Giving Wings to Voices

Preschool as an Inclusive Learning Space for Communication and Understanding

Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

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Ágrip

Á undanförnum árum og áratugum hefur innflytjendum á Íslandi fjölgað líkt og víðast hvar í heiminum. Þessar breytingar hafa mikil áhrif á starfið í leikskólum landsins sem og hið fjölbreytta tungumála- og menningarlega landslag sem þar ríkir. Markmið þessarar rannsóknar er að öðlast dýpri skilning á því hvernig hægt er að skapa inngildandi og réttlátt námsrými í leikskólum þar sem stutt er við málþroska og læsi fjöltyngdra barna, sjálfsmynd þeirra og samstarf við foreldra.

Í rannsókninni er sjónum beint að því hvernig námsrými fyrir fjöltyngd leikskólabörn eru skipulögð af kennurum og stjórnendum. Leitast er við að varpa heildtækri sýn á þá fjölmörgu þætti, umhverfis, samfélags, tungumála og menningar sem hafa áhrif á nám og þroska fjöltyngdra barna. Um leið er rannsókninni ætlað að efla skilning á samspili þessara þátta í þátttökuleikskólanum sem staðsettur er í Reykjavík. Leikskólinn var valinn með markmiðsúrtaki og er í niðurstöðum og umræðum um þær lögð áhersla á að draga fram árangursríka starfs- og kennsluhætti. Fræðilegt sjónarhorn rannsóknarinnar er félags- og menningarlegt (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) og mótast af gagnrýninni sýn á menntun fjöltyngdra barna (Nieto, 2010), fjölmenningarlega starfs- og kennsluhætti (Banks, 2010) og kenningar um mál og læsi fjöltyngdra barna (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008, 2010; Brooker, 2002a; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021a; De Houwer, 2009; García & Wei, 2014).

Rannsóknin hófst í desember 2016 og henni lauk í desember 2017. Þetta er eigindleg tilviksrannsókn þar sem leikskólinn og starfshættir kennara eru skoðaðir sem eitt tilvik og eigindlegri aðferðarfræði beitt við gagnaöflun, greiningu gagna og ritun niðurstaðna (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Heath o.fl., 2010; Tracey, 2010). Rannsóknargögnin byggja á viðtölum við kennara og foreldra, vettvangsathugunum, myndbandsupptökum, skriflegum skjölum og ljósmyndum. Hluti gagnagreiningar fólst í samvinnu rannsakanda og kennara sem tóku þátt í að greina eigin starfshætti á myndbandsupptökum. Slík samvinna staðsetur kennara sem þekkingarsmiði og brúar bilið á milli kenningasmíði og daglegs starf í leikskólanum (Cummins, 2021a).

Niðurstöður sýna að þróun og skipulag námsrýma fyrir fjöltyngd börn í leikskólanum var langtíma viðfangsefni eða vegferð sem var í stöðugri mótun. Leikskólastjórinn og aðstoðarleikskólastjórinn leiddu þessa vegferð í góðri samvinnu við marga kennara og meðstjórnendur. Yfirmarkmiðið var að breyta starfsaðferðum til að mæta betur vaxandi fjölbreytileika í barnahópnum. Með þátttöku í starfsþróun og lærdómssamfélagi leikskólans innleiddu kennarar og ígrunduðu aðferðir sem miðuðu að því að efla fjölmenningarlegt leikskólastarf. Kennararnir báru mikla virðingu fyrir fjölbreytileikanum í hópnum og höfðu skapað menningu um samskipti í leikskólanum þar sem þeir litu á það sem sitt hlutverk að hafa frumkvæði að samskiptum við börn og foreldra. Í því fólst að skapa tengsl við börn og á milli barna, styðja við fjölbreyttar sjálfsmyndir, samtal og

virka þátttöku með umhyggju og eflandi samskiptum. Kennarar studdu við fjölbreytt heimatungumál barnanna með margvíslegum aðferðum eins og með því að bjóða öll velkomin í leikskólann, syngja söngva og læra orð á tungumálum barnanna. Starfsaðferðir sem hvöttu til lesturs og læsis fólu í sér að börn gátu fengið lánaðar bækur í leikskólanum til að taka með heim ásamt því að börn og foreldrar voru hvött til að taka með sér bækur að heiman til að lesa í leikskólanum. Kennarar hvöttu foreldra til að styðja við og viðhalda heimamálum barnanna meðal annars með því að tengja þau markvisst við þann íslenska orðaforða sem unnið var með á hverjum tíma. Stuðningur við mál og læsi ásamt vinnu með íslenskan orðaforða, bæði í skipulögðum og frjálsum stundum, var rauður þráður í daglegu starfi leikskólans. Ýtt var undir sjálfræði barna, yrta þátttöku og jákvæða þróun sjálfsmyndar í daglegum aðstæðum, bæði frjálsum og barnstýrðum, sem og skipulögðum stundum sem fullorðnir leiddu. Litið var á samvinnu við foreldra sem mikilvægan grundvallarþátt í að skapa árangursrík námsrými fyrir fjöltyngd börn í leikskólanum. Hluti þessa samstarfs laut að markvissu samtali um málþroska og læsi, á íslensku og heimatungumálum, um leið og lögð var áhersla á að styðja við jákvæða þróun sjálfsmyndar.

Þrátt fyrir að niðurstöður varpi ljósi á árangursríkar aðferðir og jákvæða þróun námsrýmis fyrir fjöltyngd leikskólabörn þann tíma sem rannsóknin stóð yfir, stóðu stjórnendur og kennarar frammi fyrir fjölmörgum áskorunum. Meðal áskoranna var starfsmannavelta og skortur á kennurum með viðeigandi menntun, auk fordóma og neikvæðrar umræðu meðal einstakra kennara, ekki síst þeirra sem nýlega höfðu hafið störf og höfðu ekki reynslu af því að vinna í fjölmenningarlegu umhverfi. Kennarar töldu að skortur væri á viðeigandi matstækjum til að meta og fylgjast með þroska fjöltyngdra barna og í einhverjum tilfellum gafst lítill tími til að vinna nægilega vel með þau matstæki sem til staðar voru. Þá var það mikil áskorun að festa árangursríkar aðferðir í sessi og innleiða þær með kerfisbundnum hætti í allt starf leikskólans. Þó að samstarf við foreldra væri að mörgu leyti mjög gott vantaði upp á að allir kennarar hefðu hæfni og nægilega reynslu til að eiga í samskiptum við foreldra þvert á tungumál og menningu.

Niðurstöður gefa til kynna mikilvægi þess að byggja í leikskólastarfi á fjölbreyttri tungumála- og menningarflóru fjöltyngdra barna og þróa samstarf við foreldra þegar kemur að námi þeirra og þroska. Því til viðbótar veitir rannsóknin dýpri skilning á því mikilvæga hlutverki kennara að skapa aðstæður fyrir stuðning við samskipti, mál og læsi í öllum daglegum viðfangsefnum, bæði frjálsum og skipulögðum. Með því að draga fram árangursríka starfshætti kennara er leitast við að segja hvetjandi sögur af inngildingu og félagslegu réttlæti. Sem slík leggur rannsóknin sitt af mörkum til þess mikilvæga málefnis að leiðrétta hallalíkanið og þá mismunun sem hefur verið viðvarandi í umræðu og framkvæmd menntunar fyrir fjöltyngd börn hérlendis sem erlendis.

Lykilorð: Fjöltyngd börn, leikskóli, foreldrasamstarf, sjálfsmynd, vörðuð þátttaka, mál og læsi, frjáls leikur, félagslegt réttlæti og inngilding.

Abstract

Demographic changes in Iceland, like almost everywhere in the world, have influenced the linguistic and cultural landscapes of preschools. The objective of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how preschool can serve as an inclusive and socially just learning space for multilingual children's language and emergent literacy development, where voices and identities are affirmed and partnership with parents is enhanced.

This qualitative case study explored how learning spaces for multilingual children were created. The study is concerned with a comprehensive view on the complex reciprocity of linguistic, contextual, social, and cultural factors affecting multilingual children's learning and development. The study looks at the interplay of these factors and highlights successful practices in a preschool that was purposively chosen. The theoretical perspective of the study lies within critical pedagogy (Nieto, 2010), multicultural education (Banks, 2010), sociocultural theories (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), and theories on multilingual children's language and literacy development (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008, 2010; Brooker, 2002a; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021a; De Houwer, 2009; García & Wei, 2014).

The study was carried out between 2016 and 2017 and the design of the research is a single case study. I employ qualitative methodology to generate data and analyse and write up my findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Heath et al., 2010; Tracey, 2010). Data was generated through interviews with teachers and parents, observations and video recordings, written documents, pictures, and artefacts. Part of the analysing process of the video recordings was a collaborative analysis with the participating teachers. Such a collaboration moves practice towards theory and situates teachers as knowledge generators (Cummins, 2021a).

Findings illustrate that the development of learning spaces for multilingual children at The Circle was a multi-faceted, emergent process that included multiple diverse practices. The principal and assistant principal were leading the process of change with the participation of many of the teachers at the preschool. The overall aim was to change practices to meet the diverse needs of children, and through professional development and a learning community of teachers, practices were implemented and reflected on. The teachers showed high respect for diversity and the culture of communication involved that the participating teachers considered it to be their role to reach out to children and parents, build relationships, affirm multiple identities, and guide the linguistic participation of children. Home languages were supported with

diverse practices such as welcoming signs in different languages and the teachers and children singing and learning words in different languages together. Practices encouraging reading and literacy involved providing books that the children could bring home. Children were also encouraged to bring books from home and the teachers motivated parents to work with the home language in relation to Icelandic vocabulary that was in focus at each time.

Language support and work with vocabulary in Icelandic, both formal and informal, through child-initiated and teacher-led activities, was a continuous thread in daily activities. Children's autonomy, linguistic participation, and sense of self was encouraged through child-initiated and teacher-led practices. Collaboration with parents was an important and permeating part of developing successful learning spaces for multilingual children. Part of this collaboration revolved around the children's language development and practices appropriate to enhance and support active multilingualism and learning of Icelandic while affirming their identity.

Even though findings provide an overview of the successful learning spaces emerging for multilingual children at The Circle during the time of the study, there were multiple challenges that the teachers and principal were facing. Those involved turnover rate of teachers, lack of educated teachers, deficit discourse and prejudices among some teachers, especially those newly employed, as well as a lack of appropriate tools and time to assess the language development of multilingual children. Sustaining and systematically implementing successful practices was a challenge and although partnership with parents was enhanced in many instances, not every teacher had the capacity and experience to communicate with parents across languages and cultures.

My findings illustrate the importance of building on children's linguistic and cultural diversity while developing partnership with parents. Furthermore, the study clearly demonstrates the role of teachers in creating the conditions for language learning to take place through daily activities, both initiated by the children and organised by the teachers. By highlighting successful practices of teachers, I seek to provide inspiring stories of social justice and inclusion and as such my study contributes to the important objective of reversing the marginalisation and deficit discourse dominant in the education of multilingual children worldwide.

Keywords:

Multilingual children, preschool, partnership with parents, identity, guided participation, practices with language and literacy, free play, social justice, inclusion.

Acknowledgements

I started my doctoral journey in 2014 inspired by my experience from working with multilingual preschool children for many years and participating in two international research projects where I met and collaborated with three of my committee members. Those two projects were "Diverse Teachers and Diverse Learners" and "Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice: Success Stories from Immigrant Students and School Communities in Four Nordic Countries". This experience provided me with invaluable insights into the possibility of focusing on successes in the education of multilingual children, both of teachers and the children themselves, rather than failures as is often the case.

I will be ever grateful to my supervisors Prof. Hanna Ragnarsdóttir and Prof. Lars Anders Kulbrandstad for the care, encouragement, and friendship that they have shown me all along. I am deeply thankful for their motivation, inspiration, guidance, our thorough discussions through every step of the research process and for not giving up on me during all these years. I am also extremely thankful to Prof. Jim Cummins and Prof. Jóhanna Einarsdóttir who joined my committee during my work for the interim evaluation in 2016. The two of them gave me very valuable insights and important support from the perspective of their field of expertise, early childhood education and multilingualism. Getting the opportunity to participate in professional and theoretical discussions with such wonderful people and academics an experience that I will treasure.

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During my doctoral journey I visited the Inland Norway University in Hamar twice and stayed there for a few weeks. Lars Anders introduced me to his colleagues in Hamar, Prof. Lise Kulbrandstad and Prof. Gunhild Tomter Alstad, who gave me an opportunity to join doctoral seminars and take part in conversations with PhD students focusing on early childhood and multilingualism. I am very grateful for their support and warm welcome that inspired my research work and writing. During my studies I participated in the network *Multilingual Childhoods* and through the collaboration with researchers within the network I took part in several conferences and meetings that added value to my research project. Twice I attended the Barcelona Summer School of Bilingualism and Multilingualism where I introduced my research and got to know other researchers and professors in the field. I took inspiration from many of those that I met through conferences and courses in Iceland and internationally and would like to give special thanks to Dr. Anja Pesch from the Inland Norway University in Hamar and Prof. Roma Chuma-Horbatch from Toronto Metropolitan University.

Without the support, encouragement, and patience from my family during all these years I would have given up. I want to give all my warm thanks and love to my husband Jón Karl Helgason, who also read the thesis with his analytic eye, my son Marteinn Sindri Jónsson, who proofread the text and helped me with all the small details, my dear daughters Katrín Helena and Valgerður Birna, who encouraged me and make me proud every day, and my extended family that has supported and cared for me all the way. Finally, I want to send my warmest thanks to all my dear friends and colleagues from Reykjavík and beyond that I have learned so much from. I truly enjoy sharing our mutual passions, wishes and dreams for education and the future.

Contents

List of abbreviations

BFLA: Bilingual first language acquisition

BICS: Basic interpersonal communication skills

CA: Collaborative analysis

CALP: Cognitive academic language proficiency

FLP: Family language policies

IPA: Icelandic phonological awareness

ÍSL2: Icelandic as a second language

O: Observations

SLA: Second language acquisition

SST: Sustained shared thinking

VR: Video recordings

ZPD: Zone of proximal development

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Declaration of contribution

My contribution of this thesis involves planning the research and conducting all the manual work, transcribing, and analysing data, and writing findings, discussions, and conclusions.

1 Introduction

Demographic changes in Iceland, as almost everywhere in the world, have influenced the linguistic and cultural landscapes of preschools in Reykjavík city and around the country. Nearly one third of children in Reykjavík's preschools are multilingual or have an immigrant background. Lack of research in Iceland on successful preschool practices with multilingual children and a need for appropriate education and professional development for preschool teachers and in-service teachers call for a new understanding within the Icelandic context. This dissertation, *Giving Wings to Voices: Preschool as an Inclusive Learning Space for Communication and Understanding*, presents an empirical study that was conducted in one preschool in Reykjavík over the course of one year. The study's objective is to gain a deeper understanding of how the preschool can serve as an inclusive and socially just learning space for multilingual children's language and emergent literacy development, where voices and identities are affirmed and partnership with parents is enhanced. It has been argued that a narrow focus in research on multilingual children's learning does not answer important questions regarding their long-term underachievement or marginalisation within educational systems. Neither does it provide clear directions regarding effective educational interventions (Cummins, 2004). My research is concerned with a comprehensive view on the complex reciprocity of linguistic, contextual, social, and cultural factors affecting multilingual children's learning and development. The study looks at the interplay of these factors and highlights successful practices in a preschool that was purposively chosen for this research. The study is interdisciplinary and nested in research and theory of critical pedagogy, multicultural education, sociocultural theories, and theories of multilingual children's language and literacy development. The data comprises interviews with teachers and parents of multilingual children, observations, video recordings, artefacts, and written documents relevant for answering the research questions.

In the following sections I start by presenting my own reflections regarding the reasons for conducting my research. Then I reflect on the reality of multilingual children in Icelandic preschools as well as underlying laws and policy for preschools. In the two last subchapters I present my research questions and some main concepts used in the dissertation and explain the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Researcher's reflections

My study of the language and literacy development of multilingual children is rooted in my education and more than twenty years of professional experience where education

for linguistically and culturally diverse children has been my focus. While I worked as a preschool teacher around the turn of this century, I led a project in collaboration with researchers from the Iceland University of Education (IUE) where the focus was on inclusive work with multilingual children and their parents. This experience created a new understanding for me of the role of teachers in enhancing the partnership of all children and parents and the importance of the preschool as an equitable, inclusive community. Simultaneously, I started a diploma at the IUE in multicultural education. Some of the courses I took focused on the language development of multilingual children, the importance of active bilingualism and the role of the educational system in supporting bilingualism. Gradually, I came to realise the complicated interplay of factors shaping the learning opportunities for multilingual children which I have been seeking to understand ever since. Simultaneously, I have learned how important the preschool years are for young children and that during the first years in children's lives their brain and sense of self develop more rapidly than in any other period of life. Hence professional and high-quality work with young children within an inclusive and socially just learning space is essential for their lifelong learning and prosperity.

From the year 2005 I have worked for the city of Reykjavík, most of the time as a project coordinator and a consultant, collaborating with teachers and principals in developing practices with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children and families. During that time, I have participated in policy making on municipal and national levels around issues regarding the education of immigrant and refugee children. All along, I have visited many preschools and met with teachers, parents, and multilingual children in need of appropriate language and literacy practices. In many of those visits I noticed silenced and marginalised children, even after they had completed two or more years of preschool. I also met parents who needed support and empowerment in order to develop and sustain their children's home languages. Some of the most heart-breaking instances were related to meetings with parents whose children had been diagnosed with language impairment. In some instances, these parents were advised by specialists to focus on the acquisition of the Icelandic language at home even though they did neither speak Icelandic themselves nor had any social network or support outside of the preschool. During those years, I have also experienced wonderful inclusive practices where children's language and literacy development and active participation were being fostered in very good cooperation with parents from the first day of preschool. This experience, first as a preschool teacher, developing practices to meet the diverse needs of children, and later working with teachers and principals navigating similar paths, has given me valuable insights for conducting this type of research.

Furthermore, I have gained helpful insights from participating in various research projects and collaborations, both nationally and internationally, in the field of education for multilingual children. In my M.Ed. project I studied the perceived role and practices of teachers in three preschools in Reykjavík from the perspective of critical multicultural

pedagogy. Even though I did not look specifically at the language and literacy development of multilingual children in that study, findings indicated that more knowledge on preschool practices for children with Icelandic as a second language and ways to support and develop children's home languages was needed. At the beginning of my doctoral studies, I became an active member of the Nordic research project *Learning Spaces for Inclusion and Social Justice: Success Stories from Immigrant Students and School Communities* (LSP). The main objective of the LSP project was to learn from stories of immigrant students and school communities at different levels that had succeeded in developing learning contexts that were equitable and socially just. In collaboration with the preschool research team in Iceland and the other participating Nordic countries, I generated and analysed data and presented and published findings. Although the results showed that many of the observed Nordic preschools were succeeding in providing equitable and socially just learning spaces for immigrant children, there were also findings indicating an "overall lack of well-developed and conscious educational learning practices with the first and second languages of immigrant children" (Hellman et al., 2018, p. 145–146). Furthermore, findings indicated the need to look more closely at immigrant children's social position in the peer group and missed learning opportunities that stemmed from a lack of conscious linguistic scaffolding and support during play (Hellman et al., 2018). In the present study I draw on my learning from the LSP study both for the research focus and the research questions.

My education and professional experience have guided me in preparing and carrying out this research. My intention is to focus on quality examples of powerful teachers consciously developing their practices to meet the needs of multilingual children and their families. My familiarisation with the preschools in Reykjavík and the research field has provided me with some understanding of both the challenges and importance of developing appropriate practices for multilingual children. I am aware that this insider view also has a downside that I must address and consider. My position as a project coordinator and consultant for multicultural education in preschools in Reykjavík during the time of the study might have put pressure on the participating teachers and become a disadvantage for me as a researcher, since some of them knew me from before. As I discuss in the method chapter, I addressed this with the participating teachers at the outset of the study. My educational background and professional experience have influenced every step of my research and all the decisions I have made. This means that the data generation period, the process of analysis and writing up the findings could have been affected by biased or preconceived notions that I am not aware of. By presenting a chapter of findings with multiple examples from various data pieces, where I collaboratively analysed parts of the data with the participating teachers, I strive to minimise my biases and turn my education and professional experience to an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

1.2 Multilingual preschool children in Iceland

In recent decades, Iceland has changed from a relatively homogeneous society to a multicultural one. The same is true for the preschools where linguistic and cultural diversity of children are increasing. In 2021, 16% of all preschool children in Iceland had another home language than Icelandic (Statistics Iceland, 2021). In Reykjavík, children with one or both parents of immigrant background, many of whom were speaking another language than Icelandic at home, were almost 32.6% (Skóla- og frístundasvið Reykjavíkur, 2022). These changes bring challenges to the preschools in creating a curriculum where linguistic and cultural diversity are valued and built on inclusively within daily practices. It can be argued that the Icelandic reality, with the policy of inclusive preschools and high attendance, gives all children equal opportunity to have a good education. At the same time, it is important to be critical and ask if equal opportunities for entry to preschools fulfils the requirements for quality education for all children? The status of the Icelandic language and culture, with a tiny population of 390.000 in Iceland, inevitably puts both political and social pressure on the educational system to preserve the official language. One can ask in what way this situation influences educational reform and school development in a multicultural society. Is it possible to provide equal opportunity for all children in a preschool that is rooted in this monolingual heritage, stressing the use and development of Icelandic?

Even though there is a lack of Icelandic research in the field, results from numerous local studies confirm that the education of multilingual children needs special attention (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008, 2010; Figlarska et al., 2017; Hafsteinsdóttir et al., 2022; Haraldsdóttir, 2013; Hellman et al., 2018; Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Ólafsdóttir, 2010, 2015; Ragnarsdóttir, 2013; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019; Þórðardóttir, 2012). One indication of the need to investigate in more detail the language and literacy development of multilingual children in Iceland is the overrepresentation of this group among children diagnosed with language impairment in preschools in Reykjavík. While multilingual children in Reykjavík's preschools were around 18.9% of all children in 2015, they were 51% of all children diagnosed with language impairment (Skóla- og frístundasvið Reykjavíkur, 2015). Results from a study in compulsory schools in Reykjavík, where multilingual students' academic vocabulary of Icelandic was assessed, show that almost 80% of children 6–16 years of age needed support (Skóla- og frístundasvið Reykjavíkur, 2015).

Arnbjörnsdóttir (2008, 2010) has criticised the Icelandic educational policy for linguistically diverse children and the monolingual approach that has been practiced where children's home languages are excluded from their education. Arnbjörnsdóttir encourages policy makers and those responsible for teacher education to learn from the mistakes other countries have made in education for multilingual children by not paying attention to the need for bilingual practices. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2010) argues that the deficit model has influenced the discourse on bilingual children in Iceland,

resulting in the widespread view that they have problems succeeding academically. In my experience, discourses and practices related to the language development and academic achievement of multilingual children in Iceland tend to be shaped by the deficit viewpoint. This increases the danger of narrowing education for multilingual children to some kind of technical or special education outside the main curriculum of the school. Evidence from a survey carried out in 2010 among more than 200 primary teachers in Iceland shows that the deficit view of learning is common. 63% of the teachers state that education for multilingual students is some form of special education (Daníelsdóttir et al., 2010). Results from a study on special education in preschools in Reykjavík show that preschool teachers holding positions as division leaders agree with the view that more special education is needed for multilingual children. They claim that the children suffer from limited vocabulary, bad comprehension, selective mutism, and overall difficulties learning Icelandic, leading them to play alone and isolate themselves from the group (Leikskólasvið Reykjavíkur, 2011).

Education in English-speaking countries benefit from the global value of the language and widespread motivation to learn English. Since Icelandic is spoken by a very small population it can be argued that the language lacks such value with possible detrimental effects on immigrants' motivation to learn the language. It is also important to keep in mind that the motivation to learn and speak English in Iceland is very high, both among immigrants and those born and raised speaking Icelandic. One reason for this is the growing number of companies and workplaces in Iceland turning to English as the language of daily use. Another significant factor is that the language of technology and IT used in Iceland is mostly English. Findings from a study of compulsory students' acquisition of Icelandic as a second language show that it takes them less time to acquire English than Icelandic when they arrive in Iceland (Þórðardóttir & Júlíusdóttir, 2012). The significance of English in Iceland can thus influence the way children, teachers, and parents at all school levels perceive the learning of the Icelandic language and creates a need for carefully developed policy and practices. In the next subchapter I discuss the context of preschool education in Iceland with a special focus on local, national, and international policy documents influencing school curriculum and practices with multilingual preschool children.

1.3 The educational context in Iceland for multilingual preschool children

By law the preschool in Iceland (i. leikskóli) is the first stage of education in the school system, although not compulsory (Lög um leikskóla, 2008). Preschools are inclusive and responsible for the upbringing and education of all attending children until the year they turn six, regardless of ability, religion, language, or background. Similar to the case of other Scandinavian countries, early childhood education (ECE) in Iceland is an important part of the welfare system where around 96% of all children attend preschool (How do Early Childhood Education Systems Differ Around the World?,

2014). Municipalities in Iceland are responsible for operating preschools but the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture[1] issues a National Curriculum Guide for Preschools which serves as a frame for preschools to develop their own school curriculum (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011). Many municipalities have developed policies or published guidelines or frameworks addressing several educational issues relevant for their local preschools. These build on the National Curriculum Guide and some draw on international key documents as well. Preschools are responsible for developing their school curriculum based on national and local policy documents and guidelines. Jóhannesson (2007) has argued that if the national policy, and thus key documents, lack clear focus regarding the education of linguistically and culturally diverse children, those issues will hardly be addressed in the school curriculum. Gunnþórsdóttir and Ragnarsdóttir (2020) have studied the importance of well-developed policies for the education of immigrant children. They identified a difference between schools located in municipalities with a well-developed policy and those that had not implemented a policy. Where municipalities had not developed a clear policy "it was evident that teachers struggle to respond to the needs of immigrant students and there was a lack of coherence in practices" (p. 111).

The first municipality in Iceland to adopt a policy on multicultural education and on language and literacy of multilingual preschool children was the city of Reykjavík. The first policy for multicultural education in preschools was adopted in 2001 (Menntasvið Reykjavíkurborgar, 2006) and a literacy policy for preschools was launched in 2013 (Skóla- og frístundasvið Reykjavíkur, 2013). The literacy policy addresses the need for preschools to work with emergent literacy and language development of all children, with a special focus on active bilingualism and cooperation with parents. The policy also provides practical suggestions on how to work with Icelandic as a second language and how to support the development of the home language. Following the unification of the divisions running education in Reykjavík's preschools, compulsory schools, and leisure programs in 2011, a policy on multicultural education was issued by the united Department of Education and Youth (Skóla- og frístundasvið Reykjavíkur, 2014). The policy addresses the need for schools, teachers, and staff to aim for active bilingualism where Icelandic is taught and learned as a second language, giving children the opportunity to build on and expand their home language in the process of developing their overall language and literacy skills. The policy emphasises good cooperation with parents where continuity from home to school is developed in relation to work with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children. Teachers are provided with multiple ideas on how to implement theory and practice with the home language and Icelandic as a second language.

[1] Following national election in 2021 the name of the Ministry was changed to The Ministry of Education and Children 2022 (i. Mennta- og barnamálaráðuneyti) https://www.althingi.is/altext/152/s/0169.html.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture issued the National Curriculum Guide for Preschools in 2011 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011). The first part of the Curriculum Guide is the same for preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools and is based on six fundamental pillars: *literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality and creativity*. The pillars derive from laws on all three school levels with a wider reference to Icelandic and international acts and conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNESCO policy on general education, and Council of Europe policy on democracy and human rights. The main aim of the Curriculum Guide is to combine education and care through play and provide equal access for all children to preschools. It is highlighted that the main objective of preschool is to provide general education for all and make the "effort to operate according to the status and needs of children [...] to encourage their active participation in democratic society, within and outside school" (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011, p. 11). The language and literacy policy for preschools in Reykjavík and the multicultural policy of the Department of Education and Youth, build somewhat on the prevailing National Curriculum Guide for Preschools but they go further by addressing issues like multilingualism, active bilingualism, and multiculturalism. Reykjavík's policy and emphasis on these factors has influenced the national policy draft of education for children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds issued in 2020 and discussed further below.

This emphasis on education for all children and active participation in a democratic society raises the question of how the Curriculum Guide serves as a framework for the preschools when planning education for linguistically diverse children. To a large degree, the Curriculum Guide is progressive with a strong message on democratic, empowering, and socially just education, urging teachers to meet the challenges and changes that Icelandic society has undergone. Partnership with parents and families is valued and teachers' role entails reaching out to all parents where collaboration ought to build on mutual understanding and respect. On the other hand, educational practices for linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children are largely absent from the guide, which raises more questions than it provides answers. Terms and concepts like *mother tongue/language, home language, heritage language, bilingualism, active bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism, bilingual practices, Icelandic as a second language, second language practices, additional language, L1* or *L2* are completely absent but the words *democracy, communication,* and *participation* are widely used. This absence of references to the preceding concepts raises questions about what the focus should be for preschools when developing their school curriculum. These questions are in line with the view of Jóhannesson (2007), who argues that without a clear focus in the national policy and the Curriculum Guide the education of multilingual children will most likely not be addressed in the school curriculum. Based on this understanding, the National Curriculum Guide for Preschools

from 2011 did not give teachers and principals in Icelandic preschools clear guidelines on how to organise education for multilingual children at the time this research took place.

In 2020 the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture published a policy draft of education for children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2020a). The policy document addresses education for multilingual children from a wide perspective and is a part of the new Educational Policy 2021–2030 launched through a parliamentary resolution in 2021 (Alþingi, 2021) followed by the first action plan of the policy for the years 2021–2024 (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2021). Building on this policy, two practical documents aiming at supporting teachers in their role of providing education for multilingual children have been published. The first one involves guidelines for supporting mother tongues and active plurilingualism in schools and leisure published by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (2020b). The second document consists of competency frameworks of Icelandic for multilingual preschool children and was issued in 2021 by the Directorate of Education (Menntamálastofnun, 2021). The policy draft and the practical documents stipulate that special attention is to be given to the education of linguistically and culturally diverse children from preschool to upper secondary school. The focus is on enhancing active plurilingualism while attending purposefully to the teaching of Icelandic at all school levels. Education and support for teachers, both with regard to in-service teaching and teacher education, are addressed and cultural diversity and partnership with parents are regarded as being of high importance. The Icelandic concept *fjöltyngi* (e. plurilingual or multilingual) is recommended when referring to the group of children speaking and learning diverse languages. It is stressed in the document that *fjöltyngi* has positive connotations and indicates skills in Icelandic regardless of children's background, place of birth, or language learning and development trajectories (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2020b).

The new policy documents eventually led to some instrumental changes of the National Curriculum Guide for Preschools regarding multilingual children (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2022). The changes both involve additions to the previous text as well as the inclusion of important concepts and factors regarding teachers' roles in the education of multilingual preschool children and partnerships with parents. The changes acknowledge and respect cultural and linguistic diversity and stress multicultural education where all children should be provided an opportunity to discuss and learn about their own and others' culture and society. Although learning through play is the hallmark of the National Curriculum Guide for Preschools from 2011, the role of teachers in providing language learning opportunities through play to multilingual children is not addressed there. The changes published in 2022 highlight that teachers should work with Icelandic and act on the learning opportunities that arise during play. Their role is to lay the foundation for learning Icelandic and provide

children with ample opportunities to improve their language competency through daily play and work. Teachers should respect diverse languages and look for ways to support mother tongues and active multilingualism through daily work and collaboration with parents.

As mentioned earlier, Icelandic is the official language of Iceland. The policy on the Icelandic language was adopted by the parliament in the year 2008 (Íslensk málnefnd, 2008). One of the issues addressed in the policy is the importance of laying a good foundation for language and literacy development in preschool. The policy stresses the importance of teachers possessing the knowledge and ability to provide language stimulation to linguistically diverse groups of children and to teach Icelandic as a second language. A committee on the Icelandic language is obliged to issue a resolution on the Icelandic language every year. In the year 2013 it issued a resolution focusing on children and adults learning Icelandic as a second language. The committee emphasised that active bilingualism should be the target of the language and literacy instruction of multilingual children and called for further research regarding the fact that immigrant children were not succeeding in the Icelandic school system. The resolution concluded that more support should be provided to the educational system to work with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children. Furthermore, that parents should be assisted in developing and sustaining the home languages of their children (Íslensk málnefnd, 2013).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was given legal status in Iceland in 2013. It states that education for all children should be based on equality and justice. Children's rights, active, and democratic participation are highlighted, and that decisions involving children should always be based on what is best for them. All children have the right to develop and preserve their own language and culture, receive education, and maintain their relationship with their family (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). The legal status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has influenced the National Curriculum Guide, policy development on local and national level, and political decisions regarding education for linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children. Furthermore, it has influenced practices in many schools and municipalities around the country as many of them have implemented the UN convention in their daily work.

Development and changes of key documents must ensure widespread implementation involving multiple initiatives within preschools, municipalities, and universities. Among those is the need to reflect on the content of courses provided to those pursuing their education as preschool teachers as well as the content of professional development for those already working as teachers. Through the years, the content of compulsory courses for preschool teacher students has involved some presentation of multilingualism, multiculturalism, and inclusion. However, explicit learning for preschool teacher students of diverse practices for supporting the learning of

multilingual children, such as teaching Icelandic to multilingual children, working with multilingualism and culturally responsive pedagogy are mostly provided as optional courses. The fact that around one third of all children in the preschools in Reykjavík have a linguistic and cultural background other than Icelandic, indicates the need for teaching of theory and practice enhancing the development, language learning and active participation of multilingual children in preschools and beyond. I will discuss this further in my concluding remarks of this dissertation. In this subchapter I have highlighted main policy documents on local, national, and international levels influencing the development of preschool's curricula and practices in Iceland. In the next subchapter I will present the aim and research questions of this study.

1.4 Research questions and aims

The overall aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how the preschool can serve as an inclusive and socially just learning space for multilingual children's language and emergent literacy development, where voices and identities are affirmed and partnership with parents is enhanced. The focus is on highlighting successful teaching practices with multilingual children and the way the preschool organises its work with children's language, literacy, and identity in partnership with parents. The study looks to how teachers communicate with children, guide their linguistic participation in daily activities, and how they build upon children's cultural and linguistic resources. Attention is also directed to the way underlying values, beliefs, and experiences of teachers and parents shape the school ethos and collaboration of those stakeholders.

The overarching research question that this study seeks to answer is the following: How are learning spaces for multilingual preschool children created? The subordinate questions are the following:

- How do teachers scaffold and guide linguistic participation of multilingual children within:
    - Planned activities with language and literacy practices?
    - Free play and child-initiated activities?
- How are identities and voices of multilingual children affirmed in daily activities?
- How do the teachers enhance partnership with parents of multilingual children putting a special focus on language, literacy, and identity?

In this research *multilingual children* are those children who are born into families where *home language/s* differ from the *language of the society* and the *language of the school* (Cummins, 2021a). The generic term I use when referring to the language/s that the children and parents speak within the family is *home language/s* and when I use the

term the *language of the school* or *school language,* I am referring to Icelandic. I am aware that this is in some way self-contradictory since some of the parents in the study speak Icelandic and some teachers in the preschool speak the home languages of the children. Some of the children are used to hearing Icelandic from birth, while other children are not familiar with Icelandic when they start preschool. The term *multilingual* in this study has positive connotations where children's language learning is approached from a strength-based, social perspective. Children are referred to as multilingual regardless of their linguistic background, place of birth, and their proficiency of understanding and speaking in each or all languages (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007; De Houwer, 2009; García & Wei, 2014).

In this study I build the concept of *learning space* on the definition from the LSP project (Ragnarsdóttir & Kulbrandstad, 2018). Learning spaces refer to the preschool community, the learning environment, social contexts, and resources that "encourage, develop and nurture learning" (p. 7). The concept of learning space also refers to the agency of children, their active participation and how social justice and equity are weaved into the learning process in an inclusive way (Banks, 2010; Rachid & Igbida, 2022; Rogoff, 2003; Sapon Shevin, 2007, 2008). This way both children and teachers have the power to open up learning spaces where they learn together and from each other. When analysing and writing up the findings of this study I seek to highlight *successful* practices. In this study the concept of success is related to practices that enhance the engagement of children and families in equitable, inclusive, and socially just learning spaces. In a successful learning space, critical and powerful teachers and principals turn marginalisation and lack of success of linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children into success and achievement (Cummins, 2021b).

1.5 The structure of the thesis

In this introductory chapter I have presented my personal incentive for the research and discussed the relevance of the study in the light of local, national, and international policy. Additionally, I have given an overview of the issue of multilingual children in Iceland from before the time of the study and until this present day. In the fourth subchapter of the introductory chapter, I presented the research questions, aims, and main concepts of the study and finally present here the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter gives an overview of the perspectives from theory development and empirical research undergirding the research. I discuss the fundamental concepts and highlight relevant findings from Icelandic and international studies. I start by discussing transforming and empowering pedagogy. Then I turn to language development and learning in the early years with a special focus on multilingual and inclusive language practices with young children aiming at meeting their multiple language and literacy needs. In the final subchapter of the second section, I present theory and research on the importance of connecting identity and language and finally I

discuss collaboration with parents around the language and literacy of multilingual children.

The third chapter describes the research methodology. I start with discussing the research design and then I present the research setting and the participants. The following subchapters confer the data generation which consisted of interviews, naturalistic observations, video recordings, written documents, photographs, and other artefacts. The fourth subchapter describes the data analysis process and the fifth and final subchapter discusses quality criteria and ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter contains the main findings of the study and builds on the themes defined in the analysing process. The aim of the chapter is to present a comprehensive overview by building on different data items throughout the chapter. The first subchapter describes the changes taking place in the preschool and how the teachers and principal were building a learning community through professional development and implementation of multiple projects. Then I turn to findings regarding attitudes and beliefs, multilingual practices and the culture of communication identified as one of my main themes. The final subchapter focuses on learning opportunities with Icelandic language and literacy and how the participating teachers create those during child-initiated and teacher-organised practices.

In the fifth chapter I discuss my findings in the light of main theories and results from prior empirical research presented in the second chapter. In the sixth and the final chapter of the thesis I conclude by discussing the contributions of the study and implications for policy and practice as well as recommendations for further research, teacher education, and professional development.

2 Perspectives from theory development and empirical research

In this chapter I review theory and research that will serve as the framework for the analysis, investigation, and discussion of my findings. Guided by the research questions, I focus on theory and research highlighting issues around inclusive learning spaces for multilingual children, particularly the role of teachers in scaffolding and guiding children's active participation, affirming their identity and collaborating with parents around language and literacy development. Cummins (2004) argues that if multilingual children are to succeed within the educational system it is necessary for educational communities to invest in social justice and gain understanding of how policy making, attitudes, beliefs and expectations welcome some children and exclude others. Linguistic and psychological research that focuses on relevant linguistic and cognitive issues, the nature of language proficiency, the effects of multilingualism on children's development and the relationship between students' first and second languages can throw light on some questions regarding how long it takes to learn a second language, or how to catch up academically in the second language. However, there are many questions left unanswered regarding the education and learning of linguistically and culturally diverse children, why the achievements of many groups remain low and what educational interventions are needed to reverse this (Cummins, 2004).

The social turn of language research in second language learning and multilingualism stresses that language should not be an object of research disconnected from the social context (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Cummins, 2021a, 2021b; García and Kleifgen, 2010; Hedegaard, 2008). This social turn has evolved into a multilingual turn where there is a call for rethinking of pedagogy and research acknowledging that issues of power, school climate, attitudes, beliefs and identity affirmation can either hinder or foster multilingual children's learning (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Cummins, 2021b; Hélot, 2021; May, 2014; Nieto, 2010). Furthermore, the multilingual turn highlights the competencies of the multilingual child as the foundation for language learning, avoiding the deficiency model where the focus is mostly on children's knowledge of the school language. The research reported in this thesis focuses on the sociocultural nature of learning informed by linguistic research. It lies within the fields of critical pedagogy, multicultural education, sociocultural theories and theories on multilingual children's language and literacy development (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008, 2010; Banks, 2010; Brooker, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; García & Wei, 2014; Gibbons, 2002; Nieto, 2010; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

The chapter is divided into four parts. In the first one I start by discussing important underlying factors contributing to social justice, belonging and participation of multilingual children in inclusive equitable learning spaces. Then I will look at theory and research concerning language development and learning of multilingual children and multilingual practices. Finally, I will look at collaboration with families, identity affirmation and funds of knowledge.

2.1 Transforming and empowering pedagogy

Through the years, scholars focusing on inequalities in education have stressed that schools do not just teach children things and children do not only learn the things that schools and teachers set out to teach (Biesta, 2021; Cummins, 2004; Nieto, 2010; Yates, 2004). Learning is not only based on teachers' practices and school curricula since children also learn from the way teachers communicate and engage with them and their families. Cummins (2004) and Nieto (2010) argue that the heart in education builds on the communication between the teacher and the learner. Similarly, Biesta (2021) claims that the "how" in education "matters as much as the "what", which is why we should never think of teaching as just a neutral "intervention" (p. 17). The underlying pedagogy, values and beliefs play a significant role in children's experience and sense of belonging, affecting their identity and level of participation.

Learning is actively constructed by teachers and learners that participate in a shared endeavour where experience, context, and cultural differences are regarded as highly influential and socially mediated through pedagogical practices. This relates, as Cummins (2021b) highlights, directly to the teacher's agency and in such a context the teachers themselves become powerful key actors. Powerful teachers transform procedures of inequality and exclusion into learning spaces of inclusion, affirmation, and belonging beneficial to children's engagement, empowerment, and motivation. Teacher agency is paramount for understanding the challenge to exclusionary structures and ideologies:

> ...individual educators are never powerless. Although they frequently work in conditions that are oppressive both for them and their students, educators *do* have choices in the way they orchestrate the interactions that take place in their classrooms. [...] Educators always have options with respect to their orientation to students' languages and cultures, in the forms of parental and community participation they encourage and in the ways they implement pedagogy and assessment (Cummins, 2021b, p. 284, italics from original text).

Powerful teachers like the ones Cummins (2021b) describes incorporate children's experience into their learning, change the power structures in communication and learning processes, give primacy to children's voices and send important messages to

children about their agency, identity, strengths, and possibilities. In the next two subchapters I will look at theory and research on practices and ideology concerning transformative and critically empowering pedagogy, inclusion, and social justice and how those influence participation and learning of multilingual children.

2.1.1 Critical pedagogy and multicultural education

The education of multilingual children has gained increased attention in research and for over forty years researchers and scholars have been putting forward ideas for educational improvements based on their findings. Multicultural education (Banks, 2010), critical multiculturalism (May and Sleeter, 2010), critical pedagogy (Nieto, 2010), linguistically appropriate practices (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012), multilingual practices with language and literacy (Cummins, 1984, 2004, 2021a, 2021b) and translanguaging practices (García & Wei, 2014) are all part of this development. What these approaches have in common is first of all that they view the languages and cultures of diverse learners from a strength-based and empowering perspective, linking societal and political issues. Expectations towards children are high, and teachers learn with their students about the world while they reflect on their own practices. Some scholars argue that without the critical stance, where teachers and school leaders open their minds for thinking critically about the process of learning and teaching and the context where these appear, the transformation in education, necessary for the success of multilingual children will not take place (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2021b; May & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2010).

Multicultural education is based on the idea that all children, regardless of background, culture, language, social class, or religion, should experience equality and success in schools (Banks, 2010). The main goal is to support students to achieve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to develop within their own culture, the culture of the society and the world at large. Schools are looked at as social systems that continuously undergo transformation to meet the needs of diverse students. Banks (2010) argues that school transformation does not happen unless all major dimensions of education change simultaneously. Those dimensions consist of knowledge construction, content integration, empowering school culture, reduction of prejudices and equity pedagogy (Banks, 2010). Without the critical stance of multiculturalism and multicultural education, practices often take on a celebratory approach where culture or cultural recognition of children is highlighted in a tokenistic and stereotypical way, sometimes referred to as the liberal stance. The weakness of the liberal stance is that it does not tackle systematic structural inequalities such as racism or institutionalised discrimination (May & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2010). Transforming education and implementing powerful practices creates the need for teachers to become critical and question practices, curricula, policies, and power relations in a much deeper way than just celebrating cultural differences. Critical multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010) involves that the experiences of individuals and groups within schools and the society at large

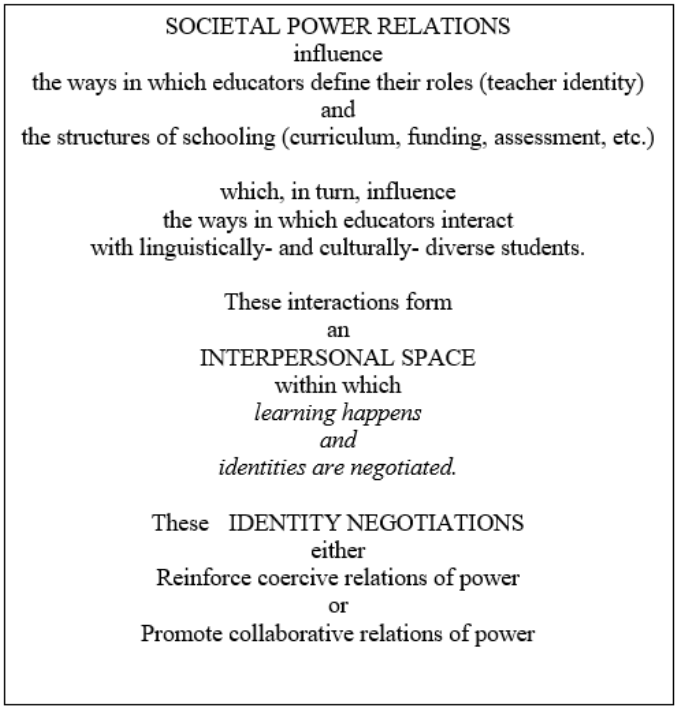
are looked at from a critical viewpoint. Equality, social justice, and empowerment are key concepts where schools ensure the active participation of all children.

Critical pedagogy (Nieto, 2010) involves that children and educators engage in learning about and with the world. Dominant patterns of oppression are contested, attitudes and beliefs are acted on, and the agency of children and teachers becomes fundamental in shaping democracy. Nieto (2010) explains that multicultural education needs the lens of critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism to become transformative and empowering, involving that teachers rethink and reflect constantly on the way they work and teach. She argues that transformative education is not only about particular practices, approaches or recipes for teaching and learning but "rather to *examine critically the environment in which those strategies and curriculum are played out*" (p. 135, italics from original text). Empowerment and agency of teachers and learners are both the main goals and outcomes of critical pedagogy and involve that all the relationships within the school are redefined.

From a critical and empowering standpoint, the role of teachers in challenging oppression and coercive relations of power becomes essential when transforming education. Cummins (2021b) claims that when teachers act in a powerful way to enhance children's autonomy and participation, they are creating a pedagogy of powerful communication. A triangle set of images of teachers and the world reflect the way teachers perceive their roles. These involve teachers' own identity as educators, the image of the options they want to highlight for children and the image of the society that teachers hope to form with children. In this way the "mindset of expectations, assumptions, and goals that educators, individually and collectively, bring to the task of educating linguistically and culturally diverse students" paves the way for powerful pedagogy (Cummins, 2021b, p. 288). Power is not a fixed good in the hands of a few. Instead, collaborative relations of power involve that more power is generated for others to share. Cummins (2021b) has created a theoretical framework of empowerment that can support researchers and teachers in observing relations of power, identity negotiation, and academic achievement within the learning space, see Figure 1. This framework can easily be adapted for analysing the roles of teachers working with young children and creates the understanding that only when patterns of communication in school reverse the interactions and power structures in the society at large they start to benefit linguistically and culturally diverse children.

