participation, and analytical means to understand how interactions unfold on a moment-to-moment basis.

***Combining Ethnographic Field Sites Across Borders for Deeper Insights***

Lastly, this dissertation combined two different field sites, which are only 45 kilometres apart but separated by a national border. As a result, the local organizational conditions greatly differed from one another. It became clear that childhood experiences, daily interactions, and language socialization at ECEC can unfold in very different ways related to the local and national context. For instance, children born on the Dutch side typically attend ECEC until the age of four before entering school, whereas their counterparts on the German side continue until they are six years old. Historically, it is uncommon in ethnography to explicitly juxtapose two different research settings due to the anthropological premise that each field site possesses its unique logic, shaped by day-to-day practices. More recently, researchers have, however, demonstrated that combining two different field sites can be productive for the researcher's sensitivities towards the field sites (Abramson & Gong, 2020; Huf, 2021). Also in the research journey of this dissertation, I got to enrich the analysis through juxtaposing two field sites. Concretely, after conducting observations in preschool Little Sprouts (NL), where linguistic diversity 'just happened' without becoming a meta-communicational topic, the children's and teachers' discourse practices about linguistic diversity in Good Shepherd (DE) stood out. Hence, this dissertation suggests that juxtaposing two different contexts in the same research project may help to direct the focus to relevant characteristics for each setting.

In this dissertation, the cross-border approach ultimately allowed to show how different forms of participation take shape in different contexts. The German-Dutch border region provided for an interesting setting due to the local language situation: It is located on a dialect continuum, yet national languages became dominant after nation-state formation, and local varieties are almost extinct on the German side nowadays (Cornelissen, 1995). Lack of language skills is often named as an obstacle to border-crossing practices like working

abroad later on in life (Actieteam Grensoverschrijdende Economie en Arbeid, 2017). In preschool Good Shepherd and kindergarten Little Sprouts, the ‘neighbor language’ (Hovens, forthcoming) never explicitly played a role, showing that the linguistic diversity of the wider Euroregion is not widely reflected in the ECEC context. Given that ECEC is an important arena for language socialization (Schwartz, 2018), it can serve as a fruitful environment to familiarize toddlers with linguistic diversity early on. Ultimately, cultivating an open attitude to linguistic diversity may support the Euroregion’s efforts to encourage cross-border cooperation and exchange.

### 7.3 Outlook

The Netherlands and Germany are linguistically diverse societies, related to migration, internationalization, regional minority languages, and bordering contexts (Adler, 2019; KNAW, 2018). At the same time, they are also internationally oriented countries when it comes to, for example, economy, politics and science, rendering a wide variety of languages relevant. Linguistic diversity is thus increasingly a societal reality that could be harnessed within and across societies (KNAW, 2018). However, the multilingual trend is not yet reflected in the education systems, which are still often described as operating on a ‘monolingual habitus’ (Gogolin, 1994). Laying the basis for harmonious linguistic diversity<sup>20</sup>, which can benefit not only multilingual speakers but society as a whole, starts early on in life. Therefore, it is relevant to foster language inclusivity already in ECEC. The impact paragraph in the annex of this dissertation presents several didactical strategies aimed at welcoming linguistic diversity into the ECEC context.

Future research can connect here, focusing, for example, on ECEC settings that introduce such didactical strategies into daily practice. Since children’s lives unfold across different contexts, it might

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<sup>20</sup> Inspired by de Houwer’s (2020) term of ‘harmonious bilingualism’



be fruitful to expand research on language practices to the home contexts in such future studies.

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## Annex

### A: Information letter for parents (Little Sprouts, NL)



Maastricht, 12.10.2020

Geachte ouder(s)/verzorgers,

De Universiteit Maastricht, Leerstoel Taalcultuur in Limburg, is een project gestart met onderzoek naar het **taalgebruik op de peuteropvang** in de Duits-Nederlandse grensstreek. Het doel van het project is om te begrijpen *wanneer en waar kinderen welke talen op de opvang spreken en hoe kinderen samen leren met taal om te gaan*. Hiervoor loop ik gedurende vier maanden regelmatig als gast mee op [naam opvang], observeer en doe mee met de dagelijkse routines. In een latere fase zal ik soms audio- en video-opnames maken. Het management van [naam organisatie], [namen leidsters] hebben ingestemd dat ik het onderzoek uitvoer bij [naam opvang]. Met deze brief wil ik graag uw toestemming vragen voor de deelname van uw kind. Deelname is vrijwillig.

