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Symposium

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Language Policies and Practices in Early Childhood Education: Expectations, Prescriptions and Negotiations in the Context of Migration and Multilingualism

Chair: **Verena Platzgummer** (University of Vienna - Eurac Research)

Discussant: **Julie Argyro Panagiotopoulou** (Universität Köln)

The symposium aims to shed light on language policies and practices in early childhood education in European migration societies by juxtaposing case studies from five national contexts. It highlights how language policies in early childhood education in different national and regional contexts are negotiated by relevant actors (e.g. parents, educational professionals, policy-makers, politicians, and stakeholders) and how they connect to educational practices. In addition, the symposium aims at examining the links between institutional and family language policies and practices (Schwartz 2019) and how responsibilities are negotiated between different actors. Preschools and other structures of early childhood education are the first institutional sites where children receive language education and there are competing normative attitudes towards language practices and language learning and teaching in these contexts. An examination of how societal and political expectations and prescriptions are reflected in institutional practices is therefore of central importance for a better understanding of the societal relevance of language in migration societies.

The aims are, firstly, to uncover the different national and regional language ideologies that inform language policies in early childhood education in different contexts and to relate these to one another. Secondly, we will analyse interactions between professionals, parents and children in order to reconstruct which linguistic resources are used in which contexts and with which actors, and we will examine which expectations, prescriptions, norms and attributions underlie these interactions. Thirdly, we will reconstruct how educational professionals engage with social hierarchisations of languages and with societal power relations both in their professional practices and reflections. On this basis, we will discuss how professional practices in early childhood education can contribute to overcoming discrimination and exclusion.

Theoretically, we draw on approaches that conceive multilingualism as the interplay of linguistic resources, practices and ideologies (Androutsopoulos 2018). We see languages as resources that are distributed in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces, and whose values are socially constructed under specific sociohistorical conditions (Heller 2007). We also consider teachers' approaches to multilingualism and multilingual practices such as translanguaging (García & Lin 2017), as relevant for students' sense of belonging and well-being (Van Der Wildt et al. 2017). Methodologically, we focus on ethnographic approaches, since they allow for studying concrete and immediate actions and consider how these are embedded within a wider socio-political context (Heller 2006; Panagiotopoulou 2017). We also include discourse-analytical approaches for the study of language policy (Johnson 2011) and examine possible links between both approaches to uncover how macro-level language policy and micro-level educational practices interrelate. The papers of part I and part II of the symposium assemble findings from ethnographic and discourse-analytical research projects conducted in five European countries. This will allow for comparative reflections on how language policies and practices in early childhood education across these contexts.

Part I: The presentations investigate the interrelation of language policies and practices in different national and regional contexts. The first presentation focuses on non-formal early childhood education and care in multilingual Luxembourg and investigates how educators, parents and children develop literacy activities in multiple languages. The second presentation investigates the interrelations between family language policies and language policies implemented in early childhood structures in Germany, Italy and France and gives an overview of recent developments in this sector. The third presentation analyses institutional language policies of different kinds of preschools in the multilingual Italian province South Tyrol as well as public discourse around these policies, taking a discourse-analytical approach.

The discussant will reflect on the potentials of ethnographic and discourse-analytical research approaches for investigating language policies and practices in preschools in the European context. The symposium closes with a discussion with the audience.

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Presentations of the Symposium

Papers in Symposium: 3

National Perspectives: 4

Head, Shoulders, Knie et Pés – Singing One's Way Into Multilingual Practices

Valérie Kemp (University of Luxembourg), **Claudine Kirsch** (University of Luxembourg), **Laura Colucci** (University of Luxembourg)

National perspective: Luxembourg

While the European Commission (2011) has called for multilingual approaches in preschools and primary schools, their implementation is difficult and has rarely been studied (Kirsch et al. 2020). Multilingual language policies are likely to challenge traditional monolingual language ideologies and language hierarchies (Bergroth & Palviainen 2016). The present paper looks at the non-formal early childhood education and care sector (ECEC) in multilingual Luxembourg, where a new plurilingual education programme has been implemented in 2017 (MENJE & SNJ