Teachers play a crucial role in developing powerful educational contexts where they continually and critically examine their practices and pedagogies. When teachers respect and recognise the cultural and linguistic resources that the children bring to school, build on those and develop collaboration with diverse families, they are transforming education for all children. I will now turn to findings from empirical research on school development and teachers' practices with linguistically and culturally diverse children with a special focus on Icelandic research.

Figure 1. Societal power relations, identity negotiation, and academic achievement (Cummins, 2021b, p. 287)



Research findings are somewhat contradictory, indicating that some teachers and some schools have already gone through transformation aiming at more culturally responsive education while others have not. Overall findings expose the need for more hybrid and multi-dimensional practices within the school system to develop multicultural education and ensure just learning spaces for all children. Too much attention directed towards one dimension of education, especially if it is teaching multilingual children Icelandic as a second language without building on children's cultural and linguistic resources, will not create successful learning conditions for them (Ragnarsdóttir, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Ragnarsdóttir & Sveinsdóttir, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir & Blöndal, 2014; Ragnarsdóttir & Hansen, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir & Schmidt, 2014). There are also indications from research that there is a lack of support and professional development for teachers regarding practices that support multicultural education. The focus is very often mainly on teaching Icelandic and even though in some cases teachers can get support and some service, these often seem remote and beneficial for neither teachers nor children (Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2018; Jónsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2022a; Ragnarsdóttir & Tran, 2016; Tran & Lefever, 2018). Better support, education for, and understanding of multicultural and multilingual practices are also needed (Einarsdóttir & Rúnarsdóttir, 2021; Gunnþórsdóttir, 2016; Óskarsdóttir, 2020). Findings from a praxeological study looking at the pedagogical practices with culturally and linguistically diverse children

show few examples of culturally responsive pedagogy and cultural diversity. To implement more culturally responsive pedagogy teachers might both need some external support and a supportive principal (Jónsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2022b).

Findings from research focusing on preschools and teachers that have been chosen because they have a reputation or have been evaluated by official quality assessments as successful in providing education for linguistically and culturally diverse group of children show a somewhat different picture. In my own study on how preschool teachers perceived and acted out their roles with linguistically and culturally diverse group of children and families (Jónsdóttir, 2011) I found that the teachers shared high ambitions to attend closely to the needs of individual children and families even though their practices were vastly different. In their view it was very important to build a good relationship with parents and they appeared solution-oriented when it came to communicating with parents not sharing their language. Although the study did not focus on how the teachers worked with Icelandic, some inclusive linguistic practices were identified, especially with beginners of the school language. Ragnarsdóttir and colleagues (2016) studied participation, communication, and care in three preschools from the perspective of critical multiculturalism and culturally responsive pedagogy. Findings show that the teachers work purposefully with democracy, equality, and diversity in their practices, creating a community where children and their parents feel welcome and included. Needs of children are met with diverse educational practices and educational care is implemented to provide a supportive and nurturing educational environment. Interviews with parents indicate that, overall, the preschools have managed to develop practices that support diversity and are welcoming linguistically and diverse groups of children and families (Ragnarsdóttir et al., 2016).

Findings from research on how critical and powerful teachers and principals turn marginalisation and lack of success of linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children into success and achievement indicate that they are never powerless and that they can turn things around (Cummins, 2021b). In Rafik Hama's study of experiences and expectations of successful immigrant and refugee students in upper secondary schools in Iceland, the participants reflected on their teachers' care, knowledge, and professionalism and some students even described their teachers as family members because of their love, care, devotion, and security they provided them. Many of the schools and teachers based their education on the diversity of students and showed high expectations towards them, essential for their performance and motivation for learning. Many of the students explained how skilled and well-prepared the teachers were and how they used various teaching methods helpful for their learning, as different factors were at play in the students' success (Rafik Hama, 2020).

Although it is important to acknowledge teacher's agency and the power of the individual teacher, transforming education for multilingual children is a mutual responsibility of the educational sector in general, researchers, policy makers,

principals, and the society. Transforming education for the good of diverse learners involves understanding macro level issues like social structures, policy making, power relations, resources, and access to learning and how these factors influence the relationships and communication between teachers, children, and families. On the micro level teachers and principals have the main responsibility and the role of organising learning spaces that empower children and teachers in a meaningful, inclusive, and socially just way (Cummins, 2021b; Nieto, 2010).

2.1.2 Inclusion and social justice

Believing that diversity is the norm is a precondition for providing inclusive, socially just, and equitable learning spaces for culturally and linguistically diverse children. Meeting the needs of diverse children is not about fitting them into a preorganised learning space, it involves the importance of constant reflection and rethinking of how they are welcomed, cared for, and educated. Sapon-Shevin (2007, 2008) argues that inclusion is about creating a community within schools and classrooms where all children are included, where everyone feels comfortable with diversity, and teachers acknowledge all the multiple differences within their group of students. In inclusive communities the focus moves away from *I* to *we*. Instead of thinking first and foremost about our own wellness and success we think and share collectively for the common good. Hence the essence of the ideology of inclusion is rooted in the belief that everyone belonging to the community, teachers, children, and families are welcomed, have a role to play, and can give to others. Sapon-Shevin stresses that inclusion is not about us helping others but rather it is the importance of implementing discourses and activities that facilitate children's collaboration and understanding where they help and learn from each other through democratic participation:

> Inclusive settings provide multiple opportunities to explore what it means to help one another. By challenging the notion that there are two kinds of people in the world - those who need help and those who give help - we teach all students to see themselves as both givers and receivers. We recognise and honour multiple forms of intelligence and many gifts (p. 52).

This kind of collaboration provides children with the tools to communicate and learn from each other across differences and languages. Simultaneously, teachers become continuous learners with and through their students. Such practices support the "goal of creating thoughtful, engaged citizens for our democratic society" (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, p. 49).

Inclusive focus translates into looking at the educational processes or pedagogies of learning provided to young multilingual preschool children through daily activities from an equity perspective, instead of only an equality perspective where everyone is expected to get the same. Rachid and Igbida (2022) argue that the concept of equality

is constantly being reconstructed and what used to be considered equality, such as providing access to education for all, is not considered sufficient today and does not necessarily ensure equity. Equity, as they explain, involves value judgments and moral conceptions linked to the idea of providing fairness and justice in education for all children. Rachid and Igbida (2022) claim that even though the concepts of equality and equity are related, they are dissimilar and complementary. They indicate the need to act on inequalities that are unjust such as providing different support to students based on their different needs. Such an unequal treatment is not unfair "since it aims to make the system more equitable. Thus, some inequalities may be considered fair, while other equalities may conversely not be" (p. 175). In this way the concept of equity relates to fairness and justice, making it crucial to avoid sameness in educational processes for all children, involving the need for teachers to take children's differences into account, build on their background and knowledge, and provide appropriate support for their diverse needs (Ragnarsdóttir & Kulbrandstad, 2018).

When children and adults not only learn about differences or how to work against racism or address inequities, but live and participate in an inclusive democratic learning space, social justice comes alive:

> Being in an inclusive environment makes social justice *real*. Through the lessons we learn in inclusive classrooms – how to challenge exclusion, see things from different perspectives, and develop the courage and the strategies to respond to oppression – we can create the inclusive, democratic society that we envision for our children and ourselves (Sapon-Shevin, 2007, p. 219, italics from original text).

Inclusive and socially just learning spaces motivate children and teachers to take a stand, act, and call attention to injustice instead of practicing what Sapon-Shevin (2007, p. 228) refers to as the "powerful silence". Powerful silence emerges when children and adults turn their heads away when injustice is done to an individual or a group without acting or challenging the injustice. Preschool age children can easily be engaged in discussions and motivated to take action around issues related to fairness and justice, inclusion, and exclusion (Sapon-Shevin, 2007). Findings from a study on students' attitudes towards immigrants' rights show that those who got more opportunities to participate in democratic discussions had more positive attitudes towards the issue. Students' views on how active they were themselves during the discussions influenced their attitude towards immigrants' rights, regardless of their age, gender, or socioeconomic status (Aðalbjarnardóttir & Harðardóttir, 2018).

Developing inclusive, socially just learning spaces where critical multicultural pedagogy and powerful communication are in focus can be challenging for teachers and principals. Even though practices are developed, and changes are made to meet multilingual children, sustaining these is even more challenging. Findings from

research show that preschools which work effectively with multicultural education and meet the linguistic and cultural needs of children retain principals and motivated teachers that are interested in creating inclusive and socially just learning spaces (Hellman et al., 2018; Jakobsdóttir, 2007; Ragnarsdóttir & Schmidt, 2014; Svavarsson et al., 2018). Implementing and sustaining practices and ideology aiming at inclusive and socially just learning spaces for multilingual children involves that teachers and principals participate in a learning community where practices, injustices, and possibilities of change are constantly reflected on and teachers learn about and with their children and families (Nieto, 2010; Sigurðardóttir, 2013). The learning community develops when teachers share their common interests, attitudes and beliefs about learning and education, work together, learn from each other, and look for new ways to improve their practices for the good of all children (Sigurðardóttir, 2013). Professional development where the focus is on teachers' collaborative learning and co-construction of values, ideology, and practices to meet new challenges is an imperative part of the developing learning community. Pudlas (2010) argues that in order to provide learning spaces that are inclusive and welcoming, teachers need to be both professionally and personally inviting and well-prepared. The learning community and professional development thus need to include principles that address the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the teachers or their hearts, hands, and minds to seek children's best interest.

The role of the principal in leading the inclusion and participation of linguistically and culturally diverse children and adults is paramount in school reform aiming for inclusion and social justice. In their research, Svavarsson and colleagues (2018) studied how principals in three culturally diverse preschools in Iceland addressed the challenge of implementing inclusion and social justice with a focus on their leadership and active participation of immigrant families. Their findings indicate that the three principals developed three different ways of leadership and participation even though all the preschools were creating effective communication with multilingual children and parents. One of the preschools showed signs of developmental democracy where the principal was open for critical review and constantly engaged in discussions with the children, parents, and teachers regarding school matters. The authors argue that the model of developmental democracy gives principals powerful tools to work against marginalisation. In their research findings this kind of leadership seemed, however, to put the principal under a lot of stress since multiple challenges such as high staff turnover and lack of support from school authorities seemed to be draining the principal, preventing her from being able to sustain the inclusive practices (Svavarsson et al., 2018). This is congruent with Ragnarsdóttir and Blöndal (2014) in their study of inclusive practices, participation, and empowerment in a preschool in Iceland. Their findings show that the principal worked under very strainful conditions and had the main responsibility of maintaining the good ethos and practices of inclusion. Every time a new teacher started to work in the preschool the principal had to inform and train

them to make sure that they would become active and contributing members of the preschool's community (Ragnarsdóttir & Blöndal, 2014).

This is an ongoing process and if schools are going to transform their learning spaces to meet the needs of diverse children, both principals and teachers must become leaders of change for inclusion and social justice. Ensuring the sustainability of such changes is of equal importance and creates a need for purposeful planning for organising leadership beyond individual leaders (Hansen et al., 2016). Lauritsen (2014) studied how professional practices and changing attitudes over time contributed to exemplary practice within two Norwegian preschools, providing space for social justice and an equality-based participation for all children. Her findings show the complexities of aiming for socially just learning spaces for all children. Teachers faced multiple challenges in communicating with parents and implementing multilingual and multicultural practices with the children. By creating a platform where teachers could gather in formal and informal discussions, reflect on their experiences, and receive professional development, they gradually improved their skills and knowledge. Through real experience of communicating with parents, getting to know them and the children, teachers learned that parents were not so different from themselves, and it became less challenging for them to communicate. Multilingual and multicultural practices made the children proud; they were seen and welcomed as complex individuals, not defined by preconceived notions of their cultural background that the teachers had before. This was identified as a positive move in the direction of social justice and empowerment. Lauritsen (2014) concludes by highlighting that affirming cultural diversity and transforming education for multilingual children is a continuous process calling for leadership that focuses on social justice and empowerment.

In their research Hellman and colleagues (2018) explored how preschools with a history of multicultural and inclusive practices in Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden created learning spaces of empowerment, equity, and active participation. The participating preschools succeeded in developing equitable and inclusive learning spaces where education and care was provided in an empowering way and the active participation of children and families was enhanced. However, the preschools were facing challenges regarding staff retention, education of teachers, and demanding conditions for the principals. Part of the challenges included missed learning opportunities in relation to language learning and linguistic participation of multilingual children and an overall lack of educational practices involving the first and second languages of the multilingual children. The authors claim that in preschools all teachers are language teachers since the everyday work is based on communication and language and therefore more awareness and competence in working with second language learning and multilingualism are needed. Thus, inclusive and socially just learning spaces for multilingual children must involve learning opportunities that focus on their language development and literacy participation.

Findings from research show negative outcomes for multilingual children when teachers do not meet their linguistic needs, do not have the knowledge or understanding of language development and appropriate second language practices and when assessment, language, and literacy practices are carried out from a monolingual perspective (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; Esteban & Moll, 2014; García & Kleifgen, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Hélot, 2021; Ragnarsdóttir & Kulbrandstad, 2018). In the next section I will turn my attention towards the different factors undergirding the language development and learning of multilingual children in the early years.

2.2 Language development and learning in the early years

Theory and research on language development and learning of young children is extensive and builds on a wide spectrum of findings from different disciplinary fields. The focus of the current study is on the social nature of language and literacy development of young children but it is *informed* by research and theory from other fields of study, both Icelandic and international. I am not situating this research within linguistics but agree with those claiming that knowledge and understanding of language-related issues from different perspectives is important, both for teachers and researchers (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Tabors, 2006).

In the following subchapters I discuss the language development and learning of young children with a focus on multilingual children. I start by looking at theory and research on early language development and emergent literacy. Then I turn to the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky on the zone of proximal development, and I conclude by addressing theory on scaffolding and guided participation.

2.2.1 Language and literacy of young multilingual children

Language development of an individual is a natural process starting already in the womb, continuing through early childhood and beyond. Although many multilingual children add one or more new languages to their repertoire after the development of the first language has started, findings from research show that the overall course of language development of multilingual children is comparable to monolingual children (De Houwer, 2009; Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001; Neaum, 2012; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Tabors, 2006; Whithead, 2010; Þórðardóttir, 2007, 2011). The basic linguistic needs of multilingual children are similar to those of monolingual children. In both cases, the children's language environment needs to be rich and varied since early language development does not take place in a vacuum and depends largely on the role that adults and other children play when interacting with the child (De Houwer, 2021; Figlarska et al., 2017; Þórðardóttir, 2007, 2011). The process of acquiring two or more languages is more complicated in the sense that the children must divide their

time between the languages and learn grammar, phonics, and vocabulary of both or all languages, sometimes delaying their overall language development. What the language learning context for young children at preschool and at home has in common is that the children acquire and develop language without being formally instructed. Findings from numerous studies show that good development in one language makes it easier for individuals to learn other languages even though the relationship between different aspects of language development needs further attention (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008; Cummins, 2001, 2021b; De Houwer, 2009; Figlarska et al., 2017; Þórðardóttir, 2007, 2011).

The language learning and development of young multilingual children varies extensively between children and is closely related to their family background and situations. De Houwer (2009) refers to the language acquisition of children hearing two or more languages from birth or even pre-birth as BFLA (*bilingual first language acquisition*). For a child growing up bilingually from birth it can be argued that bilingualism is the acquired mother tongue or home language. ESLA (*early second language acquisition*) takes place when monolingual children growing up within a family speaking another language at home than the language of school transit to preschool or start to hear a second language regularly while still acquiring their home language/s. SLA (*second language acquisition*) is usually the term used for children and adults that learn a new language after they acquire their home language/s. Even though language development of multilingual children is a lifelong process, researchers widely agree that it takes children 1–2 years to develop conversational skills in a new language and 5–7 years to achieve academic proficiency in the language. However, this is closely related to the practices children are exposed to at home and in school and will be discussed further in the next section (Cummins, 1984, 2004, 2021a).

The language practices of parents shape the language development of their children. Findings from research on linguistically and culturally diverse families show that there is great variation between their language practices. Some families guide their children's linguistic development in a way comparable to preschool practices, while others socialise their children into language very differently, affecting their transition into the language of school (Brooker, 2002a; Heath, 1982; Neuman, 2007; Nieto, 2010; Rogoff, 2003). In the past few years, research on family language policies (FLP) has gained increased attention. Through FLP studies, researchers are developing an approach to investigate the relationship between children's language development and parents' language ideologies, practices, and control of language use (Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). These studies show that the diverse patterns of family language choice and use have different influences on children's language outcomes. More exposure to a language increases children's opportunities to develop their understanding and ability to speak and there is a positive relationship between children's vocabulary and comprehension and their access to books and parents that read to them (De Houwer,

2013; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). Children's agency also plays a role in shaping the FLP since the children continuously co-construct the social practices at home with their own communicative actions. Even though a child is socialised into the norms and rules of language at home, the active agency of the child allows her to challenge these (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017). De Houwer (2013, 2021) claims that FLP can influence children's linguistic developmental paths and argues that a harmonious bilingual development should be the aim since it is closely related to the wellbeing of children and families. Harmonious bilingual development involves that the issue of multilingualism is not considered a hindrance for language learning and children encounter positive experiences with language, both within the preschool and the family. The attitudes and beliefs of the society at large and of those working with multilingual children and families play a critical role and influence children's socio-emotional wellbeing as well as their behaviour and learning (De Houwer, 2013, 2021). This links directly to the way language attitudes, beliefs and practices shape young children's identity and agency in an empowering or deficit way.

All children enter preschool with some form of language knowledge depending on their age, linguistic background, and the FLP they are exposed to at home. A clear relationship has been documented between the amount of time that children spend in a particular language environment and the growth of their vocabulary and grammar in that language. Furthermore, children already possessing a knowledge of complicated words and concepts in one language encounter fewer difficulties in learning the same words in the new language (Þórðardóttir, 2011, 2019). For a long time, it was a general belief that the younger the children started to learn a new language the easier it was for them. This is not always the case and starting preschool in a new language while acquiring the first language/s of home is a great challenge for multilingual children. Working with multilingual children creates a need for teachers to understand and know about different paths of multilingual language development for developing practices that meet the different needs of multilingual children (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008; Brooker, 2002a, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2001, 2021b; Figlarska et al., 2017).

Language skills fundamental for later literacy proficiency, such as reading and writing, are closely tied to language development during the early years. These language skills are often referred to as *emergent literacy,* denoting the gradual process of "children acquiring knowledge, concepts and skills through, and about, communication" during the early years (Neaum, 2012, p. 139). Language and literacy skills already present at the age of four or five are strong predictors of academic achievements years later, including the ability to read and write (Birgisdóttir, 2011; Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001; Ragnarsdóttir, 2013, 2015). In light of this knowledge, researchers and practitioners have turned their attention to the importance of providing rich and linguistically appropriate language context during the early years with a special focus on children coming from families with low social and economic background and

children brought up in another language than the language of school (Brooker, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021a, 2021b; De Houwer, 2021; García & Kleifgen, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Ólafsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2010; Rogoff, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Snow et al., 2001; Tabors, 2006). Studies of family language policy can shed light on the connections between children's emergent literacy skills and home practices with literacy-related activities, access to print, and academic vocabulary (Brooker, 2002a, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2001; Figlarska et al., 2017; Heath, 1982; Rogoff, 2003).

Over time empirical research on the language development of multilingual children in Iceland and around the world has mostly been carried out from a monolingual focus. Although research shows that most multilingual children in the world grow up multilingual from birth, pointing to the fact that multilingualism should not be considered a problem, too often the focus is on the children's language development in the school language. This frequently involves inappropriate and biased documentation and negative assessment of multilingual children's language development where their knowledge and development of the language is only carried out in the language of school and compared to the results of monolingual children (De Houwer, 2021; García & Kleifgen, 2010). If multilingual children's language knowledge is allocated in two languages (or more) it is not possible to expect their performance in either language to be the same as that of monolingual children. Þórðardóttir (2011) claims that:

> ... how much the rate of development of bilingual children differs from that of monolingual children and how this relates to factors such as amount of input is still not well understood. Until this is more firmly documented, the language evaluation of bilingual children will remain subject to inaccuracies and erroneous clinical and educational decisions. This also affects research that relies on matching mono-lingual and bilingual children on language level (p. 427).

Research in Iceland on the language development of multilingual children is scarce and most of it looks at the children's language development in Icelandic in comparison to monolingual speakers of Icelandic. Findings from research looking at vocabulary development, language knowledge and language production of multilingual children in Icelandic compulsory schools show that a majority of children speaking Icelandic as a second language score significantly lower than children speaking Icelandic as a first language, even though they are born in Iceland and have attended preschool in the country. Students' progress in Icelandic seems to be very slow and not sufficient to reduce the gap between them and native students over time. Hours spent on special education in compulsory schools does not seem to benefit children with Icelandic as a second language (Ólafsdóttir, 2010, 2015; Ólafsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2010; Þórðardóttir & Júlíusdóttir, 2012). Furthermore, findings show that those few children

scoring within the range of monolingual children had at least eight years of residence in Iceland and arrived in the country at an early age (Þórðardóttir & Júlíusdóttir, 2012). These findings are harmonious with those from international research showing the gaps between the language development of multilingual and monolingual students and raise questions about what practices are appropriate in the education of multilingual compulsory students (Cummins, 2004; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Few studies have been carried out regarding the language development of multilingual preschool children in Iceland but most of them show that they have lower levels of proficiency in Icelandic than monolingual peers (Figlarska et al., 2017; Hafsteinsdóttir et al., 2022; Haraldsdóttir, 2013; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). These studies vary in the sense that they look at different aspects of language development. Findings from a study looking at multilingual children's receptive vocabulary and ability to form past tense verbs in comparison to monolingual children show that even those children living in Iceland from birth and attending Icelandic preschool, expressed much less knowledge of Icelandic vocabulary than monolingual peers (Haraldsdóttir, 2013). In a recent study, where diverse set of assessment tools and language samples were used to evaluate bilingual children's language development in comparison with Icelandic peers', the authors stress "that the Icelandic language skills of 5–6 years old pre-school children acquiring the majority language as a second language are surprisingly poor" (Hafsteinsdóttir, 2022, p.17). The authors discuss how this low performance is closer to what could be expected from bilingual children with language deficits and that these "serious results call for action and changed attitudes in language stimulation for bilingual children in Iceland" (Hafsteinsdóttir et al., 2022, p.17).

Even though the findings from the above studies can throw light on multilingual children's language development in comparison to children born, raised, and educated in Icelandic, they lack clear directions regarding how to reverse this underachievement. Furthermore, some of them involve the danger of maintaining the deficiency view with a risk of lowering expectations towards multilingual children and even sometimes blaming teachers for not doing enough. Cummins (2004, 2021b) has argued that this can negatively influence the societal power relations in the educational sector and the society, often with inferior effects on multilingual children's identity. These influences can affect the way multilingual children are perceived in preschools. Their linguistic participation as documented in research showed that multilingual children's comprehension of Icelandic was poor, and they hardly spoke with peers and adults (Reynisdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2022). This knowledge of the children's lack of linguistic participation became visible through action research involving a developmental project, where a special education preschool teacher in one preschool looked at language practices with multilingual children in collaboration with colleagues in a critical and reflective way. Findings show how the teachers turned lack of learning opportunities into more communication and learning of Icelandic for the children. While the

participating teachers and staff gained increased confidence when interacting with multilingual children, the atmosphere changed, and the children became more linguistically active. The project changed their level of participation during different preschool activities such as free play and reading sessions. The staff received professional development and participated in a learning community where they reflected on their practices and discussed the need for change (Reynisdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2022). Although the study did not involve practices with the linguistic and cultural background of the children, the findings show important aspects of how teachers working collaboratively and purposefully can create language learning opportunities with Icelandic in a way that activates all the staff and teachers with a positive outcome for multilingual children.

Two studies look at children's language development in Icelandic in relation to their language background and paths of learning (Figlarska et al., 2017; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). The main aim of the prior study was to assess the vocabulary of bilingual Icelandic-Polish–speaking children 4-6 years of age in both of their languages and study the effects of the language context in their home and preschool (Figlarska et al., 2017). Main findings show that most of the children had similar vocabulary in Polish as their Polish-speaking peers, but their Icelandic vocabulary was below that of Icelandic monolingual peers. The main emphasis of the work in the preschool was to facilitate the learning of Icelandic while the parents were responsible for supporting the learning of Polish. Teachers used informal assessment methods to assess children's language development and called for appropriate assessment tools, support, and training to better meet the needs of bilingual preschool children (Figlarska et al., 2017). The focus of the latter research was on capturing children's different language repertoires through studying their FLP and examining their *Icelandic phonological awareness* (IPA) (Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). The findings are dense and provide rich information on the family language practices and the children's IPA. The participating families had different language policies, the mean score of children's phonological awareness in Icelandic was under the national average, and a higher percentage of children scored below average. The parents in the study explained that the preschool teachers were the main source of information regarding language learning and development of their children. One of the implications the authors discuss concerns the importance of informing preschool teachers about family language policies and their relation to emergent language and literacy development of multilingual children (Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). If teachers in preschools are the main source of information for parents about their children's language learning and development, they also need support, time, and knowledge about multilingual children's language development and how to collaborate with parents to meet the individual needs of their children. Teacher education and professional development for teachers must address these issues. Findings from research on multilingual children's language development in Icelandic provide

information about gaps in children's learning of Icelandic although their often narrow focus does not shed light on the complex interplay of factors influencing their learning.

Hedegaard (2008) explains how a narrow focus in research on children's development increases the danger of disregarding the broad spectrum of components affecting their development through everyday life activities. She argues that through the years, practices guiding children's language development in school and at home have not been addressed within research of developmental psychology, inhibiting understanding of the most important conditions that society can provide for children's development. A narrow, psychological approach does not consider developmental factors that are fundamentally enhanced through social conditions and thus deprive children of their possibility to become co-constructors of their development and learning. Hedegaard stresses the importance of formulating an approach that combines general psychological concepts with research carried out in concrete settings and suggests that building on Vygotsky's cultural-historical theories of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) can aid in this quest. In Vygotsky's theory the learning of the child is social because of the interaction that needs to take place between the child and more capable others, and cultural since new learning always builds on prior experience and knowledge. I agree with Hedegard and other scholars (Bodrova, 2008; Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Nieto, 2010; Rogoff, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Smidt, 2009) claiming that looking at multilingual children's language development and learning through a sociocultural lens can shed a more comprehensive light on that complex and multifaceted process. In the following subchapter I will discuss research on development and learning through a sociocultural view, highlighting Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD and Rogoff's theory of *guided participation*.

2.2.2 Language development and learning from a sociocultural perspective

One of the best-known theories of Vygotsky (1978) is the theory of ZPD. The ZPD is useful for educators to understand in more detail the learning and development of the preschool child and their role in the process. Vygotsky explained that new intellectual skills of a child are mastered gradually by practicing them in interaction with a more capable other. The process that takes place within the ZPD is the essence of learning because what the child is almost able to do herself today with guidance from the capable other, she can do individually when the process of new learning is internalised. The ZPD is thus described as the "distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The guidance and support from the teacher must be individualised and build on prior experience and knowledge of the child in order to create conditions that foster intellectual growth. This relationship of guidance, development, and new learning builds on interaction where

the young child participates in active learning with the other just beyond the level of independent mastery but is not a passive receiver of new knowledge (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Kozulin, 1998; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). The process of learning is activated when the child is active, the teacher is active and the space between them is activated through guidance and support that give meaning to the task at hand (Moll, 2001).

When interacting with a more capable other within the ZPD, "children learn to use the intellectual tools of their community, including literacy, number systems, language, and tools for remembering and planning" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 282). In order for the vocabulary to grow, the child needs social interaction and intellectual development gradually moves from social *speech* to internal *thought*. Although formal education and instruction does not start until children begin compulsory school, the vocabulary used in different projects, themes, and books in the preschool gradually becomes more abstract, moving children from concrete thinking in spontaneous concepts into more abstract thinking when dealing with scientific concepts or deeper vocabulary (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Children's understanding of scientific concepts develops through verbal interaction where "the word functions as the thinking "tool"" (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 13, quotation marks from original text).

Theories on scaffolding in learning and education of an individual expand Vygotsky's theory on ZPD (Smidt, 2009) and explain in greater detail the role of the teacher or the more capable other. The concept of *scaffolding* is related to a sociocultural perspective on learning. When children get support from their teachers, they are more likely to be able to perform more difficult tasks than on their own. This kind of support includes practices such as the teacher first giving a hint on the task at hand, then explaining and demonstrating the task, observing the children solve a similar task and finally ask the children to finish a task they start themselves. Scaffolding involves active learning for the child where participation and engagement are enhanced. A skilled scaffolder understands what the child already knows and can provide appropriate hints that support the child in showing her existing knowledge (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009). Thus, scaffolding needs to build on the child's experience and knowledge and go hand in hand with learning needs. Scaffolding that is too extensive or not targeted at the individual child is not beneficial. Hence, scaffolding that is either below the capacity of the child, making the learning process too easy or uninteresting, or that is too difficult and not related to earlier knowledge and thus outside the ZPD, does not construct new intellectual skills (Smidt, 2009).

Rogoff (2003) stresses that although Vygotsky's theory on ZPD is very important, it focuses almost entirely on interaction related to formal education and schooling where the child is prepared to use academic discourse and symbolic tools. Rogoff expands Vygotsky's theory by putting forward the concept of guided participation, which is useful to understand in more detail as the "collaborative nature of learning that occurs

outside of (as well as within) explicit instructional situations" (p. 283). The term *guided* clarifies the child's need for support in the process of discovering new things and with guided participation the child is learning, alongside with a more capable other. Because of the nature of preschool education with informal and implicit learning through play, Rogoff's concept is easily applicable to the practices of preschools. The term *participation* refers to the changing role of the child when developing new skills in participation with others (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Rogoff, 2003). Rogoff argues that communication during participation in shared experiences is the key factor in the way individuals develop. Hence important aspects of language development and emergent literacy are mediated through guided participation:

> In bridging different perspectives, partners seek a common perspective or language through which to communicate their ideas in order to coordinate their efforts. Mutual understanding occurs *between* people in interaction; it cannot be attributed to one person or another. Modifications in each participant's perspective are necessary to accomplish things together (Rogoff, 2003, p. 285, italics from original text).

Mutuality in language use can be connected to the way in which the adult guides the linguistic participation of the child when adding to the meaning of incomplete one- or two-word sentences. Rogoff identifies two basic processes of guided participation that are helpful to understand how learning and development occurs in sociocultural activities. The first process has already been discussed here and relates to language, words, and symbolic tools. The second relates to the kind of activities and projects that children take part in. The guided participation of the teacher in a context where learning and development takes place is therefore not only connected to the interaction between the child and the teacher but also to the activities and materials provided to enhance and expand learning. Therefore, it is important to observe what kind of projects and materials are provided for children to enhance learning and development. It has been argued that real contextual projects, such as planting, baking, setting the table, and constructing and playing with real and known artefacts that relate to children's experience, contribute significantly to their new learning and development. Projects carried out without interaction and purpose and those lacking cultural and social references are less likely to enhance learning (Smidt, 2009). This is important in relation to the aspect of guided participation that deals with the changing participation of the child when she takes on new roles and responsibilities. Without active participation in meaningful practices, where purposeful interaction and use of vocabulary relate directly to the task at hand, it is less likely that the child's participation changes. Teachers need to be aware that a crucial part of the learning process has to do with children's changing involvement in the preschool community and thus relates to their sense of belonging (Rogoff, 2003).

Modelling has been identified as a useful strategy to provide support to children in language and literacy learning when they become guided into participation in meaningful tasks with a clear purpose. Byrnes and Wasik (2009) suggest that strategies "implemented according to the principles of sociocultural theory are more effective than strategies implemented according to principles of standard direct instruction or discovery learning approaches" (p. 354). Modelling is explained as a phase where the teacher shows the steps of solving a problem while explaining with appropriate language how and why the children perform in this manner. Then the children imitate the action, and the teacher explains verbally the steps the children go through. Teachers will need to observe children to understand how they are taking on a new task to provide sufficient support with decreasing feedback identified as *fading:*

> At the same time that teachers give away responsibility for success, students are taking on more and more responsibility. As they do, they slowly *internalize* successful strategies and become *self-regulated learners* rather than other-regulated learners. To get students to the point of being self-regulated, the three-step sequence has to be followed (i.e. modelling plus explanation, followed by student attempts at imitation, followed by feedback that progressively fades) (Byrnes and Wasik, 2009, p. 354, italics and brackets from original text).

Siraj-Blatchford (2009) has studied the effects of different pedagogies applied to support the development and learning of children and links the concept of *sustained shared thinking* (SST) to the ZPD theory of Vygotsky, scaffolding, and guided participation. SST involves that children, either with adults or peers, work collaboratively "in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or extend a narrative" (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, p. 78–79). The concept of SST was defined as a result of findings in the longitudinal study "Effective Provision of Pre-School Education" where researchers "specifically referred to the sharing of thinking, and to the particularly sustained nature of some of the interactions identified in effective (in terms of child outcomes) pre-school settings" (p.77, brackets from original text). Findings show that sustained shared thinking can be both child and adult initiated and when interaction build on SST as a pedagogy, it is associated with higher cognitive outcome and better performance in language.

Bodrova and Leong (2007) have built on Vygotsky's theories while studying the importance of the role play or make-believe play where children perform above their capability in real-life tasks. All the different types of make-believe play involve the development of abstract, voluntary, and conscious behaviours crucial for the children's mastery of literacy indicating that the make-believe play creates the optimal ZPD for language learning and early literacy. In order to view the make-believe play as the ZPD for children's cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional skills, teachers need to actively model, scaffold and engage with the children through the play. Teachers need to label

the learning material and props used in the play and respond verbally to children's language use during the play (Bodrova, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Viewing play as a spontaneous child-initiated activity "incorrectly assumes that adults need only to provide children with time, space, and props, and children will engage in play on their own" (Bodrova et al., 2013, p. 118). According to Bodrova and colleagues (2013) this view belongs to those who think that adult support through play should only be for those children experiencing some difficulties. This goes against the Vygotskian view that situates play as a cultural activity where adults assume a critical role in engaging, supporting, and scaffolding children (Bodrova et al., 2013).

Several Icelandic and international studies have focused on play in preschools and how learning and development is or is not activated through play both from the view of children and teachers (Bodrova et al., 2013; Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Einarsdóttir & Pálmadóttir, 2019; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Findings show that in some instances adults avoid participating in the play because they are afraid of disturbing the children or destroying the play, simultaneously increasing the likelihood of missing important learning opportunities (Samuelson & Johansson, 2009). Researchers claim that preschool children themselves do not regard learning and playing as different elements indicating that when they are young "children are playing learning individuals" (Samuelson & Carlsson, 2008, p. 626). In their study of several early childhood educational programs, Samuelsson & Carlson (2008) concluded that preschools showing the most quality in their work had children playing with issues related to the daily curriculum and teachers building on ideas from children in curriculum-related activities. This way the roles of both became important and contributed to everyday life. An important part of the learning-playing process involves the active participation of children where their different perspectives are considered. Furthermore, teachers must take into account the power positions in communication internally, between the children and between the children and themselves, while providing space for creativity and the freedom to choose (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008).

Looking at the role of teachers from the perspective of children is of high importance. In an Icelandic study carried out with children aged three to five years from two preschools, the researchers investigated the children's view on the role of the teachers during play (Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017). Findings show that the children did not consider the teachers as participants in the children's play, but they remained close, observed, and reacted if something went wrong. The status of the children within the group affected how they conceived the role of teachers. Those children that were leaders in the play worried that the teachers might ruin the play while the children who followed the leaders in play wanted the support and participation of the teachers. The findings suggest that educators might reconsider their participation in the play, especially regarding those children that are passive and not participating (Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017). These findings, as well as those focusing on the language

development of multilingual preschool children in Iceland discussed above, and findings from research showing that multilingual preschool children are marginalised in play and organised activities (Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019), indicate the need to look more deeply at teachers' practices, children's learning, and their multilingual realities.

Vygotsky's concept of children's ZPD in relation to learning and language development has significant implications for researchers studying children's learning spaces and teachers reflecting on their pedagogies in play and other activities. Theories of scaffolding and guided participation take his ideas further, allowing researchers and teachers to look at how learning is activated through child- and adult-initiated preschool practices and active participation. However, to provide a more holistic view on multilingual children's learning, it is also necessary to look at theory and research from the perspective of bilingual and multilingual learning.

2.2.3 Inclusive language practices in multilingual preschools

In the book *Language and Literacy in the Early Years 0–7*, Whitehead (2010) explains that language and communication "affects the whole of care and education for, even when they are not the particular focus of planned provision, teaching and learning, it is the means and the channel for teaching and learning" (p. xiii). Practices where the focus is primarily on teaching the language of school, without building on children's linguistic and cultural background and acknowledging them as emergent multilinguals, can be referred to as monolingual practices. Monolingual practices risk the temptation to pressure multilingual children as quickly as possible into acquiring a second language without carefully planning their overall language and literacy development (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004; Whitehead, 2010). Monolingual practices and lack of respect for diverse languages increase the danger that teachers "unconsciously retain damaging lowered expectations and attitudes towards the development and achievements of young potential bilinguals" (Whitehead, 2010, p. 41). Furthermore, they may negatively affect the overall language and literacy development of the child (Brooker, 2002b; Cummins, 2004; García & Wei, 2014; Whitehead, 2010).

The aim of this section is to look at theory and research that shift the focus away from monolingual ideologies and practices to inclusive and equitable language practices where multilingual children are guided and cared for as emergent bilinguals, sustaining their home language/s while they learn the language of school. This section is divided into two subchapters. In the first, Jim Cummins' theories on language and literacy development of multilingual children and findings from research on multilingual pedagogy are in focus and in the later subchapter I turn to theories with a dynamic view of language development and language use.

2.2.4 Pedagogy and practices enhancing active multilingualism

The focus of Jim Cummins in research for the last four decades has helped researchers and teachers to understand in more detail the relationship between children's home languages and the language of school and the importance of nurturing and supporting both or all their languages. Practices that are inclusive, where multilingual and multicultural identity is affirmed and a sense of belonging is nurtured through powerful communication, have the potential to engage children in language and literacy processes that affect their social and academic success (Cummins, 2021b).

To explain language developing proficiency of multilingual children learning the school language Cummins introduces the distinctions between *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) and *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) (1984, 2004, 2021a). BICS refers to the conversational surface skills usually acquired during the child's early second language acquisition and is a process that can take some months up to two years. CALP involves a process that starts already in preschool during interaction where the multilingual child participates in literacy activities and discussions around context-reduced vocabulary:

> CALP is developed through face-to-face interaction in home and school and in the process of actively engaging with literacy, discussing ideas with peers and adults, and becoming aware of how the registers of academic language work across different disciplines. Opportunities for collaborative learning and talk about text are crucial constituents of academic language learning (Cummins, 2021a, p. 200).

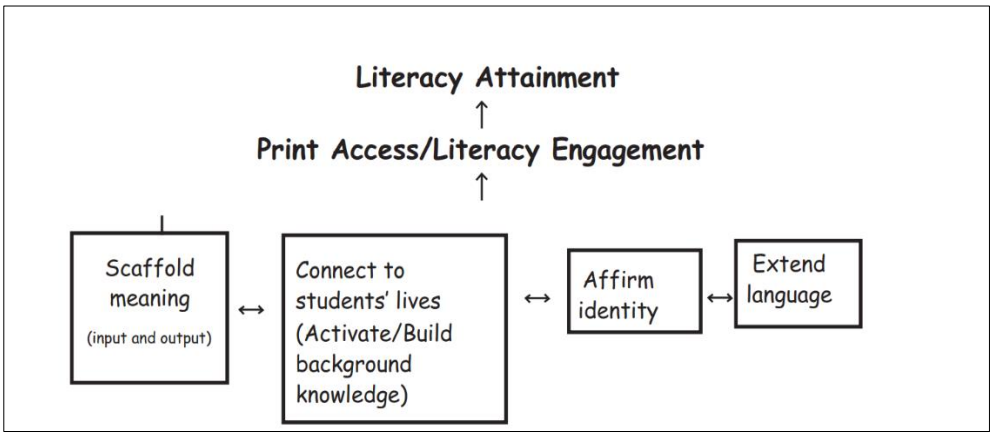
Typically, it takes five to seven years for multilingual children to acquire the academic language proficiency needed for mastering learning in different subjects in primary and secondary school. Although this is a process that starts in preschool it never stops, since active language users continue to learn new words and concepts. Through the years there has been a tendency to value children's ability in second language as sufficient, based on assessment of their conversational language proficiency or BICS without exploring the need for cognitively more challenging practices enhancing CALP. When looking under the surface it soon becomes clear that multilingual children's vocabulary and understanding of context-reduced communication is lacking in proficiency and that without appropriate linguistic support they are not likely to improve their proficiency in more cognitively demanding tasks (Cummins, 2004, 2021a). To understand what kind of support is needed for multilingual children to develop language proficiency it is important to know the rules within the educational setting and in what way communication and language use give access to specific language tasks. When the language used in specific tasks is context-reduced, that is when the child relies only on the language itself (like when listening to a teacher reading a book with vocabulary that is not understandable for the child) and no linguistic scaffolding is

provided, it can become a challenge for the child to learn new words and concepts and develop the proficiency to participate in discussions. All teachers need to support understanding of deeper vocabulary across the curriculum in a way that enhances multilingual children's engagement in interaction with peers and adults. Furthermore, teachers and researchers need to understand that BICS is not a sufficient indicator for assessing children's proficiency and that purposeful work with deeper vocabulary associated with academic language is needed already in preschool. Findings from a longitudinal study in New Zealand, show the long-term impact of literacy socialisation during the preschool years as it predicts reading comprehension later on (Wylie & Thomson, 2003).

Given that rare words and academic language are more likely to be found in books and written text than in everyday language (Massaro, 2015), Cummins (2021a) stresses the need for maximising multilingual children's access to print and enhancing their literacy engagement. Simultaneously, teachers need to understand how to scaffold and guide children's participation in literacy practices in a way that increases their engagement and understanding. Cummins and colleagues (2015) highlight three components of effective pedagogy: scaffolding meaning, connecting to children's lives, and extending children's knowledge of vocabulary through explicit instruction. These components are made clear in the framework for literacy engagement described in Figure 2. The connection between the elements of the framework indicates that literacy in the broad sense will be enhanced when children's understanding of deeper vocabulary is scaffolded and supported with specific practices. These include that teachers connect actively to children's lives and children get the opportunity to carry out challenging work that affirms their identities. Furthermore, teachers need to provide explicit instruction in a way that develops children's awareness and ability to use deeper vocabulary (Cummins et al., 2015). Even though the framework is based on research with older children in relation to academic learning and the creation of identity texts, there are commonalities easily applicable to language learning pedagogy with multilingual preschool children.

Supporting young multilingual children's emergent literacy with powerful pedagogy, while simultaneously affirming their identity and connecting their background knowledge, strengths, and interest is important for their overall language development and learning. Building on the framework, analysing literacy practices and identity affirmation in relation to print access and literacy engagement is helpful both for researchers and teachers working with young multilingual children.

Figure 2. The literacy engagement framework (Cummins et al., 2015, p. 560)



Language proficiency in one language forms a basis for underlying cognitive proficiency in both or all the languages of a child. In the same way there is a relationship between the home language/s and the language of school. A child that has developed a knowledge of concepts in one language can transfer her knowledge into the other language while the child that needs to acquire both the label and the concept in the new language simultaneously does not have the possibility to transfer the knowledge from one language to the other (Cummins, 1984, 2004; Ólafsdóttir, 2010, 2015). For this reason, it is important to work with both or all languages of the young developing child and support language and literacy learning through the preschool practices and in collaboration with parents. Young multilingual children come to the preschool with some understanding and knowledge of their home language and literacy and sometimes also familiarity with the language of school, regardless of their proficiency in speaking the language/s. Chumak-Horbatsch (2012) encourages us to look at these young language learners as emergent bilinguals arguing that by doing so we "recognise the importance of their home language and literacy accomplishments, set aside the many single-language labels that hamper their progress and concentrate on their bilingual potential" (p. 23). In her research Chumak-Horbatsch (2012, 2019) investigated practices with multilingual children in early childhood settings in Canada and beyond. Her findings show that the growing diversity of children with home languages other than the language of school creates a need, in almost every setting, for developing linguistically appropriate practices where multilingual language and literacy is fostered. Her findings have revealed three basic linguistic practices with young emergent bilinguals defined as *assimilative, supportive,* and *inclusive*. The assimilative approach has a monolingual and monocultural focus. Practices do not involve acknowledging the home language of the children, assessment is carried out in the second language without paying attention to the home language, children speaking the same home language are separated and their languages are not welcomed into the classroom. Supportive practices are monolingual and monoliterate, but cultural

differences are celebrated. These practices involve that information is translated for parents, teachers learn keywords in home languages of children and organise inclusive multicultural activities. In preschools where assimilative and supportive practices are the main pedagogy the focus is solely on teaching and learning the second language, but those practices "disregard and deny immigrant children's home language and literacy lives" (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012, p. 41). Inclusive practices focus on multilingual, multi-literate and multicultural lives of children on a daily basis all year round. Language of school is actively supported and simultaneously, language and literacy materials in the home languages are provided and worked with in close cooperation with parents (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012). When comparing those three practices it is easy to see that they overlap. Assimilative practices have some supportive features, and the supportive features have inclusive dimensions as well. Findings from research show that supportive and inclusive practices are more likely than assimilative practices to engage children's active participation and provide them with opportunities to become motivated and excited about language and literacy from the very beginning, thus meeting their multiple language and literacy needs (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Mary & Young, 2021).

When developing supportive and inclusive language practices with multilingual children, teachers need to learn about the cultural and linguistic background of the children to meet their linguistic needs. How much newly arrived children rely on verbal communication with peers and adults depends a lot on their age when they start preschool. The children, already fluent in their home language/s, are more used to relying on language in communication with peers and adults and can experience a language shock when they realise that they do not understand the language of school (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012). This creates a need for inclusive practices where the active participation of children is guided, regardless of their ability to use the language of school (Tabors, 2006; Roberts, 2014; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012). Findings from earlier research on language development show that all children go through phases while learning the new language of school; the first phase involving that they try to use their home language until they realise that this does not work and then they become silent (Roberts, 2014; Tabors, 2006). These findings have been contested in later research with the argument that even though children were not able to communicate with peers or teachers in the home language or the new language they did not stop interacting (Roberts, 2014; Tabors, 2006). Already in 1985 Gibbons criticised the traditional view that a silent period is an inevitable, or even a preferable stage in the language acquisition process. His findings show that what had been defined as a silent period most likely starts as a period of silent incomprehension and that a prolonged silent period could be related to the learner's psychological withdrawal but was not a part of the learner's language acquisition (Gibbons, 1985).