De observaties die ik in dit onderzoek verzamel worden opgenomen in onderzoekspublicaties, lezingen en een proefschrift. De kinderen en medewerkers krijgen hierin een andere naam ('pseudoniem') en alle identificerende gegevens worden onherkenbaar gemaakt. Dat houdt bij beelden onder andere het vervagen van gezichten in.

Voor de interne administratie van dit onderzoek zijn ook persoonsgegevens nodig, zoals naam en geboortedatum van uw kind. Alle gegevens worden tijdens en na afloop van het project op beveiligde wijze volgens de richtlijnen van de Universiteit Maastricht en de Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming bewaard.

U beslist zelf of u toestemming geeft voor deelname van uw kind. U kunt op elk moment tijdens het onderzoek de deelname van uw kind stopzetten en uw toestemming intrekken. Voor het stoppen hoeft u geen reden te geven. Stopzetten kan tot één maand na afloop van de onderzoeksperiode. U kunt uw toestemming intrekken door een mail te sturen naar [m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl).

Zou u de toestemmingsverklaring willen invullen, ondertekenen en deze in de bijgevoegde enveloppe aan [namen leidsters] geven?

Hartelijk bedankt voor uw medewerking!  
Als u vragen heeft kunt u altijd contact met ons opnemen.

Met vriendelijke groet,

*Uitvoerend onderzoeker:*  
Marie Rickert  
[m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl)  
T : [telefoonnr.]

*Verantwoordelijk onderzoeker:*  
Prof. Leonie Cornips

**B: Approval form for parents (Little Sprouts, NL)**



**Toestemmingsverklaring voor het onderzoek "Taalgebruik op de peuteropvang"**

Ik heb uitleg gekregen over het doel van het onderzoek. Ik heb vragen mogen stellen over het onderzoek. Ik begrijp dat ik op elk moment tijdens het onderzoek de deelname van mijn kind mag stopzetten. Ik begreep hoe de gegevens van het onderzoek bewaard zullen worden en waarvoor ze gebruikt zullen worden.

Ik geef mijn toestemming om

- mijn kind te laten deelnemen aan het onderzoek zoals beschreven in het informatiedocument
- geluidsopnames** van mijn kind te maken, deze opnames op te slaan volgens de geldende regels van de Universiteit Maastricht en de Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming transcripten daarvan te gebruiken voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden.
- de geluidsopnames af te spelen op congressen.
- video-opnames** van mijn kind te maken, deze opnames op te slaan volgens de geldende regels van de Universiteit Maastricht en de Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming en transcripten daarvan te gebruiken voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden.
- de video-opnames te laten tonen op congressen en beelden te gebruiken voor publicaties waar gezichten onherkenbaar gemaakt worden.

*(U kunt doorhalen wat niet van toepassing is.)*

Overige opmerkingen:

.....  
.....

**Ik geef mijn toestemming:**  JA  NEE

Naam van het kind: ..... Geboortedatum van het kind:.....

Eigen naam: ..... Relatie tot het kind (bijv. vader/moeder):.....

Plaats/Datum: ..... Handtekening: .....

***Verklaring uitvoerend onderzoeker***

Ik, Marie Rickert, verklaar dat ik de hierboven genoemde persoon juist heb geïnformeerd over het onderzoek.

Plaats/Datum:..... Handtekening: .....

## C: Information Letter for parents (Good Shepherd, DE)



Maastricht, den 15.09.2021

Liebe Erziehungsberechtigte,

[Name KiTa] nimmt in den nächsten Monaten an einer Studie teil. In der Studie geht es um den Sprachgebrauch in der KiTa. Das Ziel ist es, zu verstehen wie Kinder im Alltag lernen mit Sprache und sprachlicher Vielfalt umzugehen.

Mein Name ist Marie Rickert und ich bin wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin an der Universität Maastricht. Für die Studie werde ich [Name KiTa] bis Ende des Jahres regelmäßig besuchen. Ich werde die Kommunikation im KiTa-Alltag beobachten, Notizen machen und Audio- und Videoaufnahmen machen. Die Leitung der [Name KiTa] und die ErzieherInnen sind damit einverstanden.