2018). It aims to develop skills in Luxembourgish (or French), familiarize children with French (or Luxembourgish) and value home languages. Furthermore, it encourages collaboration with parents and networking with social institutions (Kirsch & Seele 2020). The project COMPARE examines collaborative language and literacy practices with three-to-four-year-olds in crèches (day care centres in Luxembourg). This paper investigates the ways in which the educators in one crèche, helped by children's parents, and the children themselves developed literacy activities in multiple languages and began to overcome monolingual ideologies. The data stem from seven video recordings totalling 29 minutes and fieldnotes written on four days over a period of three months. The data have been analysed with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). Our preliminary results show that the educators included six of the children's home languages by engaging the children and their parents in a range of activities. They developed an inclusive stance to language diversity and, like the children, learned words in different languages. Thanks to the good collaboration with parents, they received home-recorded videos which they integrated into their daily practices. Finally, they considered children's, at times, reluctant attitudes towards languages other than the majority languages and found ways of opening up their minds to language diversity. Children became the driving motor for the new multilingual practices (Boyd & Huss 2017). The findings are relevant for policy-makers, researchers and professionals because they show means to develop collaborative and inclusive multilingual practices and overcome possible challenges.

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Language Transmission In Multilingual Families: New Synergies Between Preschools and Family Language Policies?

Marie Leroy (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main)

National perspective: Germany and France

In my contribution, I will present and discuss the first results of an ethnographic survey aimed at studying the interrelationships between family language policies and language policies implemented in early childhood structures in Frankfurt, Bolzano and Paris. I will focus on the interviews carried out in Paris and Frankfurt among actors in the associative sector working to promote plurilingualism in private and institutional spheres. The scope is here to reach an overview of the recent developments in this sector and more specifically to identify the challenges from an institutional point of view. Sociolinguistic and language didactic research in recent decades has highlighted the persistent differences between the appreciation of a certain elite multilingualism and marginalised plurilingual practice, often due to negative representations of migrant languages (Blommaert, 1999, Busch, 2013). These internalised and rarely consciously made differences have significant consequences for language practices in the family, which in turn have a serious impact on children's emotional and linguistic development (Moro, 2007), as for example, the non-transmission of one or more languages. Knowing that the acquisition of a second language is based on the foundation of the first language(s) knowledge, language transmission in the family also plays a crucial role in the child's school life. While this topic is well researched in linguistics, common representations, both in the family and at school, are still dominated by discourses that are strongly oriented towards monolingual ideals and aim to erase or obliterate the traces of specific kinds of migration. The aim of this research is above all to question the interconnections between the family and school spheres in multilingual contexts in order to understand the mechanisms of (non-)transmission of languages in the family. Family language policy and language education policy are usually treated separately, although a number of recent studies (Hélot and Fialais, 2014, Simon et alii 2015, Haque 2019) show the extent to which parental involvement in school plays a crucial role in children's language acquisition. My research investigates on the one hand, the ways in which family languages are taken into account in different types of early childhood structures (monolingual and multilingual) and, on the other hand, how decisions around 'school enrolment' in the family are linked to language transmission projects. A long-term project goal is to develop approaches that create synergies between the areas of family and school in order to support children's language acquisition in an inclusive way.

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Debates Around Language Policies in Preschools in South Tyrol, Italy: an Analysis of Policy Documents and Media Discourse

Verena Platzgummer (University of Vienna - Eurac Research), **Nadja Thoma** (University of Vienna)

National perspective: Italy

There has been a recent surge of interest in language practices and practices of language education in preschools in multilingual contexts around Europe (e.g. Krompåk 2015; Neumann & Kuhn 2020; Thomauske, 2017; Zettl 2019;). Such research has provided in-depth observations of practices and policies in institutions of early childhood education and has shown how these link back to discourses and ideologies circulating in the respective national or regional context. The present paper builds on these insights and investigates both institutional language policies as well as public discourse around these policies in the multilingual context of the Italian province South Tyrol. The structure of the education system in South Tyrol is tripartite, reflecting the three language groups officially recognised as 'autochthonous'. Educational policies are decided on separately by 'German', 'Italian' and 'Ladin' educational institutions, which also holds for preschools. Language practices and language education, in particular in preschools, have repeatedly been the subject of heated public debates in the province. The present paper will untangle these debates, and take a discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2016) to analysing policy documents released by the institutions representing 'German', 'Italian' and 'Ladin' preschools, political documents as well as media coverage on the subject. In doing so, we will uncover societal and political expectations and prescriptions on language education in preschools. Finally, these analyses will feed back into an ethnographic investigation of language practices and policies in South Tyrolean preschools carried out in a related project, and thus enhance our understanding of interconnections between language practices, policies and wider ideologies (Johnson 2011).

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