Roberts (2014) analysed the extent and quality of findings from a dozen different research projects where children's acquisition of the second language was investigated. Roberts found very limited evidence of a silent or nonverbal stage and in most of the

research she identified methodological limitations. She criticises the negative consequences that accepting the silent stage has had on educational practices and claims that:

> The language learning, positive view of silence has dominated publications popularizing the existence of a silent stage. None of the reviewed studies documented the relationships of silence or less talking to positive second language attainment, although authors claimed this linkage. Evidence of this linkage is crucial for permitting a warrant that L2 silence contributes to second language learning. [...] Inaccurate characterization of the meaning of silence and its relationship to measured language acquisition may carry significant consequences for language development via its effect on educational practice (Roberts, 2014, p. 35).

Roberts argues that much more research is needed on factors that contribute to positive second language acquisition within the classroom. Among factors that need to be studied are children's communication and language use within the classroom, teacher scaffolding and support, group size, peer interaction and learning activities, but only one of the studies she analysed took some of these factors into account. Social factors, identity affirmation and children's linguistic, cultural, and familial funds of knowledge are also of great significance in the process (Roberts, 2014).

Chumak-Horbatsch (2012) argues that the acceptance of the silent period as a normal phase in the transition to a new language environment is a result of practices in monolingual classrooms where the experience and knowledge of immigrant children are excluded, and they are *silenced* in the process. She highlights that the silent period should neither be accepted nor considered an important stage in children's second language acquisition since it can create a prolonged space of silence between children and adults where the newcomer children "remain non-verbal or mute for weeks, months or even years, because they come to understand that their way of speaking is not acceptable in the classroom" (p.31). This acceptance can lead to social isolation and loneliness with negative outcomes for multilingual children's wellbeing and engagement. Cummins (2021b) stresses that teachers' pedagogical choices have here a part to play:

> Teachers' instructional choices within the classroom are crucial in determining the extent to which minoritized students will emerge from an identity cocoon defined by their assumed limitations in the language of instruction into an interpersonal space defined by their talents and accomplishments – linguistic, artistic, and intellectual. For this to happen, teachers must see through the institutional labels and societal stereotypes to the potential within (p. 285).

In this argument Cummins draws on different projects and findings from research carried out in multilingual settings where teachers have implemented pedagogy that allows for identity affirmation, belonging, and participation instead of exclusionary practices (Cummins et al., 2015; Cummins, 2021b; Mary & Young, 2021).

Research from Iceland on language learning and language practices with young multilingual children is limited and the focus is predominantly on practices with Icelandic as a second language, although there are some exceptions. In a study carried out as a part of the Nordic research project *Learning spaces for inclusion and social justice* Ragnarsdóttir and colleagues (2016) studied participation, communication, and care in three Icelandic preschools. Part of the study involved observation of the communication between teachers and multilingual children and their peers. Main findings from observations indicate that the teachers show care and culturally responsive pedagogy while communicating with children and build on their background in inclusive ways. The preschools and the teachers were different, and although some teachers were carefully creating learning spaces for empowering communication while extending and scaffolding linguistic participation and work with vocabulary, the researchers also identified missed learning opportunities. These entailed that children were not engaged in communication with teachers or peers and were marginalised and passive in play. Some teachers expressed low expectations towards multilingual children and sometimes the teachers waited for the children to take the initiative for verbal interaction. Findings indicate that teachers need more knowledge of how to support the language acquisition and literacy of multilingual children (Ragnarsdóttir et al., 2016).

In their research Figlarska and colleagues (2017) assessed the Polish and Icelandic vocabulary of bilingual children and investigated their language environment at home and in preschool. They found that similar language development practices were used in all the preschools they studied. Language learning stimulation in Icelandic was intertwined with daily activities and with pull-out lessons for literacy development. The main areas of emphasis mentioned by the department heads were reading to children and discussing the stories with them. The *Text talk* method (i. *Orðaspjall*) was also used for vocabulary development (Jónsdóttir, 2013). In four of the preschools the participating children received special lessons with emphasis on Icelandic vocabulary development. Many of the children were facing difficulties with communication in the preschools because of their lack of Icelandic but the children with more Icelandic vocabulary engaged more often with peers and teachers. In most preschools teachers tried to separate the Polish-speaking children during mealtimes and organised activities for instance. The division leaders explained that the reason for this was to prevent the Polish-speaking children from becoming marginalised as a group within the bigger group of children and the belief that they would learn more vocabulary in Icelandic (Figlarska et al., 2017).

In her action research Stephensen (2018) studied how the home languages of children were included in the preschool's activities, based on Chumak-Horbatch's (2012) method of linguistically appropriate practices. She documented the language resources that were created in the process and how the interest of children, teachers and families was activated when the home languages became a part of the activities and observed how that affected children's identity. Her findings show that teachers and parents experienced positive effects of the project; children's self-efficacy was stronger when their language became a part of the school's activity and there was a general interest in all children's awareness and interest in other languages. She explains how multiple practices with the home languages, such as singing, writing, comparing languages and parent's visiting the preschool to read for the children generated engagement and excitement among the children. There were also examples of parents of Icelandic children that started to show interest in other languages, for instance a father who did a list of vocabulary in Polish and Icelandic together with his son who brought the list back to the preschool. Stephensen (2018) noticed increased engagement among the multilingual children who had been passive or not willing to acknowledge their own home languages. An example of that was a girl speaking Filipino at home. When the preschool got a visit from a Filipino-speaking language mediator who led a circle time with all the children and connected Icelandic and Filipino through songs and stories, she became very happily inspired and interested in the language resulting in more participation in oral and writing activities. Stephensen (2018) highlights that building on the home languages of the multilingual children had a very positive influence on their identity, indicating the importance of welcoming diverse languages in children's learning.

In their study, Ólafsdóttir and colleagues (2022) investigated the attitudes of Icelandic preschool staff towards language stimulation for children speaking Icelandic as a second language. Around 30% of the participants did not have a university degree in education. Participants with less formal education spent more time with multilingual children than those with a university degree in ECE. All participants believed that verbal communication, singing, and reading were important, as well as working explicitly with vocabulary. Participants were asked if they thought it was important that preschool staff had skills to provide language stimulation to children in their home languages. The participants did not agree on a single answer and the researchers stress that there is no consensus among university-educated preschool teachers or other staff on how or whether to strengthen children's home languages in Icelandic preschool work. Findings indicate that the preschool staff was insecure about how to work with multilingual children and that the staff needed better information on what practices were important for language stimulation in Icelandic, better working conditions, and smaller groups of children. The researchers highlight that "preschool staff need to be aware that first language stimulation should not, according to research, be the main focus of Ísl2 children's early years' education in Icelandic preschools" (Ólafsdóttir et al., 2022, p.

18). According to the National Curriculum Guide for Preschools (The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2011) and other Icelandic key policy documents concerning the education of multilingual children, as discussed in the introduction, supporting multilingualism is not considered to be the *main focus* of education for multilingual children. As such, this claim of the researchers encourages monolingual practices and contradicts theory and findings from research arguing for multilingual practices. Furthermore, it polarises the discourse on what are the best practices for enhancing the language development of multilingual preschool children and increases the risk of devaluing their home languages in general. Studies focusing mainly on the language of school leave out important understanding of the relationship between languages, identity affirmation, and sense of belonging that are all important factors in children's wellbeing and learning (Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Kultti (2012) studied learning conditions in eight Swedish preschools that were supportive for language learning, communicative development, and active participation for multilingual children within child-initiated play and teacher-led practices. Her findings show that children's experiences of play, mealtime, singing, and story time created conditions for their communication and language learning. Swedish was the dominant language and other languages than Swedish were hardly visible in the preschools, except in play activities when the children sometimes chose to speak their home language. The children had many opportunities to participate and learn from communication within activities without being expected to speak Swedish and differences in children's linguistic skills did not create barriers to participation. Multiple resources were offered during activities to scaffold learning, such as repetition of actions, use of artefacts and involvement in music. How these resources where used depended on the teachers' ability to scaffold meaning. The study provides an understanding of the learning of young multilingual preschool children, the preschool as institutional practice and the way teachers can use scaffolding as a didactic tool to activate learning in multilingual contexts (Kultti, 2012). Kultti (2014) analysed further how routine activities like mealtimes in Swedish preschools can support young multilingual children's communication, participation, and language development when language learning is developed as a communicative and participatory experience. Crucial for the linguistic participation of multilingual children is that topics during conversation are common and shared. Kultti (2014) identified three key features: first the importance of high levels of repetition in the structure and organisation of the mealtimes that encouraged children's communication because of their familiarity with the situation, secondly that mealtimes provided multiple opportunities for participation revolving around food and utensils used while discussing them, and thirdly the possibility of extending conversation by discussing non-present topics through ideas initiated by the teachers or the children. Kultti (2014) highlights that mealtime activities provided a learning context where children could take part at their own pace according

to their language competence, and in order to create these conditions the teacher's participation is fundamental.

In Norwegian multiple-case research, Alstad (2013) studied three preschool teachers' second language teaching practices, knowledge, perception, and understanding. The goal was to understand how the preschool serves as an environment for learning a second language, highlighting teachers' pedagogy with language learning and multilingual practices. Data was generated with interviews and video observations where the focus was on teacher-child interactions. Findings show that all the three participating teachers were engaged and very interested in developing appropriate language practices for multilingual children. They also actively used every opportunity to work with second language as a part of the open daily schedule in a way that was appropriate to the needs of every child. One of the teachers in the study, Heidi, modelled a big variety of language use for the children, both cognitively demanding and not. Even though Heidi did not speak the children's first languages, she sought to include all their languages in a dynamic way and used translanguaging practices to sustain their multilingual identities (Alstad, 2013).

Kirwan (2014) explored and analysed linguistic data she generated in classrooms in the Scoil Bhríde Girl's School in Dublin among four groups of learners from age 4 to age 11 learning English as a second language. The aim of the school is to value and build on every child's language in their education. Kirwan (2014) made special reference to the learning opportunities that arose within the linguistically diverse classroom and how these could be built on in every child's education while developing language awareness for all children regardless of language background. Her findings show that what is most important for the children to succeed is the teacher's competence and professionalism in valuing and building on linguistic diversity. Samples from the study of children's linguistic contributions show that when teachers succeed in cultivating a climate of language awareness it is not beneficial only for deeper understanding of the language. It also adds to more complex thinking and learning that supports literacy development and broadens children's views in relation to different languages and cultures.

Skaremyr (2021) explored how children learning Swedish as a new language entered the new language environment in a Swedish preschool and how they participated and interacted by combining different communicative tools. Her findings show that the children were active communicative participants; they shadowed others, code-switched when using language, invented language and used their body language. Skaremyr (2021) highlights that newly arrived children's communication should not be regarded as inadequate. Their communicative acts are allowing them to participate in the preschool practices and should as such be regarded as a factor in their second language acquisition. By focusing on their communication, both teachers and researchers can better understand, learn about, and use children's interplay, as well as

the driving force of friendship with peers, when facilitating the development of newly arrived children (Skaremyr, 2021). The findings are congruent with Robert's (2014) and Chumak-Horbatch's (2012) who contest the acceptance of the silent period as an important phase in multilingual children's second language learning.

Contemporary research in educational settings around the world from preschool to university where linguistic and cultural diversity is growing among students show that multilingual practices are fundamental for equitable and inclusive education (Mary & Young, 2021). Critical pedagogy, where teachers contest prevailing monolingual ideologies and become actors of change, even in very challenging and complex situation, shows how they can turn exclusionary structures into inclusive and powerful collaborations (Cummins, 2021b). In a longitudinal study in a French preschool, Mary and Young (2021) analysed how Sylvie, a preschool teacher who worked with three- and four-year-old emergent bilingual children, broke with the monolingual norm of the preschool with inclusive language practices in her classroom. Sylvie had to systematically go against her colleagues' assumption of the French-only policy which caused conflict in their collaboration. She intentionally went against the flow, welcomed all the children's languages in the classroom and built on them as valuable resources in their learning and wellbeing. That turned her attention towards the children's potential instead of their deficiencies and provided her with more empathy and understanding of their linguistic and cultural background while she collaborated purposefully with their parents. She did not have the ability to speak the children's languages but strived to learn a few words in all of them and used them to scaffold the children's meaning-making and understanding with translanguaging practices. Sylvie reflected critically on her practices grounded in her strong belief of social justice and equitable education for all children. One of the aims of the study was to present real examples of culturally and linguistically inclusive language practices that could be drawn on in teacher education (Mary & Young, 2021).

Inclusive language practices are essential for developing equity in education in the contemporary multilingual world. Newer studies on the brain and neurological system of bilinguals have taken bilingual and multilingual theory further, showing multiple benefits of aiming for multilingualism instead of monolingualism. In the final section of this chapter, I will look at theory and research on the dynamic view of language development and language practices.

2.2.5 Shift to a dynamic view of language development and language practices

Through the years, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic views on language and bilingualism have influenced and transformed traditional ideas of language learning (García & Wei, 2014). The traditional views of language consider bilinguals as double monolinguals, missing the interrelations between the languages of each individual and

the common underlying proficiency of language learning. The traditional views in education for bilingual children also highlight the importance of separating the home language from the language of learning and even stigmatising the use of "the wrong" language as something bad and corruptive while children struggle to gain proficiency in the language of school (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012). García and Wei (2014) have contested these ideas and argue that even when one language is used the other language/s is active and can be easily accessed. This understanding has led to a shift in ideas on bilingualism not only as dual but also as dynamic. When looking at bilingualism or multilingualism as dynamic, a new ground for communication, meaning-making, and identity-shaping evolves (Bailey, 2007a; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Cummins, 2004, 2008, 2021a; García & Wei, 2014). The Bakhtinian concept of *heteroglossia* can be described as an umbrella concept for all different uses of fluid or dynamic language practices of multilingual children (García & Wei, 2014, p. 36). Bailey (2007a) has discussed the relationship of heteroglossia and identity and argues that "the socially based construct of heteroglossia has several advantages over the narrower and formally defined construct of code-switching as a means to understanding social identity negotiations" (p. 266).Thus, heteroglossia can release social meaning-making in bilingual and monolingual speech and account for diverse meanings while connecting hierarchies related to historical power to the discussion taking place.

García & Wei (2014) claim that to provide social justice in education of multilingual children and deconstruct the idea of power in the hands of those few speaking the "correct" language, a new approach to language learning is needed where language is more closely connected to cognitive functions and the shaping of identity through the process of languaging:

> Language is not a simple system of structures that is independent of human actions with others, of our being with others. The term *languaging* is needed to refer to the simultaneous process of continuous becoming of ourselves and of our language practices, as we interact and make meaning in the world (p. 8, italics from original text).

Taking the theory of languaging further in relation to education for multilingual children, García and Wei (2014) propose the concept of *translanguaging*. It was coined by a researcher in Wales, Cen Williams, and is referred to as a "pedagogical practice where students are asked to alternate languages for the purposes of receptive or productive use" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 20). For García and Wei (2014) the idea of translanguaging does not simply apply to the concept of the two languages, different language practices, or a reality where languages are mixed in a hybrid way. It rather "refers to *new* language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories" (p. 21). They use the metaphor of a Banyan tree to explain how dynamic multilingualism emerges where roots and branches grow in all directions until they become solid. They argue that in the same way dynamic

multilingualism becomes both the foundation and the goal of communication. Cummins (2021b) has criticised this metaphor, building on studies showing that even though languages are rooted in a "dynamic network of connections" they can still be distinguished from each other (p. 234). Even though languages are sustained "by an underlying network of interconnections" showing that children's linguistic repertoire is activated almost continuously, their existence as individual and collective entities should not be denied (Cummins, 2021a, p. 234). Although translanguaging strategies have been shown to be effective in language learning of multilingual children, they do not involve the extent of scaffolding practices and work with academic language essential for learning the school language (Cummins, 2021b). Nevertheless, this new idea of language learning in today's ever growing multilingual world adds a very important dimension to the education of multilingual children. The multilingual turn encourages us to rethink language and language education for the 21st century (Hélot, 2021; May, 2014). Inclusive multilingual practices do not only embrace the issue of which languages are being used, but more importantly, which voices are engaged in communication and the shaping of identity, thus relating to social justice and critical pedagogy. In the next chapter I will turn to issues related to identity and collaboration with families of multilingual children.

2.3 Belonging and becoming

Starting preschool is for most young children the first big transitional step away from home where their emotional, social, linguistic, and cognitive development has been guided by their parents and other family members from birth. All these factors, along with culture, religion, world views, attitudes, and beliefs, are also mediated through family practices and play a big role in shaping children's identity and motivation for participation and learning. It can be argued that no other period in the life of humans is as significant as the first years. During infancy and the first years of preschool, children's brains and their ability to form relationships with others develop, entailing a great responsibility for caretakers within families and preschools for nurturing and guiding positive learning and becoming. Furthermore, the ability to develop dependable and secure attachment to others in early childhood seems to provide protection against mental challenges causing mood and anxiety disorders later in life (Raghavan & Alexandrova, 2014). Secure attachment and solid relationships in early childhood also undergird children's ability to learn and develop positive identities. Children's identity changes over time and through the years their "cultural resources expand as they encounter different ways of being, doing, thinking, and acting" (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011, p. 22). For multilingual children this transition often involves separation from the language/s that have shaped their understanding of the world around them. Chumak-Horbatch (2012) claims that this transition process can lead to a language shock for children resulting in isolation and loneliness that can be prolonged

unless the child is met with appropriate linguistic practices, inclusive pedagogy, care, and collaboration with parents.

From the very beginning of preschool all children need to experience that they and their parents are welcomed and worthy of belonging and participation, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background. The way children and families are welcomed into the preschool affects children's identity, and already at a very young age they start to understand the system of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging. This does not only connect to their personal identity or sense of self but also their experiences of being accepted and the way they show respect for others (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008). Children's sense of belonging shapes their identity but is also related "to the basic human need to experience a sense of belonging to other people, places and things" (Pálmadóttir, 2022, p. 13). Einarsdóttir and Ólafsdóttir (2020) studied multilingual children's and teachers' understanding of participation and wellbeing from the perspective of belonging. Their findings show that the discourse and knowledge on how to best support the belonging of multilingual children within the preschool need to be advanced (Einarsdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2020). Multilingual children usually played with children from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds, had fewer linguistic resources to get back into the play when they were marginalised and did not seek assistance from their teachers during daily activities. For them, their sense of belonging was mainly associated with play and having friends. The teachers' ideas of supporting the belonging of culturally and linguistically diverse group of children included assisting them with learning Icelandic and adopting to the preschools culture (Einarsdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2020). These findings and the views of the teachers do not coincide with theory and research arguing for the importance of building on children's linguistic and cultural background from the early start of preschool and onward as discussed in the last section of this chapter (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Nieto, 2010; Roberts, 2014).

Findings from Icelandic and international research show that children and families experience marginalisation and exclusion already in preschool, negatively affecting their sense of belonging, identity, and participation (Brooker, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Leifsdóttir, 2014; Nieto, 2010; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Þórðardóttir, 2012). When preschools intentionally create partnership with parents across language and cultures it benefits their children's learning and wellbeing and parents' sense of belonging, motivating their participation with teachers (Christiansen, 2010; Epstein et al., 2002; Hellman, 2018; Pálmadóttir, 2022; Ragnarsdóttir et al., 2016; Thomauske, 2011; Voorhis et al., 2013). In the following subchapters I will look at theory and research on children's identity and partnership with families in relation to language and literacy development.

2.3.1 Identity and language

The development of children's identity is closely related to their participation, inclusion, and exclusion in family, school, and the wider society from birth. Identity is shaped by individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and feelings of oneself and is learned and mediated in the interpersonal space between the individual and the other, where interactions and expectations play a significant role. Whether the child gets the message that she is competent, worthy of being loved and cared for or that she is not good enough or deficient in some way shapes her negative or positive understanding of self (Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). Brooker and Woodhead (2008) refer to the development of a personal identity as a "dynamic process embedded in the child's multiple activities and relationships in everyday settings at home, in the community and at preschool" (p. 6). They highlight that developing a positive identity is a core goal, involving that children gain the resilience, strengths, and knowledge to meet the different circumstances they must deal with in their daily lives. Children's self-efficacy beliefs play a significant role in shaping their identity, and already at a young age these are influenced by their prior experience of mastering tasks (Bandura, 1997). A child learning a new skill, a new language for instance, needs to feel some mastery of the task to integrate the feeling of capability and the resilience to try again and again without giving up. Teachers and parents play an important part in this development of children's self-efficacy beliefs and their will to learn new skills. When adults direct their attention and encouragement to children while using language and gestures to model their activity, they are adding to children's empowering physical and emotional feeling, directly influencing their self-efficacy belief (Bandura, 1997; Jónsdóttir, 2007). Children who develop a positive identity and the feeling that they are capable and worthy of belonging are more likely to succeed both academically and socially (Bandura, 1997; Brooker & Woodhead, 2008; Jónsdóttir, 2007; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003).

The idea of identity as fixed or stable has been challenged by scholars arguing that through participation in diverse cultural and social contexts individuals develop new or modified identities based on their experience (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008). This applies directly to multilingual children belonging to linguistically and culturally diverse families. When they start preschool their linguistic and cultural context takes on a new dimension that starts to modify their identity. One of the challenges for teachers in a linguistically and culturally diverse setting is to avoid fitting every multilingual child into a fixed identity, confronting them and their families with a "forced choice, that identity is a matter of 'either/or', instead of a more inclusive 'and/and' that respects their multiple identities" (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008, p. 26). Findings from research shows that children's ethnic identity, language, culture, and experience within their families affects children's learning and development and should be seen as a vital part of that process (Brooker, 2002a; Brooker & Woodhead, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003).

As already discussed in the chapter on critical pedagogy and in the chapter on multilingual practices, building on existing cultural practices with words, text, and communication influences children's acquisition of language and literacy, and simultaneously contributes positively to their developing identity and sense of belonging (Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Cummins, 2021a; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). Learning and developing a language surely means possessing knowledge of grammar but language is much more: "It is through the language or languages that we speak that we form a sense of identity, community and belonging. The way the languages we speak are perceived also influences the way we feel about ourselves" (Siraj-Blatchford, 2003, p. 33). Creating a community within the preschool where children experience that their languages and cultures are valued, welcomed, and built on in their learning influences their identity and sense of belonging. Furthermore, the way interactions are guided and enhanced influences children's self-efficacy beliefs when it comes to learning the language of school and maintaining their home language.

One way of affirming the identities of multilingual children is to build progressively on their experience and knowledge in relation to home languages and literacy practices. Findings from research show that schools need to value and build on home literacy practices, children's interests, experiences, and popular culture to reshape and challenge the operation of power and ensure literacy for all (Brooker, 2002b; Cummins, 2004; Levy, 2011; Neaum, 2012; Neuman, 2007; Purcell-Gates et. al., 2011; Þórðardóttir, 2012). Esteban and Moll (2014) have used the term *funds of identity* to explain how pedagogical work with children's background and experience enables them to make meaning of new learning:

> We use the term funds of identity to refer to the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding. Funds of knowledge—bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential for the well-being of an entire household—become funds of identity when people actively use them to define themselves (p. 31).

Funds of identity can help us to look at and absorb new knowledge based on prior knowledge and experience, and when activated in educational processes they provide a "dynamic composite of who we are and who we are becoming, based on what we have learned (and we are learning) from both our academic and everyday experiences" (Esteban and Moll, 2014, p. 44, brackets from original text). The challenge for teachers is to connect these educational resources with pedagogical practices that enhance children's knowledge and understanding, but too often these resources or funds of identities remain untapped. When resources are untapped schools become separate worlds disconnected from the world and lived experience of children that negatively affects their becoming as human beings. Esteban and Moll (2014) build on Vygotsky's definition of identity arguing that the lived experience of the child is a part of what

forms her identity and conception of self. In that respect the role of teachers should be that of developing social contexts or learning zones where children's identity development is affirmed (Esteban & Moll, 2014).

Home languages of children are a part of their funds of identities, like already discussed, and by welcoming children's languages, teachers actively engage multilingual children (Cummins et.al., 2005; Purcell-Gates et. al., 2011). In their research, Cummins and Early (2011) explored how teachers created interactive learning spaces aimed at affirming children's identity and sense of belonging while becoming proud of their multilingual talents. During the research process they developed the concept of *identity text* used to describe children's products and creative work or performance as structured by the teacher in relation to educational language and literacy tasks. When the text was strongly related to the child's interest and experience and gave way to multimodal expression that very often contained both or all languages of the child, it became effective in creating collaborative power and proved valuable as a powerful pedagogic tool (Cummins & Early, 2011). Identity text used as a tool where teachers, parents and children create a collaborative multimodal text is likely to affirm the child's identity, give her a voice and respect the funds of knowledge belonging to the community and the family, including language and cultural practices (Cummins et.al., 2015; Cummins & Early, 2011). The framework for literacy engagement described in Figure 2 and the components discussed there to enhance understanding of deeper vocabulary is also helpful for analysing work with identity texts. Case studies of the development of identity texts show how:

> ...the pedagogical innovations linked to identity text work undertaken by the teachers produced highly engaged learning without vast amounts of one-size-fits-all pre-programmed resources being poured into the school or drip-fed to the learner. Rather, the teachers respectfully and imaginatively honed, harnessed and redeployed the readily available rich resources within students and their communities, resources that are all too frequently squandered (Cummins et al., 2011, p. 154).

Hence identity texts can be used to build a richer understanding of the linguistic and cultural reality of the multilingual child, showing her competencies and learning processes as an emergent bilingual while affirming her multiple identities and strengthening the relationship between her and the teacher. These are all important factors when it comes to developing identity and self-efficacy beliefs, thus enhancing the agency of multilingual children when they engage in learning through inspiring and welcoming learning spaces (Banks, 2010; Brooker, 2002b; Cummins, 2004; Levy; 2011; Rogoff, 2003; Schwartz, 2018).

Findings from Icelandic and international research show the effects of different pedagogical practices on children's identity, sense of belonging, participation, and

agency. In her study, Þórðardóttir (2012) examined the cultural literacy of four- and five-year-old children at two preschools in Iceland with a special focus on gender and ethnicity. Her findings show that different access at home to children's literature and popular culture and different opportunities for children to express themselves through language in the preschool influenced their cultural literacy and participation. Multilingual children were marginalised in sessions while the teacher and children with Icelandic background discussed Icelandic folktales and Icelandic cultural events since the teachers did not respond to children's diverse cultural literacy. These findings shed a light on the complicated interplay between cultural knowledge and cultural literacy and give indications for teachers on how to respond to these discussions and ensure engagement and active participation of all children (Þórðardóttir, 2012).

Making space for home languages has positive impacts on children, not only linguistically but also socially and emotionally, affecting their identity and well-being. Krüger and Thamin (2021) have noted that when teachers actively brought children's languages into the classroom, they observed different linguistic, emotional, and behavioural benefits for the children and their families. When the classroom transformed into a multilingual space the relationship with the children's families became more relaxed, and children who had not wanted to participate or speak either French or their home language were not silent anymore. This is similar to the findings of Stephensen (2018). The teachers in Krüger and Thamin's (2021) study explained that to begin with, children must feel comfortable and well, and then they start to learn. In her research, Emilsson Peskova (2021) studied elementary school children that were selected as representative of successful language learners, both within the formal education in school, and their heritage language learning classes. Her findings show that the interplay between children's languages, their success, and their school experiences, as well their plurilingualism, is present in their mind all the time, even when they participate in monolingual situations. These findings add to the understanding of the role of parents and teachers in maintaining and developing the children's plurilingual repertoires. "Furthermore, by recognizing students' plurilingualism and utilising the whole linguistic repertoire, student's self-image, a sense of belonging, and participation are strengthened" (Emilsson Peskova, 2021, p. 289).

Streelasky (2011) studied the complexity of everyday communicative practices of two six-year-old aboriginal children in Canada within the school, their family and close community. The aim of the study was to acquire insight into their language and literacy lives in order to challenge and replace the strong deficit belief held by the society and schools about aboriginal children and their families. Her goal was to use the findings to shape the future track of literacy curriculum for aboriginal children in Canada. Her findings revealed that the homes of the children were lively and dynamic language spaces with good access to multimodal texts, digital technology, and communicative support. Still, there were visible discontinuities between home and school. The children

got very few opportunities to build on their prior knowledge and experience from home or link to their contemporary lives and participation in or out- of-school activities in their formal education. Streelasky (2011) argues that when teachers overlook the dynamic and creative out-of-school literacies, experiences, and meaning-making of their students and focus only on the educational and academic aspects of literacy in the school language, they are only treasuring a narrow view of what is regarded as effective language and literacy education for young children, affecting their identity and agency in communication.

Brooker (2002a) carried out an in-depth case study of early childhood literacy of two five-year-old boys in a school in the UK, one of an English-speaking household and the other from a Bangladeshi-speaking family. Her findings show that the classroom was rich with literacy practices for all children every day of the week. Practices were both formal and informal and were carried out either with or without the assistance from the teacher. Still the children speaking English as a second language did not benefit from the language environment and instruction in the same way as the English-speaking children. These findings also show that lack of appropriate guidelines for the parents on how to assist their children during home reading and an absence of culturally relevant strategies to bridge home and school practices resulted in less progress for the boy learning English as a second language. His home experience, even though it was vibrant and rich with language and literacy experiences, did not help him in the classroom in the same way as in the case of the English-speaking boy. The teacher did not reach out to the parents of the boy speaking English as a second language in a way that was needed, and his deficits became institutionalised, affecting his identity, self-efficacy belief, and motivation for further learning.

Partnership with parents around children's learning and development in preschool where their funds of identities and funds of knowledge are affirmed and connected to language and literacy practices directly affects multilingual children's wellbeing, language learning and development (Brooker, 2002a, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Krüger & Thamin, 2021; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). In the following chapter I will turn to theory and research addressing the importance of reaching out and developing partnerships with parents of multilingual children.

2.3.2 Collaboration with families around language and literacy of multilingual children

The importance of collaboration and partnership between teachers and parents in relation to language and literacy has gained increased attention in research and practice in past years. Drawing on their review of findings from around one hundred studies on the effect of parent-school partnership in enhancing children's literacy and math learning, Voorhis and colleagues (2013) highlighted that overall parents' involvement in providing rich conversation and reading practices at home were

beneficial to their children's learning and literacy, which is in line with earlier research (Epstein et al., 2002; Rogoff, 2003; Whithead, 2010). Parents' background, knowledge, resources, and income level in the studies was diverse, but parents from all groups provided good language and literacy practices with their children (Voorhis et al., 2013). Nevertheless, almost all parents wanted better information, ideas, and guided practices to develop empowering interactions with their children, beneficial for their language and literacy learning. Some of the studies were intervention studies where educators and researchers worked with parents on facilitating their knowledge and skills regarding communication and literacy. It became clear that parents from all backgrounds could improve their skills and knowledge regarding language and literacy. Voorhis and colleagues suggest that school outreach to engage parents in partnership around language and literacy should involve good information, guidance, and reciprocal discussions with parents with a special focus on parents of children facing difficulties in their learning.

In the longitudinal research project *Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development*, Snow and colleagues studied the connections between young children's early language development and later literacy development in relation to practices in preschools and in the homes of low-income families (Snow et al., 2001). Findings from data generated in home visits, interviews with mothers, and assessment of language development revealed three aspects of home language and literacy environment that seem to benefit children's language and early literacy development. These are extended discourse in conversation with family members, rare word density in conversation and home support for literacy, and book reading connected to dialogue and discussions (Tabors et al., 2001b). The pattern of activities and interactions that support children's language and literacy development is very broad and it is complicated to identify the direct links between language practices at home and child's language and literacy development. Therefore, educators need to reach out and engage in conversation with all parents about the issue of language and literacy development emphasising that all kinds of everyday activities and conversation in the family that include new vocabulary play an important part in children's language and literacy development (Tabors et al., 2001a).

Teachers and principals have the main responsibility of reaching out to families, but parents are responsible for the upbringing and education of their children, and when they collaborate with teachers they are participating in their children's education. Parents who are interested in their children's learning, are willing to participate in events and decision making within the school and seek contact with teachers make a large contribution to their children's wellbeing, learning, and success (Epstein et al., 2002; Christiansen, 2010; Voorhis et al., 2013). But it is not enough for parents to be interested in their children's learning if teachers do not reach out to include them in a meaningful partnership. The way teachers look at the children and their families are mirrored in their outreach:

> The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as *students*, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as *children*, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 7, italics from original text).

When reaching out to parents in an inclusive and powerful way, teachers communicate their shared interest and responsibility for children's learning and development now and for the future. When parents and teachers develop a relationship based on trust, understanding, and respect, they contribute to the caring community every child needs to learn and thrive. In a caring community, teachers and principals seek to create what has been referred to as family-like schools (Epstein et al., 2002). A family-like school affirms and respects children's individuality and develops communication and practices that make every child feel special and included. Such schools create a welcoming atmosphere and reach out to all families rather than only those who are easily reachable. It is important for teachers and principals to understand that building partnerships with parents is a continuous process and not a single, quick fix. This process is not always successful or inclusive for all families, but in a caring school community participants keep on improving the nature and effects of their collaboration. Findings from research show that just about all parents care for their children's learning and success and are eager to collaborate with teachers and almost all teachers want to work with parents even though they don't always know the best way to do it (Epstein et al., 2002).

Reaching out to a culturally and linguistically diverse group of parents can be a challenge for teachers who do not share with them a common language. This creates a need for teachers to develop innovative and multiple ways through different means of communication, such as interpreters, gate keepers, technical translation devices and teachers sharing the same language. Findings from a Nordic research (Hellman et al., 2018) of preschools in Norway, Iceland, Sweden, and Finland show that when teachers and principals intentionally reach out to parents across languages and cultures with a welcoming atmosphere, caring communication, and genuine interest in children and families, they are contributing to the development of a caring community. The preschools participating in the study created caring, safe, cooperative, and trusting educational contexts where most parents experienced themselves as active participants. In all the countries researchers found examples of collaboration with parents indicating that the preschools were serving as a bridge from home to the society, and this process played a key role in parents' first steps into the new society (Hellman et al., 2018).

In the process of reaching out to parents of multilingual children, teachers need to understand the different reasons and experiences of parents and how these can hinder or foster collaboration or parents' sense of belonging to the preschool's community. Egilsson and colleagues (2021) explored linguistically and culturally diverse parents' feelings of belonging in preschools in Iceland through their experience of communicating and participating with teachers and other parents and how this effected supportive relationships and parent communities. Findings indicate that parents had different attitudes to their sense of belonging and while some of them described benefits from belonging to the preschool's community, others wanted to keep their distance. Parents' experience of belonging was described as a process where some parents experienced full belonging while others described emergent forms of belonging. One mother who was new to the community explained that it took her time to "break through the nice and *respectful* surface to make more substantial contacts with other families and, reflecting on educational and cultural differences" (Egilsson et al., 2021, p. 41, italics from original text). The findings have implications for policy makers and teachers on factors that can facilitate belonging. Simultaneously, the findings serve as a reminder for respecting those parents that want to keep their distance and of the understanding that this perspective does not necessarily reflect parents' poor or limited interest in their children's education.

Parents' experiences, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background, are very different and can influence their initiative in reaching out to their children's teachers. Some parents have encountered negative experiences of schooling, some have a cultural background that does not support partnership of parents and schools and others have experienced marginalisation and racism because of their linguistic and cultural background. Time has also been recognised as a factor in hindering parents' collaboration with teachers (Egilsson et al., 2022; Epstein, 2002; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). Some of these factors can be mirrored in parents' insecurity and hesitation for collaborating with teachers because of the parents' feeling that how they themselves do things is not the right way (Brooker, 2002b; Nieto, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). Reaching out to parents that want to keep their distance or are not easily reachable involves building a foundation of understanding, empathy, collaboration, and respect where parents feel that the "setting offers them something, such as friendship, advice, support or even just a chance to have coffee and meet other parents and carers" (Siraj-Blatchford, 2003, p. 93). Part of this collaboration involves looking at parents as valuable resources for children's education and wellbeing, even though they do not share the same understanding of education or upbringing as teachers. Whitehead (2010) claims that in order to engage parents into a partnership that involves sharing of ideas and mutual support, teachers must be culturally sensitive and take a careful look at their discourse and discussions with parents on and about appropriate language and literacy practices:

> Professionals could do more to explain the principles on which they base their practices in sensible human terms. Do we still talk mysteriously, of 'reading for meaning', using 'real books' and 'developmental writing' and leave it at that? Outside care and education settings, these terms are either ludicrously obvious or meaningless. [...] As well as saying exactly what we mean, rather than staying safely in the cocoon of professional jargon, we must help parents and the community to say what they mean (p. 216, quotation marks from original text).

This involves sharing the message with parents and children that diversity of language practices and funds of knowledge add value to children's language and literacy learning and development. Even though it is important to read books, teachers need to realise that not all cultures value the practice of reading (Brooker, 2002a; Heath, 1982; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Rogoff, 2003). Already at preschool age children are familiar with and interested in popular culture, e.g. characters and objects from TV, computer games, films, and books (Levy, 2011; Neaum, 2012; Þórðardóttir, 2012). Children usually learn more about language and print within their families than is recognised by traditional education. By drawing on children's interest beyond preschool, teachers can offer them valuable experiences while enhancing their interest and motivation for participation directly affecting their language learning and development (Brooker, 2002a; Levy, 2011; Neuman, 2007; Purcell-Gates, 2011; Streelasky, 2011; Whithead, 2010).

Researchers have addressed how discontinuities between home and school in relation to language and literacy development for young bilingual children can add to insufficient learning conditions for them (Brooker, 2002a, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004; Esteban & Moll, 2014; Heath, 1982; Neuman, 2007; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Tabors, 2006; Whithead, 2010). In her large ethnographic case study, Brooker (2002b) studied the practices of teachers and families within the homes and school of a group of children starting a reception class in the UK. The children were all from poor working-class families and half of them were from the Bangladeshi community within that group. Brooker focused particularly on how teachers developed partnership with parents and how children were engaged with learning and literacy. Her findings exposed that even though the school had an open-door policy stating that teachers wanted to work with all parents, many of the teachers encountered difficulties reaching out to parents. This was particularly evident in the linguistically and culturally diverse group of parents. These findings showed that if parents were not familiar with the school culture and practices, they became insecure and lacked the confidence to care for their children in partnership with the school. This negatively affected their children's learning, literacy, wellbeing, and school attendance (Brooker, 2002b).

Thomauske (2021) studied how parents speaking other languages than German are involved in daily practices in Kita, German kindergartens, and how their linguistic

resources are built on. She questions whether implementing educational partnership, which was their goal, has resulted in less hierarchy between teachers and parents, where teachers better acknowledge the expertise of parents and are more willing to listen to them. Findings point to different results as higher levels of knowledge of education and care among the teachers seems to lead to partnership where teachers give advice to parents instead of "entering into a real dialogue with them and listening to their views, wishes or expectations concerning (language) education" (Thomauske, 2021, p. 65, brackets from original text).

Teachers' practices with linguistic resources of parents and children differed and while some of the kindergartens claimed that they were facing different problems that prevented them in adopting multilingual resources into their practices, others involved parents and children in diverse multilingual practices. These activities reinforced children's and parents' identities and sent the message to them that they could be proud of their linguistic background. In some instances, parents started to open up to the kindergarten when they experienced that their language and family background were seen as resources and not a hindrance for their children's language learning and simultaneously, they felt listened to. Thomauske (2021) concludes by arguing that if we are aiming for inclusive educational partnership with parents, teachers need to follow an inclusive approach where they step back from their privileged position of being the professionals with the knowledge and create space where parents participation is enhanced and their language and knowledge are valued and built on.

In their research, Krüger and Thamin (2021) studied the importance of the home-school relationship in a preschool in France with the aim of showing that the well-being of children in preschool is closely related to their sense of being included along with their languages, cultures, and families. Their findings show that involving parents is a process that takes on different forms throughout the preschool years. This multifaceted process needs to include more than just informing parents about the school or inviting them to participate. Krüger and Thamin (2021) identify three basic forms of participation. The first includes formal contact established by the principal and the teachers from the child's start of preschool and ongoing personal meetings throughout the time the child stays in the preschool. The second form involves informal daily contact with parents, such as a parents' café or a space where parents can meet to discuss and exchange ideas related to their children's education and upbringing. The third form involves applying classroom language awareness practices where the home languages of the children are welcomed. The activities that were implemented had collaborative, symbolic, physical, and transversal dimensions and created safe spaces where parents were empowered and included, which proved essential for their children's learning (Krüger & Thamin, 2021).

In their study of family language policies of multilingual children and Icelandic phonological awareness, Jónsdóttir and colleagues (2018) describe how the parents

explained that the preschool teachers were their main source of advice on language development. These findings show the importance of establishing close partnership between parents and teachers of multilingual children, along with findings that emphasise the crucial role of preschools and teachers in welcoming immigrant families new to the language and culture of the society (Hellmann et al., 2018) as well as accommodating parents' wishes for guidance regarding language and literacy of their children (Voorhis et al., 2013; Whithead, 2010). Furthermore, the teachers need to understand the importance of reaching out to all parents, regardless of their background. This puts a great responsibility on teachers to learn about the diverse trajectories of language learning in groups of multilingual children, work with their own attitudes and beliefs, and develop their practices to provide inclusive and socially just learning spaces where language learning and identity of multilingual children are enhanced and affirmed.

In this chapter, I have presented the framework guiding my research, building on perspectives from theory development and empirical research. I connect theories from transdisciplinary research fields arguing for the need of looking at education for multilingual children from a comprehensive viewpoint. I have explained how the underlying pedagogy, values and beliefs play a significant role in children's experience and sense of belonging, affecting their identity and level of participation during the preschool years. All these factors are influential in their language development. I have also stressed the need to transform all major dimensions of education simultaneously instead of focusing solely on one dimension like teaching the school language. My overarching research question looks at how learning spaces for multilingual preschool children are created. With the subordinate questions I look for answers to how teachers scaffold and guide the linguistic participation of multilingual children within organised and child directed activities, how the identities and voices of multilingual children are affirmed, and how the teachers enhance partnership with parents focusing on language, literacy, and identity. In the following chapter I present my methodology for conducting the research.

3 Materials and methods

The aim of this research is to establish a deeper understanding of how preschools can serve as inclusive and socially just learning spaces for multilingual children's language and emergent literacy development where voices and identities are affirmed and partnership with parents is enhanced. The education of multilingual children is a complex and multifaceted process that requires special attention in the growing multilingual school context in Iceland and all over the world. Researchers claim that a transdisciplinary research field is needed to investigate why some linguistic and cultural groups of children are at risk of underachievement and what educational interventions are important to reverse this (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Cummins, 2004, 2021a, 2021b). The theoretical perspective of this study is guided by sociocultural theories on children's learning and development, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and the language development and learning of multilingual children. I employ qualitative methodology to generate data, analyse and write up my findings, and gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of participants' experiences and teachers' practices. Qualitative methodology also provides a space for connecting transdisciplinary theories and relating findings to broader pedagogical positions instead of relying on one single theory (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Data generation took place in one preschool in Reykjavík over a period of one year from December 2016 until December 2017. Data was generated through interviews with teachers and parents, observations and video recordings where teachers' communication and practices with multilingual children were in focus, and by analysing written documents, pictures, and artefacts related to the research questions.

In her discussions on critical pedagogy and qualitative research, Quintero (2007) draws on the ideas of Paulo Freire, arguing that he provides educational research with a language and a discourse useful to shed light on the effects of inequality and oppression. This way, building on critical pedagogy in combination with qualitative research methodology, is "potentially an effective way to address the complexities of our changing world" (Quintero, 2007, p. 111). Qualitative research methodology, based on critical pedagogy and participation, gives space for the voices of teachers, children and families to become voices of possibility and transformation in education (Quintero, 2007). Indeed, Quintero and others have argued that by listening to stories and seeking answers to the question of what really is going on within the setting being investigated, it is possible to influence changes and create new inclusive learning spaces (Brooker, 2002b; Cummins, 2004; Quintero, 2007).

In this chapter I describe the methodology chosen for the study and present how the pathway of the data-generation was developed and conducted. The chapter is divided into five subchapters. The first subchapter explains the research design, and the second describes case and participant selection, as well as the setting where the study took place. The third subchapter provides a thorough overview of the data generation and the nature of the data selected for analysis. The fourth subchapter discusses the analysis process and methodological issues regarding transcriptions, translations, and descriptions from different data, interviews, participant observations, video recordings, documents, and other artefacts. Finally, the fifth and last subchapter highlights quality criteria and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research design

This research is a case study, and it can be argued that a case study equips the researcher with multiple tools to provide a deep and holistic understanding of a complex real-life context that can't be explained through a narrow lens. A researcher with a rich case and multiple theories is therefore more prepared to identify complexities and present multiple understandings instead of telling a single story (Tracy, 2010). Silverman (2013) explains that a case study allows the researcher to generate data on social processes in a real-life context. A critical factor in case studies is that the unit of analysis most often focuses on not only the individuals participating in the study, but simultaneously on the system of actions. The research at hand is designed around a single case where the system of actions in the learning space of multilingual preschool children are in focus and where I generate data on *the communication and practices with multilingual children and parents facilitated by teachers in one multilingual preschool*. A single case study provides the researcher with tools to represent a unique case, one that is not accessible to everyone to dive into (Tellis, 1997) and can be defined as "*an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units*" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342, italics and brackets from original text).

The case study allows the researcher to gain context-dependent knowledge of the social space and experiences under study with continued presence and through multiple responses from participants (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Polkinghorne, 2005). This proximity to the real situation and the continued feedback from those under study can also improve the understanding of the reality taking place. Flyvbjerg (2006) claims that "Great distance to the object of study and lack of feedback easily lead to a stultified learning process, which in research can lead to ritual academic blind alleys, where the effect and usefulness of research becomes unclear and untested. As a research method, the case study can be an effective remedy against this tendency" (p. 223). The advantage of the case study is also that it provides a variety of data sources and multiple tools for researchers where the unit of study is explored through diverse lenses. This can

increase the thickness of data and add to a deeper understanding of the complex social structure under study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Rogoff, 2003).

Hill and Millar (2015) claim that the case study is a highly applicable research method when the research questions posed are "how" and "why" questions, when the researcher has little control over what happens in the setting being studied, and the focus is on contemporary issues. Case study research questions and multiple data generation tools can aid the researcher in accepting the complexity of the case and the different participants' perspectives and experiences, while drawing attention to issues and challenges linked to political, social, historical, and personal contexts in diverse multilingual settings. Data generation for the research at hand involved the use of mixed qualitative research methods for the purpose of providing thick data and multiple angles. Using mixed methods can reduce the researcher's biases and stimulate more complex and in-depth understanding of the case (Tracey, 2010; Turner, 2010). Tracey (2010) refers to this method as *crystallisation* where the researcher generates different data and builds on multiple theoretical frameworks. This is an apt description of my undertaking in this study which I explore further in the last part of this chapter on quality criteria and ethical considerations.

The current study is constructivist, assuming that new knowledge and understanding does not evolve without shared thinking and interaction between people that interpret and try to make sense of their own experiences (Grbich, 2007). It is also a participatory study in the sense that I participated with teachers during my observations and a part of the analysis was carried out in collaboration with them. This is further discussed in the subchapters on methods of analysis. Grieshaber (2007) explains that "having a researcher in a classroom on a regular and long-term basis can result in a high degree of rapport between teacher and researcher and often a reciprocal relationship that has mutual benefits" (p. 158). In virtue of the goals of this study, it was very important to use mixed methods and reflective discussions while generating and analysing data in order to co-construct new understanding in collaboration with the participating teachers. Clarke (2017) stresses that when researchers map or study something it says a lot about themselves since their research focus often builds on their interest, knowledge and experience. I can't disregard my experience and knowledge of preschools in Reykjavík, nor can I deny that I had preconceptions about the setting as I explained in the introduction. However, I have sought to convert my prior knowledge and preconceptions into a strength in the research as I argue that my aim was to select data that is directly relevant to the study, or as Polkinghorne (2005) stresses:

> Because the goal of qualitative research is enriching the understanding of an experience, it needs to select fertile exemplars of the experience for study. Such selections are purposeful and sought out; the selection should not be random or left to chance. The concern is not how much data were gathered or from how many sources but whether the data that were

> collected are sufficiently rich to bring refinement and clarity to understanding an experience (p. 140).