Die Ergebnisse werden in Artikeln, Vorträgen und einer Doktorarbeit (Buch) veröffentlicht. Die Kinder und ErzieherInnen bekommen dort andere Namen (Pseudonym). Sie bekommen auch andere sogenannte Identifikationsmerkmale. Das heißt zum Beispiel, dass Bilder nachgezeichnet werden und Gesichter dabei unscharf gemacht werden.

Aus administrativen Gründen brauchen wir auch den Namen und das Geburtsdatum Ihres Kindes. Alle Daten werden während und nach dem Projekt nach den Richtlinien der Universität Maastricht und der Datenschutz-Grundverordnung sicher gespeichert. Nur berechnete ForscherInnen können auf die Daten zugreifen.

**Sind Sie einverstanden, dass Ihr Kind an der Studie teilnimmt?** Die Teilnahme ist freiwillig. Sie können auch später noch entscheiden, dass Ihr Kind doch nicht teilnehmen soll. Dann schicken Sie bis spätestens einen Monat nach Ende der Forschungszeit eine E-Mail an [m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl). Sie müssen keine Gründe nennen.

Füllen Sie bitte die Einverständniserklärung aus und geben Sie diese in dem beigefügten Umschlag wieder in der KiTa ab. Vielen Dank!

Bei Fragen können Sie sich jederzeit bei mir melden.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

*Durchführung:*  
Marie Rickert  
[m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:m.rickert@maastrichtuniversity.nl)  
T : +31 433883471

*Wissenschaftliche Leitung:*  
Prof. Leonie Cornips

## D: Approval form for parents (Good Shepherd, DE)



### Einverständniserklärung zur Teilnahme an der Studie "Sprachgebrauch in der KiTa"

Ich habe Informationen über die Studie bekommen und die Informationen gelesen. Ich konnte Fragen stellen. Mir ist klar, dass ich jederzeit während der Forschungsphase (und bis zu einem Monat danach) mein Einverständnis widerrufen kann. Ich habe die Informationen zur Datenbewahrung und Datennutzung gelesen und verstanden.

#### Ich stimme zu, dass



mein Kind an der Studie **teilnehmen** darf.  
Die Studie wird wie auf dem Informationsblatt beschrieben durchgeführt.



**Tonaufnahmen** von meinem Kind für diese Studie gemacht werden dürfen.  
Die Tonaufnahmen dürfen unter Wahrung des Datenschutzes gespeichert werden und Transkripte hiervon für wissenschaftliche Zwecke gebraucht werden. Die Tonaufnahmen dürfen auf Konferenzen für wissenschaftliche Zwecke abgespielt werden.



**Videoaufnahmen** von meinem Kind für diese Studie gemacht werden dürfen.  
Die Videoaufnahmen dürfen unter Wahrung des Datenschutzes gespeichert werden und Transkripte hiervon für wissenschaftliche Zwecke gebraucht werden. Die Videoaufnahmen dürfen auf Konferenzen für wissenschaftliche Zwecke abgespielt werden, wobei Gesichter unkenntlich gemacht werden.

*(Sie können durchstreichen, womit Sie nicht einverstanden sind.)*

Ich stimme zu:  JA  NEIN

Name des Kindes: ..... Geburtsdatum des Kindes:.....

Eigener Name (Erziehungsberechtigter) .....

Datum, Unterschrift: .....

## **Impact paragraph**

Why is *participation in linguistically diverse Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC) worth our attention? The Netherlands and Germany, just like many other countries, have linguistically diverse populations. ECEC commonly serves as the first place for children to be introduced to institutional contexts, so that there, children learn how to *participate* in social settings using language. Understanding how and why children shape their participation in the ways they do is not only of interest to scholars but also to society as a whole and various stakeholders like parents, ECEC professionals, or children themselves. For this reason, creating both *societal* and *scientific* impact was an important aspect of my PhD project. In line with the Maastricht University Promotion Regulations of 2023, this section reflects on scientific and societal impact in layman's terms.

### ***In a Nutshell: What did I find?***

My Ph.D. research focused on participation in ECEC centers where multiple languages are spoken by teachers and children, taking the examples of preschool Little Sprouts in the Netherlands and kindergarten Good Shepherd in Germany. I found that the way children and teachers interact with each other is very dynamic, involving aspects like what children and teachers *do*, for example, what they *say* or *sing*, the physical surroundings they are in, and, importantly, what they believe about how language should be used.