I began the analysis process during the study, keeping a journal as Sanger (1996) recommends, where I reflected on new learning and challenges while generating data. I used thematic analysis for the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2015; Clarke, 2017) and in order to develop the data set from video recordings for analysis I built on a procedure from Heath and colleagues (2010). To ensure confidentiality and privacy of participants they are given pseudonyms. The pseudonym for the preschool under study is *The Circle* and the pseudonym for the division where most of the observations and video recordings took place is *Green division*. In the next chapter I will describe the case and the participants.

3.2 Selection of case and participants

The selection of the case was purposive. Purposive selection gives the researcher an opportunity to choose a case that illustrates some features of interest, is theoretically meaningful, relevant for the research questions, and provides the reality and experience needed for the investigation to take place (Polkinghorne, 2005; Silverman, 2013). I decided to choose a preschool in Reykjavík, and at that time the city was the only municipality in Iceland that had developed a policy on language and literacy of bilingual children and multicultural education. Preschools in Reykjavík with more than fifteen multilingual children receive additional funding to support multicultural education, collaboration with families and language learning. Furthermore, the Educational Board of Reykjavík expects preschools to describe their practices with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children in their annual plan and school curriculum.

When choosing a setting for the study I applied the following criteria; that a significant number of multilingual children were attending the preschool, that the principal was determined in developing culturally and linguistically appropriate practices, and that the annual plan accounted for inclusive practices for multilingual children. My choice of both settings and participants was directly related to my research questions and my goal of highlighting successful practices with multilingual children. Information on languages spoken at preschools in Reykjavík is public and accessible on the internet as well as the annual plans and curriculum of each preschool. Based on this information and my knowledge of preschools in the city, I selected two preschools in different neighbourhoods where half of the children had a linguistic and cultural background other than Icelandic. I contacted the principals, and both were interested in participating in the study. Simultaneously, I collected permission from the municipality and informed the Ethics Committee at the University of Iceland and the Icelandic Data Protection Authority. In December 2016, after consulting with both principals and when all permissions were obtained, I started generating data in The Circle as the principal Petra was ready to start the research process. The principal of the other preschool

wanted to wait, mostly because of high turnover rate among the teachers and staff during that period. This delay ultimately resulted in The Circle being the only participating preschool in the study.

3.2.1 Research setting and participants

The preschool is located Reykjavík in a neighbourhood with mixed housing and demography. The socio-economic background of inhabitants is diverse ranging from low to middle- class status. Most of the children started preschool at the age of two and they all left for compulsory school the year they turned six. The children in the Green division, where most of the observations and video recordings took place, were aged three to five and during the course of the study they transferred to the oldest division. During the time frame of the study, which was twelve months, some changes among the children and teachers occurred, especially as fewer part-time staff worked in the preschool in 2017 than in 2016. The total number of children at the preschool at the time of study was fifty-four and they were divided between three divisions. During the school year 2016–2017, twenty-five of the children were multilingual, speaking a total of twelve languages. During the school year 2017–2018, thirty children were multilingual, speaking altogether thirteen different languages. The largest language group was Polish-speaking. Since this study focuses on the learning spaces provided by the teachers and not the cognitive outcomes for the children or their individual learning trajectories, I will not go into details regarding their individual backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the socio-economic background of the children in The Circle was mixed as some of the children belonged to families with challenging socio-economic backgrounds and others belonged to middle-class backgrounds.

A total of seventeen teachers and staff were employed at The Circle in the school year 2016–2017. Six had a Bachelor of Education degree in preschool education, two were finishing a Master of Education, one was an elementary school teacher, three had finished a diploma to become preschool assistants and five did not have related education. In the school year 2017-2018, sixteen teachers were employed at The Circle; seven were preschool teachers or finishing their degree, three had a preschool assistant diploma and six did not have preschool-related education. Four of the teachers had an immigrant background but they were not all employed during both years.

Since my aim was to highlight successful practices by interviewing teachers and parents, conducting observations, and filming teachers interacting with multilingual children, I asked Petra to assist in selecting the participants. She told me that the three teachers in the Green division, Birta, Dísa, and Halla, had been successful in developing practices for a diverse group of children and were working inclusively with multilingual children. Birta and Halla shared the responsibility of being division leaders. The three of them all agreed to participate and were ready to discuss and reflect on their practices. Petra also advised me to include Sif and Freyja. Sif, the assistant principal, was responsible for guiding work with multilingual children and assisting all

teachers and division leaders in this work on the basis of the financial support from the municipality. Freyja, the special education coordinator, organized working with children with diverse educational needs and guided teachers in their work with equity and inclusion. Both Freyja and Sif agreed to participate and later Sif, Halla, and Dísa agreed that I observe and video record their communication and practices with the children. I refer to the principals, special education teacher, and the three division teachers as *teachers* in this research since all of them had an educational role in the learning spaces of the multilingual preschool childrenis.

In the beginning of the study, I introduced the research to all teachers and staff working in the preschool at a meeting and prepared a letter of introduction in Icelandic, English, and Polish for them and the parents. Halla and Birta, the division leaders in the Green division, helped me to approach parents for participation. It took some time to obtain parents' consent for participation and finally Petra, the principal, assisted me in finding parents outside the Green division for participation. Eventually, eight parents agreed to be interviewed; three couples and two mothers whose spouses did not participate in the interviews. Relevant information about the participants is provided in Table 1 below. I will refer to this table in the chapter on interviews.

Table 1. Participants, language used in interviews, places of interviews, number of interviews, and references in the findings.

Participants	**Language**	**Place**	**Number**	**References**
Petra, principal	Icelandic	Preschool	2	Petra 1,2
Sif, assistant principal, supporting multilingual children	Icelandic	Preschool	2	Sif 1,2
Halla, division leader in Green division	Icelandic	Preschool	2	Halla 1,2
Birta, division leader in Green division	Icelandic	Preschool	1	Birta 1
Dísa, preschool assistant	Icelandic	Preschool	1	Dísa 1
Freyja, special education coordinator	Icelandic	Preschool	1	Freyja 1
Mother and father of a child in the Green division. East-European background.	Icelandic	Home	1	M1 F1 MF1

Mother of a child in the Green division. North-European background.	Icelandic with an interpreter	Preschool	1	M2
Mother of two children. The older child was in second grade in compulsory school but had also been in the preschool. The other child was in the preschool but had recently transferred from the Green division to the division for older children. Southeast-Asian background.	Icelandic	Preschool	1	M3
Mother and father of two children. One had just started compulsory school. The other was still in the preschool and started attending the Green division during the research. Central-European background.	English	Home	1	M4 F4 MF4
Mother and father of two children. One had just started compulsory school and the other was still in the preschool. North-European background.	Icelandic	Home	1	M5 F5 MF5

3.3 Data generation

The generation of data started in December 2016 and ended a year later in December 2017. From December 2016 until March 2017, I visited the preschool once a week, either in the morning or in the afternoon, to comprehensively document the practices from morning to afternoon. In May and June, I visited the preschool once a week and again from October until December. I started the study by interviewing Petra, the principal, and then I planned the next steps and recruited the participants in collaboration with her as explained above. I started generating relevant documents and information such as the curriculum, language and literacy plan, written information, and pictures on the walls. This documentation was an ongoing process during the whole period as I took many pictures during my visits. The photographs focus on the school environment, messages to parents and teachers, and material aimed at scaffolding and stimulating the children's language and communication, as well as affirming their identity.

Table 2. Overview of generated data

Types of primary data	**Quantity**
Interviews with six teachers and eight parents	14 interviews, 157 transcribed pages
Reflection meetings and collaborative analyses with teachers of video recordings	2 meetings, 3 hours, 37 transcribed pages
Natural observations	8 visits, 21 pages of transcribed notes from audio recordings post visits
Video recordings	15 visits, consisting of 5 hours and 58 minutes of recordings altogether 138 items of filming, lasting from 22 seconds to 12 minutes each. 57 were items from child-initiated activities or free play and 81 were from teacher led activities.
Types of secondary data	**Quantity**
Pictures of artefacts and information displayed around the preschool	92 pictures
Written documents: • The preschool curriculum • Annual plan • Monthly plan • Guidelines for communication with parents • The Circle's homepage • Bilingual picture books and pedagogical documentation of children • Document for communication and interaction with children	1 item of each except for bilingual picture books and pedagogical documentation that were presented by the teachers during interviews or visits.

During the interviews, I also received information about important documents and messages that I took note of. After two visits to the Green division, I asked the teachers for permission to speak to the children and explain the reasons for my presence to them. During observations and filming, my focus was on the teachers, not the children, even though it involved their participation.

Polkinghorne (2005) claims that to establish understanding and properly describe the experience and practice being studied the research process needs to be iterative, "moving from collection of data to analysis and back until the description is comprehensive" (p. 140). He also points out that the data in qualitative research is not readily accessible and the researcher needs to dig below the surface to find the sources "that are most likely to inform the researcher about the character of the experience being explored. The second act of production occurs in drawing out from these sources the data that serve to render a refined and rich description of the experience under study" (p. 142). Hence, when selecting additional data for the research, I used information from all the different sources available, i.e. interviews, observations, video recordings, documents, pictures, and messages to deepen my understanding. This resulted in the second interview with Petra, Sif, and Halla and the collaborative reflection on the video recordings with Dísa, Halla, and Sif, which are discussed in the chapter on video analysis. See Table 2, for an overview of generated data.

3.3.1 Interviews

The interview as a research tool is one of the basic methods of qualitative research (Kvale, 1996; Silverman, 2013). Kvale (1996) has described the research interview as a kind of professional conversation related to daily experiences of the interviewees. The semi-structured interview is defined as "*an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena*" (p. 5–6, italics from original text). How the researcher carries out the interview, how it is structured and what types of analytic methods are used to interpret the results, depend on the chosen research design. In this research I used semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers since these provide both the interviewer and the interviewee the opportunity to seek more detailed answers outside of the prepared framework of questions (Kvale, 1996). The questions in a semi-structured interview allow for open-ended responses but as Turner (2010) observes, open-ended interviews give participants a platform to provide information in as much detail as they like, while allowing the researcher to ask follow-up questions for further details and co-creation of knowledge. The interviews were social practices in the sense that the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and multiple stories of teachers and parents were co-constructed, and the form and the process of the interview was a collaboration between the interviewee and the interviewer (Talmy, 2011).

I carried out nine interviews with six teachers, thereof two interviews with Petra, Sif, and Halla respectively, one at the beginning of the study and the second later in the process. In all instances the second interview was based on events I had observed and wanted to understand in more depth. The interview with Halla focused on language assessment and educational practices with multilingual children that I had observed and wanted more feedback on. In the interview with Sif I asked her to explain the

adjustment process for multilingual children at the preschool, and in the interview with Petra I asked her for feedback on changes and challenges I had observed during the year the study took place. All these interviews were conducted in Icelandic, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The duration of each interview was usually from forty minutes to an hour but there were exceptions of both longer and shorter interviews. The interviews with the teachers all took place at the preschool and were scheduled and planned in collaboration with them.

I interviewed eight parents in five interviews, three couples and two mothers. Their linguistic and cultural background was Asian and European. The two interviews with the mothers took place at the preschool and the interviews with the couples took place in their homes after working hours. Three of the interviews were in Icelandic, one in English, and one interview was carried out with an interpreter chosen by the mother, someone that had previously interpreted in meetings with the preschool. I experienced that there was trust between the interpreter and the mother and even though it can be challenging to carry out interviews with the assistance of an interpreter, I did not feel that this was an obstacle in our conversation. Each interview lasted from thirty to fifty minutes, and I transcribed all of them verbatim. Since most of the interviews in the study were carried out in Icelandic, I have translated the excerpts which are quoted in the chapter on findings and discussions. The first draft of the findings chapter contained excerpts in Icelandic that I translated in the final phases of writing when I was sure that I would use the excerpt. English is not my first language, so it is possible that something got lost in translation even though I tried my best to translate as accurately as possible. It should be emphasised that sometimes I had to rephrase sentences for them to make sense.

It is very interesting to compare the interview conducted with the assistance of an interpreter with an interview carried out in a language understood and spoken by both the interviewer and the interviewee. It indicates very clearly how much more time is needed to mediate information through an interpreter than when there is a shared understanding. The transcribed interview involving an interpreter lasted for forty-two minutes and occupies seven transcribed pages. Interviews of a similar duration without an interpreter usually occupy eleven to fifteen transcribed pages. I recorded the interviews with two devices using simple recording apps.

The standard of the data generation and original interview provides a very important foundation for the quality of all further analysis, discussions, and writing on the findings (Kvale, 1996). The qualitative interview is theme oriented (Kvale, 1996) and my analysis already began during the interview itself, in the reflective journal, and during the transcription process.

3.3.2 Observations

Even though interviews are very important tools for researching the lives, knowledges, and experience of participants, I agree with Silverman (2013) who stresses that in order to fully understand what is going on in a classroom, researchers need to observe what is going on instead of only asking participants what they think about it. Observations of early childhood education can be an important research tool to consider how teachers enhance the participation of multilingual children within the learning space. Children's learning engagement depends on how they participate or interact with teachers, peers, and materials within the educational setting. It also includes social and emotional interactions, as well as language- and literacy-related play and practices of children and adults (Marcella & Howes, 2015). *Naturalistic observations* (Marcella & Howes, 2015) refer to a way of observing a field or setting without attracting attention or interfering with the interactions or tasks at hand. Naturalistic observations can prove a useful tool to learn about the complexity of play and interaction within the educational setting. Sanger (1996) discusses the difference between seeing and observing, as the researcher must decide which of the many actions taking place within one setting at the same time are to be documented. Consequently, it is just as important to be observant of something not happening as of that which is going on (Sanger, 1996).

By focusing on the teacher's interaction with multilingual children, I strove to make varied observations and to understand in more depth the system of actions taking place within planned activities, free play, and child-initiated practices. In February and March I generated data with naturalistic observations without filming to get to know the setting, build trust and learn which teachers I should follow later during video observations. I did not write anything down during my observations, but directly after each session I recorded an oral report with my phone and transcribed it later for further analysis. I am aware that I could have missed some important insights and details from my observations since I did not document or write notes while observing. At this point I found it most important to build trust with the teachers and children without attracting too much attention. I was a participant in the sense that I responded to the children and the teachers when they asked for my attention, but otherwise I tried not to interfere or attract attention.

By using transcripts of observational data and a reflexive journal I got a better overview and understanding of what was going on within the setting. However, the disadvantage of observing and writing field notes, as Silverman (2013) explains, is that the researcher is stuck with the way she describes things when observed as it is not possible to revisit the setting or the activity taking place when analysing data or writing up findings. The main strengths of using video recordings are that they show details of daily life and interactions that are easily overlooked when observed naturalistically. Video recordings enable the researcher to revisit data, code for specific interactions, and give space for collaborative analysis and reciprocal discussions. To establish a

better understanding of the interaction and communication taking place between teachers and multilingual children, I video recorded my visits in May and June and from October to December. The video recordings gave me the opportunity as a researcher to look closely and repeatedly at events where teachers and multilingual children were communicating.

There are also weaknesses in filming as video recordings can give the researcher a false sense of confidence and enhance the belief that what she captures in the video is what is happening at all times or that she has captured everything that happened at the time of recording (Walsh et al., 2007). The researcher must also keep in mind that her presence affects the situation and therefore the image is never neutral. The image is always "*literally and socially* constructed by a person or team of people [...] knowledge is not absolute but is culturally constructed and [...] the researcher and her milieu are always implicated in the research" (Thomson, 2008, p. 9–10, italics from original text). A video recording is the outcome of a process where the researcher has selected what to record, what is in focus and what is not, what is in foreground and background, what is included and excluded, processed, and edited (Thomson, 2008). The particular aim of filming was to document the communication between teachers and multilingual children. I recorded with a small handheld digital camera. While recording, my focus was on the participating teachers and their interaction with multilingual children, and when the participating teachers were not communicating or interacting with the children I stopped recording.

After each visit I watched the recordings, selected, and saved those useful for the study. Because I was using a small handheld camera, the sound was sometimes very unclear, and the picture blurred. I deleted all videos that were unclear or did not feature participating teachers, leaving me with five hours and fifty-eight minutes of video recorded data. My role during video recordings was participatory (not taking the teacher's role but being on her side) and I discussed different questions and observations with teachers in formal and informal interviews during the data generation and analysis. Some of these interactions provided valuable insights into which written documents, pictures, and artefacts would be useful for further data generation.

3.3.3 Written documents, photographs, and other artefacts

Cummins (2021b) explains that a holistic view of education for multilingual children requires an understanding of educational structures and what excludes or includes children. "Educational structures refer to the organization of schooling in a broad sense that includes policies, programmes, curriculum and assessment [...] they are not by any means fixed or static and can be contested by individuals and groups" (p. 288). A few years prior to my study the principals of The Circle had started to contest the prevalent and dominant goals, values, assessment, curricula, and policies of the preschool and revise their ideology with an inclusive focus. I found it essential to analyse documents

and artefacts that communicated the shifting educational structures in relation to my research questions.

According to Flick (2006), documents are various artefacts that come in specific formats, such as notes, remarks, reports, letters, and diaries. Almost all institutional activities are subject to some form of documentation that conveys important information. I relied on information from the teachers to purposively select documents and artefacts that related to my research questions on language and literacy of multilingual children, partnership with parents and the affirmation of multilingual children's identity to provide thicker data for the analysis, as well as the representation of the study's results. In addition to official documents and other written material, I used pictures or other artefacts that were either hung on the walls of the preschool, used by the teachers in interaction with children or shown to me during observations or filming. See Table 2, for an overview of written documents.

3.4 Data analysis

There are many different approaches to data analysis in qualitative research such as conversation analysis, discourse analysis, or narrative analysis to name a few. At the same time there are no rigid rules or processes that establish the one and only right way for developing an understanding from complex data. Kvale (1996) argues that the analytic methods used to interpret results depend on the research design and the research tools being used. Spencer and colleagues (2003) claim that regardless of the "approach a researcher uses, there is a need to capture, portray and explain the social worlds of the people under study, and so the researchers must initially stay close to the original data" (p. 213). Staying this close to the original data is time consuming and at times a frustrating part of the process since the original data or data corpus may in the beginning seem overwhelming, immense, and confusing. Thus, it is important to understand the difference between the data corpus and the data set used for analysing purposes. These concepts are defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) in the following manner: "Data *corpus* refers to all data collected for a particular research project, while data *set* refers to all the data from the corpus that are being used for a particular analysis" (p. 79, italics from original text). In order to develop the data set it is vital to "build a structure of evidence within which the building blocks of the analysis can be seen" (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 213). The structure is very important for the researcher to "gain an overview of the data, carry out different analytical tasks and make sense of the evidence collected" (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 217). Such a structure supports the researcher in creating meaning and answering the research questions driving the study. The structuring procedure needs to be ongoing and iterative where the researcher moves between the original data and her interpretation of the social world under study (Rinehart, 2021; Ritchie et al., 2003). The interviews and video recordings became my primary data set along with the transcriptions from naturalistic observation, written

documents, and artefacts that I used as secondary sources to deepen my understanding of the system of actions in a more comprehensive way.

I started analysing the data during data generation and kept journals where I reflected on new understandings, concrete experiences, and challenges that I had to respond to in writing up my findings and discussions. After each interview and each visit to The Circle I allocated myself some time to organise the new data and reflect on the newly acquired interviews or observations. This was very helpful when it came to structuring the data corpus into a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Heath et al., 2010) and made the original data more accessible. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that although transcribing data is time consuming, the work enlightens the first steps of the analysis process and gives the researcher a deeper understanding of the original data. While transcribing interviews, audio recordings based on my observation and extracts from video recordings I started to analyse and write down comments and codes. After transcribing all the interviews, I printed them out in two separate booklets, one with the teachers' interviews and the other with the parents' interviews. To maintain confidentiality, I gave all participants pseudonyms while transcribing the data. After transforming data into written text, I read and reread the entire data set to become more familiar with the data (Braun et al., 2015).

The analysis process was iterative and abductive (Flick, 2014; Rinehart, 2021), meaning that I shifted between analysing the data, applying the theoretical framework and writing up my findings. Rinehart (2021) claims that it is important that the researcher takes time away from the data and gives herself time to think and process the information thus acquired. Often when puzzled or confused I would go for a walk, preferably in a natural environment where I could open up my senses. Or I would listen to music, read, or discuss my challenges with others. This was usually beneficial for the next steps since I always came back to the data and the writing with a more sober mind than before. Such moments also supported me in being more creative while analysing and interpreting data, rather than being too rigorous. Braun and colleagues (2015) describe the analysis process as a creative one, similar to a sculpture being the "product of an interaction between the sculptor, their skills and the raw materials" (p.96). An analysis they add, is the "result of engagement between the dataset and the researcher's interpretative and analytical skills" (p. 96). Flick (2014) also describes abductive processes as creative because the researcher investigates if the data supports existing theories and understandings or if these need to be changed. He claims that creative researchers "go beyond the data and pre-existing theoretical knowledge by modifying, elaborating upon, or rejecting theory if needed, or putting old ideas together in new ways to examine, understand and explain the data" (p. 52).

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

For analysing the interviews, I used *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a very common design within qualitative research that can be applied using diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks. Thematic analysis is a flexible and reflective research tool that bypasses theoretical constraints and allows the researcher to present rich, comprehensive, and detailed findings from a large data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2015; Clarke, 2017). Despite being practical and linear, a thematic analysis is also fluid and compels the researcher to dynamically shift between certain phases of the analytical procedure. The process of thematic analysis is divided into six to seven phases, depending on whether the researcher transcribes the original data herself or not. The six phases are:

1. Familiarising yourself with your data (this can involve the phase of transcribing)
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2015; Clarke, 2017)

Braun and colleagues (2015) acknowledge that an experienced researcher may "even blur some phases together" (p. 99). I have tried to work my way through the phases one at a time while also blurring some phases, especially when writing the findings, reviewing, defining, and naming themes. After transcribing the data and during the first "familiarising" phase of the thematic analysis I read and reread the data and started to write comments and codes with the aim of acquiring an overview of the content. Braun and colleagues (2015) explain that after reading and absorbing the content the researcher seeks two positions as analyst, those of *immersion* and *distance*. It is this distance, they argue, that gives the researchers their 'analytical eye' and allows them to identify "logic frameworks, assumptions, or rationales that underpin" the content of the data, as well as "the 'bigger-picture' commonalities that might unite seemingly disparate data content" (p. 100). Considerable time passed between the original data generation in 2016 and 2017 and the completion of the writing process in 2022 and 2023. I believe this has indeed provided me with valuable distance from the original data and at the same time a stronger analytical eye.

However, the reading and absorbing of the content and its analysis is not a linear process in my mind, as I had already started to correlate my data with theory and research questions in the early stages. For instance, when moving to phase two of initial coding I had already written comments and codes on the transcribed pages and in my reflection journal. To organise the initial correlations more systematically I reread all the data during phase two and coded the whole dataset by making a separate copy of each interview with the data items, codes, and comments in a table. These comments later proved useful when I started searching for themes. I did not code all the data, only the

parts that were potentially relevant to answering my research questions. When coding I relied on "analytical, interpretative, insight" (Braun et al., 2015, p.101) and in the process some codes became subthemes, such as *attitudes and beliefs* and *professional development*. In Table 3, I present an example of a data item, codes, and comments. The data item is verbatim from a transcribed interview, the codes build on the theoretical framework guiding the research, and the comment carries both description and analysis further. This method was very helpful, and the codes and comments provided a solid foundation when I started to write up my findings.

Table 3. Excerpt from transcripts with coded data items and comments

Data item	**Code**	**Comment**
"[I]t changed, respect for the child, all children, respect for parents, it changed and respect for colleagues, this changed as well, you could hear that, and more voices began to be heard, because the principals who came they gave permission, things that were a bit silenced or not allowed because one could say this but not something different" (Sif1).	**School development** **Attitudes and beliefs** **Changing mindset pro diversity**	Interesting to see how the respect for the children and families changed with the new principal. The microphone was opened for more voices to be heard.

Alongside phase two I started phase three of searching for themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) emphasise that the researchers must use their judgement to "determine what a theme is", offering the initial guidance that one should "retain some flexibility" and that "rigid rules really do not work" (p. 82). When searching for themes I used the comments written in the coding process, see Table 3, to develop ideas. I also transferred all codes from each interview into a list where I used colours to group codes according to *candidate themes* (Braun et al., 2015). During this process I also started to write the chapter on findings, as well as reviewing the themes, the coded items, my comments on the data and the list with the coloured codes. Braun and colleagues (2015) emphasise that the candidate themes need to represent the data items used for answering the research questions. They explain that thematic analysis is "concerned with *patterned* meaning, so it is important that themes are evident *across* different data items" (p. 102, italics from original text). However, they argue that

frequency is not the only relevant criteria for themes, sometimes themes are important even though they only apply to a few data items. I kept this in mind although I could usually identify many data items from different data sets belonging to each theme, thus describing in more detail the system of actions. Ultimately, the fifth phase of defining and naming themes took place throughout the process of writing the findings.

Eventually, through these different but complementary procedures, I chose six themes: *emergent learning space, transformative pedagogy, acting on diversity, culture of communication, spaces of multilingualism,* and *language learning opportunities through active participation*.

3.4.2 Analysis of video recordings

I developed my data set of video recordings for analysis purposes according to a process suggested by Heath and colleagues (2010). First, I catalogued the data corpus, carried out a preliminary review, and selected relevant recordings for the data set. The recordings I excluded from the data set were either those with bad sound or incomplete visual focus, or those that did not include any interaction between the teachers and multilingual children. After each recording session I carried out the preliminary review as soon as possible, preferably within the same day, as Heath and colleagues (2010, p. 62) recommend, arguing that preliminary cataloguing and reviews do not "detract from undertaking more detailed analysis, so preliminary reviews should involve no more than a simple description and classification of the material."

To create a clear overview of all the data from the video recordings I used an Excel sheet divided into columns with short descriptions of the nature of activity and the teacher's participation. The next step was to analyse the data further, add more information to the preliminary review, and start writing the substantive review. The entire table of the preliminarily reviewed data set consisted of one hundred and thirty-eight items of recordings of varying duration, from less than a minute up to twelve minutes each, nearly six hours in total. Fifty-seven of those were items documenting free play or child-initiated play with the involvement or participation of teachers and eighty-one were items documenting activities organised by the teacher. I outlined the time of day of filming, the activity recorded, the duration of the recording, whether the activity was free, child-initiated play or organised by the teacher, my first comments on the activity with a focus on the role of the teacher, and finally an observation number. I carried out the analysis in Icelandic and only translated the excerpts in Table 4 in order to give an example of the preliminary review.

Table 4. Excerpt of data showing a preliminary review of the data corpus.

Activity	Length	Organized/ Free act.	Comments on activity and role of teacher
Two children with the role of servants	1 min	O	(Fire soup for lunch) Dísa discusses fire soup with Magdalena and what they do at home
Table servants set the table, count spoons, dishes and talk about the food for lunch	5.22 min	O	Dísa guides their activity with words and discussions
Lunch time, children sit down at the table to have fire soup	10.49 min	O	Dísa converses with the children during lunch around different subjects such as brushing teeth and going for a visit to the library
Free pretend play, children going for a picnic, the play moves around the room	3.21 min	F	Dísa is close to them and asks whether the children need sunscreen for their picnic because the sun is strong
Few boys play with hollow blocks in free play	4.11 min	F	Sif is participating in the play – turning on light, day, and night play
Boys keep on playing with hollow blocks	3.12 min	F	Sif is actively participating in the play
Group work with children, book reading and discussions	9.26 min	O	Halla reads the book „Peter and the Wolf “

The next phase involved a more focused substantive review of the data corpus that evolved from the first analysis of the data extracts (Heath et al., 2010). In Table 5, I present an excerpt of the data set after the substantive review where my comments, written in Icelandic, convey thicker descriptions of the activities taking place than in the preliminary review listed in Table 4. I used colour codes to produce an overview of partially or fully transcribed items, activites selected for collaborative analyses and different types of activites. This review of the data helped me to write up the findings and allowed me to effectively revisit the data set and original recordings when needed. All this work was carried out in Icelandic.

An important phase in the analysis process of the video recordings was to transcribe them in order to be able to review them as texts. When searching for an appropriate method to transcribe video recordings I faced some challenges. As I mentioned earlier, my intention in this study is to understand how teachers scaffold and guide the linguistic participation of children and affirm their identity. I not only wanted to transcribe exactly what was being said but also address the study's social interactional questions by introducing, describing, and analysing examples during interaction with "the dynamic intersubjective aspects of emerging shared meaning and purposes" (Angelillo et al., 2007, p. 190). Angelillo and colleagues (2007) suggest that the sociocultural perspective in their research aims to "investigate people's mutually constituting contributions to social events as they build on their own and each other's prior contributions" (p.190, italics from original text). Such a sociocultural perspective can be used to identify collaborative communication during group engagement or the contributions of individuals such as "how one person manages another's attention to an

object during a lesson" (p. 190). As my whole research is based on a sociocultural view of the communication and social interaction of teachers and multilingual children, I find their guidelines for transcription highly appropriate.

Table 5. Excerpt of data set after the substantive review.

Viðfangsefni	Tímalengd	Stýrð/frjáls	Athugasemdir
Borðþjónar M og A leggja á borð – eldsúpa í matinn	1 mín	S	Dísa spjallar við M um eldsúpu og mömmu. Samtal á milli M og D um pólsku þar sem M segist hafa sagt mamma á pólsku.
Borðþjónar leggja á borð -	5.22 mín	S	Dísa leiðir þau áfram í því að leggja á borð, telja skeiðar, diska og nefna matarheitin
Geng á eftir borðþjónum inn í eldhús – samtal um skæplestur	1.31 mín	S	Sóla stoppar mig til að segja mér frá því hvað hún var hrifin af hugmyndinni um að lesa fyrir börn í gegnum skæp sem rædd var á fræðslufundi um Tungumál er gjöf
Matartími – börnin sitja við borð og borða eldsúpu	10.49 mín	S	Dísa spjallar við börnin og borðar með þeim... Verið að kenna að nota hníf og smyrja, Daníel reynir að fá athygli frá Dísu, og krakkarnir reyna að fá athygli frá honum. Talað um hjólið hans og hjálminn.
Frjáls leikur – börnin farin í lautarferð, leikurinn færist fram að dyrum	3.21 mín	F	Dísa fer að spyrja hvort það þurfi sólarvörn í lautarferðinni því það sé svo mikil sól, hún er að gera þrennt í einu, skrifa á spjald fyrir utan dyrnar, hjálpa tveimur stelpum að skrifa nafnið sitt og tala aðeins við krakkana í leiknum.
Hlutverkaleikur í holukubbum	3.12 mín	F	Sif tekur þátt í leiknum - D og H eru að leika, elda matinn, leika pabba og mömmu setja tómatsósu, jólasveinninn kom með jarðarberin. Hún er á staðnum og þeir leika saman og við hana. Leikurinn miklu afmarkaðri þegar hún er á staðnum. Kallar fram samskipti á milli barnanna

When transcribing the raw data from video recordings I generated an overview of the communication and contribution of teachers and children to the social interaction taking place. In the following extract, Sif is communicating with Ina, a multilingual girl. The dialogue is transcribed in bold and details of the contribution and social interaction are in parentheses.

S: (Sif lifts her hands joyfully, smiles, opens her arms, and welcomes Ina who approaches Sif directly, Sif smiles, puts her arm around her and Ina leans against her)
S: **Hi Ina, hi, you are here** (smiling warm voice, open appreciative face)
I: **Hi** (smiles)
S: **You are here** (puts her arms around her and smiles) **to The Circle, The Circle** (Sif repeats the name of the preschool with movement and in a rhythmic tone, Ina smiles and moves with her)...

S: **Socks, shoes, slippers** (speaks in a calm voice, points to Inas' socks and shoes and smiles at her) **pink slippers** (holds her shoes and looks at Ina)
I: **Pink** (Ina repeats)
S: **Pink slippers**...
I: (Looks down at her shoes, pulls on her socks and the tights she is wearing under the socks)
S: **Tights, tights, and socks** (Sif names the items Ina was pointing at)
I: (Laughs and points to the back of her hand)
S: (Softly touches the spot on the back of Ina's hand, pays full attention to what Ina is showing her even though she only uses gestures, smiles, and laughter) **what is this? Is this oh oh** (with a voice of pain and a pained expression on her face)
I: (Realises what she is saying and shakes her head in denial)
S: (Realises that this is not a wound but a lipstick) **is it like this, a lipstick** (pretends to put on a lipstick)
I: (Laughs and puts a finger on her lips and moves her fingers as if she were putting on a lipstick) (VR M11B).

Part of the analysis process of the video recordings was a collaborative task with the participating teachers. Collaborative analysis in cooperation with participants can help to construct a deeper understanding of what occurred during the interaction between teachers and children. Additionally, it provides the opportunity to establish a reciprocal dialogue on how to learn from activities already taking place within the setting. Such a collaboration moves practice to theory, not only theory to practice, and situates teachers as knowledge generators. In this way "the theoretical intuitions, hypotheses, and potential insights that emerge from this process can be brought into direct dialogue with instructional practice, resulting in practice and theory serving as reciprocal catalysts for each other" (Cummins, 2021a, p. 140).

To prepare for the collaborative analysis, I first did a preliminary review of all the video recordings where I catalogued the data corpus (Heath et al., 2010) by making an overview of all the recordings that qualified to become the first data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then I selected thirteen samples from the data set that I watched and analysed together with Dísa, Halla, and Sif in the first session, but only Dísa and Sif in the second session, since Halla was on leave. The two sessions lasted almost three hours and I recorded the discussions that took place and transcribed them verbatim.

In this section I have attempted to create a detailed and precise overview of the research process, its design, the selection of participants, and the generation and analysis of the data. Even though I am building on the views, beliefs, and actions of others, I argue that by documenting and putting forward what I learned from observing

and analysing real experiences, I have gained important context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). With this knowledge I am not aiming at presenting a single truth or a narrow perspective, but an example of the complex and multifaceted practices needed to provide a successful learning space for multilingual children.

3.5 Quality criteria and ethical considerations

Quality in both qualitative and quantitative research requires legitimate methodology, data generation, and analyses that are relevant to answer the research questions guided by ethical considerations. The standard quality criteria of quantitative research; validity, reliability, and generalisability, can to some extent be compared to the quality criteria of qualitative research with important differences. Validity, transferability, limitations, and generalisability are important, but are not the only valid, quality criteria for qualitative studies, as Tracy (2010) explains. In her model for quality in qualitative research, Tracy (2010, p. 840) puts forward eight key markers or quality criteria that the researcher can build on. These are *worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics,* and *meaningful coherence*. When searching for a theoretical framework to argue for the integrity of my research, I found the writings of Tracy (2010) helpful to reflect on the research procedure presented earlier in this chapter and to guide my focus in this last part of the chapter.

When arguing for quality in relation to a single case study, which is the research design I chose for my research, it is important to address issues that can undermine the verification of the findings and recognise vulnerabilities. In his book, *Rethinking the Education of Multilingual Learners,* Cummins (2021a) reflects on the way in which we can assess the legitimacy of theoretical constructs and claims. He argues that it is the *theory* generated through research rather than the *findings* of any study that becomes relevant for policy and practice. The nature of the complex educational context and the many variables intertwined in the learning of multilingual children make it very challenging to carry out experimental or quasi-experimental studies or repeat practices with the expectation to get comparable results between different settings. Hence, case studies of different programs for multilingual children become relevant for theory and policy when their outcomes are "assessed in relation to the predictions derived from particular hypotheses or theoretical frameworks" (Cummins, 2021a, p.136). As such "ethnographic and case study research are in the *mainstream* of scientific inquiry" (p. 138, italics from original text). Flyvbjerg (2006) claims that case studies are commonly misunderstood, for instance, as not contributing to scientific development and the development of theories. He insists on the role of cases for human learning and argues that proximity to real-life situations is one of the most important methods to build scientific knowledge of human behaviour. He recognises that the quality of a good case lies in the narrative and the story being told, however multifaceted:

> I tell the story in its diversity, allowing the story to unfold from the many-sided, complex, and sometimes conflicting stories that the actors in the case have told me. [...] I avoid linking the case with the theories of any one academic specialization. Instead, I relate the case to broader philosophical positions that cut across specializations. In this way, I try to leave scope for readers of different backgrounds to make different interpretations and draw diverse conclusions [...]. The goal is not to make the case study be all things to all people. The goal is to allow the study to be different things to different people. I try to achieve this by describing the case with so many facets – like life itself – that different readers may be attracted, or repelled, by different things in the case (p. 238).

Similarly, I seek to ensure quality in my research by presenting a rich but multivocal story of the complex and multifaceted learning space for multilingual preschool children that I studied. I claim that the topic is worthy and highly relevant and the contribution significant because the education of multilingual children in Iceland needs special attention, as I have argued for earlier. Furthermore, my research is rigorous as I have built on appropriate and complex theoretical perspectives, spent abundant time in the field, generated a variety of data and used diverse methods for analysing my data. Rigor and worth are two of Tracy's (2010) eight important criteria, but they alone do not guarantee the quality of the study. In what follows I continue my discussion of these eight criteria in relation to the considerations of yet other scholars when arguing for the quality standards and ethical considerations guiding this research.

3.5.1 Sincerity and transparency

Tracy (2010) claims that self-reflexivity, honesty, and transparency are the essence of sincerity which she relates to the concepts of authenticity and genuineness. This includes that the researcher is open and aware of her preconceptions, biases, and weaknesses and how these affect the methods, successes, and mistakes of the study. This also involves being transparent about the research process, keeping in mind questions regarding access, levels of participation, and clear documentation of all research decisions and activities. I recognise that my position as a project coordinator and consultant for Multicultural Education in Preschools in Reykjavík during the time of study may have put pressure on the participating teachers and become a disadvantage for me as a researcher since some of them knew me from before, as mentioned in my introduction. A qualitative case study can never be neutral, but I want to look at my position not as a disadvantage but as an advantage, given that I know the general preschool context very well, both as a former preschool teacher and as a consultant working with teachers, parents, and preschool children for many years. I spoke openly about this in my first meetings with the teachers, discussed that I was aware of this and that I would try to separate these roles as much as possible.

When conducting research that involves children there are several ethical considerations that must be addressed. Contemporary studies on early childhood education indicate the importance of recognising the child as a competent, capable, and knowledgeable citizen, possessing a voice that needs to be heard (Cummins, 2004; Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Nieto, 2010; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017). This stresses the importance for the researcher to always "respect and value children's rights" (Hill & Millar, 2015, p. 531). Even though I was focusing on the teachers and their activities, I wanted to build trust with the children and approach them as competent and knowledgeable. Hence, I found it very important to explain thoroughly to them what I was doing and why I was there. I got permission from the teachers to speak to the children during circle time when they were all together. I told them that I was doing this research to learn about how the teachers were working in the preschool. I asked them if they knew what *research* was and we discussed this for some time. I asked if they could raise their hand if they agreed on me being there and all of them did except one boy. I did not know if he became unsecure about the words I was using or wanted to show his power in not participating. I kept this in mind while doing observations, but this did not happen again. I also told the children that I would always ask if I could participate in what they were doing and that they could say no if they did not want me around. That happened once and at that time I withdrew from the activity. It is possible that not all the children understood what I was telling them, but I always asked for their permission to stay and observe or record and I also took into account and withdrew if children implied, with their gaze or body language, that they did not want me around. It is important to keep in mind that during video recordings my focus was on the teachers, not the children, although they were participants.

Rogoff (2003) highlights the need to look beyond ethnocentrism and deficit models when trying to understand the learning taking place within different communities. According to her, it is important not to prejudge without appropriate knowledge. This can be applied to the learning situation taking place within the preschool community where children and adults with diverse languages and cultures meet and learn together and from each other. When researching a field where linguistic and cultural diversity are apparent, the researcher needs to be aware of the linguistic challenges, languages being spoken and how biases or prejudgements can influence perception of what is actually occurring (Marcella & Howes, 2015; Rogoff, 2003). Even though I do not understand the many languages of the children and families spoken in the preschool, I could use my knowledge of culturally responsive and critical pedagogy to observe and document ways in which the teachers scaffolded, guided, and enhanced the linguistic participation of children within the learning space. By keeping a reflexive journal, avoiding being judgmental, offering feedback and reciprocal discussions with the participants during the research, as well as paying close attention to the issues mentioned above, I did my best to be honest and sincere during the research process. Including the teachers in discussions while giving and receiving feedback during data

generation provided me with a valuable opportunity as a researcher to build a relationship with the participants. This hopefully benefitted their practices and knowledge while deepening the understanding of their experiences, decisions, and practices. During collaborative analysis and reflection on video recordings with the three teachers, they expressed how pleased they were with the opportunity to get this time together to discuss their practices and how that offered them a valuable focus on their actions.

When carrying out an interview from the perspective of critical pedagogy it is especially important to pay attention to power relations in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Rhedding-Jones, 2007). It is also necessary to keep in mind that the use of appropriate, clear, and non-academic language in an interview carried out in relaxed and appropriate circumstances can add to the quality of the research (Kvale, 1996; Silverman, 2013). During the interviews with the teachers, I had more opportunities to establish trust, since I had met most of them earlier at the meeting where I introduced the research and in the first visits to the preschool where I carried out naturalistic observations. This was not the case with the parents, as I met them for the first time during the interview, even though we had spoken on the phone or exchanged emails. I was aware of the power relations and tried to establish trust by inviting the parents to choose the location, language, and time for the interview. One of the couples mentioned that this was very convenient and that this gave them the possibility to be relaxed at home speaking to me in the evening when the children were asleep. One interview was carried out with an interpreter that the mother chose herself and, as mentioned before, I did not experience this as an obstacle in our conversation. In all the interviews I did my best to be relaxed, warm, empathetic, and engaged with the stories being told.

Silverman (2013) defines the difference between overt and covert access to a research field where overt access is "based on informing subjects and getting their agreement, often through gatekeepers" (p. 214). The principal took the role of a gatekeeper in the study and my access was overt and participatory as I informed all teachers and parents about my research focus and was available for discussions whenever I was around. When planning my observations, I emphasised with the teachers that I would start by visiting the Green division and observe naturally without documenting or filming. Also, that I would consult with them on when to start and which of them to film. This was to build trust between me and the teachers and to learn which teachers could give me a deeper understanding of their practices and communication with multilingual children.

Sincerity, as Tracy (2010) explains, is to be self-reflexive and transparent, earnest, and vulnerable. She defines sincere researchers as "approachable rather than self-important and friendly rather than snobbish" (p. 842). It is my hope that I have succeeded in being sincere and self-reflexive enough to provide a transparent account of the research process.

3.5.2 Informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality

My first step in preparing this research was to look for preschools that matched the criteria for participation as discussed above. After establishing the research focus and research questions, I discussed the aims of my research process with the principal and decided when to begin the research process in collaboration with her. In the beginning of the study and before generating data, I introduced the research to all the teachers and staff working in the preschool and prepared a letter of introduction for them and the parents in Icelandic, English, and Polish, which were the languages that the principal told me were most needed. Before I started to generate data, I prepared a letter of consent for the teachers and all participating teachers signed the letter. All parents who agreed to participate in the study also signed a letter of consent, which was provided in the languages they preferred. Silverman (2013) argues that the researcher should be aware of the importance of getting consent in different forms from the different participants of the research. This was especially important for my research since only the participating adults signed a consent but the children themselves did not. Hence, I found it very important to inform the children about my research and always give them the opportunity to deny my participation in their activities as discussed above. All participants were informed about their ability to withdraw from the research at any time.

Ensuring confidentiality and privacy in a small community like Reykjavík can be difficult, especially when selection criteria apply to certain preschools and not others. I discussed this with the participating teachers during the research process and we went back and forth on whether anonymity of the preschool was a precondition of theirs or not. They were open to making the name of the preschool public, even though teachers, children and parents would receive pseudonyms. Finally, it was my decision to ensure as much confidentiality and privacy as possible by giving pseudonyms to all participants, the preschool, and the division where most of the observations took place. As discussed already, my focus was on the teachers and their practices. To protect both children and parents I avoided presenting any details about them or their family background except for the Polish-speaking children when I refer to their language use since they were the single largest language group in the preschool.

3.5.3 Credibility

Credibility of a study means different things to different scholars but, as Tracy (2010) argues, credibility in qualitative research is established through various methods such as thick description, multivocality, triangulation or crystallisation. Silverman (2013) highlights certain aspects that the researcher can focus on to ensure the credibility of the study such as the articulation of an explicit theoretical framework, prolonged engagement in the field, detailed field notes and thick descriptions of observations, iterative data generation and analysis, as well as regular consultation with the supervisor

and committee members. The validity and credibility of the study is linked to how the researcher interprets findings, supports them with data, and relates to prior research (Silverman, 2013). The use of multiple sources and multiple methods is one way to strengthen the credibility of a study (Silverman, 2013; Tracy, 2010) and, as discussed before, this is a qualitative case study where different methods were used to generate and analyse data. A democratic research process where voice is given to participants and reciprocity is ensured between researcher and participants is one aspect of validity in case studies on early childhood. As already detailed, I constructed my understanding of the learning space for multilingual children in reciprocal discussions with participants. I constantly searched for further information to deepen my understanding by asking questions about certain actions and practices, written documents, artefacts, and procedures. For instance, when a new multilingual child started at the preschool and began its first preschool adjustment in Iceland, I interviewed Sif about adjustment procedures to complement my own observations.

According to Tracy (2010), multivocality is an important aspect of research in the field of critical pedagogy and is achieved by presenting multiple and diverse voices as well as through intense collaborations with participants. As discussed above, I collaborated partly with the participating teachers in the analysis process of the video recordings. This provided me with a deeper understanding of their practices and gave them an opportunity to observe, discuss, and learn from their own actions and practices. As a result, I could write thicker descriptions in my findings, involving concrete, in-depth examples to provide a multifaceted story. This can only be achieved by spending significant time generating data and gathering knowledge.

Credibility of research also depends on the way the researcher triangulates her data. Definitions of triangulation have changed through the years but involve the use of more than one type of data and various methods for conducting the research and analysing data (Flick, 2006; Silverman, 2013; Tracy, 2010). However, the term crystallisation may be more helpful than triangulation to argue for the credibility of research that presents reality as socially constructed, complex, and multifaceted and does not aspire for a single truth or a univocal conclusion to be drawn from the findings (Ellingson, 2014; Stewart et al., 2017; Tracy, 2010). Crystallisation results from gathering different data with diverse methods while building on multiple theoretical frameworks, the teamwork of many researchers, and the mediation of findings in a variety of ways (Ellingson, 2015; Tracy, 2010). My methods do not include all the aspects of crystallisation such as working with other researchers. However, I claim that my participation, and the findings of the LSP research discussed in the introduction, strongly relate to the overall research question in this research. In this way, my research and understanding builds on the collaboration and teamwork of researchers. Stewart and colleagues (2017) compare the researcher to an alchemist, who prior to understanding the world must first understand herself. They claim that crystallisation "centres on understanding the research and researcher position to intimately view the process with an openness that allows

discoveries to unfold that would otherwise be lost" (p. 1). By using the term crystallisation to argue for the credibility of the study, I highlight the complex dynamics of the learning spaces of multilingual children and recognise that the story I tell with my findings is not the only story that can be told. By allowing discoveries to unfold through multiple methods, collaboration with the participants, and multiple theoretical perspectives, I seek not only to understand how teachers develop successful learning spaces for multilingual preschool children, but furthermore to inspire positive change in the education of multilingual children.

3.5.4 Limitations

Findings from the current study only offer an understanding of the selected case and is limited by its small size. It includes only a few participants, one preschool, one researcher, and the time and space given for the investigation. Brooker (2002a) claims that in-depth case studies, especially those emphasising the importance of both home and school environment on the literacy learning of multilingual children, are extremely urgent. However, these studies usually account for a very small number of cases that cannot be used to generalise or represent the overall population. Their effectiveness lies in the "careful presentation of a logical, well-evidenced argument: an argument supported at each step by documentation from field recordings or observation notes, and strengthened by the researcher's own systematic scrutiny of her or his own theorizing as it develops" (p. 292).

One of the limitations of using the research design of a single-case study involves the researcher's preconceptions, values, and bias toward verification. I am aware of my values and preconceptions and presume that I would not have been able to avoid them, regardless of my choice of methodology, as argued by scholars such as Davíðsdóttir (2003) and Flyvbjerg (2006). All researchers have some preconceptions and ideas before they carry out research and, according to Flyvbjerg (2006), a case study "contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry" (p. 237).

Even though it is not possible to generalise findings based on an individual case, they can contribute to scientific development (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and have some transferability into other contexts. Tracy (2010) argues that this transferability can be "achieved when readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (p. 845). It is my hope that my research will shed light on the complex and multifaceted system of actions and practices needed to create successful learning spaces for multilingual children in Icelandic preschools and beyond.

4 Findings

The preschool chosen for this research, here given the pseudonym The Circle, was known for its experience in developing practices for a diverse group of children with a special focus on linguistically and culturally diverse children and collaboration with parents. For the past six years prior to the research, the preschool had been undergoing a big change where more focus was being directed towards inclusion, social justice, and appropriate language and literacy practices. In this chapter I will present my findings based on the analysis of interviews with teachers and parents (Braun & Clarke 2006) and video recordings (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 2010) that became my primary data set. Observations, written documents, and artefacts were used as secondary data to deepen my understanding. Part of the analysis process of the video recordings was a collaborative analysis with three of the participating teachers, Dísa, Halla, and Sif. The chapter on findings is divided into six subchapters aiming at providing answers to my research questions. My overarching research question addresses how learning spaces for multilingual preschool children are created. With the subordinate questions, I look for answers to how teachers scaffold and guide the linguistic participation of multilingual children within organised and child-initiated activities, how the identities and voices of multilingual children are affirmed, and how the teachers enhance partnership with parents focusing on language, literacy, and identity. Each subchapter builds on the themes defined in the analysis process and presents different data items to provide a more holistic picture of my findings. The themes are *emergent learning space, transformative pedagogy, acting on diversity, culture of communication, spaces of multilingualism,* and *language learning opportunities through active participation*.

4.1 The preschool as a learning space that is constantly changing

Meeting the challenge of developing successful and inclusive learning spaces for children with different needs and backgrounds was a process that had started at The Circle some years before the study took place. Gradually, the linguistic and cultural diversity of children had grown and what used to be a rather homogeneous group of children was becoming more diverse, creating a need for the teachers to re-evaluate their practices and pedagogy. My findings show that the teachers used their experience and knowledge, reflected on the past and the present, and reached out for new knowledge, while seeking to redesign their practices.

Developing the daily life of the preschool to meet the growing diversity was a process where different practices and professionalisms had to emerge to pave the way for new

competence, knowledge, and values. Petra, the preschool principal, and Sif, the assistant principal, were the vanguards of the preschool's community, developing the way for a vision that embraced diversity, equity, and inclusion and supported linguistically and culturally diverse children and families. Petra and Sif explained that this emergent process, that they were still developing at the time of the study, began with a new principal who came to The Circle six years earlier. She was only there for one year and at the time Petra was the assistant principal. The previous principal had a long experience as a preschool teacher and a preschool principal, and her education and professionalism influenced the work. Petra also had a long experience working as a preschool teacher both in Iceland and in Denmark, where she had worked in a linguistically and culturally diverse preschool. In her master's education, which she was still working on, she was focusing on diversity and leadership. The previous principal and Petra purposefully started to deconstruct older practices and values with the aim of meeting the growing diversity of children and families.

Petra and Sif, who had worked at The Circle for many years, kept on with the process when the previous principal left, and became the leaders of change. Petra explained that after only a year she and Sif had to start the work of building up: "When she [the previous principal] left a year later, we had to reconstruct, and then we had to collect different material, how do we want to develop, and this made our ideology stronger" (Petra 2). The platform to re-evaluate and analyse their pedagogy and try out new practices was established by Petra and her predecessor, Sif explained, and involved changes in the preschool and simultaneously for her as a teacher:

> All the changes I have seen may have been because I have changed myself... like the practices that are here now... so much occurred when the new principals came, I just have to say it, and I just started to flourish in my work, then I just started to see and feel stronger what I wanted to stand for and got so many opportunities to do so and... this self-analysis that maybe comes with communicating with so many... different people, colleagues, parents and children (Sif 1).

Revisions of the preschool's curriculum, along with critically revising practices with children and parents, evaluating, and rewriting important messages and documents, renewing learning material and the learning spaces for the children was a continuous process. Professional development was an important factor in developing appropriate competency among the staff, where everyone had to reflect on their own practices and values. Petra explained that it was not a matter of a single solution to change practices in a preschool that was rooted in different values:

> So much had to change in here... a complete transformation... and there are some things that still have not changed, it [the preschool] was just so

> old-fashioned, not '94 but older, they were still praying before meals and such just before I arrived (Petra 1).

Some of the participating teachers discussed that changing practices was not only a necessity but a challenge. They gradually re-evaluated their pedagogy, vision, attitudes, and beliefs with the aim of providing inclusive education for all children. However, they were dealing with obstacles in the process such as a lack of staff including educated teachers, high turnover rate at times, housing that was old and too small, and a routine of practices that some of the teachers were not eager to change. They also had to act on prejudices and a deficit discourse, often minimising the potential of children and families. Petra explained that changing practices was the prerequisite of embracing diversity and multiculturalism, something that she found exciting despite the challenges:

> It is necessary to change practices, you do not just have the circle time as it was before '90 and something when everyone spoke Icelandic and only Old Icelandic because you have to change practices... changed practices are the foundation of multiculturalism and you cannot argue that the child "ruins" the circle time or interrupts the circle time, you must make the circle time for the child... but I just find this a lot of fun... to be in this multicultural community, often challenging but just very rewarding (Petra 2).

One of the practices with families that had changed was a traditional coffee invitation for parents and grandparents, as I noted during observation. Instead of directing the invitation only towards mothers and grandmothers or fathers and grandfathers as had been done before, the invitation was inclusive and welcomed all mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nieces, sisters, and friends of children. A few days later all fathers, grandfathers, uncles, nephews, brothers, and friends were welcomed. This gave all children and families with diverse family situations a chance to participate and feel included, and the staff got a chance to meet the significant members of the extended family of the children.

The teachers who had been working at The Circle for a longer time described how positive the changes were. More attention was directed towards the language learning of multilingual children, practices to embrace their multilingualism and background were put in place. Also, the children were in smaller groups when read to than before and the teachers did their best to create more opportunities to open up active language learning spaces during daily activities. Dísa found the changes taking place very positive. She described that before no one was thinking about the multilingual children:

> Now there is more attention directed towards this and more done for the children... it has become much more than it was here and somehow you never predicted it then, children just came in here and they just learned Icelandic so nothing special was done to make it easier for them (Dísa 1).

The teachers highlighted that before the children were not allowed to speak their home languages inside the preschool. This had changed, now the children were encouraged to use their home language and the teachers tried to support multilingualism in different ways. Dísa explained that even though she, like the others, banned children to use languages other than Icelandic before, she did not like it:

> I remember when I started here if children spoke in their mother tongue, then this was said: "We only speak Icelandic here"... they just could not speak in their mother tongue, they could do it outdoors but not indoors but now it's completely changed, now everyone just speaks as they speak and of course it should be like that, I think, I always thought it was very silly (Dísa 1).

Sif explained how she experienced changes in the school ethos and how that affected the power positions within the preschool's community. More and more children, parents, and staff were able to talk about things, respect for children and families changed, and voices that had never been heard came alive:

> It changed, respect for the child, all children, respect for parents, it changed and respect for colleagues, this changed as well, you could hear that, and more voices began to be heard, because the principals who came they gave permission, things that were a bit silenced or not allowed because one could say this but not something different (Sif 1).

Many of the teachers explained that every time someone new began to work at the preschool they had to provide training and discussions regarding their attitudes, beliefs, and competences. This influenced the way they organised work with the group of children, and it usually took time to adjust new practices of a new person to the preschools' vision, ethos, and practices. As an example, Petra reflected on their discussions on how to provide quality reading groups with fewer children in the group than before, when a book was read for all the group of up to twenty-four children during circle time. Inclusion is necessary but at the same time complicated, she explained. The division leaders want to have children together that have similar needs but simultaneously they want to be critical in the way they organise the groups of children so that groups do not become too homogeneous or tokenistic. This was a challenge for some of the teachers that did not have experience or competency to work with a linguistically and culturally diverse group of children:

> Most of them [teachers] are very conscious that having them [children] in small groups is something that is very sensitive... it is a matter of dividing them according to abilities because it is really necessary for everyone to get what they need, but you do not want to say "divide according to abilities" in circle time and you still need to get a book that suits you, and this can be such a dangerous tool in the hands of some who would always

> divide the group but how... because here is a division leader who would divide according to nationality not according to the children's abilities, only "is this an Icelander or an immigrant" if she would be left with this task (Petra 2).

Recurrent themes in the interviews with the teachers was their will to act on demographic changes with inclusive practices. Freyja explained the importance of adjusting the pedagogy instead of making the children fit into the frame:

> You have kind of had to adapt the teaching you know to the group, the group has changed... it is a completely different environment now. You need to break up more, have smaller groups... this is also not only because of the bilingual children, there are also many Icelandic children who have difficulties with language... perhaps just a changed pattern in society and the composition of the group of children... you have to adapt, you do not just read the next book from the shelf that comes to mind just like that for everyone, so you kind of have to choose, observing those you are going to read to (Freyja 1).

All the participating teachers agreed that even though they were still developing their practices and facing multiple challenges, they had more resources than before and most of them described an open mindset towards this emerging process. This mindset was reflected in their will to participate in transforming the practices through professional development but also through critical reflection and the emerging learning community, as Petra highlighted. She stressed that this had created an opportunity for them to act on the challenges in a more empowered way than before:

> When I started here in 2011 we were not at all [prepared] but only with experience and with people who want to learn and continue to explore and are not only in the old practices, but develop further, seek information... I think we are working very hard here in looking for education or professional development... maybe it's just a learning community... of course you do not pull the stroller alone and there are a lot of people who... are always thinking about the best interests of the child, if I have to do it like this then I do that... the latest research says this... not only yes we have always done it this way, but are willing to proceed in collaboration (Petra 2).

Transformation happens when knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs are critically acted on and practices start to change. This is a long-term and challenging comprehensive process, where professional development and critical reflection go hand in hand with external and internal resources, professional and financial support, and time.

4.1.1 Professional development

When looking at the annual reports the preschool issued for the years 2016–2017, when the study took place, it becomes clear that topics related to inclusion, language and literacy, and practices with a culturally and linguistically diverse group of children were in focus. The preschool organised professional development days for all the staff around themes related to those topics. They participated in an Erasmus program focusing on multiculturalism and got a grant to visit a Family centre in the UK to learn about their work with families and children of a diverse background. Additionally, the teachers explained that within their own personal professional development and formal teacher education subjects related to multiculturalism, inclusion, language, and literacy supported them in connecting their preschool practices with theory and research. For Halla, taking courses in multicultural education at the university guided her own learning, attitudes, and beliefs:

> This is very interesting what I have been attending. I have taken two courses that are multicultural... just to respect the culture of others and these children who are born here in Iceland and do not have this background that their parents have... and we get to learn about it. I had not thought much about this in the beginning... but woke up... when I sat in on these courses (Halla 1).

Petra linked the development of the preschool practices at The Circle with the projects she was executing during her master's studies in educational leadership and school management. One of her projects was interviewing division leaders in other preschools, asking them how they organised circle time in relation to language support for a diverse group of children. It was a surprise to her how low the expectations of those division leaders were towards children with diverse needs and how many of them were blaming the children for not fitting in: "The thought is still so prevalent that they just do not fit into the circle time" (Petra 1). Petra used the experience from her studies to create a plan with Sif and the division leaders to build on when evaluating circle time and reading groups at The Circle. The aim was to develop linguistically appropriate practices with a special focus on the multilingual children.

Sif said that her interest in multicultural education and issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity had been growing together with the increased number of multilingual children at the preschool. She had attended many courses and conferences and was very enthusiastic about developing her knowledge and skills in working with diverse groups of children and families: "Multiculturalism completely number one, two and three, it is and has been ever since it became more diverse here with us, right from the beginning it actually took hold of me right away" (Sif 1). Halla explained that even though learning about diversity and multiculturalism was important and an eye-opener for her, it was crucial to act on it and get real experience of working with a diverse

group of children and adults. She argued that communication and collaboration across languages and cultures created the preconditions for developing her real understanding and intercultural competency:

> These courses did not help me at all [to get experience]... they have taught me more about multiculturalism and that multiculturalism is just something that should be... but then we have children here who do not celebrate Christmas in December and are Muslims and just before Christmas I was just chatting with one father about their religion and when they celebrated Christmas and other things, just to learn... and be ready to learn (Halla 1).

Dísa had been participating in professional development within the preschool but had not attended courses or conferences on multicultural or multilingual matters. She explained how the growing number of multilingual children had created a need for the teachers to learn new practices and develop their own skills to support these children in their learning: "There is a need to learn something more... and since of course there are always more and more children... it has to be looked at yes, and just develop things further how best to do this" (Dísa 1).

Birta explained that the preschools she had been working in before were very homogeneous and almost no multilingual children attended them so she did not have any experience before she started working at The Circle. When she was learning to become a preschool teacher and simultaneously working with a diverse group of children at The Circle she started to reflect on the preschool practices, connecting theory and practice which deepened her understanding:

> There was naturally so much emphasis in my studies on inclusive education... it really opened one's mind like that... when one had been working in a preschool and during the first year in the study you were always like "yes they are doing this because of this, yes, this was this out of this" in the beginning I was always like "yes, maybe I should have done this there" (Birta 1).

During preparation days and professional development days the group of teachers regularly discussed and evaluated their practices. They reflected on their personal values and practices and how to work with goals that they themselves found important. For example, every teacher wrote down her personal goal on a small piece of paper and displayed it on the cabinet where she kept her personal belongings. This way, every one of them was reminded of their goals every time they came to work or opened their cabinet. Many of their goals were related to diversity, social justice, language learning, and communication. The examples below display this clearly:

- Speak more to parents
- Have more regular communication with the children
- Put on the equality glasses when I pass the door to the preschool in the morning
- Be aware that children learning Icelandic as a second language should not experience social disadvantage

Hence, professional development was a very important part of the preschool's development as an emergent learning space for multilingual children. Nevertheless, real experience, communication, and reflection on practices and theory was essential for the teachers to enhance their competence. The growth mindset, where teachers were willing to carry on with their professional development and learn from each other, the children, and the families, built a foundation for a learning community that was constantly improving their practices. Even though this was a very important part of the professional development and a necessary condition for building a learning community, my findings show that those teachers that had formal education and participated in professional development related to inclusion and social justice connected theory and practice consciously and expressed a high level of professionalism. This provided them with important tools to become active catalysts of change.

4.1.2 Thinking about the future

One of the topics I discussed with teachers and parents during the interviews was their anticipation for the future. The teachers explained how they wanted the preschool and themselves to transform practices to create inclusive and successful learning spaces for all children, where wellbeing and participation was at the core. The parents focused on their children's education as well as their wellbeing, inclusion, language learning and character development.

Petra explained that her dream was that every child in the preschool was involved, engaged, and motivated to learn and that all the teachers would meet the needs of children without expecting them to be all the same. Expecting children to be all the same can be described as the *wait-come pedagogy* she said. This involves comparing children to each other, stopping those who are advancing quickly and pulling hard on those who are late bloomers. Petra explained that this was gradually changing, although still a challenge. To reverse this, they were creating individual curricula or learning plans for children in collaboration with parents with the aim of building on children's strengths and abilities:

> A dream vision that one feels good and can become motivated to learn… maybe it's a little different for you than for me so that… the children are able to learn on their own terms… quit doing what has actually decreased a lot here which is this "wait-come pedagogy"… you are always

> comparing [the child] to another child... but we have individual curricula that are used in two of the divisions and they are done in collaboration with parents... and there of course the language of the immigrant children comes in (Petra 1).

The teachers highlighted that the most important thing was for all children and families to feel included and experience equity and social justice or, as Dísa explained: "Everyone can play with everyone... everyone feels good... no one is left out... equal opportunities for everyone" (Dísa 1). They all wanted the group of teachers to become more diverse to meet the growing diversity among the children. Furthermore, that all the teachers would become qualified to work with linguistic and cultural diversity. They also wished for diversity to be accepted as the norm, as Freyja explained: "The work goes like clockwork whether the children are Icelandic or bilingual or trilingual, this is just part of how the place [preschool] is" (Freyja 1). Sif had a vision of the preschool as a place where every child and parent felt included and experienced a sense of belonging and empowerment:

> I would like every child... and every parent who comes in here to feel that this is exactly the place it should be and the parent... always experiences that [the child] should be here because everything that is done here is designed to make them feel good, thrive and develop... the child is full of confidence when he enters primary school... becomes successful in acquiring the [academic learning] and acquires a self-efficacy belief (Sif 1).

All the parents focused on their children's wellbeing and personal development. Some explained how they thought it was very important that their children got good education: "I find it most important that they will be able to study... finish their matriculate exams and university" (Mother 3). It was also emphasised that the children would become empowered, strong, and independent:

> M: School and... yeah, good education...and I hope she is going to be smart not crazy... she doesn't get into trouble, and you know bad company... I hope she always has her mind and always thinks like if somebody says "this is good for you" like no she got hers...
> R: independent?
> M: yeah, I hope so
> F: yeah (Parents 5).

For the parents it was also important that the children learn Icelandic and become participants in the Icelandic society: "Because she is going to an Icelandic school and just everything into college and I want her to strengthen all this information with Icelandic because this is her future" (Parents 1). Wellbeing of their children and strong

social relationships with friends and peers were considered important factors by parents:

> It's just like you always try to make these kids just feel good and they can achieve... a relationship with other people because everything else will come, it is just being in a good relationship... like bullying is something that one is always worried about, if it would start something like this then it would be just misery... but if they would manage to go through this... school life without getting into any big trouble.... so, you also try to not only worry about them [being bullied] but just teaching them not to do that to the others... maybe keep track of which friends they have (Parents 4).

At the same time, parents wanted their children to develop their home language, as discussed further in the chapter on multilingualism. One mother thought it was very important that her son develop the skills to speak their home language because her Icelandic proficiency was very limited, even though she had lived in Iceland for many years. She is the significant person in his life and without a shared language they would not be able to discuss all the important matters needed in his upbringing:

> I am thinking about the languages... I'm not sure I'll master Icelandic well and he's getting older and there will be situations where I want to... sit down and discuss, then it is very important that he knows [our language] so that the two of us can sit down and talk to each other and maybe solve some problems... just to talk together and discuss all issues, not leave anything behind, not something that is incomprehensible or unspoken, just finish to the end so there is not something that hangs in the air (Mother 2).

The future thinking of the teachers and the parents touch on language, multilingualism, inclusion, empowerment, education, identity, and participation. Those concepts are all closely connected to the focus of the study and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

4.2 Learning together in and through linguistic and cultural diversity

The preschool's curriculum that had been in the making for a few years in relation to the changes in demography and practices at The Circle was published in 2016, the year before this study took place. By law the school curriculum builds on the fundamental pillars and learning areas of the National Curriculum Guide for Preschools. The preschool's curriculum has a strong focus on language, literacy, democracy, empowerment, and equity. It is stated there that education and care should build on the background, experience, and social background of all children and

families. The curriculum was developed in close participation of all teachers, in collaboration with parents, and with the participation of the oldest children at the preschool.

In the curriculum it is described that the reform and changes that the preschool has undertaken during the past few years has had the goal of developing practices to respond to diverse needs of all children and families. The curriculum has a chapter on evaluation stating that teachers, children, and parents are valuable sources for yearly evaluation and planning. The pedagogical ideology of the curriculum is grounded in sociocultural theory, constructivism, children's agency, and care. It states that teachers build on and implement inclusive and diverse practices that are responsive to the different needs of children, emphasising active participation of all children, involvement, and well-being. Only in very few exceptions should children be worked with individually or pulled out from the group for special support. The teachers are responsible for affirming children's identity, facilitating agency and self-efficacy beliefs where a positive view is developed and prejudices are acted on.

The preschool's physical environment displayed a variety of visuals, among them pictures from daily life, messages to parents, children, and teachers, weekly plans and more. In many places one could read small reminders for teachers, parents, and children about communication, how to create a warm, welcoming and supporting environment and how to scaffold, support and extend language. Welcome greetings in different languages were displayed on the walls, along with flags from around the world. Pictures of the children displaying different activities supportive of the preschool's goals, autonomy, creativity, solution-based thinking, and positive actions, were hanging at children's height. The pictures provided children, teachers, and parents with examples of what kinds of daily practices were conducive to those goals. One of the messages displayed on the wall focused on the importance of giving children time, space, encouragement and support to practice and master new skills: "If we don't give time to children for practicing new tasks with appropriate support from adults, or restrict their autonomy by doing everything for them, we disable children and leave them with negative self-efficacy belief".

4.2.1 Attitudes and beliefs

All the teachers in the study explained that they had an inclusive view towards children and believed in children's potential. They did not want to label children and found it at times distracting that we were discussing multilingual children as one group of children. They looked at children as individuals with diverse strengths and needs: "We are all just like we are... foreign, Icelandic, disabled, non-disabled, more just individuals" (Petra 1). Halla explained that she usually did: "not define children with this [multilingual label]" (Halla 1) and Birta said: "They are just children... we are focusing on helping all children" (Birta 1).

The teachers' view was that diversity was the norm and they considered it to be their responsibility to address the diverse needs of all children. Sif shared her humanitarian view of children and families and how she looked at it as her responsibility to respect all people regardless of background:

> I'm very interested in the human being, just in people, not to mention children and that's exactly where you see human nature. It may seem very deep, but it's just the root of everything, or it's my opinion that if you're willing to look at everyone's human rights and respect them and how the person appears... then I think you can deal with a lot (Sif 1).

All the teachers discussed the children and families with respect and cared for their wellbeing and participation. Some of them mentioned one boy at the preschool as an example of how important it was for all children to succeed, but they did not tell me his name or any details, so I never knew who he was. Even though he was living in a very challenging situation, they did not discuss his reality in a judgemental tone but in a respectful, caring, culturally responsive, and supportive manner, avoiding the deficit model. Petra described challenges that he and the family were facing and told me about the change that occurred gradually when he started to feel better and how his wellbeing was mirrored in his increased participation and actions:

> He starts to flourish, starts playing, starts talking more and here the other day he was walking down the hall and I heard him, but I did not believe it was him, I knew this voice... and he continues on a flying journey, so we are always saying "you see how important well-being is" (Petra 1).

Some of the teachers explained that when they met teachers from other preschools, they often experienced attitudes towards growing diversity that were very different from the attitude emerging at The Circle. Petra stressed that she felt like they were in a different place at The Circle than in many other preschools when it came to organising practices to meet diverse needs: "I think here everyone agrees that we need to work differently" (Petra 1). She found it important to be able to refer to the curriculum and more inclusive practices when they had to support their vision and goals, both while discussing their practices with people outside the preschool and with parents or when new staff was recruited. Petra explained that sometimes people who are starting to work in a preschool just select the one closest to their homes, without acknowledging the prevailing practices, ideologies, and realities at the preschool:

> It takes a lot of energy to try to convince people that this is not an idea that fits in here... because here according to this curriculum these are the practices but "yes, it is always done like this somewhere", "yes it is done like that there but here, according to this curriculum it is done like this..."

> prejudices that are disgustingly difficult, you know the phrase "I'm not prejudiced BUT" (Petra 2).

Some of the parents expressed their attitudes and beliefs regarding The Circle and gave examples of what they themselves had to overcome while learning new practices and values at the preschool. They also stressed how important it was for all children to experience respect and social justice within the preschool. One mother explained how her daughter had been using negative and humiliating words at home about a boy at the preschool because of his skin colour. The mother was not content with her daughter's attitude and went to the division leader to discuss if this was a problem and explained that there was a need to act on the prejudices and show respect:

> She was talking like that, it was a boy who was just dark, he was from another country, I do not know, so she said something like that brown boy and we... you never say this again, he is just your friend, here everyone is same so I just started talking to Halla [the division leader]... watch her [our daughter] and listen to what they are talking and then just stop... or explain to her... this is not at all the way we want her to be at all, it does not matter black or not... we are foreigners here too you understand (Mother 1).

Parents described the need to act on prejudices and negative attitudes towards immigrants and how important it was that all children would learn to show empathy and kindness: "Be good to all the others... good human beings" (Parents 4). One father shared his general worries about bullying and prejudices among the children, something that he did not experience among the preschool children. He believed more effort was put on social competence and teaching the children about respect and friendship in the preschool than at the compulsory school. Still, he also made clear that it was not only the responsibility of the compulsory school or the preschool to act on prejudices. The parents are also responsible, he argued, and gave an example of how he acted on racism when his son started first grade:

> Yes [he used] just the ugliest word that [country] is using and this comes you understand in the first grade after... having been in school for a few months... and definitely did not come from children who are in the first grade... there are a lot of families... they allow children more than maybe should be allowed... and parents do not care about how to talk at home and such and they [the children] take everything with them to school and... not all teachers can just understand everything and it is difficult to keep track... and it was such a short discussion with him and me often... like this (Father 4).

Another parent highlighted her worries regarding the possibility that her son would experience exclusion and bullying, something she had experienced herself, and she

stressed how important it was that he would become strong and empowered to fight against prejudices:

> There can be such a period where he experiences himself differently from others because of language... then I know kids can be a little cruel and that's just what I'm thinking, and I've gotten into this myself... hopefully he is just going to be strong enough (Mother 2).

Findings from my observation and video recordings show that there were examples where children participated in activities, both initiated by themselves and organised by the teachers, where respect for diversity was at the core. In this excerpt from an observation, two boys had the initiative to show me their portfolios, creating a space where identity and diversity was in focus:

> Raguel showed me his folder and was very happy and cheerful to show me the pictures of himself in the folder. He described what he was doing and then a picture where his palm was printed in blue. We started talking about his hand and whether it had grown, how big it was. We started to compare my hand with his hand and put them together and then another boy, Einar, came and started to measure his palm with the palm of Raguels and discuss which was smaller and which was bigger and also how many fingers there were. Even though they did not have the same size, the number of fingers was equal but different in colour, one was black and the other white but they did not mention that, just touched each other's palms and compared and counted fingers (O 2).

In the following excerpt Sif had organised an activity with three girls where the focus was on words and concepts related to family vocabulary, diversity, and respect for diverse family types, single parents, gay parents, married couples with one or many children, parents and children with visible disability, diverse looks, and religions. The game was a pairing game where a picture of a child was paired with a picture of a family, and this called for discussions between Sif and the girls on the types of family the pictures presented and the family members. Sif connected the words to the families of the girls and used words and body language to include all of them in the game and the conversation:

> S: **What do you have here** (Sif reaches out to Ina, a multilingual girl who had just started preschool a week earlier and looks at her pictures) **the family yes and this is the child** (takes the picture with the child and compares to Ina's face and says with a smiling voice) **is this Ina?**
> I: **No** (laughs a lot and the girls laugh with her too)

S: **This is not Ina no** (laughs with them) **no, this is a little boy** (Ina takes the picture again) **and here is his family...**
I: **Here and here** (Ina points to the picture of the boy and where he is on the picture with the family)
S: **Yes, this is him** (Sif smiling, confirms what Ina is saying)
A: **But why is he so angry?** (Adda an Icelandic-speaking girl uses deeper vocabulary in her discussions with Sif and Ina)
S: **Maybe he's rather like that** (grins in front of Adda, looks her in the eyes and makes a face) **is he not rather like someone who is fooling around or what?** (Adda reaches for the picture) **maybe he's angry, I do not know** (Adda starts making faces but Sif continues to discuss Ina's picture and points to the persons on the picture while discussing them) **look, this is his mom** (points to the mother and the boy) **his mom**
I: **Mom** (Ina repeats the words Sif is using)
S: **And brother**
I: **Brother**
S: **Yes** (Sif stretches forward and points to the picture) **just like you have a brother** (points to Ina who laughs and looks at the girls with a smile)
V: **And also, sister** (Vanja, a multilingual girl points out that there is also a sister there on the picture)
S: **Yes and also sister** (Sif affirms Vanja's comment about the sister) (VR M12F).

Some of the parents explained how the experience of having their children in a preschool in Iceland had changed their attitudes and beliefs regarding different matters. They highlighted that this experience provided them with valuable information about Icelandic society, language, culture, and customs. One of the challenges for parents was to get used to the outdoor play that their children participated in every day, and some of the parents explained that this had been a total shock when they realised that they had to send their children outdoors to play in all kinds of weather. The parents did not all agree whether this was good or bad and sometimes the parents of the same child did not share the same view on this. Still, all of them mentioned that getting used to their children playing outside was a part of adjusting to the preschool's culture and important for their children to participate fully with the other children. This was most difficult in the beginning, but they became used to it as time passed:

> How is this possible, it's just rain and crazy weather outside and just everyone going out, this is just a rule... it was really hard for us like this in the beginning... during adjustment period then I was just with her and she was like that, in a rain suit and she was so small... I found it really hard but then you just get used to it and now you see that she's just looking

> forward to being able to go out and play in the rain and just like that jump in the puddles, this is just such a change from our country... if there is no sun outside just like this rain then just everyone is at home, there is no one outside in the rain (Parents 1).

Another parent said that she had found the napping conditions at the preschool shocking, especially when she realised that the children slept on mattresses on the floor during recess time:

> We are from [name of country] and for me it was a shock first. They sleep on the floor, the house was so cold and like that, but then they just get used to it so just stop thinking like that, I'm in Iceland and they... all Icelandic children are raised like that in Iceland and such weather... I just stopped thinking about it and I just somehow, this will be it (Mother 4).

But for her spouse this was also exciting and a part of adjusting to new values and an experience that was shaping the identity of their children and giving them an opportunity to become part of Icelandic preschool culture. This father made clear that for him sleeping on mattresses and getting used to different practices was fun:

> In [name of country] children just sleep in a bed and such, but I just had fun, like children always just found it much more fun to be in a tent... and I just thought it was really good but there are many from abroad who just "why are you doing this..." I just think it's fine, just real Vikings... yes, I like that they can be dirty, they can just be wet, and they just learn to have fun and just sleep on the floor and these first days with the kids in preschool... I just liked sleeping just with my boy on the floor just to put him to sleep (Father 4).

Attitudes and beliefs play a significant role in creating a space where prejudices are acted on and all members of the preschool's community learn from each other. Attitudes and beliefs, both within the preschool and families, affect the shaping of children's identity. Sif explained that in her mind there is a continuous need to work with attitudes and beliefs:

> We need to work a lot more with attitudes, it is the attitudes that are stopping so much, there are our attitudes the teachers', and there are the attitudes of parents, both are stopping cooperation that... leads to something (Sif 1).

4.2.2 Identity development

In relation to the overall aim of the preschool's curriculum and its core values, the goal was to work inclusively with all children and families and provide appropriate education

and care. The focus was on supporting children and families in their everyday lives and ensure that everyone felt welcomed and belonging to the preschool's community. Issues regarding the identity of children and parents were raised in many chapters of the curriculum, focusing on children and families as capable and strong. According to the curriculum, it was the teacher's responsibility to affirm children's identity and facilitate the agency and self-efficacy beliefs of the children.

Language and identity are closely related and even though the teachers wanted to support the language development of multilingual children, they experienced that for some children too much focus on the language development without supporting children's self-efficacy and sense of belonging sometimes resulted in a negative sense of self. Halla gave an example of a multilingual boy who had been facing multiple challenges at home and in preschool. His language development in Icelandic was very slow and the teachers had been focusing a lot on the language, providing him with special support for language when the thing he needed most was care and sense of belonging:

> There is one example in my division where we see a boy who has not been feeling good and his identity was rather broken but now, he is all getting stronger, and he has just become much happier, and he just suddenly started to talk quite a lot. [His] language development was much poorer and comprehension and there is just a lot happening, just with increased wellbeing and becoming more confident with oneself (Halla 1).

Halla described that what the teachers did was to direct their attention first and foremost to the boy's wellbeing and provide him a space to feel secure and safe. Little by little this care and understanding had a positive effect on his learning and sense of self:

> When we were realising what was happening to him that he was so miserable, what we did was to show him care... to always be there for him... it's ok to come and get a hug and we just had to stop... to put so much emphasis on his language development because most of all he needed this care and become ready to come to the teacher... he never wanted to come to us or be with us and just a month later he was ready... he felt good he could sit in our laps (Halla 1).

One of the practices that the teachers discussed as beneficial, both for the children's language development and to facilitate positive identity, was the use of bilingual books of communication that they co-created with children and families. Dísa said that the books created a space of understanding and an opportunity for the child to discuss the preschool experiences at home and the home experience at the preschool with the teachers:

> The communication books are of course brilliant... it is of course the learning as we are doing this, pasting pictures and writing and even saying what we are doing in a way that creates understanding... yes then perhaps the parents send back what they were doing over the weekend or something, it's also a lot of fun and then we can have a chance to discuss it with the child... you show interest in what the child is doing (Dísa 1).

The pictures in the books were supportive in the way that diverse family and home experiences were given value and respect through discussion on different family realities and background. The children's sense of self and belonging within the preschool's community was supported when they got a chance to look at or choose the pictures they wanted to put in the book, as Freyja highlighted:

> We often allow the children to be with us when we are cutting out the pictures and pasting them into the book... many of them find that this is really *my* book, this is a bit like *mine,* and they are showing the book to others and then maybe there is a picture of your friend with you doing something and then maybe there's "oh here you are too..." I feel a little bit that they are proud of themselves, this is mine, something they can show (Freyja 1).

The process of making the book was co-constructive where the participation and autonomy of the child was important. Here Sif gives an example of the making of a bilingual book with a newly arrived child:

> We always put in something to start with in the beginning of the book, which is a picture of her preschool and something inside the preschool, and then she takes a picture of something at the preschool that she wants to take a picture of and then this is... her book... nothing has been decided in advance what will go into it, she should manage it in collaboration with the home and someone here (Sif 2).

During observation, one of the teachers in the oldest division stopped me and wanted to show me a bilingual picture book they had created with a boy who was making very slow progress in Icelandic, which was affecting his behaviour, sense of self, and sense of belonging. She explained that his behaviour had been similar to that of younger children because he did not use words to communicate and did not understand the other children. This resulted in conflicts between him and the other children where he was usually the one using violence to get his meaning across. The teachers started to observe his behaviour and look for appropriate practices to support his development. They started to develop a bilingual book of communication with pictures from the preschool that provided him with a tool to understand better what was going on and gave him a chance to mirror himself in the situation and discuss that with teachers and family. The parents put pictures from home, his niece who was fluent in Icelandic

supported linguistic communication between home and preschool, and together the child, the family, and the teachers co-created a tool for shared understanding. The teacher showed me the book and described how the making of it started to turn things around:

> What became much better when he started to have this visual communication was his behaviour and everything just improved and he could make connections... he has a niece, she is a teenager... fluent in Icelandic and she is actually our interpreter, she connects [home and preschool] and we can easily talk to her, and she is really ready to help him with Icelandic. And he is now, instead of jumping or hitting in order to make contact with the children he has started speaking at least five words in a sentence [in Icelandic] ... he was so obsessed with the book that it fell out of its cover (VR M1 I-H).

Most of the parents expressed how they and their children enjoyed looking at pictures from the preschool at home and discussing what was happening. The pictures were accessible in different ways; on the homepage, on the walls at the preschool, in portfolios involving pedagogical documentation or in the bilingual books of communication. These parents mentioned that they frequently looked at the preschool's website to find pictures of their daughter participating in daily activities, not only in her own division but also with children from other groups, and usually there were lots of pictures of her: "We always check you know the picture... because [daughter] is always around you know... always there, she is always there, she is probably like, take the other group, and she is probably there" (Parents 5).

Some of the teachers and parents made clear that the cultural and linguistic background of the children was a strong factor in shaping their identity. Most of them expressed their wish for the children to be able to develop a positive identity where the Icelandic culture, preschool culture, and the culture and language of the parents would be accepted. The parents wanted their language and culture to be a part of their children's identity but also that the children would become strong and belong in the Icelandic school community. The teachers described their will to learn from the children and families and create a space where multiple identities could be fostered instead of stereotypical or fixed ideas on identity and self. The teachers realised that even though the parents' culture and language were strong factors in shaping the children's identity, it was not necessarily connected to national origin but rather to the diverse home or family cultures of the children. This understanding provided an opportunity for the children and families to define their identity themselves, as Halla explained:

> Most of them [the children] are born here in Iceland and some have not even gone to their home country or to their country of origin or anything like that, and there is no guarantee that they will go there... so that is why

> we are focusing on the home culture. That is what we want the preschool to connect to, whether it is related to their origin, home country or not, and as I say in many cases their home country is just Iceland, you were born and raised here and even speak better Icelandic than the language in your home (Halla 1).

All the parents I interviewed kept a close relationship with extended family in their country of origin or in Iceland. Many of them visited relatives abroad regularly and in some of the families grandparents or other members of the family lived in Iceland. All the parents thought it was important for their children to keep contact with the extended family, become multilingual, and have opportunities to connect to their background. Some of the parents explained how excited the children where when they visited their parents' country of origin and how that was a part of shaping their identity:

> Yes I think it is because we want her to know where she comes from and it's a bit that in Iceland everything is good and awesome... but we want her to know that she is also from [name of country] so it's inside of her and she does not forget that our traditions are like that... when I tell her that we have bought a ticket she is so happy and tells everyone that she is going to [name of country] and "I will be with grandma and grandpa" (Parents 1).

One mother said that she found it important to keep the relationship with her country of origin if something would come up, for example if she would not be able to care for her son and that knowing the language and culture was important and a huge part of her son's life:

> I never know what's going to happen in life, but I think it's likely that we keep in touch with [name of country] if something should happen... when we go to [name of country] he is doing very well in talking to other people... he likes to go there and often, after returning home, he discusses the trip for a long time, and it is like he is missing it (Mother 2).

In my observations and interviews I encountered different practices, both during child-initiated play and teacher-organised activities, where sense of self, sense of belonging, and respect for different background was in focus. On Ash Wednesday the teachers and children from all divisions gathered in the central area. The children and the teachers were dressed in costumes and the children, one at a time, participated in hitting the *cat in the barrel*. This is an Icelandic tradition typical for this day, where candy, snacks, or treats are put in a barrel and when it cracks open, the children share the content. After hitting the barrel, teachers and children sang together and danced to music that the teachers played. The following excerpt from an observation gives an example of how the background knowledge of Magda was activated during singing and dancing in her language:

> Then the kids continued to dance, and it was very popular to dance and sing along with the Elsa song from the movie *Frozen* and many of the girls were dressed in Elsa costumes and then one girl, Magda, comes and asks to get *Frozen*, the song, in Polish. Birta, the teacher who was sitting at the computer controlling the music found the song in Polish on *YouTube* and then Magda sang along and knew all the lyrics and the staff who were in the area sang along and some of the children tried to do the same in Polish (O 5).

Some of the teachers indicated a deep understanding of the need for practices that provided space for children and families to be themselves and where teachers, children, and parents could learn from each other. Sif explained that for some, connecting to personal interest and home culture was more important than connecting to ethnical background or national culture, while others needed opportunities to make those connections. Being culturally responsive and showing interest in diversity was for her the key for moving forward:

> We are, at least few of us here, looking at culture as personal, that you do not have to go and learn about your [national] culture to be able to come and show your own culture but you are who you are at any given time and then you can just go to your personal culture bank and if this means being proud of the country your parents come from or maybe you were born there then it's just great, then it's definitely very interesting. But it does not have to be so, it can also be something just happening in your life, whether you are a child or a parent right now and is such a big part of you and your personal culture that you really want it to be heard and... *Menningarmót* is connected to those projects that I have always favoured most, which is to show and be heard... come and tell and show... then I think we are on the right track... it is about me listening to you and being able to read you and hopefully you can listen to me and understand me and if the whole world could be like that (Sif 1).

Menningarmót[2] was carried out with all the children and families at least once a year. The main goal of the project was to affirm multiple identities and give children an opportunity to participate in an event where they could connect to their own lives, discuss what interested and motivated them, and learn from each other. During the event they displayed artefacts such as pictures, toys, videos, art, food, or other things they selected with their parents and brought to the preschool. Usually, the event was an open house invitation for all families, and sometimes parents and teachers participated by sharing what they thought was most important in their lives. In some cases, the

[2] *Menningarmót — The Flying Carpet: Intercultural Encounters*, designed by Kristín R. Vilhjálmsdóttir, see: http://tungumalatorg.is/menningarmot/.

teachers made the event smaller just with the children in a single division. The project was highly connected to language learning since the children got an opportunity to mirror themselves in the things and the experiences they chose to bring and then discuss those with multiple audiences, peers, parents, teachers, and extended family members. Birta described *Menningarmót* when it was carried out only with the children and explained how it gave all of them a chance to learn about each other, opened spaces for discussions about diverse interests and strengths, and empowered children to practice Icelandic, while telling others about their own personal culture:

> then of course they [the children] brought their own culture from home and were sharing it. It was a lot of fun… one child at a time came up and shared… for example one boy brought his skiing gear and he belongs to a skiing family and he was talking about when he went skiing, then one girl brought a teddy bear she got from her cousin in [name of country] and she was telling about him and one girl brought the teddy bear that she always sleeps with at night, just to tell… this naturally makes them become like so independent (Birta 1).

Parents also referred to *Menningarmót* and how they experienced that the project gave children an opportunity to become proud of their background, while learning about each other. These parents explained that the project was not linked to national or ethnic culture but to children's interests and that this provided an opportunity for the parents and the children to learn about the strengths and personal interests of each other:

> Two weeks ago, it was also culture day… but it was not about which country we are from, it was something about like [name of daughter] she could bring something like the toy that she really liked or something, it was also on the table all the things from kids and name of the kids… I really liked it this was good…yes to learn about, and the kids they were curious like "what is this" (Parents 5).

Petra described that through practices like *Menningarmót* the teachers were able to provide a space not only for the children to show and talk about their culture and interest but also for the parents and sometimes themselves. She had participated in the project and brought minerals to show since collecting minerals was her passion. Bringing some of them to the preschool during *Menningarmót* gave her an opportunity to share her personal interest and culture, something that she found essential for all. It also increased her empathy when she realised that she had to define what the personal culture or interest was that she wanted to share:

> *Menningarmót* are great. Even though this is an activity for the children and that the child should show the home culture, you can see how parents also want to shine through because they are also proud of themselves,

> and like the children who have brought something both Icelandic or not... something from home from parents to show... and just this thought because we [the teachers] also bring something and then you go through it yourself "what characterises me" just having to think about this as well (Petra 1).

I observed one *Menningarmót* event during my study. Many of the parents or some other members of the children's families participated in the event. In some instances, the parents were with their children, showing and introducing their personal stories. An example of this is the mother of Nora who was sharing a cake. One family with a refugee background was new to the preschool and none of them shared a common language with the teachers. This excerpt from an observation gives an example of the event and the atmosphere:

> I tasted a cake from Nora's mother who was offering a cake typical for their home culture. One Polish-speaking teacher, who just started working again after being away at a job in another preschool, was so happy to be back at The Circle. She was looking at photo albums with one mother and together they discussed the pictures in their language. Dísa was walking around taking pictures to document the event and simultaneously she chatted with children and parents. The daughter of the new multilingual family came with her parents and older sister who all greeted the division leader warmly and it seems that they have started to build trust in communication. The girl immediately started to play and was interested in the event. She sang for her parents Master Jacob in English and another language, and they were quite surprised that she knew this. One of the girls was sharing an illustrated story that she had co-created with her father after watching a documentary with him on Princess Margarita who had lived in a castle in Italy. When I came to the girl, she showed me the story and told me about it (O 22).

Findings from interviews with teachers and parents show that there were other activities that the teachers planned where the goal was to provide a space to learn about and share own and others' interests, cultures and strengths while giving the children an opportunity to practice Icelandic, refer to their home languages and discuss their personal background. One of the activities was *Töfrataskan* (e. The Magic Box). This was a small box that the children chose an item from home to display in. Then they brought the box back to show and tell others their story. Parents got good intructions for the activity in Icelandic, English, and Polish. Freyja explained that the activity was connected to various learning outcomes, children's background, personal experience, and interest:

> The children have sometimes brought something from home that they are showing us and we have had a box like this that went home and they could bring something from home to show us, it is also kind of like practicing to stand up in front of the group and talk about it, this was kind of connected to a lot of things, in fact kind of various training and some were bringing maybe some toys and others brought something related maybe to the [national culture]. One brought a national costume, some kind of hat that was related to her national costume (Freyja 1).

One day during observation I had a discussion with Dísa where she was making a pedagogical documentation revolving around a child that had brought the magic box back from home. Dísa thought the activity was very successful and explained that some children were so excited when it was their turn that they did not sleep the night before:

> The pedagogical documentation Dísa was doing involved pictures of the box, pictures of the children when they presented the items they brought, and a short text describing the activity. The boy Dísa was documenting had brought a picture of his father in the box. The father works far away from Reykjavík, and they meet irregularly. It meant a lot to the boy to be able to discuss his father and show everyone a picture of him (O 22).

One mother explained that the preschool was regularly planning events and days where the children could bring something from home that was connected to their life. Her daughter liked to bring toys, books, or pictures to the preschool, and she could do it whenever she wanted but this was also organised by the teachers, the mother explained, to give all the children an opportunity to share their personal interests and background, and get practice in discussing their own home culture:

> They have many days they can bring [something from home]... every last Friday [in the month] they have got like colour day... and this last meeting... they told me it was going to be like they got some box and every kid... can bring something from home to show kids and explain what it is and everything and like they want to teach them how to... share, to talk and share, you know with, her own things (Mother 5).

Halla explained how the culture of the preschool also affected the children's sense of self and became a part of their cultural background. Linking home and school with different practices was therefore an important factor for both children and parents:

> The preschool is a big part of their culture also and the culture that is here... but to connect this together, home and preschool, I think this is some part of it and so also for parents to connect too, what is my home culture, and addressing what is helping my child [in the preschool] or what are we doing here at home (Halla 1).