At preschool Little Sprouts in the Dutch province of Limburg, a language divide became evident. While the regional language Limburgish is spoken by many residents of the province alongside Dutch in daily life, the educational system still leans heavily towards Dutch. This already manifests as early as in ECEC, where teachers commonly reserve Limburgish for occasions in the care context, while Dutch dominates educational contexts, as also observed at Little Sprouts. Additionally, family languages like Albanian or Arabic were



not given much importance there. As a result of this language hierarchy, the way children participated in daily ECEC activities was affected. When teachers, for example, used Limburgish for a personal chat among colleagues during the daily fruit break, children understood this conversation as private and started other interactions. On the other hand, teachers used Dutch when they wanted the children to overhear their conversation, for example, in case they praised children. The use of Dutch in that case signaled that the conversation was for everyone, and children paid more attention.

Kindergarten Good Shepherd (DE) was attended by children with many different family languages. My research there showed that these children learned how to navigate linguistic diversity through participating in the ECEC day-to-day among this diverse group. While German was the main language at the kindergarten, the children often talked about their other languages with each other or simply used them (e.g., one word) with their teacher, peers, and with me, the researcher.

When children did so, this led to discussions and negotiations about what these languages meant to them and to the group. For instance, on one occasion, the teacher asked a child for translations into the family language, highlighting how valuable the family language is. The same child, however, experienced a pushback from her peers when she tried to use her family language on another occasion. This example shows that children have to figure out how to handle these different ideas about language use in the kindergarten, and they do so while participating in ECEC.

### ***What ECEC Professionals Can Learn From this Book***

A key take-away of this book is the importance of *acknowledging all languages children come into contact with*, also, for example at home, even if these languages are not the main language of the ECEC center. Such an acknowledgment of linguistic diversity can be beneficial for all children. It can help multilingual children develop their language skills, support children's language awareness and self-esteem, and it can also

encourage an open and curious attitude towards different languages in general. Since we live in societies characterized by diversity, such an open mindset can be of great benefit, also for monolingual children.

But how can a language-inclusive atmosphere be created in ECEC? In minority language contexts such as Limburg, one potential strategy to prevent children from perceiving the national language as more valuable than the regional one is the extensive use of both languages in a variety of situations and constellations. To change the current language divide, teachers can introduce Limburgish into educational group settings, such as during circle time or singing. There are several didactical resources towards these ends, such as from the project 'Jongk gelieërd, Good gedoan,' a collaboration between childcare organization MIK PIW group and the musical collective Troubadours van de toekomst which developed Limburgish children's songs<sup>21</sup>. Since songs are an important part of educational and instructional activities in ECEC, integrating such songs can be one way to signal the relevance of Limburgish to children.

Incorporating family languages into circle time activities is also possible with home languages that the teachers do not speak themselves. The project 'Storch Lingi [Stork Lingi]'<sup>22</sup> is an example of a valuable framework for this aim. Lingi is a stuffed animal with a keen curiosity about different languages, dialects, and various ways of speaking. The children take turns taking Lingi and the accompanying material home for one night. While at home, Lingi 'listens' to the languages and dialects spoken by their family members. The following morning, during circle time at the ECEC center, the children share Lingi's experiences and observations. Every child can participate

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@troubadoursvandetoekomst>

<sup>22</sup> Wiese, Heike; Mayr, Katharina; Krämer, Philipp; Seeger, Patrick; Müller, Hans-Georg & Freywald, Ulrike (2014). *Deutsch ist vielseitig: Aus- und Fortbildungsmodulare zur Sprachvariation im urbanen Raum*.

because Lingi is interested not only in different languages but also in various styles and expressions.

Yet another method to integrate family languages in ECEC is by reading multilingual books together. Digital tools like so-called ‘reading pens’ can help to put multilingual/dialogic reading into practice. These devices enable elements of a story to be recorded in different languages, for example, with parents' assistance, which brings new linguistic resources to ECEC.