4.2.3 Agency and active participation in play and daily activities

Findings from observation and video recordings show how the teachers facilitated children's autonomy, participation, and agency during daily practices. They include many examples both from child-initiated activities and activities organised by the teachers, where the children were empowered to find solutions or manage tasks while the teachers scaffolded and guided their participation with words and gestures. During Ash Wednesday I observed how Dísa guided a girl who wanted to throw away a plastic bag. Usually, they did not have plastic bags around, so the girl was not sure where the bin was, but this day they got some fruit in a plastic bag from the cat in the barrel and Dísa guided her actions:

> Dísa did not take the plastic bag from the girl to throw away but took her to where the recycling bins were located, showed them to her and read to her the words on the bin explaining where to put the plastic. Dísa told her with words and gestures what to do instead of taking the bag and throwing it away herself (O 5).

In the preschool's curriculum it is emphasised that teachers have a supporting role in children's play. Findings from observations and video recordings show that often the teachers were active during children's free play, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

> Birta and Halla walked between the spaces where the kids were playing and reacted to their play. It happened both in the corner of the block building where Birta took pictures and where one of the girls had been drawing numbers on a piece of paper on the floor. Birta and Halla noticed that and first Halla went to the computer and invited the girl to look at numbers in the computer and she started to look for numbers which they both enjoyed very much. Another girl expressed her interest and proceeded to the computer. Then Birta came and invited them to print out the numbers, she accompanied the girls to the office where they could print out. The girls participated enthusiastically in the whole printing process while Birta explained how it worked (O 6).

Some of the teachers highlighted the importance of being present in children's free play in order to act on it when children had difficulties connecting socially, and access the play to guide children's active participation with peers. During the first session of collaborative analysis with Dísa, Halla, and Sif and after watching a video with them interacting with children during free play, Dísa and Sif discussed their understanding of presence and participation:

> S: We must not be dominant in the game …
> D: That's my opinion too, I do not think I should be in the lead role in the game

S: Of course, you should not be
D: No, I do not think so
S: But you have a huge role as a teacher there
D: Yes, one fully realises that... be there and show interest, show interest in what they do
S: We naturally need to offer the material, and then we naturally need to look a little at these children who need social stimulation, help them accessing the play is something that can take a very long time and happens in small steps, just that they feel that someone is interested in them participating in the play, if it is not the children who are interested in a certain child... then it is so important that we show the child interest, that we care for the child to participate in the play, so that you are always in the play paying attention... always doing something small, and small, and small because then the child will be empowered (CA 1).

During mealtimes the children were supported in their independence and autonomy. Children were responsible for filling their own glasses and serving themselves. If something was needed from the kitchen, the teachers usually asked the children to go and fetch more and used supportive language to scaffold and guide the activity. In the cloak room the children were guided in putting on their clothes according to their ability, but most of the children in the Green division were motivated to dress themselves. Those children in need of more support were encouraged and praised for their effort to try or succeed. The teachers discussed how they used a mixture of empowering strategies and linguistic scaffolding to guide the children and build their resilience in tasks that were challenging. Birta described how rewarding this was also for her, when the children mastered the tasks that she had been scaffolding and guiding:

> I really like to see when they take a leap forward, something they cannot do and then all of a sudden they can do it because I was helping them to learn it, I really like this a lot... we have been putting a lot of emphasis on [the children] learning to help themselves in the cloak room and one boy who always said "I can not, I can not" threw the sweater on the floor and started crying "I can not" and so it was always "yes you can do this, just try to put one hand first in the sleeve, put the hand first in one sleeve and I will help you with the other" and then all of a sudden he could dress himself... now he can dress himself in the sweater and the pants and the jacket, yes this observing when they flourish (Birta 1).

Observation from a trip to the library gives an example of how Halla used supportive language while guiding the children when they had to undress and dress again, an

activity she had carried out before with the children and referred to when they came to the library:

> Halla asked the children if they remembered what was the best way to keep their cap and mittens in order not to lose them. Some of them started to put the cap and the mittens into the sleeve of their jacket and Halla encouraged them and used the appropriate words while showing them how she put her own mittens into the cap and then the cap into the sleeve of the jacket. The children all undressed themselves and Halla guided them during the activity but did not step in to do it for them (O 4).

Praising and positive feedback plays a big role in building children's self-efficacy belief, motivation and thus sense of self. Dísa described how praising and giving the children positive feedback was a big part of boosting their self-efficacy, but at the same time she found it important to connect the feedback to children's actions:

> Praise, it has an enormous effect, you see them [the children] uplifted... you must not praise them for everything... I think it is quite natural to praise them when they are diligent... and yes, they know that if I praise them, then they know that they have done things well and of course this trust, I also think it is very important that they are able to come to you if there is something and look for support (Dísa 1).

One of the pedagogical practices carried out to empower the children was to give them roles and responsibilities that contributed to the preschool community. Some of those responsibilities were given to the children throughout the day. They included asking them to help someone or to get something that was needed here and now, such as food from the kitchen during meals, and other responsibilities and roles that were systematically organised by the teachers. They were related to different activities like sweeping the cloak room, taking care of the recycling bin, preparing the meals, selecting books from the preschool's library and such. The roles were usually carried out by two children together, giving them the opportunity to support and learn from each other while guided by the teacher. Some teachers described how engaged and empowered the children seemed when carrying out these tasks and Birta explained how this directly empowers them:

> If they are getting a positive response then it helps them with what they are able to do and that encourages a positive identity... if they are the *snyrtimeistari* (e. The master of keeping things tidy) then they are completely "wow I am *snyrtimeistari*, look how cool it was when I was sweeping" then they become very happy and know that they can do this (Birta 1).

Findings from observations show how excited and engaged the children became when taking on these roles. This excerpt from an observation describes when two children, Vanja and Daniel, got the role of being *Endurvinnarinn* (e. The Recycler) and how Dísa empowered and guided the children during the task:

> Dísa informed Daniel that he and Vanja are the recyclers and asked him to go to find Vanja and tell her. It was as if he grew about half a meter, he got up and ran to Vanja. "We are the recyclers" he said as soon as he saw her. Dísa led them through the activity by showing and telling what to do without doing things for them. They collected the rubbish bin with the paper, but it was full, and they pushed the paper further down into the rubbish bin and at the same time Dísa verbally described what they were doing. Then Vanja and Daniel folded the milk containers and stuffed three to four containers into an empty one. They chatted with Dísa all the time about what they were doing, she gave them positive feedback and repeated what they were saying and doing. She praised them for being diligent and when they had put everything in the bucket, they held it together all the way outside to the big recycling container where they threw everything away (O 4).

One of the most important roles that the teachers played in the children's daily life was to give them space to belong and be accepted as human beings, as Petra explained. This sometimes involved that the teachers themselves had to apply different practices for different children and not treat everyone the same. For Petra, it was the main responsibility of the teachers to build on the children's strengths and interests, understand and learn about their background and meet them where they were with appropriate practices to strengthen their identity. In her mind, this was the prerequisite of learning: "I think this is our main job, to build the sense of self, a positive sense of self because that is the foundation of all learning" (Petra 1).

4.3 Acting on diversity — equity or equality?

To develop and sustain the inclusive and active participation of children and families and ensure social justice for all, it is very important to look critically at practices that have the potential to include or exclude stakeholders in the process of transforming education for a diverse group of children. To meet different needs of all children teachers were seeking to be sensitive and aware of how to act on diversity with inclusive and culturally responsive practices. All the teachers participating in the study explained that they had changed practices to meet growing diversity, even though they did not always have all the resources needed. They had also reflected critically and collectively on their practices and strived to build a consensus to act on challenges that they had to meet. This involved developing critical and culturally responsive practices where diverse needs and strengths were met, not by treating everybody the same or

fitting all the children into the same frame. The preschool curriculum emphasised that those practices and their pedagogy was grounded in the Human Rights Policy of Reykjavík city and the Multicultural Policy for Schools and Leisure in Reykjavík, along with a strong focus on the UNESCO Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that the practices should be in the best interest of every child. In this subchapter I will analyse findings related to inclusive participation of children and families and the way children's learning and development is assessed and documented.

4.3.1 Inclusive participation

Findings from interviews, observations, and video recordings show how the teachers aimed for inclusive participation of children and families even though it was challenging at times. Challenges came from different sources such as having enough manpower, absence of teachers, appropriate knowledge, or time to respond in a way they believed was the best. Petra explained that the teachers' competence in working with children and families with diverse needs was growing and that they had more tools and more teachers with knowledge and skills than before. Still, it was challenging when many teachers were absent or when teachers did not have the experience or knowledge to work with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children. Their goal was to work with children in an inclusive manner and provide them with appropriate support. Instead of taking a child out of the group, the focus was on empowering the children to participate in daily activities with the other children:

> At least we have the knowledge, sometimes we do not have the manpower for it, during good days we have it completely… then there are extra people who are ready, who are willing to intervene, and you know, you do not just have one child, you not only have X but you have the group X belongs to (Petra 2).

Freyja explained that they had consciously decided to take the steps needed to meet diverse needs, especially when children and families were experiencing challenges:

> There is a very diverse group here and we have completely decided to take this step to support people… you have heard that this is not the preschool's role, this is not our responsibility as such, but when you see people in a situation that they cannot handle and they need support and it is beneficial for the child that this support is provided, then I find it more important that we take this step to support people in doing things that are not part of your job description on some paper, you know rather than saying "stop, this is their problem" (Freyja 1).

Some teachers also mentioned that they had been criticised by teachers from other preschools for stretching out and providing responsive practices. They had been asked if it was their role and responsibility and whether they were stretching too far. Petra had

already found the answer to those questions and explained: "If you do something... then everyone says, "and what's next"... and I have already found the answer "Just what the child needs"" (Petra 1). She stressed that it was crucial for them at The Circle to provide support for families with immigrant background and low social and economic status, especially those that did not have a supporting community around them. She explained that the teachers know the system but some parents, like those new to Icelandic society, do not and that was, in her mind, very important to act on this with appropriate practices. These challenges could include financial problems of parents or guiding parents in getting the services and support their child needed:

> Yes we naturally step much further and closer to people and sometimes you are just in the role of a social worker which I think is just one of my roles... people in arrears [not paying the preschool fee] there is one case now... the boy is still here because I and the service centre are trying to find some solution... [other kinds of support involving] registering people with speech pathologists, talking to a service centre, one boy who is from Poland and there was a suspicion of autism, what support can they [parents] get more than an Icelandic psychologist who speaks a complex technical language, how can we help them? (Petra 2).

Some of the parents described their experience with the preschool in cases where their children needed extra support, something that had to be provided from the wider support system outside the preschool. They felt that the teachers were stretching to do what was in their power to support their children but were critical of the city's extended support system. They made it clear that everything took much too long and was too complicated:

> They [the teachers] are such great girls... Freyja, I think she did everything she could with the material she had and with the time she got... but what we needed was not from the preschool, I felt... too many who do some unnecessary work instead of doing what the children need... during these few years... we met like many, many women who were just doing some reports... this was just a report on top of reports that just go somewhere... so everyone knew, it was confirmed this is like this... but I do not know this would be no different in [our country]... just much worse... then just he would be just sent to a special school (Parents 4).

When discussing multilingual children, their needs and strengths, the teachers in the study avoided the deficiency model. Instead, they used empowering words and a discourse with high expectations and hopes. They explained that it was their role to change practices to meet diversity and not to blame the children. Sif explained that the children were never the problem, the biggest challenge was always to get all the teachers to become responsive and provide appropriate practices:

> The main challenges involve getting all the staff to... work according to our curriculum and understand why... the children never fail... there are a million ways to do this, and you just use what is needed, those are the challenges to get the staff to work according to these practices, get the staff to read the child and approach the child... according to its needs (Sif 1).

Both parents and teachers described practices that mirrored inclusion and responsiveness towards diversity. Petra gave an example of a discussion she had with the children during mealtime one day after she observed a girl, whose parents were from Asia, holding her knife and fork in a very different manner than the other children. She responded to this in an inclusive and culturally responsive way including the other children around the table in the discussion:

> At lunchtime, I noticed that one girl who has parents from [name of country] held the cutlery differently, held them with one hand, or you know the way you hold chop sticks [asked if she knew chop sticks], she immediately said yes, and immediately understood what I was talking about and then I asked a girl who is also from [same country] and sat next to her if she also had chop sticks. She did not understand what I was talking about, but this first girl whispered something to her that I did not understand and then she replied I have those in my home, golden, brown, and gold coloured so naturally there was a lot of discussion on this at the table... one boy said it's not knitting needles but food needles[3] you knit with knitting needles! (Petra 1).

For parents it was important that the preschool acted on diversity with inclusive practices. They all shared their concern regarding their children's participation, sense of self and belonging in the group, and how important it was that the teachers' practices were aimed at building a community where all children could play and be together regardless of background. These parents explained that they found the teachers very supportive, that they were aiming for inclusion and avoiding the marginalisation of immigrant children within the group:

> The preschool helps a lot in such matters, there are some kids who are from abroad and you do not see the difference whether they are foreigners or Icelanders they are all together which is just very good because at first, I thought it would be something like foreign kids would go separately... I was working so much in [name of upper secondary school in Reykjavík] in the office and then I experienced rather lot that the

[3] The Icelandic word for chop sticks is 'prjónar' or needles. The same word is used for chop sticks and knitting needles in Icelandic.

> foreigners were in groups together and the Icelanders were not together with them, which was very bad, I was worried about her [the daughter] what would happen at the preschool, but it has not happened, it has been just very good (Father 1).

For the teachers, equity and inclusion in practices and an empowering discourse were very important. Part of their collaborative reflection through the years involved discussing what tools to use to document and assess children's learning and development.

4.3.2 Assessment and equity

Findings show that the teachers were sometimes insecure when it came to translating findings from assessment of language learning and development of multilingual children. They found that too often assessment tools reflected the reality of dominant groups and therefore questioned the use of those tools. For some years they had been reflecting on how to document the overall development of all children focusing on their strengths, abilities, and engagement for learning and participation. The teachers highlighted that culturally responsive tools, where multilingual children's strengths and abilities were in focus, were scarce. They also pointed out that tools developed to assess language development were mostly intended for Icelandic-speaking monolingual children. *EFI2*[4] was the most used language screening tool at the preschool, suitable for children in their fourth year, where their understanding and expression in Icelandic was assessed. *HLJÓM2*[5] was a screening tool used for all children in their fifth year of age where children's phonological and linguistic awareness in Icelandic was assessed. When the research took place, the teachers had started to implement *TRAS,*[6] which was used to document the overall Icelandic language development of two- to five-year old children in order to screen for deficits in children's linguistic and social development and provide appropriate interventions. Sif described that, in her mind, *TRAS* was the most equitable tool that could work best for assessing multilingual children's language development in Icelandic, providing the teachers a space to look at and meet children's differences and potential instead of only comparing the outcomes to those of others. But it was a challenge for the teachers to learn how to implement the tool and use it on a regular basis, meaning that they had not succeeded in implementing it fully. Using *TRAS* was more time consuming than the other tools because it was intended to be used continually and reflected on regularly:

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4 Information on EFI2 in Icelandic: https://www.simey.is/is/moya/inna/efi2-malthroskaskimun.

5 Information on HLJÓM2 in English: https://laesisvefurinn.is/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/utsk_hljom_2_ensk_20202.pdf.

6 Information on TRAS in Icelandic: https://mms.is/tras.

> All this, except *TRAS*, both *EVI* and *HLJÓM* are not valid for bilingual children, they are not showing what one would like to see, so much is missing... TRAS is really the tool you should always use and go into details, it is easier to use EVI... [TRAS] needs more like deep thinking (Sif 1).

Screening and documenting children's development and progress was an emergent process which involved that the teachers reflected on and discussed what tools they found useful and how they made the best use of the tools available. They got consultation from language therapists at the local service centre and from the Centre of Language and Literacy where there were experts in language development of multilingual children. Even though some of the teachers argued that the tools they could use to assess the language development of the multilingual children were not linguistically appropriate, they stressed that they were useful to understand what needs to be in focus: "Not necessarily for them [multilingual children] but it tells you a little bit about what is happening" (Petra 1). But at the same time there was an urgent need for tools that would provide teachers with suggestions and guidance on how to provide multilingual children with linguistically appropriate practices: "It's always about what I can do as a teacher, not whether the child is good or impossible" (Petra 2). But this was a work in progress, as they explained, and sometimes the teachers did not build on the results from the assessments as well as they should, like Birta describes: "We could use them [the results] better... it is perhaps mostly our lack of time that we do not use them. We are not able to reflect on what is the best thing to do" (Birta 1). Halla explained that the tools could be helpful but sometimes she experienced that the children knew words and phrases that they did not answer correctly when formally assessed. She made clear that this was something the teachers had to be aware of, creating a need for documenting children's development more closely:

> There are many things that evolve with EFI, for example that some children do not know how to count so we start to work more with that... you can see based on EFI results where there is need to put more emphasis, this is like the colours are roaming... they answer for example not in EFI what mom and dad are called but they know it, they answer us inside the division but when you come into a room they are not going to answer (Halla 1).

Sif described that some of the screening tools that they were advised to use were outdated and did not address the realities of multilingual children. Some of them involved checklists or questionnaires in Icelandic that parents had to fill out and answer even though they did not speak or read Icelandic. Sif was worried about misunderstanding occuring when parents were given information based on results from assessments not appropriate for multilingual children. She was also concerned that when parents had to fill out something that was a part of the assessment but had little or

no cultural reference or even a language they could use, there was a danger of skewed results. Sometimes this was leading to a deficit view where the focus was on what the child could not do instead of starting with what the child was capable of. At the same time Sif highlighted the importance of knowing and understanding how the children were developing so that the teachers could provide appropriate support. This created a challenge for them, especially when it came to ensuring equity for all:

> We need to know what we are going to do, but there is so much need for some [special assessment tool] for bilingual children that both home and preschool are using together, I think we are also widening the gap when we are putting these questionnaires in the hands of parents, for example an Icelandic measuring device that we put in the hands of parents of bilingual children... I think we are sometimes, without thinking, making parents a little scared... and it tends to come out worse for the bilingual children in connection with literacy because we are so much measuring the results [comparing children to each other]... this needs to be much more thought through. How it is when you are talking about literacy for all, then it needs to be literacy for all (Sif 1).

Petra stressed that one of the many advantages of working with teachers who speak different languages was that they could assist with monitoring the level of children's knowledge in home languages. Even if this was not a perfect assessment in home languages, it provided the teachers with some signs or indications regarding the overall language development of children. Perhaps the development in Icelandic was exceptionally slow because something was troubling the child's development other than the language, or their language development in their home language was also slow or behind, affecting their learning of Icelandic. This was not something that the teachers could assess with appropriate tools, but multilingual teachers sometimes assisted with this informal assessment that provided both the teachers and the parents with important information:

> For example there is one boy here who is four years old and he has been here for one year and does poorly in Icelandic. Parents usually say, "they do well in their mother tongue", perhaps they do not have comparison [with other children] or do not know and then as Lana [teacher at the preschool speaking the language] started listening to him and she said "he's just like two years old" [his language use in home language] (Petra 1).

These results created the need for discussions with his parents on appropriate support which was a collaboration that most of the teachers considered an important part of their work with parents of multilingual children throughout the preschool years. When a multilingual child started at The Circle the teachers discussed language learning with

her parents and stressed that they worked with Icelandic at the preschool and supported multilingualism. They encouraged parents to keep reading and developing the home languages of the children while they learned Icelandic at school. Petra underlined that the most common question from parents of multilingual children evolved around their language development and learning of Icelandic, and many parents expressed worries about their children's progress in Icelandic. Petra found it very important to tell parents that Icelandic would gradually develop and that the teachers at The Circle had an important role in supporting that development, assessing their progress, and meeting their needs:

> P: Parent meetings revolve a lot around you know [language learning], parents are most of them very interested that the children learn Icelandic and [ask] how they can do that the best…
> R: And that is something that you purposefully discuss during parent's meetings, discussions on children's language and literacy?
> P: Yes, or it should be like that and that is what people [parents] ask about, most of them are there and many are concerned (Petra 1).

All the parents confirmed how the preschool principal and the division leaders discussed language development when the children started preschool and gave examples of how the preschool was supporting and assessing Icelandic while facilitating multilingualism. Some parents that had experience from other preschools highlighted that they had not been invited to discuss the language development of their children there. This was different at The Circle where they were told how the teachers worked with Icelandic and multilingualism. In some of the interviews I conducted, I experienced that the teachers and the parents separated the language learning of the children, stressing that it was the preschool's role to teach Icelandic and the parent's role to develop the home language. One mother explained: "You need to speak more mother tongue at home but not talk much Icelandic home, it is the teacher that teaches Icelandic" (Mother 3). Another mother stressed that when she had a meeting with the teachers, they discussed what they were doing at the preschool regarding language support and when she asked for guidance, she was encouraged to increase the child's vocabulary in the home language:

> Last meeting, they explain what they do, how they work with [daughter]. I ask if I should do something, and they said "just maybe try show her more Polish words" even we got like an Icelandic book 1000 words in Icelandic… so I just show her and ask what this is, and she explains to me what it is… (Mother 5).

Even though the teachers stressed the importance of using the assessment tools to monitor the language development of multilingual children, they also expressed the need to look at children's overall learning and development with focus on their

strengths and abilities. To do so the teachers were increasing their proficiency in using *pedagogical documentation*. Pedagogical documentation is a widely used practice in early childhood education and involves documenting the child's learning from a strength-based perspective with pictures and words, which helps the teachers to reflect on their teaching. Through pedagogical documentation the children were given a voice and a platform that allowed their strengths, abilities, interests, and motivation to come alive. Simultaneously, pedagogical documentation provided space for children to be different, not having to fit in the same box, which was very much related to the level of equity that the teachers wanted to provide at The Circle. Petra stressed that through pedagogical documentation they seek to document children's learning in relation to the learning areas of the curriculum and the preschool's values: "happiness, health, autonomy, the values [of the preschool], and play, creativity, and language stimulation" (Petra 1). Some of the teachers were apprentices in pedagogical documentation while others had more experience. Petra explained that before, pedagogical documentation was mostly used to document children that had some learning challenges but now their aim was to use this practice for all children, building on short videos and pictures that the teachers could watch with the parents while discussing what was really going on in their child's learning:

> We have been very diligent, in some divisions, this winter in doing documentation, these pedagogical documentations and we are getting a clearer idea of what is important... we were maybe just documenting the children that had some problems... but now all the children are coming into this... and now the plan is in the spring interviews [parent's meetings in the spring] to build only on documentation, videos, and photographs... so that the conversation builds on that (Petra 2).

In one of the interviews with the parents a mother described how her division leader was using pictures and videos of her daughter to discuss her learning. The mother was very happy with the way the preschool worked with her and described how empowering it was for her to learn what her daughter was capable of:

> When we have meetings, they always show me, sometimes they show me the videos... yeah, like they make with small camera, yeah so, they show me what she did and such... I love it you know everything (Mother 5).

Another practice the division leaders were developing to ensure more equity and collaboration with parents and to empower the children themselves was to prepare an individual plan for all children focusing on their strengths and interests. The children were asked individually about their interests and that was then connected to the learning at the preschool and the teachers' roles and responsibilities regarding the child. The individual plan was evaluated regularly, such as the plan of a bilingual boy in the Green division that was prepared in December and was to be evaluated in April,

like Halla explained. The individual plan addressed the child's main interest and strengths and included the main learning goals and practices to be implemented by the teachers:

> **Strengths:** Very diligent in play, happy, and powerful
> **Main interest:** Cars, blocks and playing outside
> **What do you want to learn at the preschool:** To play with the cars
> **The goal:** Support his linguistic development. Practice his pronunciation, support, and develop positive communication and self-regulation in play and friendship. Increase his autonomy
> **Practices to be implemented:** Working with language in small groups of 2–4 children where there is a possibility to read books together and discuss. The teachers scaffold and support language-use by naming objects and actions. The teacher is a good role model in all interaction and communicates respectfully with the boy. The teacher gives the boy opportunity and time to develop play with other children and provides space for the play to take place and the material needed. Keep on practicing different tasks such as dressing himself for outdoor play with encouragement from the teachers, go to the bathroom, wash hands, and put food for himself on to his plate (Individual plan, my translation)

Observing children making progress and becoming happy, motivated, and active participants at the preschool was very rewarding for the teachers. Dísa described how empowered she became when the children made progress, and to her nothing was as fulfilling as watching a child become involved, active, and happy when changing from not understanding or participating into a fully participating child:

> There is of course nothing more wonderful than to receive a child who does not understand a word and send it away [when leaving the preschool] speaking fluently... that is the gain I think and being strong socially... that is what gives me at least, to see a happy and pleased child... you see what a difference there is in some children like in our division just this winter, from last year, a big difference just in joy and as soon as the children start to understand more, the happier they become and more involved with everyone... just like the happiness around one child that was always very serious and hardly answered you, great joy, wants to play, wants to do, wants to belong... (Dísa 1).

Including multilingual parents in conversation about their children's learning and development was a part of the process when the child started preschool and in all formal parent teacher meetings. These discussions were grounded in the overall culture

of communication that was emerging at The Circle and will be discussed further in the next chapter of the findings.

4.4 Culture of communication

Findings from interviews with parents and teachers, observations, video recordings, artefacts and written documents all display the effort made to enhance empowering and welcoming communication for all. The teachers were sensitive to the different communicative strengths of children and parents and did their best to provide responsive and appropriate communication to enhance their participation. Sif explained how important it was for the teachers to be interested in children and parents and underlined that this was a strong factor in building good communication: "People immediately know if you are interested in them or not... children know if you are interested in them or not and parents too" (Sif 1). The parents also mentioned the importance of good communication, care, and understanding as being the basis for the children to belong and feel welcomed. This father had very good experience of communicating with the preschool and described how his son, who left the preschool a few weeks earlier to start compulsory school, wanted to stop by every day to greet the preschool teachers when he and his father were dropping his sister off in the mornings:

> What matters most is if the children love the teacher, you see right away and only if they love the teacher and have a good relationship with the teacher and the other children... I always drive children in the morning to the school and preschool, first take her [his daughter] to preschool, he [his son] goes with us to the preschool every morning just to greet teachers, he would not do it if it were not so good, it is just very good (Father 5).

The teachers had developed their own policy of communication with children and guidelines for communicating with parents. These documents, mirrored in the school curriculum's aims and goals, were visible on the walls, discussed and used as groundwork for daily practices and monthly planning. The document for communication and interaction with children was divided into four sections. The first section focused on appropriate practices to ensure constructive communication:

> **Constructivism:** In order to develop a caring and educating preschool community, teachers are facilitators of constructive communication where they and the children become conscious about the way they communicate with others around them. Identity and self-efficacy are enhanced with practices such as paying attention to children, praising them, and acknowledging when they do well, establishing high expectations, building on their interests and strengths, and scaffolding and supporting

> their participation (Document for communication and interaction with children, my translation).

The second section discussed what rules should be applied for communication and participation in daily activities where the focus was on *what to do* instead of *what not to do*. The oldest children participated in developing the rules and the teachers' responsibility was to guide children's participation in order for them to develop trust, safety, and self-regulation, while raising their level of well-being. The third and fourth section evolved around teachers' actions when children's behaviour was inappropriate or if a child needed to leave a situation. The teachers' role was always to empower the child, look at what triggered challenging behaviour and find ways to prevent it from happening again.

One of the tools that the teachers had developed were guidelines affirming their role to provide empowering communication in interaction with parents. When a new child started preschool, the parents could choose whether the introductory meeting, where parents learned about the preschool and the teachers got to know the child and family, took place at home or in school. During the adjustment period, the parents stayed with the child for three days and got opportunities to discuss and learn and build partnership with teachers and other parents. Teachers consider parents as experts of their children's needs but recognised furthermore that they have valuable professional knowledge that could support both parents and children. Both stakeholders were seen as equally important in providing education and care that enhanced learning, wellbeing, and development. Among the responsibilities of the teachers stated in the guidelines on communication was to:

- Communicate with all parents
- Carefully make sure that all parents get the information they need
- Call interpreters whenever needed and requested by parents
- Provide visual aids such as pictures of all teachers and staff at the webpage and in the entrance of the divisions
- Invite parents to come into the divisions to observe what the child has been playing and creating
- Encourage communication with parents where they discuss the child's learning and progress
- Listen to, understand, and discuss parents' views and wishes about their children in a culturally responsive and solution-oriented way (Guidelines on communication with parents, my translation)

4.4.1 Empowering communication in daily activities

Empowering communication and active participation of children was something that the teachers were aiming at every day. The teachers were resourceful in co-constructing understanding with the children and among the children to enhance their participation.

I did not observe any silenced children in the Green division who did not approach the teachers or the other children even though they were different in their ways of communicating, using body language, Icelandic, home languages or other means of communication. The teachers used a caring and empowering voice when communicating with the children and bent down or sat on low chairs to show their care and attention. The group of children was busy during free play and many things were going on, requiring the teachers to shift their attention from one child to another simultaneously. One of the posters on the walls explained that to provide quality language stimulation teachers should aim to provide rich and expressive means of interaction, use body language, signs, words, and gestures. Touching shoulders or holding hands with children when communicating was common both for the teachers and the children. It was obvious that the children were used to getting attention from the teachers as they expressed trust in them. Many of the teachers explained that care and understanding in communication builds the foundation for trust and that it was their responsibility to be the role models for the children, as Dísa stressed:

> Of course, it's first and foremost to be caring, talk to them in a caring tone... yes, just to be a good role model... and I find it really good when I feel that a child has started to trust me, something the child did not do in the beginning, I find this really good, both for me and the child (Dísa 1).

Petra explained that when she started to work at the preschool, she experienced that the children did not get as much attention as they needed, resulting in some children becoming silent and other children desperate for attention. Back then the children had to make an effort to get the teachers' attention but today they know they get attention both with and without trying to and that affects their involvement and engagement in activities. Petra explained that before, children were always seeking attention and became distracted when she would come into the division:

> I found it so obvious when I started here if you walked into the division all the children stopped playing and ran to you and said "Petra" but now they do not look up and I would rather have it that way... I thought this was very strange when I started because then this engagement [of the children] is lacking (Petra 2).

Observations and video recordings show that even though the preschool environment can be extremely busy, with many complex things going on at the same time, the teachers seek to keep their voice calm and caring. The teachers attended to children both with and without the children seeking attention by having the initiative to comment on their play or practices. An example from a video recording shows a boy who did not want to play with the other children and was wandering around. He went to Halla who was busy communicating with two children, put his hand on her shoulder and waited for her attention:

> Halla is absorbed in communication with the other children, but Daniel does not let go of her shoulder and patiently waits for her to pay attention to him. Halla is sitting on a low chair in the children's height and even though one child has hurt herself, another child needs support to finish up something in the play and Daniel is standing with his hand on her shoulder, waiting for her to chat with him, everything is calm. When she has taken care of the children she turns to Daniel with full attention and asks him what he is saying, he does not want to play with the other children and wants to do something else. Halla says that is not a problem they can go together, find a game to play, or blocks, or something else he likes (VR M3D).

Usually, the teachers were around during free play and acted on conflicts or contributed to the play with words and artefacts. This often resulted in prolonged play with active participation of the children, as in the following example where Dísa was present when four children in a role play changed the play from a home corner play to a trip. One girl was leading the play but with an attentive teacher around they all could participate, and the play went on for a long time:

> The children had picnic on a blanket on the floor and had already diverted the chairs into cars to travel from one place to another in the room. They were trying to push each other in the chairs, having difficulties to push so they turned to Dísa for support. She was attentive to their play and together they put a small blanket or cloth under the chair to make it slide more easily. The children, smiling and laughing, pushed each other around in the chairs (VR M3C-G-I).

Birta explained how important it was for her to be a role model by providing a stimulative learning space where children could build on their own experience and interest. Sometimes teacher-directed activity became child-initiated play when the children were provided time, space, and artefacts to try out themselves, particularly if the teacher was attentive to their initiative with open communication:

> I have often played with the three goats, both where I draw on a piece of paper and then draw one goat on this side and then the other on the other side, and then x over when the goat is over [the bridge], and then they [the children] understand completely and the troll is under and then we decided to try, put up chairs and a block so we had made a bridge and I went to get something but I did not find anything that looked like a goat so I got bead forms shaped like frogs... we changed the story to the three frogs and then the next day three girls came with the bead forms and asked "can we get a pillow we want to make a bridge" and then they were

> playing this story with the three frogs for the other children. This was great fun and incredibly cool (Birta 1).

Being present in children's play and child-initiated activities also provided the teachers with the possibility to share experiences with the children, refer to something that happened before or co-construct meaning and understanding. At the same time this provided a valuable tool for the teachers to observe children's communication within the group of children and support their social development. Dísa explained that it is not enough to tell the children to do something, communication must facilitate shared understanding and she thought it was her role to co-construct communication and be explicit in order for the children to understand: "Speak clearly, just clear instructions and gestures, and go with them, and show them, and tell them again if you see that they do not understand, then try to say it differently" (Dísa 1).

Sif described that observing the children's progress and participation while communicating with others was essential. She explained that the teachers' responsibility was to be aware, to prevent children from becoming marginalised, and responsively act on it if they started to withdraw themselves from play and communication:

> You need to be close to them [the children] and write down if they are making progress and if they are participating and that they understand and are understood. This is essential, this is how you make progress... immediately when you start to become isolated or lost especially when you get older... it does not matter if we are bilingual or not, as soon as we are not in a social relationship and we experience difficulties then we withdraw (Sif 2).

One of the practices the teachers were developing was to systematically monitor children's own perception of friends and playmates to see if some of the children felt marginalised or excluded from communication and participation. During observation Halla came to me to show me a schema where they had linked children's friends and explained how the teachers documented children's own voices and experiences:

> The teachers sat down with a child and together they looked at pictures of all the children in the division. The child then chose pictures of their friends and discussed how many friends they had and who they liked to play with. The teachers then filled out a schema where they documented children's answers and how their answers matched each other's, which children selected playmates that also selected them. This gave the teachers a valuable tool to follow children that themselves felt they were being excluded (O 3).

When observing the teachers communicating with Ina, a girl newly arrived and new to Icelandic, I filmed several moments following Sif, where the girl was participating in

play with other children and communicating with the teachers. I did not see her silenced or marginalised, even though she did not use more than very few Icelandic words, but there were no indications that she was trying to use her home language. The teachers, especially Sif, who was supporting the division teachers in guiding Ina's participation within the group of children during the first weeks, used diverse means of communication and input for support, words, pictures, facial gestures, body language, and calm tone of voice. Ina was given many opportunities to participate with the children and empowered with smiles, thumbs up, praise and acknowledgement when she was navigating communication. One morning during observation Sif was sitting on the floor with a few children playing and welcoming those children arriving at preschool. She greeted them as they came in and spoke to them in a warm and welcoming voice, smiling with her arms open and inviting. When Ina arrived, she was warmly welcomed, and her presence and participation affirmed with caring and empowering communication. Sif spoke to her in a warm tone and provided time to co-construct meaning, including Ina in the conversation until Ina showed initiative that Sif captured:

S: (Sif lifts her hands joyfully, smiles, open her arms, and welcomes Ina who approaches Sif directly, Sif smiles, puts her arm around her and Ina leans against her)
S: **Hi Ina, hi, you are here** (smiling warm voice, open appreciative face)
I: **Hi** (smiles)
S: **You are here** (puts her arms around her and smiles) **to The Circle, The Circle** (Sif repeats the name of the preschool with movement and in a rhythmic tone, Ina smiles and moves with her)…
S: **Socks, shoes, slippers** (speaks in a calm voice, points to Inas' socks and shoes and smiles at her) **pink slippers** (holds her shoes and looks at Ina)
I: **Pink** (Ina repeats)
S: **Pink slippers**…
I: (Looks down at her shoes, pulls on her socks and the tights she is wearing under the socks)
S: **Tights, tights, and socks** (Sif names the items Ina was pointing at)
I: (Laughs and points to the back of her hand)
S: (Softly touches the spot on the back of Inas' hand, pays full attention to what Ina is showing her even though she only uses gestures, smiles, and laughter) **what is this? Is this oh oh** (with a voice of pain and a pained expression on her face)
I: (Realises what she is saying and shakes her head in denial)
S: (Realises that this is not a wound but a lipstick) **is it like this, a lipstick** (pretends to put on a lipstick)

> I: (Laughs and puts a finger on her lips and moves her fingers as if she were putting on a lipstick) (VR M11B).

The way Sif and some teachers communicated with Ina affected how the other children approached her and was reflected in the way she was welcomed into the children's play and activities. The teachers explained that it was important to learn about the interests and strengths of Ina already in the beginning and be sensitive to her challenge of being surrounded with a new language and communication practices that she was not used to. For the first two weeks, the focus was on building trust and wellbeing within the group of children through daily practices, without excluding her from the group. Sif found it as important for Ina to learn about the teachers and children as for them to get to know Ina: "It can perhaps be said that I am reading her while she is reading us and within this [space] this trust evolves" (Sif 2).

Developing a sense of belonging and strong communication skills with newly arrived children was always a challenge and called for a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and effort as the teachers described. Sif explained that this awareness and care in communication was a prerequisite for Ina's wellbeing and participation in daily activities, building foundation for future communication and language development. But at the same time her communication skills were strong and she was motivated for learning and participating:

> She can read people, she can read expressions, she can read emotions, and she expresses all the same things herself, she expresses herself with facial expressions and feelings... what is so much fun is that she looks for the situations and the people she learns from... it's very important that everything is visual, that people are smiling and embracing her and show her that she's welcome, this is all very important to her... she's following friends who help her and she chooses according to her interests, she reads her environment in the sense that she uses everything in the environment to move forward and learn more and more (Sif 2).

The emerging culture of communication was that the participating teachers saw it as their role to enhance empowering communication with all children and to monitor the children's wellbeing and participation. The teachers were role models and responsible for taking the initiative to communicate with the children during daily practices and build relationships. My findings show that this was not only the character of interaction between the teachers and the children but also between the teachers and the parents, as will be discussed in the next subchapter.

4.4.2 Empowering communication with parents

Findings show that the teachers put a lot of effort in welcoming the families of the children, they expressed continuous interest in learning about the children, and did

their best to provide the parents with effective tools to participate and learn about the preschool. As stated in the guidelines on communication with parents discussed in the first part of this chapter, it was the role and responsibility of the teachers to take the initiative of reaching out to parents. Some of the teachers discussed how this was a competence that could only grow with practice and lived experience. It was not a matter of reading or learning about the importance of good communication. Acting on and empowering oneself to communicate with parents, not sharing the same language, or being new to Icelandic was a challenge that some of the teachers had succeeded in mastering: "Even though I could not say what I wanted to say, I just did it in a different way... it is about crossing the threshold" (Petra 1). Findings also indicate that discussions about communication with parents among the teachers, the development of guidelines, and their emerging consensus of the importance of empowering conversation with parents was supportive. Especially for those teachers who were still mastering the art of crossing the threshold in communication with parents with different linguistic and cultural background. Petra said that her prior experience, working in a preschool in Denmark years ago, without strong competency in Danish, gave her valuable insight into the parents' challenges in communication:

> Not being able to communicate, not being able to say anything... like in the beginning I could not express myself and then I had more in common with the parents than the staff... one dad I connected with very well had no relatives in Denmark, but we always talked (Petra 1).

Even though the teachers felt that partnership with parents was going much better than before, and while most of the parents were collaborating and participating more often, there were still parents that were hard to reach. To reconstruct power and involve all parents it was necessary for the teachers to create a welcoming space where parents could experience respect and understanding. The participating parents all described the preschool and the teachers as warm and welcoming. They gave many examples of how empowered they felt, how interested the teachers were in their children, and how family-like the preschool community was. One mother praised the teachers for being welcoming and helpful, even though the group of children was very diverse: "They are absolutely great... always want to help. We just come and get coffee... like a small family... half of the [families] are foreigners but still this" (Mother 5). Some parents had chosen this preschool because it was smaller than other preschools and closer to their home and so it was easier to get to know everyone: "We wanted a small preschool... everyone knows everyone, there are so few children, easier for the teachers... somehow you know all... yes like a big family" (Parents 4). Other parents highlighted the importance of trust and safety and how welcoming the teachers were when inviting parents to visit on several occasions:

> I feel like [the daughter] she is safe... it is more like family, they like many times you know meeting with parents. They always invite parents, we can

> have like tea with kids or some you know nice thing we can do together inside the kindergarten so we know each other so that's why I feel like you know home (Mother 5).

Many of the teachers discussed the importance of recruiting a multilingual and diverse group of teachers to be role models for the children and the parents, giving insight into diverse cultures and languages, as well as to make communication between families and preschool more fluid. Still, the teachers realised that this was first and foremost their shared responsibility, regardless of their linguistic and cultural background. Petra was sensitive to the fact that power played a significant role in communication between teachers and parents. She gave an example from an interview she had once with a mother at The Circle when she built on her own experience working as a cleaning lady. When the mother realised that Petra had also been a cleaning lady like herself and was now the principal, Petra opened a welcoming space of respect and understanding:

> Once I was in a parent interview and the mother said she was working for ISS [cleaning company] I said "yes is it so, when I was working in Denmark I worked with ISS, she was just like "YOU ??? and you are here [the principal]", "yes everyone can get there" (Petra 2).

Some of the parents had prior experience from other preschools or had older children already in compulsory schools. They compared this experience with the community at The Circle and explained how different it was from other experiences with Icelandic schools. One mother highlighted how much the teachers cared about her and her child and how different this was from other preschools she knew:

> They are like, you know, always with parents and... always when I ask when I want something, they always care about me... so I see the difference between this kindergarten and [names two other preschools] like that Petra, she is always with the kids you know, all kids know her... she just cares about kids you know (Parents 5).

The parents also explained that they experienced the teachers' ambition in building good communication with parents and that they were always willing to do their best if something came up. One mother stressed that whenever she asked the teachers for something they gave her answers and she really felt like they were working together: "When I ask about something they always... I think they always have answer, I say really... yeah together, we work together" (Mother 5). Another mother highlighted that she could always talk to the teachers and discuss whatever came up and that for organised parent meetings she was always asked if she would like to have an interpreter. She explained that she had: "often told them that I feel very good here and that I am very pleased that we had a space in this preschool, just very pleased" (Mother 2).

Dísa explained that the children were sensitive to the communication that took place between their parents and teachers. She found it important that all children were given the opportunity to see their parents and teachers exchanging respectful warm communication and that it was her responsibility to act on it. She referred to the goal she had written on her cabinet as described earlier:

> They [the children] naturally feel how the parents interact, adults of course, but of course you try... I set that goal... it's even on my cabinet here, to have the same kind of interaction with all parents... this goal that we set for ourselves like this you know what I'm going to act on, what I'm going to do (Dísa 1).

One of the practices that provided a platform for empowering communication between parents and teachers was during *Menningarmót* where many of the parents visited the preschool and participated in the event. An excerpt from observation describes the atmosphere during the event and the participation and communication between parents and teachers:

> There was a very pleasant atmosphere in the house, quite a lot of parents, although not everyone came, which is of course something to think about. Parents who came were generally interested and pleased, a large part of them had immigrant background and it was also interesting to see how many fathers attended. The newest family in the preschool (family with refugee background) attended, both parents and an older sister, and they all greeted the division leader warmly (O 17).

The experience the teachers got when communicating with children and families with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds was strengthening their confidence. Petra gave an example of how this experience had changed her little by little and how she felt more mature than a few years earlier. Knowing the theory and the importance of empowering communication is not enough if you don't do anything about it and learn from others, she explained. One day when she was taking the bus, she met a family whose daughter had just started at The Circle. They did not share a language and Petra reflected on this in the interview:

> I met them on the bus when I was going home one day... the mom and dad and the big sister, they were going to an Icelandic course. They all got up and... then they made room for me... "sit with us" and then we sat there and could not speak together, not at all and seven years ago I would have just died there. I would have gone out at the next stop. I could not have managed this... but then the sister took out the phone to show me pictures and she just [expressions, gestures, sounds to describe the communication] just this communication and I was just thinking... how

> often do they meet people they know on the bus... it was also just such an experience for me to just understand that I have matured. I do not have to leave the bus on the next stop... you can have the ideology clear but if you do not dare to go into this communication then... (Petra 2).

In some instances, it took resilience and time to establish communication with parents, especially those that avoided communication with the teachers. The teachers were determined to build connections and communication with all parents and stressed that they had more experience than before, even though some of the teachers were still developing their confidence and experience in reaching out to all parents. Often teachers from other preschools felt sorry for them for having to work with such a big group of multilingual families but the participating teachers really found it exciting to develop communication with a diverse group of parents. Sif explained that even though some of the teachers were not confident in communicating with parents across languages and cultures, they as a community had created a culture of communication where parents are approached and talked to. This was not the case before:

> I remember for example this boy who was here, there was so often this discussion around him "the mother is coming but she understands so little..." this was such a big problem. This was always what people thought of in connection with the child that, this was such a big deal. "But she does not understand and what and do you bother to talk to her" and it is strange that I still hear of cases like this when I am talking to staff from many other preschools. This is so long ago here with us.... maybe there are some staff who have a hard time [communicating with parents]. It happens and then there is someone else who does it, but no one talks about it being a problem to communicate with parents (Sif 1).

Petra described how repeated instances of acknowledging, approaching, and showing genuine interest in parents and children opened spaces of communication. She gave an example of a mother who did not share a language with any of the teachers, was avoidant and did not greet the teachers'. When she brought her child to the preschool she would turn around, turn her face down, and leave immediately after pushing her daughter through the door. Petra tried to turn things around by approaching the mother every time she could. Just by smiling and affirming her existence, while telling the girl how wonderful it was that the mother was there, she slowly started to build trust in communication and turn things around. Petra spoke Icelandic with the mother, but the mother was a beginner in Icelandic so for both of them the lack of a common language was a barrier to communication:

> Whenever she came I went to the cloak room and said to the girl "is mum here? mum has arrived, mum has arrived, mum has arrived" and then... the mum started saying "mum has arrived" and then that was in place and

> then I say "next time I will teach you this…" but this is just exactly the same as with the children to have the resilience (Petra 1).

As highlighted in this chapter, my findings show that, overall, the participating teachers and parents engaged in empowering conversations, collaborating, and supporting each other on the voyage of providing care and appropriate learning spaces for multilingual children. Still, there were parents that were hard to reach and teachers that were not confident enough or experienced in communicating across languages and cultures. In the next chapter I will shift the focus to the many languages spoken by children and families at The Circle and look at practices that open up spaces of multilingualism and create possibilities for children and adults to practice, research, and experiment with multiple languages.

4.5 Spaces of multilingualism

Developing practices to support the many languages of children and families was one of the goals the teachers were working towards. The preschool curriculum involved chapters on the language and literacy of multilingual children, where it was emphasised that social relations, emotional development, and partnership with parents play a fundamental role in developing children's language and literacy. It was stated that the preschool shows interest in and presents a positive attitude towards all the different home languages of the children and that diverse practices, with language learning where multilingual children get the opportunity to develop active bilingualism, are valued. This included goals for supporting families in developing and sustaining home languages of children while learning Icelandic.

Photos from observation show different visuals, pictures, and posters affirming and valuing diverse languages. Greetings in different languages were displayed on the walls with the word *welcome* and the name of the language written underneath. All practical information for parents were usually displayed in Icelandic, English, and Polish and multilingual staff assisted with translations. One of the practices was how the teachers purposefully worked with vocabulary. Target words from books or activities were chosen every week and displayed in Icelandic and English. Parents were encouraged to bring the words home and discuss them with their children and find matching words in their home languages. Posters with basic vocabulary, such as body parts, colours and clothes, were prepared with pictures and words in the three most common languages and displayed on the walls. Furthermore, the teachers worked systematically with books in different languages and strove to increase children's access to printed material. In this chapter I look at findings regarding practices that were supporting multilingualism both within the preschool's daily practices and in collaboration with parents.