### ***How I Engaged the Public, ECEC Sector, and Children with this Research***

First and foremost, I found it important to engage the key stakeholders with my research: Children themselves. For the target group of children in ECEC age, particularly those in the German-Dutch border area, I developed a bilingual children’s book for research dissemination in close collaboration with illustrator Léonie Smith<sup>23</sup>. The Dutch/German bilingual book ‘Zing je mee?/Singst du mit?’ has been widely distributed to public partners in ECEC, including to preschool Little Sprouts (NL), where the research for the book had been carried out. For the wider public and other children, an Open Access version is available online.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Funding for this project has been generously provided by the FASoS valorization fund and the chair of languageculture in Limburg.

<sup>24</sup>

[https://marierickert.github.io/assets/pdf/Zingjemee\\_Singstdumit\\_Publicversion.pdf](https://marierickert.github.io/assets/pdf/Zingjemee_Singstdumit_Publicversion.pdf)



Figure 13: Children's book

Secondly, for primary-school-aged children, I offered two interactive workshops at the WizzKidz summer camp of Maastricht University about children's languages and multilingualism. Valorizing my research on singing in interaction in ECEC, I gave a presentation to Limburgish musicians who were interested in input to their process of developing children's songs in Limburgish for use in ECEC contexts.

Turning to the broader public in the German-Dutch border area, together with Leonie Cornips, I was invited to give a Studium Generale lecture in the scope of the lecture series 'Im Gespräch/In gesprek' from the public libraries of Krefeld and Venlo. The event was bilingual in German and Dutch and up to today, the online recording of the event has reached 267 views. In addition, an article about this research appeared in the regional newspaper *de Limburger*.

When it comes to stakeholders from the ECEC sector, I discussed initial research results with the team manager of preschool Little Sprouts (NL) and the assistant for language support at Good

Shepherd (DE) toward the end of the respective fieldwork periods. Parents at Little Sprouts have received a flyer with an infographic summarizing initial findings on my last day of fieldwork. I also informally discussed results and observations with the teachers of Little Sprouts during two visits after the end of fieldwork, and visits to Good Shepherd (DE) will follow.

To valorize the insights from the Limburgish minority language context beyond the region, I participated as an invited speaker in the third regional language symposium, ‘Plat veur Potwottels,’ organized by the Heritage Center Achterhoek en Liemers. This event targeted educators and interested residents of the Dutch region Gelderland.

### ***What Scholars Can Learn From This Book***

Turning to scientific impact, this research primarily contributes to the field of *Linguistic Anthropology*. Linguistic Anthropologists research the intersection of language and culture, often focusing on how people use language in their daily lives. When it comes to educational settings, this field has mainly investigated how children and teachers participate in linguistically diverse educational settings in primary schools and beyond. Linguistically diverse ECEC, on the other hand, has not received much attention yet, even though it is important for children when it comes to learning how to use language. My focus on ECEC in this book helps to gain an understanding of language use in the earliest stages of children’s educational trajectory. Especially very young children primarily communicate through other forms than what we classically call ‘spoken language.’ For example, they rely on gaze or gestures to convey their messages. In this research, I included these non-audible forms of young children’s (but also adults’) communication by drawing on my own observations and making video recordings. I have shown that these approaches can help us to trace the subtle details of participation.

Another scientifically valuable aspect of my research is how I examined my role as a researcher in the interactions I observed. In

linguistic anthropology, it is common for researchers to get involved in the situations they study to build rapport and gather information. A rather novel aspect of my research is that I explicitly analyzed how I participated in the interactions in ECEC as well. I did this by using the same moment-to-moment technique of analysis that I used to look at interactions between children and teachers. This approach sheds light on how the various participatory processes in ECEC are connected. It also makes very transparent how the data for this research was collected.

### ***How I Informed the Scholarly Community About This Research***

To begin with, all four articles that make up the empirical chapters of this dissertation have been published open access in international, peer-reviewed journals. One of these publications appeared in a Special Issue entitled ‘Language policies and practices in ECEC: Perspectives across European migration societies’, contributing to international joint efforts among colleagues to shed light on language policy and practices in linguistically diverse ECEC. In addition to these publications, the entire dissertation is also accessible Open Access online and available for purchase in paperback on the website of LOT, the Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics. Another research article drawing on this project is currently in preparation and will be submitted to a renowned academic outlet for Open Access publication (in collaboration with Verena Platzgummer).

In total, I have given 21 academic presentations about this Ph.D. research at national and international academic conferences and workshops, ranging from a 5-minute pitch in combination with a poster presentation to a 1.5-hour talk. In addition to these presentations, I have facilitated eight workshops and data sessions for academic peers and colleagues. These workshops have sparked mutual exchange among colleagues, e.g., about the topic of researching multilingually and with awareness for linguistic diversity. I have contributed to organizing two academic conferences (the LIMES final conference [booklet

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committee] and the 7<sup>th</sup> ICLHE [organizing committee]), which presented valuable occasions for academic researchers to discuss topics including linguistic diversity and interdisciplinary research. In order to get into a dialogue with students, I have given four guest lectures about the present research at German and Dutch universities (University of Duisburg-Essen, University of Münster and Maastricht University). Similarly, this research has also informed my teaching of two university courses. Students' evaluations have shown an appreciation of the practical insights into linguistic ethnographic research processes and participation in linguistic diversity in ECEC.

## Summary (English)

This Ph.D. dissertation delves into the dynamics of participation among children and teachers in the context of linguistic diversity in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). It is based on linguistic ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and the generation of audio- and video-data in two ECEC centers situated on either side of the German-Dutch border. These centers each have their own linguistically diverse character with the national languages German or Dutch, different family languages and, in the Dutch case, the regional language Limburgish being represented.

In the ECEC center in the Netherlands, children and teachers primarily used the national language Dutch. The use of Limburgish by the teachers was mainly restricted to intimised interaction frames, and other family languages largely remained invisibilized. This *lived language divide* had specific affordances for children's participation: For example, one multilingual child engaged in language policing when I, as a researcher, tried to involve him in multilingual language practices in the preschool, which was ultimately rendered possible through employing institutionally relevant formats like counting and initiation-response-feedback-sequences. Another example concerns the co-construction of different *participation frames* through the use of Limburgish, Dutch, and other semiotic resources. Children understood when teachers used the regional minority language Limburgish to mark a personal chat between teachers. In these cases, the children, for example, initiated other interactions. Conversely, when teachers intended their remarks to be overheard by the children, particularly when praising the children, they switched to the national language Dutch, which indicated collective relevance. Children oriented to this cueing through active listening and silent participation. One form of language practices that was particularly prevalent in the pre-school was singing, which always took place in Dutch and took on different interactional and communicative functions. While children and teachers in the ECEC center in the Netherlands usually did not actively discuss



their linguistic diversity, different family languages, language skills and language use were addressed more directly in the German case, both by teachers and children. Children had to navigate a range of language ideologies, some of which were conflicting, leading them to position themselves in specific ways, e.g., through exercising multilingual agency.

Taken together, the dissertation underscores that participation in linguistically diverse ECEC is a dynamically emerging phenomenon that takes many forms. It advocates for a nuanced approach to linguistic diversity which takes into account *all* language that children encounter, both in professional ECEC practice as well as in the context of ECEC research.

## **Samenvatting (Nederlands)**

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de dynamiek van participatie onder kinderen en pedagogische medewerkers in de context van talige diversiteit in de kinderopvang, oftewel de opvang en het onderwijs voor jonge kinderen (OOJK). Het is gebaseerd op linguïstisch etnografisch veldwerk inclusief participerende observatie en het genereren van audio- en videogegevens in een peuterspeelzaal en een dagopvang gelegen aan weerszijden van de Duits-Nederlandse grens. Deze locaties hebben elk hun eigen talig diverse karakter met de nationale talen Duits of Nederlands, verschillende familietalen en, in het Nederlandse geval, de regionale taal Limburgs.

Op de peuterspeelzaal in Nederland gebruikten kinderen en leidsters voornamelijk de nationale taal Nederlands. Het gebruik van het Limburgs door de leidsters was voornamelijk beperkt tot geïntimiseerde interactiekaders, terwijl andere familietalen grotendeels onzichtbaar/onhoorbaar bleven. Deze taalkloof had implicaties voor de participatie van kinderen: Een meertalig kind deed bijvoorbeeld aan *language policing*, d.w.z. het monitoren en reguleren van taalgebruik, toen ik als onderzoeker hem probeerde aan te moedigen tot gezamenlijke meertalige taalpraktijken op de peuterspeelzaal. Uiteindelijk werden meertalige taalpraktijken dan mogelijk gemaakt door het gebruik van institutioneel relevante formaten zoals tellen en initiatie-respons-feedback-sequenties. Een ander voorbeeld betreft de co-constructie van verschillende participatieframes door het gebruik van het Limburgs, het Nederlands en andere semiotische middelen. Kinderen begrepen wanneer leidsters de regionale minderheidstaal Limburgs gebruikten om een persoonlijk gesprek tussen leidsters te markeren. In deze gevallen initieerden de kinderen bijvoorbeeld andere interacties met elkaar. Wanneer leidsters wederom duidelijk wilden maken dat hun opmerkingen eigenlijk voor de kinderen bedoeld waren, in het bijzonder wanneer ze de kinderen prezen, schakelden de leidsters over naar de nationale taal Nederlands. Dit gaf collectieve relevantie aan. Kinderen oriënteerden zich op deze taalwisseling door actief te