4.5.1 Supporting multilingualism through daily practices

All the teachers showed a good understanding of the need to support both or all the languages of the children, and in the interviews they described the importance of active bilingualism through which Icelandic and the home languages were simultaneously supported. Findings from my observations and video recordings show that the children were given an opportunity to navigate communication in their own languages and not banned from using home languages, as was the case a few years earlier. Dísa explained that in prior years there were instances of children who shared the same home language isolating themselves as a group from the children who spoke Icelandic. In those cases, the teachers separated the children who shared the same language from each other, but now they tried to connect the children with each other, within and across languages, and discuss with them how to create a shared understanding:

> If this would be today as it was then; we try, but we don't have any group today like that, but if it was then you would just try to connect the others... "can this one participate?" and "how can we communicate so that everyone understands?" (Dísa 1).

The teachers explained how they tried to learn and play with different languages and how they entered communication when children sharing the same language were communicating. Their aim was to enhance communication and show respect and interest towards multilingualism, instead of becoming frustrated when they did not understand. This also involved a change in power where the teacher became the learner, learning both from children and families. This gave the teachers valuable insights into the children's reality of learning a new language:

> They also often speak to each other in their mother tongue and we have not stopped that but sometimes you ask what is being said, now I do not understand... it is so different whether they can explain in Icelandic or not, but they are allowed to speak their language as they wish... sometimes we have been asking for example yes this is *epli* (e. apple), how do you say it in Vietnamese and then you try to say it yourself and they often find it very funny. You can not necessarily pronounce the words, you know, like they do and such. There is one girl here in the oldest division who has been doing this, teaching us a word or two... and then she sometimes comes and says "do you remember how you say apple?..." "yes, wait how was it" and then she laughs and laughs because you always say something different... then you can see how hard it is for us to learn those words and then you can empathise with the children, you know, to be in an Icelandic environment the whole day (Freyja 1).

The teachers used different activities to work with language and learn words from the children's home languages. Findings from video recordings show that mealtimes

provided learning opportunities for discussing words and languages and supporting multilingualism even though most often the teachers would connect the words to Icelandic. In this excerpt from a video recording, Halla was sitting with the children, discussing the food and vegetables, words, and colours:

A: **I also want this** (points to the orange pasta)
H: **But what is the colour?**
A: **They are orange** (uses the word orange in English not Icelandic)
H: **Aha, but what is it in Icelandic? Orange is in English but what is the colour?** (Holds up the pasta. Another child sitting at the table, outside the camera frame, replies and says, this is perhaps like orange) **this is orange!** (appelsínugulur in Icelandic)
H: **This is orange** (appelsínugulur)
A: **Oh, orange** (appelsínugulur) **I forgot to say that** (VR M5P).

The teachers all expressed their wish to have more linguistic diversity among the staff in order to support the children. They also said it was important for communicating with parents and for supporting their role in teaching the home language. Sif explained that even though it was not possible for the staff to teach home languages if they did not speak the language themselves, their attitudes, support, and interest could be helpful in affirming multilingualism. In this way they could create learning spaces for multilingual practices that simultaneously provided a platform for understanding of children's and parent's multilingual realities:

> Fortunately the world is opening up and there is bilingualism and there is multilingualism and we want to strengthen that... people have two languages and if they use two languages then they need to be strong in both languages and if they are good in their mother tongue they will be good in the next language they adopt and vice versa... when we see this in reality one would like to call on all the staff and say "look this is it", we have children here and parents who are good in both languages and the kind of communication you have with these parents and these children, it is such a pleasure. You have people switching between speaking with us and speaking to the child, the child speaks to us and then to the parent and no one is interpreting one thing or another. It is just when you are speaking to me you speak Icelandic and when you are speaking to your child you speak your mother tongue (Sif 1).

Once a week the three divisions were united and all the children were mixed together in a free flow of child-initiated play where they could choose the activities they wanted to participate in and who they wanted to play with. An example from a video recording shows how teachers who are not Polish-speaking communicate with three Polish-speaking children playing in the cloakroom. Instead of stopping the children's use of

Polish or ignoring them, the teachers engaged in the play. This day was a costume day and Sif had a costume consisting of swimming goggles and a swimsuit over her clothes. This made the children laugh since they thought the costume was very funny. The costume had already influenced their game as they were playing in Polish and imitating under a bench that they were in the swimming pool. Sif offered them her swimming goggles and implied that it was good to have goggles since they made it easier to go underwater. One of the boys wanted to have the goggles and spoke Polish to the other children when he was showing them the goggles:

> S: **Yes it is very good to wear swimming goggles when swimming, swimming goggles, then the water does not go into the eyes** (Sif kneels down and helps Bogdan to put on her goggles, using a soft quiet voice and he looks up happy with the goggles on) **now you can go underwater when swimming** (Bogdan turns to the other children and smiles, they come from underneath the bench and look at him smiling and are obviously interested in the goggles)
> B: **"Syskovjiesy"** (his utterance in Polish is unclear but sounds like syskovjiesy and Bogdan directs his words to the children)
> S. **"Syskovjiese" does that mean swimming goggles?** (Sif repeats the words with a big smile and enthusiasm and seeks to connect the words in Icelandic and Polish) (VR M11F).

Even though the teachers wanted to support multilingualism and had developed different practices to affirm diverse home languages, they expressed certain worries when it came to discussing the languages used by the children at the preschool. Besides Icelandic and English, Polish was a dominant language, spoken by many of the children, parents and some teachers. This resulted in Polish being worked with in different activities more than other languages spoken by the children. My findings from observation and video recordings show that other languages than Polish, English, and Icelandic were rarely heard in communication. Birta explained that knowing many languages was a strength for individuals, and it would be good if they could teach different languages at the preschool, not only Polish: "it would of course be very enjoyable if all the children could receive mother tongue instruction in preschool" (Birta 1).

The teachers explained that their wish was that all the children's languages could be be visible and heard at the preschool, not only Polish. They had already discussed whether working with Polish more than other languages would create injustice towards other languages, but they decided to do their best to support multilingualism, even though Polish would be supported more explicitly than other languages. Halla explained:

> This is of course what we were discussing a bit, whether we think it is fair that we can speak Polish to the children who speak Polish and not to the

> children who speak Latvian or Lithuanian or something else because we do not have... staff who speak those languages, but we have decided that this is just to do better for the Polish children and I think it is quite fair that Polish is spoken to them... to have moments where they are singing or something in Polish I think is great... but if I had a teacher who could speak Lithuanian or Danish or whatever because we have children from this background, then it would be naturally great, I would welcome it (Halla 1).

The teachers gave many examples of how Polish was supported in activities, such as in reading sessions where Polish-speaking children were invited to take part. Other examples were when Polish-speaking teachers spoke the language to co-create understanding with Polish-speaking children during different activities, and how Polish-speaking teachers communicated with children in free play or child-initiated activities in Polish. Even though space was given to use Polish and affirm the Polish language through different activities, the teachers explained that they found it very important for the Polish-speaking teachers to be role models when it came to using and learning Icelandic. Sif explained that she had thought a lot about this and what was the best way to do this. The teachers also discussed this collectively and although they wanted to support and teach Polish, learning Icelandic was also important. They found this issue complicated and all the teachers, also the Polish-speaking ones, had to be role models for all the children and responsible for co-constructing understanding in different activities:

> It is now... a very good example of children who have a strong language awareness and a good vocabulary, they use both languages, and they can use their language with the Polish teacher, this is constantly being developed though... when should she use Polish and when should she use Icelandic?... Should she always speak Polish to the Polish children, or should she always speak Icelandic but speak Polish when the child speaks Polish first-hand? Should she speak Polish when such issues are going on... or is it connected to emotions... something that happens and that's when she should intervene in Polish? We are of course a division [with many children], but don't the others also need to hear what is going on, also the children who do not know Polish? (Sif 1)

But there are also examples with Polish-speaking children where Polish-speaking teachers have been the icebreakers in communication and provided the children with care and trust which increased their wellbeing and motivation to learn. Petra explained that sometimes they experience that when the children get the opportunity to use their home language, it inspires language progress both in Polish and Icelandic. She highlighted this with an example of a girl they had been very worried about:

> She almost didn't speak Polish and not Icelandic but then a Polish teacher came here and then all of a sudden, she started speaking both Polish and Icelandic... I found it incredibly remarkable, and it was like she felt much better somehow... I had a conversation with her this morning which only this summer would not have been a possibility. She could speak sentences with many words (Petra 1).

One morning I observed how Petra invited two children from the youngest division to come with her to her office where they could play. She often invited children to come and play with special toys in her office. This was in the fall and both the children were beginning to learn Icelandic and did not feel content when they arrived at preschool in the morning. Instead of leaving them unhappy with the other children, Petra cared about their feelings and provided a space for them where they could relax and get ready to join the other children. This excerpt from observation shows that the children were happy to go with her and when a Polish-speaking teacher arrived, she supported their understanding across languages:

> The children were allowed to play and relax with toys at the table and Petra was simultaneously managing her tasks and communicating with the children who were happy to be there playing. They were both Polish-speaking and when the Polish-speaking teacher came to pick them up to go back to their division, she spoke to them in Polish. The children were young and beginners in Icelandic and did not use many words in Icelandic but the teacher translanguaged by speaking both Polish and Icelandic to them and Petra (O 5).

The teachers discussed that in many cases children were living in many languages especially in families where the parents did not share the same language. Being a strong role model in Icelandic and teaching Icelandic was the responsibility of all the teachers, while at the same time building multilingual awareness and respect among children:

> That they [the children] hear that it is possible to speak more languages and that there are also adults who can do it because we have children who are bilingual, or trilingual or even quadrilingual and that the staff is able to express themselves in more languages... because I think children should get to know and respect others (Halla 1).

The teachers were ambitious in creating a space that was open for many languages, a role that they acted on through different practices, both child-initiated and organised by the teachers. All the parents were pleased when they experienced support and respect for their languages. One example was the mother who listened to the children sing in different languages during *Menningarmót* that many of the parents participated in: "They were singing Meistari Jakob, in 5 languages, yes Polish, Icelandic English,

Latvian, Lithuanian and Italian... you know almost all parents came" (Mother 5). Partnership with parents in supporting multilingualism was something that the teachers found very important. In the following chapter I will look more closely at findings regarding collaboration between parents and teachers around active multilingualism.

4.5.2 Collaborative spaces for supporting multilingualism

The teachers explained that their goal was to develop different practices to connect to children's home languages and support multilingualism and multiliteracy. They did this by implementing practices that connected language, writing, and reading and they believed that proficiency in one language was beneficial for learning other languages. Some of the practices were already in place and the teachers were experimenting with other practices while the study took place. One of them was *Orðaspjall* (e. Text talk) where target words that the teachers were introducing in Icelandic were translated into English and given to parents for translating into other languages. Other projects were connected to the *Bilingual Book of Communication* or by providing access to multilingual books. Petra found it important for the children to have opportunities to build on their linguistic competence with support from their parents:

> We have been experimenting with *Orðaspjall* so that they have words both here and at home... to bring books from home and bring books to the home [from the preschool and the library] the communication book... teach us one and one word in their language... some Polish, Klotski e.g. building blocks... we are starting to use the "Project approach" then you have to make a web and talk about your knowledge, what do you know. You do not know any words in Icelandic about the body but you know a lot of words about the body [in your language]. How can we get the knowledge if we could perhaps ask the parents to find the knowledge and bring it to us even if it was in Polish (Petra 2).

An excerpt from observation during *Menningarmót* shows that not only did the children sing for the parents in different languages but everyone who participated in the event was handed a text in the different languages to enable them to participate and sing along:

> All the children were gathered in the middle division along with a considerable number of parents, fathers, mothers, and grandparents. They were singing Master Jakob in Icelandic, English, Latvian, and Italian. One of the multilingual teachers was playing the accordion. When the parents came into the division, they were handed a text with these languages to be able to sing along (O 17).

The parents explained how the teachers reached out to them when looking for ways to support multilingualism. Parents described how the teachers wanted to learn directly

from them instead of relying on Google translate or dictionaries and at the same time building stronger relationships with parents in relation to their children's multilingualism:

> And they [the teachers] also sent us an email asking how to write correctly in your language, how do you say good morning and how can she write? She went to google translate but she just, she does not trust google translate, just asked us (Mother 1).

In almost all the interviews with teachers the *Bilingual Book of Communication* was mentioned as a resource for supporting multilingual children's language development and sense of self as already discussed. The bilingual book was usually an A5 notebook used for pictures, drawings, and text. The characteristics of the bilingual books differed from one child to another, but the main goal was to teach vocabulary, build bridges between Icelandic and the home language, and affirm children's identity, sense of self, and sense of belonging. The child's activities were documented in pictures and text where teachers wrote in Icelandic, encouraged parents to write back in their home language, and send pictures. Different writing systems were displayed in the books since parents wrote text in their home languages. In some of the books the focus was mainly on supporting new vocabulary with pictures of objects and expressions that were linked to appropriate words in Icelandic and the children's home language. This is explained by one mother who had been working with a bilingual communication book at home every other week with her son and focused on the words that the teachers were working with each time:

> The preschool was teaching him words... you know, for example fruit, banana, pear, apple, you know fruit, tomato, cucumber, this vegetable and then maybe one week I keep this book and then maybe return to them and then they write something; face, nose, chin, hair, body, and such (Mother 4).

The participation of the parents differed as well, as some of them were more active and interested in using the communication books than others. One example was a book belonging to a Polish-speaking girl. While learning about body vocabulary at the preschool her mother participated by drawing a body and explaining all the words in Polish and Icelandic. This provided a valuable tool for discussions with the girl, both at home and in preschool: "There was one [mother] who just drew the human body... and writes in Icelandic and Polish next to the body parts... then we go through the book with the child and talk about the pictures" (Freyja 1).

Freyja explained that when the bilingual books of communication were used to document children's real experiences in pictures and text they provided multiple opportunities for the child to connect words with their own reality in a meaningful way, both in relation to learning Icelandic and their home languages:

> Just you know this experience for the child and the connection... it's good to have this connection to objects, not just a picture of a game or clay... but [for the child] I was making something from the clay you know, this experience I think the child connects more and finds it easier to learn new words and such if it can connect to something that he has been doing himself than to always just see a picture of something... it is this real experience too... it is of course to help the children learn Icelandic but also to keep their mother tongue alive (Freyja 1).

Most of the parents discussed how important they found it for their children to become literate in their home languages. They bought books when they travelled to their home countries and got books from visiting relatives, borrowed books from friends or the library. Some of the parents were also interested in collecting books in Icelandic. The preschool intentionally collected books in different languages and welcomed children and parents to the library where they could borrow books and for use at home:

> We have books, a lot of books in different languages, we have searched for books that are in all languages [spoken] here, not found for everyone but we have searched for them. We have a lot of books and have been lending books home in the children's languages (Sif 1).

The teachers also worked with the city library and visited it regularly. Children could borrow books in diverse languages from the library and the preschool also had the opportunity to order a case with books from the library with multilingual books to take home. Halla explained that when she visited the city library with the children, she pointed out books in different languages in order to encourage multiliteracy:

> I show them at the library that there is a sign [on the books] from which countries and that there are books in multiple languages, and I think that is important... that one can read for them [the children] also in their language (Halla 1).

Children could also bring books from home and they and their parents were encouraged to do so. The teachers explained that by sharing books, inviting children to borrow books to bring home, and by bringing books to the preschool, they were seeking to build a collective interest in reading and interest in different languages and writing systems. This was also an attempt to give children with less access to print and books the opportunity to have more books around them. For some children, being able to bring a book to the preschool was exciting, and one mother explained that having someone to read her language at the preschool was also an opportunity for her:

> They can bring books from home also... she loves that, and she wants to you know, wants to take all, not never ever one... we really want to teach... [name of child] how to read in Polish so... yes, they have got two

> teachers for Polish... and sometimes [name of teacher] reads to them (Mother 5).

Since this was not an activity all the parents took part in, the teachers gradually began to systematically carry out projects for all children, sending the books home and bring books to preschool. They made small cards, explaining that the children who had the card had a special role of bringing a book to the preschool or selecting and taking a book home from the preschool's library. Halla explained the card and the activity:

> It says something like they [the children] can choose a book, take it home and then bring it back to preschool when we bring the book from home, it says on the card... "today I can bring my favourite book from home, or tomorrow" this is really just our encouragement for parents to read to their children. They naturally choose the book and hopefully ask if mom wants to read to me, or dad, or sister, or whoever you know (Halla 1).

When the children brought a book from home, they were given special attention during circle time so they could present the book to other children and discuss it with the group. If the book was in a language the teacher understood, she would read it and discuss it with the group of children, but if the teacher did not understand the language or the writing system, she co-created the session with the child who brought the book:

> [The children bring] the books... and they sit with the person reading the book, then they come up and have the book, either tell about it themselves or the teacher reads the book... if it is in a language I do not understand then I ask the children to either read or look at the pictures and tell the story around the pictures. I tell them that this is in this language and I do not know this language so I cannot read the words (Birta 1).

Some of the parents explained that they had books in Icelandic and that their children preferred bringing those to the preschool, but others only had books in their home languages: "When the children can bring their favourite books... I have asked if it is a problem if he would bring a book in [our language] and that has never been a problem and then he just brought his books" (Mother 2). Other parents explained that their daughter had many books in Icelandic and usually chose to bring them because the teachers did not understand her home language. But they knew that it was not a problem to bring books in different languages since the teachers created learning opportunities with the children to discuss any book, the text, and the pictures:

> Then we take a book from home but I have never actually brought one in our language, only in Icelandic... there is no one who knows the language... there are only teachers who are asking what is on them, there are like pictures that are in the book and then they are just going over the

> pictures, not reading the text or what is written and just asking what is written there... but we have not done that because she also has... a lot of books in Icelandic (Parents 1).

The teachers and parents believed that one of the important reasons for maintaining and supporting the home language was for the children to be able to sustain their relationship with the extended family, grandparents, and other family members. Freyja stressed that the home language of multilingual children played a big part in their possibility to maintain the relationship with the extended family, thus connecting closely to their identity as multilingual: "I think in connection to the identity e.g. you know, hold on to your roots, and this connection both to parents and also the family that they can speak to grandmother and grandfather when they visit" (Freyja 1). In some cases, the grandparents were living in Iceland but did not speak Icelandic and in those instances the home language was essential for the children to be able to communicate with them, as one mother explained: "It is just so that they can speak to each other... grandmother and grandfather do not know Icelandic... even though they live in Iceland" (Mother 3).

Sif believed that working with, supporting, and displaying all the diverse languages spoken at The Circle provided a platform where they could increase the awareness and interest for languages. By showing interest, they were building trust and hopefully motivating multilingual children and parents in their learning of Icelandic:

> I think without exception that if we want to get people to listen to what... we are expressing when we are going to talk about the value of Icelandic and that they are starting to show interest in their language and as soon as people feel that you are interested in them, they identify with it... and then maybe they start to trust... and want to hear what you have to say (Sif 1).

The parents participating in the study had varied proficiency in Icelandic and did not share the same view of learning or practicing Icelandic themselves, even though they thought it to be necessary for their children to master Icelandic. One of the mothers explained that she had been living too long in Iceland without succeeding in learning the language and for her it was essential that her son kept on speaking her language. Other parents who already knew Icelandic, partly or fluently, explained how interested they were in learning more and how their motivation to learn Icelandic influenced their attitude towards the language and the society:

> I want to speak Icelandic, I want to learn more, always just more and more so I went to all the courses that were available and I just wanted to go learn. I don't care, I can speak English but I just want to speak Icelandic because I live, I'm going to be here and then I want to speak Icelandic. It's much more fun for me when I started speaking, it was a completely different life (Mother 1).

All the parents had the policy of using and supporting the home languages. Some were more rigid when it came to the use of languages in communication within the household, like one mother who did not want her two children to use Icelandic in the house: "When they are playing sometimes, they speak Icelandic, but I always say "no, at home we need to speak [our language]" (Mother 5). Other parents tried to guide the children softly towards using the home language like one mother who encouraged her son to use the home language even though she gave him space to express himself in Icelandic:

> At first it was that at home we only speak [our language] but then when he went to play he chose Icelandic... he took on some kind of imaginary play playing with toys... like play language... usually if he is in a hurry and is excited to express himself, I let him finish but if it's like this at home and the home conditions are just calm, I try to fix him (Mother 2).

Other parents believed that supporting their children's language development in Icelandic was a part of their responsibility and they were not worried that this would be too complicated or confusing for their children. These parents explained that multilingualism was an asset, something that they themselves were interested in and they believed it was beneficial for their daughter to become interested in many languages. Their policy was to support their daughter's use of Icelandic and speak Icelandic when they were around other people speaking Icelandic, otherwise they spoke their home language:

> At home we speak our language... still, if she asks us something in Icelandic then we also only answer in Icelandic... when we are at the preschool or around other Icelanders, we try to speak Icelandic, so others understand... home, inside we try to speak our language to support her to learn it (Parents 1).

Still there were some parents that expressed a monolingual view. They emphasised the separation of Icelandic and the home language, as part of their beliefs and understanding of their own role regarding their children's language development. One father highlighted that the main role of the preschool was to teach and speak Icelandic, that was not his role and he did not want the children to be spoken to in their language by teachers at the preschool. He knew that there were Polish-speaking children and teachers at The Circle and stressed that he would not want teachers to speak in their language with his children:

> F: I would perhaps not dig it if there was a teacher from [name of country] and would speak to my children in [name of language].
> R: You would not like that?

> F: No this is a preschool, it was a rule, agreement between us and teachers from first day when he started preschool, "preschool – Icelandic, home [name of language]", to catch those both languages as much as possible, it is much time they spend at home, this is much more work for us and I think just great, very good (Father 4).

One mother, who did not speak Icelandic herself, explained that it was not her role to work with Icelandic at home, that was only for the teachers and the preschool, and she stressed that this was the message that the teachers had given her:

> They [the teachers] always like say, "don't worry about Icelandic... we're going to care about this, you just care about the Polish language, don't talk," as I even can't, but "don't talk with kids in Icelandic so then Polish, talk with them Polish..." if she knows Polish pretty good, she will speak Icelandic also (Parents 5).

All the parents discussed how they supported their children's home languages with different practices, explicitly or not. Collecting books and reading for the children was an activity they all carried out and many of them visited their home countries regularly. This created an opportunity to focus on the home language for an extended period of time as one mother explained: "We read to her of course every day and we have got Polish TV... we almost every year go to Poland, this is like school for them, be like two months... and we just speak Polish" (Mother 5). Discussions and communication in the children's home language were a part of most children's daily life along with reading and singing, as explained by this mother:

> We read books every day and in the evening in [our language]... and then we also sing songs in that language, just everything we do together, maybe play together, it all takes place in [our language]. I also have a daughter who is 25 years old and lives here in Iceland and when the siblings meet they also talk to each other [in our language] (Mother 2).

Some of the parents said that they sent their children to heritage language schools to give them the opportunity to learn the home language outside of the home. There they learned to read and write, sing, and play with language. The parents explained that the younger children were mostly playing with the language: "This is called school but usually the children meet to play and sing, there is not perhaps much teaching the children, but this is like coming together" (Mother 2). For the older children, usually at least five or six years old, the language school was on Saturdays and involved different activities including homework. Parents had to support the children between the classes which was often a challenge for parents that worked a lot and had little extra time. Other parents did not send their children to language schools, even though they found it very important for the children to learn to read and write in their home language, at least the basics. They saw it as their role to support reading and writing in home

languages. These parents explained how they motivated their daughter in relation to reading, writing, and communication and gave an example of their practices with their daughter when a relative was visiting for two months:

> Yes, I'm just going to do this myself, also writing and I'm just going to help her and be with her completely in this and so that she can just sometimes write with her aunt who is in [country] in our language... he [the uncle] only came to visit Iceland for about two months and... does not understand anything [Icelandic] and then she comes into the shop and like that she is explaining to him what was said... we allow her to say "what does it mean, can you explain it to him." "Yes mom," then she just says [our language] it's just marvellous, we are very happy with her (Parents 1).

The parents were proud of their children's ability and motivation to learn words and languages. Some of the parents were happy when their children displayed interest in more languages than Icelandic and the home language, especially English. Parents gave different examples of their children's interest in learning languages, some involving the children's ability to translanguage or showing awareness of "appropriate" language use:

> He was actually very interested right from the beginning here at the preschool and often when I came to pick him up, I asked the preschool teacher what language he speaks [in the preschool] and whether he understands Icelandic and then I always got a positive answer. As soon as he saw me he was very quick to switch and spoke [our language] to me, it was clear from the beginning that he realised that he speaks two languages... even though he uses one word at a time in Icelandic, it still works very smooth for him. He is not stopping or hesitating, just keeps talking... and it is still today so if we are driving e.g. he often asks what does this word mean or I ask him, do you know the meaning of the word in [language] or Icelandic. Then English is added now, based on cartoons and children's material that is on television (Mother 2).

Even though both teachers and parents discussed the importance of supporting and teaching the home languages of children, all of them highlighted the preschool's responsibility to teach Icelandic and give the children ample opportunities to learn and practice Icelandic. For most of the parents and teachers it was important that all the children got the opportunity to become active learners and participants within the Icelandic community, both in relation to social and educational success, as Freyja explained:

> If you are going to live in Iceland then it is naturally important that you can speak the language to those around you... and they [the children]

> continue to the next school level and that they can follow the group and what is going on and just yes, be like this in this Icelandic society as equals... everyone has the same right and then it is good for them to have Icelandic to be able to express themselves... this social connection (Freyja 1).

Parents explained that even though the home language was important, it was essential for the children to become fluent in Icelandic, especially in those cases where parents had decided to live permanently in Iceland:

> I also think it is important that we know what is for the child, what is good for them, to learn their mother tongue. They know it, it is good but still this is how they live in Iceland, so better they have good Icelandic, this I think (Mother 3).

Icelandic is the language of school and for the teachers and the parents it was crucial that the multilingual children learn Icelandic. Findings from my observation, interviews, and video recordings show that the teachers were resourceful in creating learning opportunities with the Icelandic language and literacy. In the next chapter I will look at examples where the active participation of multilingual children is enhanced through Icelandic.

4.6 Creating learning opportunities with Icelandic language and literacy

Findings show that one of the main areas of multilingual children's learning took place when children's use and understanding of Icelandic was supported in different activities, both child-initiated and organised by the teachers. The preschool's curriculum stated that play was the main learning area of the preschool and through sustained and deep play, where teachers have a supporting role, all other aspects of learning should take place. Language support was a cross-curriculum activity, regarded as a continuous thread through all aspects of learning. The teachers' aim was to use diverse daily activities to introduce, scaffold, and teach new vocabulary and enhance the language use and linguistic development of all children.

Even though teachers shared the view of the importance of creating a space for children to communicate in their home language and feel respect and support for their linguistic diversity, they explained that one of their primary roles was to support learning of the Icelandic language. As discussed in the previous chapter on multilingualism, there were instances where teachers built on children's knowledge in their home languages but they were scarce. Usually, when the children used words in other languages, mostly English or Polish, the teachers would accept and affirm the children's use of the words but quickly repeat the word in Icelandic or ask for the Icelandic meaning. The teachers consciously planned and provided rich language

spaces where Icelandic was in focus. The teachers strove to accomplish this by grouping children differently during daily activities such as lunch time, during reading groups, or group work, but during free play the children chose who and what to play with. The teachers avoided *stigmatised* grouping where multilingual children were only paired with other multilingual children or with children who all needed special language support. An exception to this was when the Polish-speaking teacher read for the Polish-speaking children. Most often the teachers' aim was to group children who shared different strengths and abilities together. Still, it could be challenging for the teachers to tailor the support and motivation to children with different linguistic needs. Free play and active participation where peer use of Icelandic was the main medium, provided an important learning space for multilingual children even though they were not pushed to speak Icelandic: "we try to create situations where they are not all together [children sharing the same home language] so they have to speak Icelandic or maybe not speak Icelandic but participate in Icelandic" (Petra 2).

Petra explained that she had thought a lot about how to develop a productive and caring Icelandic language environment. She wondered whether there was a perfect group size of multilingual children versus monolingual Icelandic-speaking children that would provide the ideal peer supported Icelandic through play and other activities. Many years ago, when Petra was working in a preschool in Denmark, more than 80% of the children had another home language than Danish and she experienced that as a challenge. But at the same time, she thought it to be a strength to have many children sharing the same home language because that added to their overall linguistic development. She connected her experience in Denmark and at The Circle to other Icelandic preschools she knew well, where there were few multilingual children in the group. In those preschools, she had experienced that the teachers did not find it important to focus on inclusive practices. This created the risk that multilingual children became marginalised, and Icelandic language support was the sole responsibility of the special education teacher: "I have sometimes thought about this if it is more difficult... if the Polish boy has become a special-education child? Rather than being just the Polish boy among the other Polish boys, or the children?" (Petra 2).

In the following subchapters, I discuss findings which focus on learning opportunities in Icelandic. In the first part, I look at how underlying beliefs and attitudes of teachers influence the way they seek to develop the language learning spaces and how complex it can be at times. In the second part, I seek to visualise the learning opportunities provided by teachers in relation to language support, motivation, and guided linguistic participation by presenting concrete examples of daily activities.

4.6.1 Language learning spaces in the making

A recurrent theme in the interviews and findings from observation and video recordings show that the participating teachers considered it to be their role to be

language models and guide the linguistic participation and socialisation of multilingual children. This was not only the responsibility of the special education teacher at The Circle, as Freyja explained: "It is the role of everybody who works here to promote language and literacy and all this, that is just a part of what should be in focus all day, just as simple as that" (Freyja 1).

It was underlined that all the teachers needed to become aware of important learning opportunities regarding language support through daily activities. Sometimes children needed some extended support in Icelandic, but the teachers had to be alert and not deprive them of valuable learning opportunities with peers. Sif explained that removing children from play or other activities in order to receive Icelandic language support could destroy very powerful learning opportunities:

> In some cases ... we simply need, or the child needs, this kind of extended support, but it's not always at all... special education activities. I don't mind as long as you're not removing the child from situations where they learn the most... but you can always find some moments and then it's nothing for everyone at two o'clock in the afternoon or something like that... there is a big misunderstanding with children who need to learn the subject better that they are removed from activities and put in this and that project because they should learn Icelandic better, but it is possible to destroy great learning opportunity with this procedure (Sif 2).

At the beginning of my research during the natural observations, I experienced many instances where children with diverse needs and skills were participating in different activities. I realised after some time that this really affected how I as a researcher perceived the group of children. In the beginning, I could not pinpoint the children in need of extra support because of their special needs. The practices were overall very inclusive and the groups of children were so varied (e.g. not the same children together for lunch and reading session, group work, or free play) that it somehow minimised the gaps between them. What added to this experience was that the teachers did not build on the deficient model when discussing children and always displayed high expectation towards them. Even though the daily life in the Green division could be very chaotic and busy with ups and downs and children exposing all kinds of feelings and behaviour, the teachers strove to remain calm and respond quickly to situations that came up. I did not detect any particular or single children being marginalised repeatedly.

Still, the teachers were aware that all the multilingual children needed linguistic guidance and rich language learning spaces to succeed in learning the language of school. Even though this was a prevailing view and the hallmark of the language work in the Green division, the teachers discussed different challenges that they had to work

with, like shortage of staff, new staff entering the preschool, lack of time to plan and their continuous quest for best practices, as explained by Dísa:

> We are probably not doing enough to achieve the best [results] it's probably possible to do a whole lot more... maybe some methods are better than others that you may not know about... yes, 'it's just that to keep on going, and you know develop and establish and try to speak as much as possible [to the children] and embed the vocabulary... this is of course a long-term task (Dísa 1).

One of the challenges I detected was the complex and at times exhausting situation that could arise when many children were trying to get a teachers' attention at the same time, or when the teachers were seeking to attend to the needs and interest of many children simultaneously. In this excerpt below, which took place during free play after lunch, two boys were sitting at a table playing with blocks and Halla was sitting at the table with them. The other children were playing either at the table or around the room. The other teachers were also inside the room and occasionally they or some children approached Halla and exchanged words with her, distracting her from focusing on her communication with the boys. During the session Halla's attention was directed at Daniel who was unhappy in the beginning and did not want to participate in any of the activities the children had selected for free play. Halla told him that this was fine, the two of them could go and pick a game to play. He selected the blocks and started to play. Very soon another boy, Alfonso, sat down with them and joined the activity. The recording shows very clearly that Halla is doing her best to give her full attention to one boy at a time in order to enrich the language being used, but it is challenging because they often speak almost at the same time:

D: **Look this is a horse, look horse** (Daniel smiles points to the horse he made with the blocks and looks at Halla to get her attention)
H: **Wow, that is a cool horse** (Halla replies with an encouraging voice and says something more that can't be heard because Alfonso is speaking)
A: **And I have a giraffe** (Alfonso is joining the conversation trying to get Halla's attention at the same time as Daniel but she focuses on Daniel and does not comment, Daniel points to the back of the horse and says something that can't be heard because Alfonso is talking simultaneously)
H: **Can you sit there?** (Halla points to the back of Daniel's horse)
A: **And I have a giraffe** (Alfonso repeats his sentence but neither Halla nor Daniel reply)
D: **Yes** (Daniel and Halla keep an eye contact, her focus is completely on him, and he is seeking affirmation from her during the conversation)
H: **And does it have an eye?** (Points to the block with the horse eyes)

D: **Yes** (keeps on smiling and looking at Halla for affirmation)
H: **And where is his mouth?** (Daniel turns the horse around, still smiling and looking into her eyes, pointing to the horses' mouth) **Is it there, there under?** (VR M3E).

After one minute of focusing her attention on Daniel, who needed much more linguistic support and encouragement than Alfonso who talked continuously, both directing his words to Halla and Daniel but also speaking to himself, she turned her attention to Alfonso:

A: **And I am also making a horse** (He still tries to get attention from Halla and succeeds)
H: **Wow! You also made a horse** (and now her attention shifts to him for a while)
A: **I am making a tall horse, very tall horse, I have a tall horse**
H: **Wow is it both tall and big?** (VR M3E).

Even though the children need the teachers to scaffold and teach Icelandic, they are also learning a lot from each other. The teachers highlighted that when children were together in different groups, playing with others more competent than themselves, they were learning. When the children were chosen to carry out roles, they were always in pairs so they could learn from each other and the teacher. Sif explained that the children learn a lot from each other, and when the teacher is around, supporting their interaction, they benefit the most: "Children teach children, that's just the way it is, and children teach children, I think, the most if a teacher is nearby... because children are more interested in children than us" (Sif 1).

My findings show that creating quality learning opportunities during child-initiated activities was just as important for the teachers as planning and organising language stimulation. Still, there were indications that the teachers were sometimes insecure regarding child-initiated activities and free play and unsure if they had the potential to provide a language learning space of similar quality as one organised by the teacher. Sif explained that even though it was important to carry out organised language activities, it was just as important to listen and observe when learning opportunities arose and build on real experiences, connecting language and actions:

> For example if you invite children to join in game-playing and you intend to apply rich language stimulation during the game, it is just a good activity and just a good thing, but it's no better than escorting a child when it goes to the toilet and what the child is doing exactly when it is experiencing things, what you say while it is carried out [the task], that's just the main issue... because this kind of practice with language stimulation that I favour, I think it's just a marathon and you always have to

> be on your toes and always say [use the words] and extend [the conversation] and then look at what changes and praise [the child] (Sif 1).

Routine activities like mealtimes and getting dressed for going outside, going to the bathroom, and cleaning up, were used for discussions and language learning. I detected multiple *hands-on* and *real experience* activities that teachers turned into language learning opportunities for multilingual children, and there were also organised language and literacy activities where the teachers would read, play games, or carry out group work where language was in focus. Pictures and visuals around the preschool were used to scaffold meaning and give ideas to work with language in different spaces. As already explained, I organised the data from video recordings either as teacher-organised or children-initiated but the boundaries between these were not always clear. My findings show that usually the teachers gave a lot of space for child-initiated talk and discussions during organised activities. During free play and child-initiated activities the teachers were often around, extending or adding words and artefacts.

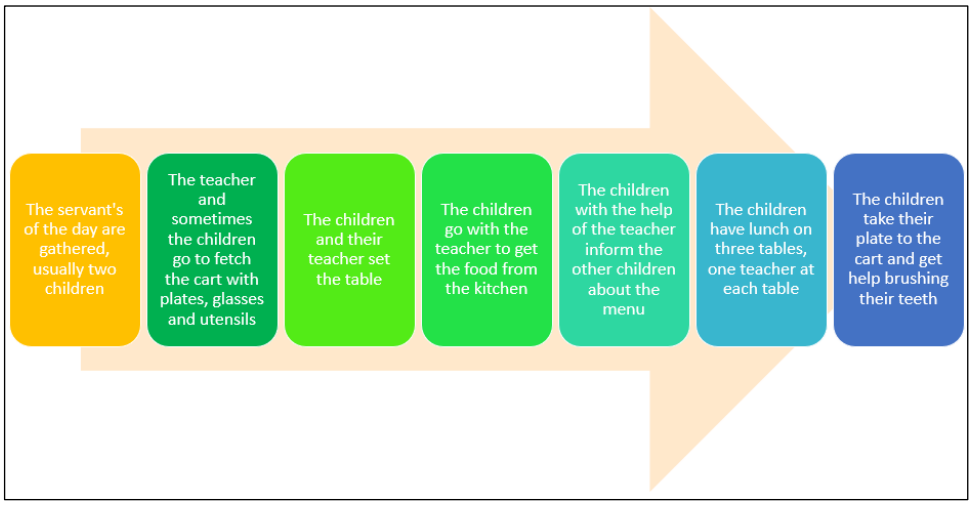
In the following subchapter I seek to draw out examples of active participation and real experiences where the language of the preschool, Icelandic, is in focus. The first and the most detailed example describes the sequence of different activities or modules relating to preparing and having lunch. When I was analysing my data, I discovered that this sequence involved multiple opportunities for language learning and language socialisation in small groups, where active linguistic participation was guided by the teachers and the children became social actors and role models for each other. Then I turn to examples of different activities where the focus was on providing learning opportunities with Icelandic language and literacy. As explained in the chapter on methodology, I analysed and reflected on selected video recordings in collaboration with the three participating teachers. I build on these in order to add to the understanding of the language learning spaces provided for multilingual children.

4.6.2 Learning Icelandic through active participation in real experiences

An activity taking place every day at The Circle was preparing and having lunch. The sequence of this activity is described in Figure 3. The sequence consists of seven parts or modules, each exhibiting vocabulary, means of communication, and chores that the children learn simultaneously and gradually while participating repeatedly in those activities over time. Two children were chosen as servants each day and their responsibility, guided by one teacher, was to set the three tables for the children and teachers in the Green division. This was a role all the children carried out over time, but the teachers decided which children had the responsibility each day and displayed a picture of the two in the cloak room. During lunch one teacher usually sat at each table with six to eight children. The full sequence, from beginning to start, took more

than an hour each day. During the sequence, the children, individually or in a very small group, got the opportunity to participate in this real-life project that had significant relevance for the preschool community.

Figure 3. The sequence of preparing and having lunch in the Green division.



During observation I saw when Magda and Alfonso, the servants of the day, came running in from the playground into the cloak room to look at their pictures and get confirmation from Dísa that they were the servants. They looked very excited. While setting the three tables they chatted with Dísa both about their chores, but there were also instances where they or Dísa connected the activity to their lives while talking. This was an organised activity that became child-initiated when Dísa followed Magda's lead in a conversation connecting home and preschool experience and language. This excerpt shows how Magda, who was often rather silent in the larger group of children, became more expressive with the guided participation of Dísa. The activity became a safe learning space for Magda with Dísa providing care, interest, warmth, and motivation for linguistic participation in Icelandic. Simultaneously, it raised questions regarding Magda's opportunity to build on her linguistic repertoire and knowledge in Polish:

M: **What soup is for lunch?** (Magda is putting the plates and cutlery on the table in the corner and Alfonso on a table in the side room)

D: **It is called... the colour is red... what is it called?** (Dísa smiles at Magda and with care and full attention and provides her with a safe space for the conversation, gives her clues but does not answer)

M: **Fire soup** (This soup was a favourite of many children and Magda had seen the bowls and knew there was soup for lunch)

D: **Fire soup, that is correct** (Magda makes a stop, turns her attention to Dísa, walks towards her with a smile on her face, standing in front of

Dísa, looking directly at her and Dísa turns her face towards Magda, looks at her smiling and they make eye contact)

M: **But mom just does not know!**

D: **Does your mother not know how to make Fire soup?**

M: **No**

D: **Ohhh, just Stína** (Dísa is referring to the preschool's cook, and Magda nods her head with a smile on her face)

D: **Have you finished putting the plates on the table?** (Magda turns to the table and keeps on setting the table)

M: **But mom** (unclear utterance) **red soup, not Fire soup**

D: **Does your mother know how to make a red soup but not Fire soup?** (Alfonso enters the conversation and tells Dísa that he has finished setting the table. Dísa is giving Magda full attention and does not reply to Alfonso at this moment)

M: **Yes**

D: **Then it is perhaps tomato soup, do you think that is possible?**

M: (Pauses and thinks before approaching Dísa again) **Mom, no I was saying mom** (jumps up and laughes, Dísa smiles at her)

D: **That is perfectly fine, you can say mom to me**

M: **I was saying in Polish** (laughs again and fidgets a little bit like she becomes a little shy for accidentally calling Dísa mom in Polish)

D: **That is perfectly fine even though I do not know how to speak Polish, do you speak Polish at home?** (Even though Dísa knows about Magda's Polish background she displays interest towards her language)

M: **Yes, at home to mom and daddy but Icelandic in preschool** (Here Magda separated her languages even though she sometimes used Polish at the preschool) (VR M2A).

During the activity, Alfonso, Magda, and Dísa discussed the words and vocabulary of utensils, dishes, and glasses and practiced numbers and concepts. Dísa was attentive to the children's practices and used questions and gestures to discuss the task at hand, giving them ample time to answer her questions, repeated and extended their use of words. Alfonso was more fluent in Icelandic than Magda and the recording shows that Dísa directs her attention and words towards Magda in greater detail than Alfonso:

A: **I have already put the knives there**

D: **Can you count for me how many plates are here?** (Dísa asks Alfonso to estimate how many plates are needed for this table based on the number of knifes already there)

A: **One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, eight, we need eight plates**

D: **Magda, are you finished?** (Magda approaches Dísa with the rest of the utensils that are not needed for the table) **What else is missing?**
A: **Eight spoons!**
D: **Here, eight spoons** (Dísa holds the spoons in her hand and directs her attention to Alfonso) **one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight spoons, wow, here you are** (Dísa uses wow to express her awe for the many spoons and hands them to Alfonso but does not ask him to count again, like he did with the dishes)
D: **Magda, here, glasses? Something is missing for drinking, what is that?** (Magda goes to pick up more glasses to put on the table) **glasses** (Dísa is simultaneously asking a question but also giving Magda a clue for the word needed)
D: **Magda is putting the glasses on the table,** (Dísa goes back to the table where Magda is putting the glasses, verbalises the activity Magda is carrying out and pays attention to her) **do you need more glasses, Magda?**
M: **Yes**
D: **How many?** (Dísa waits, looks at Magda and gives her time to look at the table and find out)
M: **Here and here**
D: **Here and here, two, two glasses?** (Dísa affirms the words of Magda but extends the sentence and repeats the number two)
M: **Yes, two**
D: **Yes, two glasses, are we not finished then?** (Magda finishes putting the glasses on the table but does not answer Dísa) (VR M2B).

During the collaborative reflection and analysis with Dísa, Halla, and Sif, I used recordings of the third and fourth parts of the sequence described above, setting the table, and getting the food from the kitchen. We watched the recordings, discussed, and reflected upon the activity taking place and replayed the scene if something needed better clarification. This provided us with a deeper understanding of what was happening during the interaction between them and the children and how learning opportunities with language were enhanced. It was powerful to hear the teachers discuss what was happening and reflect on the communication taking place. The collaborative analysis and reflection also became empowering for them as they could see the learning opportunities unfold during activities that they had not analysed or reflected on in this way before. My role as the researcher was to provide positive feedback and ask open-ended questions to stimulate the reciprocal discussions between the three teachers. In the excerpt below, Dísa and Sif discuss how certain activities like setting the table became a valuable learning space for the children. Dísa could focus on the communication with one or two children and use the opportunity to connect to their background and experience, not only the task at hand:

D: There you naturally have one individual [child] or of course two [children], which is naturally more intimate than when you have seven or fifteen, so you can connect much better to the individual child
S: These are very important activities
D: Yes, they are, there are so many things, it's not just about setting the table, there are so many things "mom can't make fire soup" we've come to something else than what we're doing, it's so much fun…
R: But as you say, everything, you've come to her house, you give it time […] you give time for such beautiful communication with the children
D: That is maybe something we are not thinking about, this is just what is happening and perhaps we are not paying attention to it until you explain it like this… you are just used to have good communication with them [the children] (CA 1).

The teachers keep on discussing the activity and refer to Magda's engagement in daily activities as being the calm and often silent child, but they have observed that this is changing after she transferred from the younger division into their care in the Green division. Sif, who supports all three divisions in their work with multilingual children, knew Magda from before and could provide additional information regarding her engagement. Their reflection on the participation of Magda and other children was inclusive and they always avoided the deficit model. They discussed the children as capable and with the potential to bloom, understanding that both adults and other children are role models for language participation:

S: I was also going to say that this is exactly the kind of child who speaks gently and doesn't express herself when others are talking, she stays silent
H: It's still changing a bit
D: Yes, yes
S: Yes, I can hear it when I sit at their table that she is starting to take up some space there
H: She has absolutely blossomed after she transferred (to the Green division)… She is now one of the youngest and is becoming much stronger and has good role models like (name of a girl) and others (CA 1).

When looking at the discussions between the teachers during the collaborative analysis it became obvious that Sif regularly connected the activity and communications directly to the curriculum and organised practices with language, communication, and empowering pedagogy. At the same time, Dísa explained that this was just what she was used to doing without thinking that much about it. Going through the collaborative analysis with Sif and Halla obviously made Dísa see the activity from a different perspective, but it was also empowering for her to listen to Sif praising her work, for

providing a learning space that included deep conversation with the children while providing rich language learning opportunities:

D: I feel like I've talked enough, I talk a lot, I don't think I talk that much in general
S: This is really a great *Text talk* (is a practice they have been using in organised activities connecting written words and words from books to activities) glasses, glasses, glasses and then one glass and then more glasses, I think it's awesome
D: Yes, three (in Icelandic þrír) and three (in Icelandic þrjá)
S: I felt that time stood still there, is this a 19 children's division or?
D: We were just coming in (some of the children were still outside)
S: Yes, but this scene, that this can also take place at the preschool!
D: Look what a wonderful time you have with them! This is a quality time, a quality time, huh, you get there with these two while the others are coming in slowly, what a lot of things you can think about which maybe you don't necessarily think about every day, you just do this, huh (CA1).