luisteren en stil te participeren. Een bijzonder veel voorkomende taalpraktijk op de peuterspeelzaal was het zingen, dat altijd in het Nederlands plaatsvond en verschillende interactionele en communicatieve functies had.

Terwijl kinderen en pedagogische medewerkers in de Nederlandse OOK-locatie hun talige diversiteit meestal niet actief benoemden, werden verschillende familietalen, taalvaardigheden en taalgebruik directer besproken in de Duitse opvang, zowel door pedagogische medewerkers als door kinderen. Kinderen moesten navigeren door een reeks taalideologieën, waarvan sommige tegenstrijdig waren. Daarbij positioneerden de kinderen zichzelf op specifieke manieren, bijvoorbeeld door het uitoefenen van meertalige *agency*.

Al met al onderstreept het proefschrift dat participatie in talig diverse OOK dynamisch is en vele vormen aanneemt. Het pleit voor een genuanceerde benadering van talige diversiteit die rekening houdt met *alle* talen waarmee kinderen in contact komen, en dat zowel in de professionele praktijk van OOK als in de context van het OOK-onderzoek.

## **Zusammenfassung (Deutsch)**

Diese Dissertation befasst sich mit der Dynamik der Partizipation von Kindern und ErzieherInnen im Kontext der sprachlichen Vielfalt in der frühkindlichen Betreuung, Bildung und Erziehung (FBBE). Sie basiert auf einer linguistisch-ethnographischen Feldforschung mit teilnehmender Beobachtung und der Erstellung von Audio- und Videoaufnahmen in einer Vorschule und einer KiTa, jeweils auf entgegengesetzten Seiten deutsch-niederländischen Grenze. Diese Einrichtungen haben jeweils ihren eigenen sprachlich vielfältigen Charakter durch die Landessprachen Deutsch oder Niederländisch, verschiedenen Familiensprachen und, im niederländischen Fall, die Regionalsprache Limburgisch.

In der niederländischen Vorschule verwendeten Kinder und ErzieherInnen hauptsächlich die Landessprache Niederländisch. Der Gebrauch des Limburgischen durch die ErzieherInnen beschränkte sich in erster Linie auf intimisierte Interaktionsrahmen, während andere Familiensprachen weitgehend unsichtbar/unhörbar blieben. Diese gelebte Sprachentrennung hatte Implikationen für die Partizipation der Kinder: Ein mehrsprachiges Kind betrieb beispielsweise *language policing*, sprich das Monitoren und Regulieren von Sprachgebrauch, als ich als Forscherin versuchte, es zu gemeinsamen mehrsprachigen Sprachpraktiken in der Vorschule anzuregen. Letztlich wurden diese mehrsprachigen Sprachpraktiken dann durch den Einsatz institutionell relevanter Formate wie Zählen und Initiations-Reaktions-Feedback-Sequenzen ermöglicht. Ein weiteres Beispiel betrifft die Ko-Konstruktion verschiedener Partizipationsrahmen durch die Verwendung von Limburgisch, Niederländisch und anderen semiotischen Ressourcen. Die Kinder bemerkten es, wenn die ErzieherInnen die regionale Minderheitensprache Limburgisch verwendeten, um ein persönliches Gespräch zwischen den ErzieherInnen zu kennzeichnen. In diesen Fällen initiierten die Kinder zum Beispiel andere Interaktionen. Die ErzieherInnen benutzten wiederum die Landessprache Niederländisch, wenn sie beabsichtigten,

dass ihre Äußerungen von den Kindern mitgehört wurden, insbesondere wenn sie die Kinder lobten, was auf kollektive Relevanz hinwies. Die Kinder zeigten ihre Orientierung zu diesem Sprachwechsel durch aktives Zuhören und stille Teilnahme. Eine Sprachpraxis, die in der Vorschule besonders häufig vorkam, war Singen, das immer auf Niederländisch stattfand und verschiedene interaktionelle und kommunikative Funktionen übernahm.

Während Kinder und ErzieherInnen in der niederländischen Vorschule in der Regel nicht aktiv über ihre sprachliche Vielfalt sprachen, wurden unterschiedliche Familiensprachen, Sprachkenntnisse und Sprachgebrauch in der deutschen KiTa sowohl von ErzieherInnen als auch von Kindern oft direkt besprochen. Die Kinder mussten sich in verschiedenen, teils widersprüchlichen Sprachideologien zurechtfinden, was sie dazu veranlasste, sich auf spezifische Weisen zu positionieren, z. B. durch mehrsprachiges Handeln (*agency*).

Insgesamt unterstreicht die Dissertation, dass die Teilnahme an sprachlich vielfältiger FBBE sich dynamisch entwickelt und viele Formen annimmt. Es wird für einen nuancierten Ansatz der sprachlichen Vielfalt plädiert, der *alle* Sprachen, mit denen Kinder in Kontakt kommen, berücksichtigt, sowohl in der professionellen FBBE-Praxis als auch im Kontext der FBBE-Forschung.

## **Acknowledgement**

This dissertation has greatly benefited from the unwavering support and encouragement of many different people who have accompanied me throughout this Ph.D. journey.

First and foremost, I am indebted to to my supervisory team (Leonie Cornips, Gunther De Vogelaer and Christine Arnold) who skilfully guided me during the past four years. Leonie, your trust in me as an ethnographer, proud introduction into your academic networks and ever-present support for questions and consultations empowered me as a junior scholar. With a warm feeling, I look back upon many impactful conversations about the ups and downs of the research process but also about life more generally. Gunther, your linguistic rigor and critical comments have consistently challenged me to improve my texts, which I am very grateful for. The visits to Münster have been little highlights over the past four years. Christine, having you with a political science background on the team helped me to present my research in a way that is understandable outside my own discipline. Thank you for your continuous encouragement.

Next, I warmly extend my gratitude the childcare managers, teachers and children who have welcomed me in their institutions amid the uncertainties of the COVID-pandemic. Your generosity and openness not only made the research possible but also made my time in the preschool and kindergarten memorable. I wish every one of you only the best for the future.

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## About the Author

Marie Rickert (born in 1995, Borken/Germany) is a Linguistic Ethnographer who specializes in linguistic diversity in educational settings. Her interest in the intersection of language and culture already manifested during her Bachelor's in Cultural Studies and Educational Sciences at the University of Bremen. In the subsequent pursuit of her Master's degree at the University of Amsterdam, Marie delved deeper into Linguistic Ethnography by conducting a research project on interactions in Dutch as a Second Language (L2) classes. This research interest is closely related to teaching and mentoring activities that she undertook in the field of German as a foreign language since 2013 in international contexts, including a high school in Brno/Czech Republic, the language center of the University of Bremen/Germany, and a language school in Rabat/Morocco. Marie continued to develop the research line on L2 classroom interactions on the side of her PhD, publishing two peer-reviewed papers in this field.



Marie conducted her PhD project at the University of Maastricht and the University of Münster, focusing on participation in linguistically diverse Early Childhood Education and Care. She was also involved in teaching courses on language policies and sociolinguistics at these two universities and obtained her University Teaching Qualification in Fall 2023. Already as a Ph.D. candidate, Marie published all four empirical chapters of her dissertation in international peer-reviewed journals such as the *International Journal of Multilingualism and Ethnography & Education*. Besides academic presentations and publications, Marie engages extensively in public outreach, as part of which she has developed a children's book for research communication. During her PhD, Marie benefitted from a one-

year guest fellowship at NL Lab (KNAW Humanities Cluster). As of February 2024, she holds a post-doctoral researcher position in digital tools in professional interactions in education at Radboud University.

Marie lives with her partner in Amsterdam Oost. When not doing research, she likes to unleash her culinary creativity in the kitchen, go for runs and walks, and discover cozy cafés.