The next activity in the sequence of preparing lunch was when Dísa and the two children took the cart to the kitchen to get the food. When the cook had put the food on the cart Dísa asked the children to explain to her what the children in the Green division were having for lunch. Magda was distracted and did not reply in the beginning, and Alfonso led the conversation. Dísa directed her attention to Magda and included her in the communication with encouragement. Having two children as servant's each time provided an opportunity for them to learn from each other, not only from the teacher, and it also motivated collaboration between the children who had to work as a team and they themselves become role models for each other:

A**:** **Milk** (Alfonso is quick to reply and Magda repeats after him)
M: **Milk**
D: **And?**
A: **Water**
M: **Water**
D: **And?**
A: **Bread** (Magda repeats almost at the same time as Alfonso)
D: **And?**
M: **And soup** (Now Magda has taken the lead) (VR M2D).

Dísa also used the opportunity to communicate with the children while they pushed the cart back to the Green division. They practiced directions and concepts relating to space and speed. Dísa was walking backwards with the cart and the children helped each other to push the cart and direct her. Dísa was not only turning the activity into a

learning opportunity with language, she was also turning the activity into play with her voice and body language. Simultaneously, she became a role model for Magda and Alfonso. With her powerful and respectful interaction when talking to the cook, Magnús (a boy from another division playing on the floor where they were going) and others they met on the way, she displayed how this language learning space became an invaluable socialising activity:

D: **Should I go backwards all the way?**
A: **No, not faster**
M: **No**
D: **But if you just tell me where to go?**
A: **This way** (points to the right direction)
D: **Here, this side? The left side?** (Points to the same direction)
A, M: **Yes** (both at the same time)
D: **Then you turn to the right, oh, oh, oh, is someone in the way?** (Dísa keeps on walking backwards according to their directions)
A, M: **Yes**
D: **Who?**
A: **Magnús**
D: **Magnús, don't get in our way** (Dísa uses a playful and joyful voice like she is playing in a bumper car in Tivoli or something) **aaah, we are coming** (Magnús moves to the side)
D: **Thank you** (Magnús replies "no problem", Dísa is very polite to him, just as polite as she was to the cook in the kitchen)
D: **He said, "no problem"** (Alfonso and Magda start watching Magnús and forget to direct Dísa) **You have to look, Magda, you have to look now I am about to bump into the door!** (VR M2D).

The focus on using every opportunity to work with language was repeatedly documented during observation and video recordings and is in line with the preschool's curriculum and what Petra described as quality language stimulation during daily practices. When asked if she could point out activities that were not organised language activities but involved lot of language support, she gave an example of teachers picking up lunch with the servants of the day:

> I hear it very often because I often leave the office doors open and everything can be heard... when the food is being picked up and there are servants [...] and there should be quality language support and I hear it very often when they walk. I heard e.g. this morning "what smell do you smell?", "Smell of soup (said the children)." "Yes but I smell bread, it's because I'm on this side of the cart, and you're on the other side of the cart" I heard this this morning. "Let's be careful now because the cart is

> full, make sure we don't spill the water" this can be heard just on this spot [in the hallway in front of the office] (Petra 2).

The final activity in the lunch sequence that I analysed was the mealtime itself. Dísa sat at the table with five children (three of the children who usually sit at the table were sick). The conversation went from discussing the meal and the food to discussing things that interested the children. Sometimes the discussions were mainly initiated by the children where they communicated with each other but sometimes Dísa guided and scaffolded the communication with questions or by extending sentences. This also involved teaching the children some manners, like how to hand the knife to others, ask for more, and hand the food politely, or by practicing how to go to the kitchen and pick up more food.

I observed Dísa's and the children's interaction with Daniel, the only multilingual child at the table. He often made many attempts to form the words and sentences that he was uttering and during the conversation it was clear that he needed time and patience from the other children (in this excerpt there are two girls at the table, Anna and Kristín) and from Dísa to be included in the conversation:

> Daniel: **There, daddy, there, daddy... this give I... there daddy was at me like this, uhh... daddy there give bike, me and I was biking there** (Daníel turns around in his seat and points to the window and outside and makes circle with his hands)
> Dísa: **I saw when you came this morning on the bike** (Dísa engages in the discussions and looks at Daniel with a big smile, affirming his words)
> Daniel: **Yes**
> Dísa: **You were very diligent when biking**
> Daníel: **Yes uhu**
> Dísa: **Yes, with your helmet!**
> Daniel: **Uhu...** (Daniel murmurs and Anna tries to get his attention and engages in the discussion)
> A: **Do you remember when your helmet was here in the back? (**Points to her back, Daniel does not answer, and Anna repeats the question saying his name, but he does not respond, the conversation changes to discussing the soup and the girls, Anna and Kristín repeatedly say the Daniel's name who does not answer. Finally, Kristín tries to get the attention)
> K: **My princess bike was very cool... I love my princess bike!**
> Daniel: **But I love fast bike** (Daniel enters the conversation again and Anna repeats her question)

A: **Daniel look, do you remember when your helmet was here in the back?** (She uses her hands to pretend to have the helmet lying down the back of her shoulders)
Daniel: **Yes** (smiles and looks towards Anna) **But I do not bother to use, yes it was here back** (he replies and stretches his hands behind his back with a smile on his face) **But I don't want to, I do... bother, not, now I start using this** (VR M2-E).

My findings show that the seven-sequence activity described in Figure 3 and explained in more detail with different examples provides an overview of related but different opportunities that the teachers use to create language learning spaces for multilingual children. From discussions during interviews and collaborative analysis of video recordings with Dísa and Sif I learned that rules, the roles of teachers, and the importance of using the activity for language learning had already been discussed and evaluated by the teachers. As in many other activities, children collaborated in evaluating and making rules for the lunch time:

S: Yes, yes, of course this has both been evaluated and then this activity [having lunch] has been discussed especially in relation to language promotion and such
D: But of course, people are different
S: Yes, some do [promote language during lunch] but others, it just different how well it goes
D: Yes, for some it's just somehow so natural, but for others it's not
R: So, you did evaluate the lunchtime?
D: Yes, and discussed it often
S: We also had the children participate in evaluating and coordinating rules and such (CA 2).

As already mentioned, visual support was provided for children, parents, and teachers around the preschool in the form of pictures and posters with text. The words of the week from activities related to *Text talk* were also displayed, and the parents were encouraged to take them home and translate into their own languages. The visual support for children was displayed at their height, for instance pictures showing the sequence of washing hands or indicating who was the servant of the day. Pictures of daily activities and routines that teachers could scaffold by using the appropriate language were used to connect activities and words and prepare children for roles and projects. Halla explained that while preparing the children for *Ash Wednesday Celebration* she used pictures from the previous year to discuss the words and activities linked to the event. This gave the children an opportunity to be prepared before the event and reflect on their participation. Some of the pictures and posters included guidelines for teachers on how to scaffold, extend, and support the linguistic participation of children or add to the children's vocabulary. An example of this was a

poster hanging next to the sandbox with different ideas for teachers on vocabulary and language use which are appropriate during sand play. These included suggestions like adjectives to use (*soft, much, little, empty*), names of objects (*cup, dish, spoon, bucket*), actions (*fill, drain, stir, knead, compress*) and complete sentences used to scaffold and model sentence use (*I think that the sand is very soft*). These ideas served a purpose and were helpful for new and novice staff as well as for multilingual staff learning Icelandic.

One of the visuals used to support children's vocabulary were posters with transparent pockets where the teachers could put in pictures and audio record the words belonging to the pictures in Icelandic. The pictures (up to 20 pictures per poster) were put in a clear pocket and below the picture was a green button that the children could push and listen to a recorded word, or a sentence matching the picture. Most often the teachers would choose the pictures for these posters depending on the vocabulary they were working with from time to time. In some instances, this was an activity the children were involved in, like in the following excerpt from a video recording showing Sif and Donek discussing words related to hens and roosters. Sif had invited Donek to help her prepare the poster, they both sat on the floor with the poster in front of them and Sif had a large pile of animal pictures in her hands. While discussing the words, Sif was also teaching Donek how to manage the technology, press play and record:

S: (Sif puts a picture of hens into the clear pocket and explains to Donek) **Listen to how I am doing** (she presses the green play button and speaks the word loud and clear) **HENS, now you can push** (Donek pushes the play button and hears the voice of Sif saying hens, Sif then goes through the pile of pictures with Donek)
S: **Should we put in another one, do you know what this is?** (She shows him a picture of another animal)
D: **No wait, I see another hen,** (takes a picture with a rooster from the pile of pictures and puts it in the clear pocket. He realises that the picture is upside down and turns it in the right direction, so it is above the record and play button)
S: **You want, I can see that you do not want it to be upside down** (Sif watches him as he finishes to put down the picture and rotate it in the right direction and then asks him) **do you think this is a hen or is this possibly a rooster?**
D: **Hens**
S: **So, you think this is a hen, look** (she points to the other picture already in the transparent pocket) **here are the hens** (and then she points her finger to the rooster, repeating the word) **rooster**
D: **Rooster**
S: **Yes, and now I am going to record, and you are going to say the word ROOSTER** (Sif clearly speaks out the word) (VR M8F).

My findings show that this was not a unique act since Sif and the other teachers regularly included the children in participation in daily chores which increased their engagement. This was not only during organised activities like the lunch sequence described in Figure 3, teachers also grasped other opportunities to build on. During collaborative analysis, Dísa and Sif discussed why the participation of children in daily chores was important. It was interesting to learn that for Sif this was a conscious pedagogical act of creating learning opportunities but for Dísa this was just the way she was used to working and it created more fun both for her and the children:

> R: But why do you think that I see this so often... that they [the children] are involved and they get to make decisions and you are not by yourself [preparing or finishing chores]?
> D: It's just more fun for both the kids and us, isn't it?
> R: But why do you think you are doing this, is it conscious or unconscious?
> S: It is totally conscious, in my mind
> D: I think it's also often unconscious, you're just used to working like this so that the children are with you, we're not used to sitting somewhere alone and...
> S: But yes, this is just so important for the children, it's there, there are the learning opportunities... I want the door to the division to be open and I want them to have access out here and be able to come and take part in what I'm doing, or Petra if we are there, and naturally there is also this feeling that this is one home here, one home, and all kinds of work needs to be done... why prepare the thing [on your own] if you benefit from them participating with you or if they just benefit! (CA 2).

The teachers realised that when they collaborated and worked together as a team the children got many more opportunities to participate and learn the language connected to the activity at hand. This was a collective effort that needed to include discussions and careful planning on how to support linguistic participation of the children, teach vocabulary, and guide and scaffold language. Sif explained that the decision to put her in the position of supporting the multilingual children was simultaneously a support for the other teachers and the division leaders. In this way she became a role model for empowering communication and an additional teacher in the group. This was also very helpful when it came to organising and carrying out work with smaller groups of children:

> The division leader doesn't necessarily manage to work like this, but that's why we created this position that I'm in. When there's a child who comes in [starts preschool] and is bilingual and we know that there are two languages then it is just priority one, two, and three to get to know the child, that you feel that they trust you and you just become their partner

> and from there you can start promoting [the language]... just follow these children, you go into the division, create projects here in front [the space in front of the division used for group work and free play] you do something extra for them and then little by little you stop it, while you never stop it with others (Sif 2).

Usually, when Sif came into the Green division to provide language support, she joined the activity taking place and tried to enrich the linguistic participation of the multilingual children. Usually this benefitted all the children taking part in the activity. Sometimes she would organise projects or do some extracurricular activities with a particular child in mind. Most often she invited others to join in, something the children were all excited about. Findings show that Sif had strong pedagogical, caring, and inclusive skills when working with the children. During an organised group activity she invited four boys to participate. I observed how the discussions constantly changed from being directed by Sif to child-initiated and personal. The recordings show how an activity organised around drawing a picture and discussing similarities and differences such as colours of eyes and hair turned into discussions about colours, words for the face, positional concepts, and the boys' personal interest and knowledge. As the activity proceeded, democratic discussions about where to hang the pictures became a part of the activity. Meanwhile, Sif praised the boys for helping each other and working together. Finally, the activity turned into discussing how sharp the tips of the coloured pencils were and how to make them sharper. Sif brought in a pencil sharpener and all the boys became very interested in taking turns in sharpening the colours. In the end, Daniel remained sitting there, still playing with the pencil sharpener. During this conversation, Sif was able to connect the activity to Daniels' background knowledge and family while extending the language being used, repeating his words, and providing him clues:

S: **Do you have a sharpener like this at home?**
D: **Yes...** (hesitates and keeps on sharpening) **but I had not...**
S: **You don't have a sharpener anymore?** (Provides him time to answer but then gives the conversation an opportunity to go on)
D: **No... hey, what happened** (removes the coloured pencil from the sharpener)
S: **Can I see? What happened, no tip?**
D: **It broken** (puts the pencil in the sharpener and keeps on sharpening)
S: **Does your sister have a pencil sharpener?** (Sif keeps on connecting to his home experience building on his family background)
D: **Yes, she has this** (points to the sharpener and looks into the eyes of Sif)
S: **Does she have a pencil sharpener just like this one?**
D: **Yes, like this**
S: **Both your sisters?** (Gives him time to answer)
D: **Yes... two sisters like this** (VR M14 G-M).

Daniel experiments with the sharpener but the tip of the pencil breaks again and again. Instead of removing the pencil from his hands, Sif uses this learning opportunity to guide his linguistic participation in Icelandic while teaching him how to sharpen the pencil through engagement and motivation:

S: **Because I see that you know how to use a pencil sharpener like this one** (stands behind him, reaches for the sharpener but he keeps on sharpening, pressing the pencil very hard), **can I show you a little bit, just a little bit** (Sif reaches for the pencil and Daniel gives it to her. She puts the pencil into the pencil sharpener and directs his hand gently around the pencil, putting her own hand around his. Together with their hands curled around the pencil they sharpen it, and Sif explains the process) **Look you put it in and then you turn the pencil around and then you let go and then you make it go around again and then you stop and start again, look it goes round and around in the pencil sharpener!** (She describes the process explicitly while they perform the action together and then she removes the pencil from the sharpener) **Woooh, look at the tip**!

D: **Yes, oh my god it stings** (Daniel smiles, tries how sharp it is on his finger and his voice is engaged and excited) **Can I see inside?** (Realises that lot of shavings have piled up inside the sharpener) **Peep** (makes a 'peep' sound when he removes the lid from the sharpener, smiles and looks inside) **Woooh** (he sticks his finger into the shavings) (VR M14 H).

Another example shows how Sif organises an activity with three girls. One of them was Ina, a multilingual girl who had just started at the preschool a week earlier. Sif had already explained how the children learn from each other and my findings show that she repeatedly used the opportunity to match together children with very different skills. The three girls and Sif sat on the floor and used cards with pictures of diverse children and families to practice family words, but Sif organised this as a hide and seek game which meant that they had to move around instead of not only sitting there naming pictures. Sif had selected three sets of pictures for each girl and put them in a bag that she handed to each of the girls who opened their bags with excitement. The girls took out the pictures, matched the children to the families, and described the pictures collectively while Sif created a shared understanding. The level of understanding and ability needed to discuss the pictures in Icelandic was very different among the three girls but by changing this into a hide and seek game Sif added excitement for all of them. By giving time to discuss the pictures and explain the game carefully, Sif created a valuable language learning space for Ina, putting inclusion, a sense of belonging, and active linguistic participation in focus:

S: **Hmm, how many are you?** (The girls are getting prepared to sit on the floor and Sif pretends to count them, already holding the small paper bags with the sets of pictures that she had prepared)
V: **Three** (Vanja, a multilingual girl is the first to answer)
A: **Three** (Adda repeats)
I: **Three** (Ina obviously listens very carefully, grasps what the girls are saying and echoes their words with a smile on her face watching them closely)
S: **Are you three? Ina, are you three?** (Ina does not understand the question but Sif uses her name and directs the question to her, but Ina looks at Vanja)
V: **Yes** (Vanja replies yes)
I: **Yes** (Ina repeats what Vanja says loud and clear)
S: **Three; one, two, three** (Sif counts the girls and Ina watches her) **do you want to play hide and seek?** (Sif is sitting down on the floor in front of them smiles and imitates their enthusiasm)
A: **Yes** (Adda answers happily and Vanja looks at her and echoes her. Ina is busy looking at the colourful floor mat, turns her head away and when she hears both girls say yes with their enthusiastic voice, she turns towards them and imitates their way of sitting)
I**: Yes** (replies happily like the two girls)
S: **This is still a different hide and seek, it is called "family hide and seek"** (Sif explains the game slowly and explicitly to them, displaying a picture of a family and a child telling them that she is going to hide the families and give them the children so then they can go and find the matching family for each child)
S: **This is a rather big child, he is definitely older than you are, don't you think?** (Sif shows the picture to the three girls but this time she is asking a question more appropriate for Adda's and Vanja's understanding than Ina's)
V: **Yes** (Vanja takes a good look at the picture)
S: **And then the family, the family of the child** (Sif holds up the two pictures of the child and the family, including the child)
V: **This is also a child** (Vanja points to the picture of the child on the family picture with his family)
I: **What, what** (Ina catches the similarities between the pictures and uses the English word WHAT while she points to the picture of the child and then to the family picture)
S: **Is he there?** (Looks at Ina, smiles and with the same enthusiasm in her words affirms Ina how observant she was recognising the child on both pictures and then Sif points to the child on the picture and the picture where he is with his family) **Yes, he is there, this is his family** (VR M12 F).

This was one of the activities we reflected on during collective analysis. Dísa and Sif focused on Ina's participation in the activity and discussed how Sif was able to include her with the other girls, even though the girls' understanding and knowledge of Icelandic was very different:

> D: She obviously found this a lot of fun, she was laughing and smiling constantly
> S: Yes, she felt included
> D: A participant
> R: Yes, very active participant... how is this group put together?
> S: These are naturally three, they are all in a very different place, they are, one is... very strong in relation to language, quick to get what is going on, one is just developing successfully but there are still some gaps just like is normal with bilingual children
> D: More time needed and such
> S: Yes, yes, but and then there is this beginner in Icelandic, but this, what we are doing there, what I am thinking is that no one there feels better than...
> R: You create conditions where...
> S: Yes, where everyone is capable
> D: Exactly (CA 2).

Child-initiated free play was a part of everyday activities in the Green division. The children could move freely around the space inside the two main rooms, and they also used the space that consisted of a cloak room and a small open area in the hallway. During free play, the children chose an activity and were able to transfer their play and the learning material around the space without the rules being very rigid on what material could be used, how, and where. Teachers were situated around the playing area, moving from one group of children to another, often with the aim of extending the play with questions or suggestions or intervening if the children needed some assistance. In some instances, the teachers provided additional learning material or language motivation like Dísa did in the following example when she became active in a role play with one boy and three girls, two of whom are multilingual:

> The play started in the home corner where they had been playing for a while and then they decided to pack their things to go for a picnic. After a while they had transferred the play to the other end of the room. Dísa was watching the children and when they had put down the picnic blanket one girl told Dísa that she had not put on sun protection at home this morning even though the sun was shining outside. Dísa immediately connected that to the play and whether the sun was shining: "But for the picnic? If the sun is shining so strongly? You must find sun protection!" This became an activity that the children discussed for a while, found some bottle to use as

> a pretend sun protection, and helped each other put it on. Later during the same play, the children were looking for a way to drive to the picnic site using their small chairs. Dísa helped them to find a solution where they could put some soft scarfs or blankets underneath the chairs to make it easier for them to push each other from their house to the picnic site (VR M3G-I).

Another example from a child-initiated activity taking place during free play shows three children, one of them multilingual, playing in the cloak room. Halla is watching the children play and turns to the three of them to see what they are doing. She realises that they are very interested in the flies in the window and immediately shares their interest and engages in the activity. Simultaneously, she turns this child-initiated activity into a shared endeavour, a language learning opportunity with active participation and involvement on behalf of all the children and herself:

> H: **What happens if we look through the magnifying glass? Do we see better?** (Halla has added a box and a magnifying glass to the children's observation of the flies)
> L: **Yes** (Lukas turns to Anna and shows her the flies that he has put in the box and is now watching through a magnifying glass) **Anna look here** (shows her the box but she is busy looking at the window sill)
> A: **Woooh, there are very many...**
> L: **Anna, Anna** (Lukas brings the box and the magnifying glass closer for Anna to see)
> H: **Very many flies in the window, look also here at the mitten of [name of child], here are a few** (Halla adds to Anna's sentence and then takes a mitten that belongs to a boy in the division and shows them a fly clinging to it)
> L: **Many, wooh the bee!** (Lukas uses the word bee for a regular house fly)
> H: **Is this a bee?**
> A: **Oh no** (takes one fly and puts it into the box)
> L: **There are more bees needed in the box** (Lukas still uses the word bee for the fly)
> H: **Shall we put more flies into the box?** (She listens to Lukas and affirms his expression to put more flies in the box, does not correct him nor repeat bee)
> L: **Yes**
> H: **Hey, no, what is this** (The fly crawls on her finger) **Where is it going?** (Halla laughs and Lukas laughs with her, Halla makes the fly fall into the box) **Did it go in the box?** (She directs her question to Lukas) (VR M2-I).

My findings show that when the teachers were attentive to the children's needs during play and when they interacted and blended in by providing additive learning materials, learning sparks, or ideas, especially when the children did not have the focus or resilience to keep on playing, the play was prolonged. Simultaneously, the teachers added valuable vocabulary and means of communication to the play, providing the possibility of a deeper and more sustained play and higher level of participation among the children. The teachers sometimes acted as bridge builders in communication and opened the door to the play for children who were not participating or belonging to the play taking place.

During collaborative analysis and reflection, we observed recordings from free play and discussed how the three teachers, Dísa, Halla, and Sif, perceived their role during play. They explained that their role was to be observant and attentive, show interest in the children's play and provide the learning and playing materials. They found it very important to understand and learn which children needed extra motivation and support in order to become active participants in the play, a process that was often taken in several small steps over long periods of time. If a child was not included in the play, Sif saw it as their own responsibility to show interest and engagement: "So you are always paying attention to the child during the play even though it is not yet included in the play. You do something little to help the child become empowered" (CA 1). Dísa and Sif did not share the same view on their level of involvement in the play. While Dísa argued that she did not want to disturb children if they were playing on good terms, Sif claimed that this was built on a misunderstanding since they as teachers could and should use learning opportunities within free play to support the child, especially the children in need for support:

S: But this is the misunderstanding, you are not disturbing, you go in there as a teacher
D: But you somehow want to allow it [the child] to enjoy because you see that [the child] is feeling good
S: That's exactly what you... (They direct their talk to each other, not minding me)
D: Maybe more words are missing
S: Yes, you come in for that... if we take [name of multilingual girl] and many of these bilingual children, you get exactly X many opportunities to do the child some good, you are not disturbing them just by being there
D: Hmm...
S: Then you are using these learning opportunities, a child may be needing a word, and if you are there and say something like "banana", this was a banana. The child may not notice you but then the child catches the word or you engage with the play, and then when

you leave, you don't feel like you interrupted anything, but you had come in and done language promotion for a bilingual child

D: Hmm (in an agreeing tone)

S: And if it would be accepted among the staff to sit in the dolls' corner… is perhaps your best job [practice] during the day, this half an hour that you were in the dolls' corner… (CA 2).

Often when Sif came into the Green division to support the participation and language learning of the multilingual children she used the opportunity to observe their activity and intervened with ideas or materials to enrich the play and support their sense of belonging and active participation with peers. During the collaborative analysis we reflected on a video where a few boys were role playing using "hollow blocks" (large wooden blocks that children use for imaginary play) to build a home, pretending that there was night and day by turning the light on and off. One of them, a multilingual boy who needed special attention, was drifting out of the play. The teachers discussed and reflected on the recording, their own actions during free play in general, and how this play and the multilingual boy's involvement changed with Sif's facilitation, guidance, and support:

S: While the blocks were just there, someone wanted it to be night and go to sleep and went and turned off the light and went to sleep and then day came… but the prompt was whether it wasn't time to have breakfast since the day had come and then they [the boys] went and got all the materials (they went to the other side of the room and moved a wooden stove and some kitchen artefacts to where the hollow blocks were)

D: And then you just got chocolate and everything (the boys prepared breakfast and invited Sif)

S: Yes, sauce and everything

R: Like you say, there's a learning spark, then another half hour has passed in the play… do you remember which prompt was the one that came in a little later?

S: They [the other teachers] were folding laundry [small wash cloths] and… we started to join in folding laundry and then it all went back into the washing machine and then the stove turned into a washing machine and then more went into the washing machine and this folding became a big play before it [the laundry] was folded

R: But it is exactly this with the prompts that I have been thinking about and there have been many ideas both from you and the children who are in the play. But is this something you do consciously or what do you think about this?…

H: It's just so different... but this is still a bit unconscious, you come in and find where you should be and participate or not, depending on the situation
D: Yes, sometimes you don't want to get involved, just stay aside and watch. That's also very good, I think
H: Yes, you often end up going to another play or whatever, even though you're watching there...
S: But the play is at such a different stage, it often takes just a little spark to help them [the children] to get into the play...
D: Of course, this depends on which children we are talking about, some have developed in play, and some have not
S: And then they need time
D: This boy, for example, needs stimulation and that's why it's so nice to see him in *this* play (CA 1).

Even though the teachers used many daily and hands-on activities to add to the language learning opportunities of multilingual children and provided vocabulary from real experiences, they also discussed the need for awareness of working with more advanced vocabulary and concepts. They all mentioned how they used *Text talk* as a pedagogical practice, but this was something they were still developing and was not fully organised or sustained. Their aim was to connect and activate words and concepts from written text or from artefacts into their daily language use:

> It is important you know to promote the vocabulary... that is a little bit the key, that they learn the vocabulary so that they learn how to express themselves, so we have changed many things trying to implement *Text talk* and purposefully work with certain words we are introducing (Freyja 1).

This practice with vocabulary and language was mentioned by the parents. One couple discussed how this had influenced their way of working with their home language. They discussed how important it was for the child to use rich vocabulary and learn different words to describe similar things:

> They [the teachers] write down words, it's like they did not use this really common word... so every week there is a different... and like you know if you are going to speak to the kid like adult to adult, you know she might not get you know, you can use like totally different words and describe... like many ways to say about one thing you know (Parents 5).

As already mentioned, the teachers had been revising their practices regarding group sizes during book reading and working with organised language and vocabulary promotion. The teachers claim that when the number of multilingual children increased and there were also more monolingual children in need of extra language support, they did not benefit enough from reading practices within the bigger group. Halla explained

that the circle time, where all the children got together in one big group, was still important. During circle time they learned to participate in a larger group of children through singing and other collective activities like celebrating birthdays, discussing the weather, and such. However, in the smaller group it was easier to promote the language and work with vocabulary according to their abilities because "they are all in a very different place, that is just how it is" (Halla 1). They organised smaller sessions so that over a period of one week the same teacher would stay in one activity, such as reading, working with hollow blocks, or doing some creativity work: "The groups rotate, you [the teacher] stay in one place for a week and you get the group [of children] and the children get to enjoy all the teachers, that was the thought" (Halla 1). The teachers explained how different activities sometimes lead to quality language promotion or work with practices like *Text talk*. At the same time, findings from interviews show that the teachers feel like they are not doing enough, and that they could do better, especially in organising more teacher-led practices.

Recordings from group work show how Halla works with *Text talk* during play with *Unit blocks*, an activity she had already mentioned as valuable in an interview carried out months before. Halla was very fond of using *Unit blocks* both as a free and child-initiated activity but also in organised group work. She believed that the blocks could be used as an open material for enhancing social development, communication, and language promotion by connecting words and concepts to the activity:

> Even when you are using the *Unit blocks*... there is very good language promotion taking place... so *Text talk*, you plan it but the *Unit blocks*... I think they are awesome... and also using... these ideas how can I have them [the children] tidy up today? Should we make a ship, and have it sail into the shelves, or should we find all the blocks that are the smallest blocks... so we are always using the concepts also while cleaning up because you know, make use of all the possibilities (Halla 1).

One day I recorded how Halla used the tidying-up time in a group session with *Unit blocks* to discuss words and concepts. She sat on the floor with the children and turned the tidying time into a game where they played with the blocks, turned them into ships and discussed the size and shape of them, compared them, and looked for similar and different shapes. Halla used the appropriate concepts for the blocks like the "curved" block or the "triangle". She facilitated and encouraged conversation to motivate the children to collaborate and work together to clean up the area. Even though Lukas, a multilingual boy, did not use many Icelandic words or expressions during the session, he actively participated with his body language, engagement, and interest in the activity:

H: **It's a bit difficult to make a ship with these here** (Halla lifts the blocks and shows them the shape, turning them around) **these are ramps. It's a bit difficult to make a ship out of them because they don't float well on the sea** (puts two together so they fit each other and makes them sail) **Should we try anyway?** (The two boys next to her, Magnús and Lukas, pay close attention)

L: **Yes, yes**

H: **Do we have any more that we can make a ship out of?**

L: **Hmmm, this, this** (Magnús is watching but Lukas is more active in response and the tidying up at this point)

H: **Yes exactly, I also found this one, how is it?**

L, M: **Ship, ship** (Lukas and Magnús both call out that this block could be a ship)

H: **Does it have a curve?** (She runs her finger back and forth along the curved block while saying the word)

L, M: **Yes, yes** (both boys answer but do not repeat the name of the block)

H: **Is it supposed to be here?** (Halla puts the curved block on top of the other blocks that are part of the ship in making) **But what is behind you Lukas?** (Lukas pulls out a block that fits the ones that are there) **Yes, this one, it fits** (Lukas puts the ramp block on top of a same sized block but not with the same shape)

H: **Are they identical?** (Halla lifts the ramp block up from the single unit block that is the same size but not the same shape) **You have to put the same kind together** (Magnús and Lukas try to fit together blocks that have the same size and shape, Lukas puts two ramps together)

H: **Were these the ramps?** (Halla is affirming that Lukas has found two identical ramp blocks, but she had given the boys time to figure out what blocks were the same instead of doing it herself)

L: **Yes** (VR M7 A).

In the excerpt above, Halla is introducing vocabulary that is not yet taken up by the participating children, indicating the need for continuous work with words and concepts that are not part of the everyday language of the children. By carrying out the activity with the *Unit blocks* she was supporting their understanding of deeper, more academic vocabulary by scaffolding and guiding their understanding of concepts belonging to the blocks. Other activities that involved learning opportunities with context-reduced vocabulary included reading sessions where the teachers discussed the text with the children they were reading to.

The teachers stressed that books were read more often and for smaller groups of children than before and reading practices were more diverse than before. The

teachers were aware of the importance of guiding the children's understanding during reading and discussing the text, something they found easier to manage when the groups were smaller. Dísa explained: "You just read differently to them than in the big group... and you just speak differently to them..., for example asking them for something you just ask with gestures" (Dísa 1). Birta discussed how she often extended the stories from books by collectively remaking the text with the children. For instance, when she read the *Three goats*, she added some artefacts and performance to her reading session and involved the children's participation. The next day they repeated the act during free play: "I find it very exciting when they act out the stories. I read the book and let them repeat, it is so much fun to watch their play when they try to do the same" (Birta 1). Sometimes the teachers would read for one or two children at a time and often the children had the initiative to bring books to the teachers to read for them. Then the teachers would sit down with a book without organising a session or inviting a particular group of children to join in and the children interested in the book would gather around them. Some of the teachers had become very good at this and acted as role models for the others, as Petra explained:

> Then there are many [teachers] who often just sit down with a book and those [children], that want to join in, do that and that is something that I think is also extremely important... there was one [teacher] who was very good at this and we started discussing how great it was that she was doing this and it just spread [among the other teachers] because it's so good to see just what is being well done and use that as a role model... she's great when she always sits down and reads and then the others go to observe her because we are role models for each other (Petra 1).

Organised reading sessions were most often carried out with the participation of a few children at a time, usually four to six, when possible, but that depended on the number of staff available in the Green division from day to day. The group of children each time was very diverse regarding linguistic background and ability, which created a challenge for the teachers to select appropriate reading materials and tailor the activity to the needs of individual children and the group. My findings show that when teachers were reading and working with the language from a book the vocabulary changed and more diverse words and concepts from the books could be added to the conversation. Abstract or context-reduced words and concepts such as those belonging to ethical issues or feelings were studied. For instance, when Halla read *Peter and the Wolf* she discussing the cat who wanted to eat the bird with the children: "Should we eat birds? Should cats eat birds?" (VR M8-A). In another reading session with four children she asked them if they understood the word "sorrowful":

> H: **What is it to be sorrowful?** (The word sorrowful or full of sorrow is *sorgmæddur* in Icelandic but that is a more complex and not as frequently used concept as the word *leiður* (e. sad), which is a more

age-appropriate word for the children. Halla directs her question to the four children in the group but they do not reply) **To be sorrowful, then you are sad and you feel bad, perhaps you miss someone, perhaps you miss mom or dad, then you are sometimes sorrowful** (Halla explains carefully a feeling that the children know very well and provides them with an example that they can relate to their own experience. They listen and watch Halla but no one replies so she waits a bit and then she asks) **How are you when you are sad?**

A: **I also love grandpa** (Alfonso a multilingual boy replies and has made connection from what Halla is explaining to his own experience)

H: **Yes, you also love grandpa, perhaps you sometimes miss grandpa?** (Halla affirms his emotion and his love for his grandfather) (VR M10A).

The reading sessions usually started with the teacher showing the book cover to the children and discussing what the book was about. Then the reading started and every now and then the teacher would stop to explain words by relating them to the children's experience, ask questions with closed and open meaning, and extend the words outside the book, often connecting to the children themselves. Having few children in the group provided the teachers with the opportunity to involve the children actively in the book reading. An example is when Dísa read a book for five children, one of them multilingual. Dísa sat in front of the children, held the book open and showed them the pictures while reading, giving them time to repeat and answer. In this example, the multilingual child got an opportunity to practice the language in a group of children without the focus being exclusively on her. Furthermore, context-reduced information was given context when Dísa provided clues and suggestions for the children to scaffold and guide their understanding. Even though the book is very simple and perhaps not linguistically appropriate for all the children, Dísa offered tailored guidance which enabled all of them to participate and enjoy:

D: **Guess who we are? You put us on when you go out for a walk! (**Dísa with excitement in her voice whispers in order to get the children's attention) **You must listen carefully, we are often made of leather and you put us on the feet** (The children watch their feet and take them down from the edge of the couch) **You put us on your feet when you go outside, do you know who we are? Are we a snowsuit?**

Children**: Noooo** (The children laugh and answer in unison, Magda, the multilingual girl listens for a split second for the children's answers and then she joins in with them saying noooo)

D: **Are we mittens?** (The children say noooo again in unison) **Are we perhaps a dress?** (The children smile saying noooo)

D: **Elsa who are we?** (Dísa directs her question to a girl in the group)
K: **In the shoes** (Kalli a boy participating has got the clue and provides an answer but Dísa does not reply to him and gives Elsa full attention)
D: **We are** (Dísa points to a picture in the book looking at Elsa)
E: **Shoes** (Elsa provides the answer and smiles)
D: **Shoes** (Dísa repeats the word very slowly) **because we put the shoes on our feet like Birta** (Dísa points to the slippers that Birta, one of the girls, is wearing and Magda looks at them and Birta's feet) (VR M9A).

Sif and Dísa reflected on this recording during collaborative analysis. They discussed and compared reading activities with different sized groups of children and how important it was to be able to have groups with few children. Sif argued that it was more or less a waste of time for the children and almost impossible to read the same book for all children in the larger group if learning was expected to take place:

> S: But we are almost just wasting the children's time if half of them are not paying attention, have no interest and one third does not understand what is being read... in a very big group it is unique if everyone understands, or as I say if the development [of the children] is the same (CA 2).

They also discussed what a different atmosphere they could provide during reading activities with small groups. They were able to give each child better guidance, care, and interest, and there was less stress and more time given to the communication between the teacher and the children. Sif commented on Dísa's pedagogy when she was reading to the five children in the excerpt above and complemented her on how much time she was giving them and how cosy the atmosphere was:

> S: I think it is great that she [Dísa] was not in a hurry... she uses all the opportunities and allows them [the children] to enter and then you catch the opportunity to discuss what is going on and you listen to what they are saying, still, you keep their attention and proceed and you know, they are not losing it (CA 2).

Dísa argued that watching the video repeatedly and reflecting on it collaboratively provided her with better insight into her actions and the children's responses, for instance when she enhances the attention of Elsa as described in the previous excerpt. Even though Dísa has not done it consciously, as she claims, she manages to see if children are drifting away or losing their interest during the reading session and is able to respond to it in an empowering way:

D: Yes, but then while I'm reading... I guess this, it's so spontaneous, if someone drifts away you see it immediately and then you pull him in again just by saying...
S: And because you have five children in the group, it's going so well, this is not reading for many more...
D: Yes, but what did I say to Elsa again, I'm wondering, it is not the same how you say things, sometimes you ask "are you listening"
R: (Plays the video again and finds the right place where Dísa asks Elsa "who are we" so Dísa can watch it again)
D: Yes, exactly this was it!
R: Yes, and also, what did you do more than ask her? Kalli answers, what do you do?
D: I give her a chance to answer
R: Exactly you give her a chance to answer
D: Yes, because I was asking her
R: And what do you also do? You don't say "No Kalli I wasn't asking you to reply" (Dísa and Sif burst out with laughter)
D: It was a good thing I didn't do it (laughs even more), is your name "Elsa" (ha ha ha)...
S: Wow, this is wow
D: Yes, this is awesome
R: You just keep looking at her clearly and direct your questions to her without saying anything to him
S: You don't humiliate the other child in the process (CA 2).

In this chapter I have highlighted concrete examples of how the teachers strive to enhance children's learning of Icelandic through active participation in real experiences. Furthermore, the examples provide insights into the complex and challenging tasks that the teachers are facing when they strive to create multiple language learning opportunities during daily practices. I want to conclude by quoting Halla, the division leader in the Green division, who argues that even though the teachers are putting a lot of effort in planning and organising children's learning so that they advance linguistically, the foundation is always the respect for the individual child because "you do not learn if you are broken down... good interaction... respect for the children... I think that is the foundation for the language development" (Halla 1). I think these words are a good motto. They show what is leading the teachers' goals for working with multilingual children and how they organise the learning space and the learning activities so that active linguistic participation of all children can be fostered. In the next chapter, I reflect on my findings and discuss them in the light of the research questions based on previously presented perspectives from theory and empirical research.

5 Discussion

In the previous chapter on findings, I explored how learning spaces for multilingual children were being created in one preschool in Reykjavík, The Circle. The overall aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how the preschool can serve as an inclusive and socially just learning space for multilingual children's language and emergent literacy development, where voices and identities are affirmed and partnerships with parents are enhanced. The focus of the study is on teacher's practices with multilingual children and the way the preschool organises work with language and literacy of multilingual children in partnership with parents.

As already mentioned in the introduction chapter, demographic changes in Iceland are altering the linguistic and cultural landscapes of preschools as the number of multilingual children is rising. Findings from Icelandic research show that the education of multilingual children needs special attention, and their level of Icelandic is generally low (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2008, 2010; Figlarska et al., 2017; Hafsteinsdóttir et al., 2022; Haraldsdóttir, 2013; Hellman et al., 2018; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018; Ólafsdóttir, 2010, 2015) and they are often marginalised and excluded in play and other preschool practices (Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019; Þórðardóttir, 2012). Supporting children in their learning of Icelandic, the language of school and society in Iceland, is one of the most important roles of the preschool as the participating teachers and parents in this research explain. Simultaneously, the research findings show the importance of looking at the complex fusion of the many factors influencing the language learning and participation of multilingual children, as well as their opportunities for maintaining and developing their home languages. This calls for a comprehensive education for multilingual children where language learning is not disconnected from social context (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Banks, 2010; Cummins, 2021b; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Hedegaard, 2008). Language learning in a social context, as presented in the chapter on findings, shows how power issues, communication, school climate, attitudes, beliefs, and identity affirmation influence children's participation and learning.

In light of these findings, it is important to address the social and political power of the dominant discourse in education of multilingual children that mainly accentuates their underachievement and marginalisation. When those stories are highlighted in schools, media, and academia, without critical discussion or guidance for improvement, there is a danger of maintaining marginalisation and exclusion of multilingual children. When researchers present findings from research that show teachers and schools providing good education for multilingual children, they can help the society at large and the

educational sector to write a new story of social justice and success that is inspiring and helpful in reversing social injustice and exclusion (Dervin, 2018).

The following subchapters address themes that contain answers to my research questions. Through the overarching question, I investigated how learning spaces were created for multilingual children. The subordinate questions looked for answers to how teachers scaffold and guide the linguistic participation of multilingual children, affirm their identity, and enhance partnership with parents with a focus on language, literacy, and identity. The findings provide an understanding of how complex it was for the teachers to create quality learning spaces for multilingual children. The findings give examples of all the many different factors that need to be considered. Hence, my discussions of the issues are relevant to answering the questions. In some cases, the same issues are treated in two or more subchapters. In the first subchapter I discuss how the teachers in the study were striving to create inclusive, just, and equitable learning spaces and then I move to discussing linguistic participation, identity, and collaboration with parents.

5.1 Inclusive, just, and equitable learning spaces

Developing learning spaces that were inclusive, just, and equitable while fostering the language learning and development of multilingual children was a complex and multifaceted process emerging at The Circle. It became clear in the first interview with Petra that she understood the need to act inclusively regarding the growing multicultural landscape in the preschool. She explained the need for transformation and a change of practices. Most of the participating teachers acted on this reality with a critical, equitable, and inclusive view. They acknowledged diversity as the norm and displayed the need to transform their own practices. The continuous change that the teachers stressed was built on their understanding of the ongoing need for reevaluation of goals and practices. Professional development, collaboration, and the will to proceed in a different way than they were used to indicated that the teachers were creating a learning community that improved their practices for the good of all children, similar to what Pudlas (2010) and Sigurðardóttir (2013) have highlighted. These findings can furthermore be mirrored in Banks' (2010) claims that schools as social systems need to continuously undergo transformation to meet the needs of diverse students. In such a transformation, all major dimensions of education must change simultaneously while teachers reflect critically on their own practices and beliefs (Banks, 2010; Nieto, 2010). Too much attention directed towards one dimension of education will not create successful learning conditions for multilingual children (Ragnarsdóttir, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Ragnarsdóttir & Blöndal, 2014; Ragnarsdóttir & Sveinsdóttir, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir & Hansen, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir & Schmidt, 2014). The teachers in the study built on local and national policies and the National Curriculum Guide but they went further by developing their own curriculum, documents, and practices that manifested their vision and goals. Some of these became

powerful tools, such as the guidelines of communication with parents and the policy of communication with children. They were mirrored in many of the practices and projects I observed, filmed, and documented in the interviews.

Some teachers explained how they themselves had changed during the process of transforming the school. This was done through their professional development, self-reflection, and actual experience of diversity and communication across languages and cultures. This experience empowered them and became part of their agency in transforming education for multilingual children. These findings correlate with the writing of Cummins (2021b) who claims that critical and empowered teachers and principals are never powerless. Petra and Sif were the leaders of change, empowering the other teachers and staff in the process, which is in line with other studies showing that preschools that are determined to transform education to the benefit of linguistically and culturally diverse children are staffed by motivated principals and teachers (Hansen et al., 2016; Hellman et al., 2018; Jakobsdóttir, 2007; Lauritsen, 2014; Ragnarsdóttir, 2021; Ragnarsdóttir & Schmidt, 2014; Svavarsson et al., 2018). Studies show that teachers and staff in Icelandic preschools call for more professional development and support (Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2018; Jónsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2022a; Ragnarsdóttir & Tran, 2016; Tran & Lefever, 2018). However, the available support often seems distant and not beneficial for the teachers or the children (Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2018). Changing practices to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children is a shared responsibility of the educational authorities who must provide ample support, the academic field which is responsible for doing research involving relevant guidance to policy makers, and the preschools themselves. But nothing will ever change if the principals and teachers themselves do not find the need to transform practices. At The Circle, the principal and the assistant principal in collaboration with many of the teachers, took the responsibility to act on the changes in the preschool and were innovative in developing their practices. They looked for multiple opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge, simultaneously relying on local resources, support, and findings from research while reaching out for international collaboration, thus indicating that they were powerful, responsible, and motivated visionaries.

While an inclusive and socially just learning space was emerging at The Circle it became clear that this was a challenging and at times straining process, as discussed in the chapter on findings. Petra and Sif strove to make changes systematically across all the divisions, involving all the teachers in the preschool in the emergent process. Nevertheless, not all the teachers and staff were prepared, or had the knowledge or skill to act on the demographic changes taking place. This is congruent with Ragnarsdóttir's (2021) findings from a study showing that multicultural and multilingual practices are driven by dedicated individuals and implementation of practices needs to become a systematic process. Some of the participating teachers explained that every time someone new began to work in the preschool there was a need to provide training and discussions regarding the attitudes, beliefs, and competences of the new

individual. Sometimes the principals had to act on prejudices or lack of knowledge of inclusive, equitable practices, as in the example of the new division leader who wanted to group children together who had immigrant background, contrary to the preschool's aim to avoid stigmatising grouping. Many of the practices that the teachers in the study implemented were not sustained and not all of them were systematically taken up by teachers and division leaders in other divisions. By developing a learning community and collaboration among the teachers, Sif and Petra provided a platform for thinking critically about the processes of learning and teaching which was essential for the transformation to emerge (Banks, 2010; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; May & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Pudlas, 2010; Sigurðardóttir, 2013). Visionaries leading educational transformation can become overloaded with straining and stressful obligations. This, in turn, negatively affects the possibility of sustaining the changed practices (Hellman et al., 2018; Ragnarsdóttir & Blöndal, 2014; Svavarsson et al., 2018). Petra and Sif are the visionaries in my study and for them, systematically changing practices for the benefit of all children and families, as well as sustaining them were among the challenges they faced. Involving all the teachers and staff in the process was yet another challenge. Not all the teachers and staff were prepared to work with linguistically and culturally diverse children and in some instances prejudices or lack of understanding of the preschool's vision was hindering the sustainability of practices.

When anticipating the future, the participating teachers described their wish for an inclusive, socially just, and equitable preschool where linguistic and cultural diversity would be embraced. The parents described their wish for their children to become included, well-educated, and prosperous. Furthermore, they wanted their children to learn the language of school, and simultaneously maintain their home language and relationship with their home culture. The emergent process taking place at The Circle matches the vision of teachers and parents. To ensure sustainability and continuous transformation of practices in the future some of the previously mentioned challenges need to be removed to ensure that even if Sif and Petra leave the preschool, the change will continue (Hansen et al., 2016).

One main theme of the study, *culture of communication,* indicates that the participating teachers were creating a culture of empowering communication (Cummins, 2021b). Findings from Icelandic studies show that multilingual preschool children are often silent, teachers do not speak as much to them as to Icelandic children, teachers often have low expectations, language learning opportunities within free play and child-initiated activities are scarcely used, the multilingual children are less likely to ask teachers for assistance, and their families experience marginalisation. These results tell a different story than the findings from my research where the participating teachers showed high expectations towards the children and their families and children often used their agency as active participants. The teachers took the initiative to build relationships by reaching out and communicating across languages and cultures. My

findings suggest that the teachers were applying critical pedagogy, as explained by Nieto (2010), showing that they were learning together with the children and the parents. The agency of children and teachers was visible where both parties had a voice to influence practices and attitudes and beliefs were acted on with active participation (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Cummins, 2021b; Schwartz, 2018). Some of the participating teachers had received education and professional development where multicultural education and inclusive and critical pedagogy was in focus, which they found very important. However, this had not sufficiently prepared them with the skills needed to communicate across languages and cultures. The only way for them to actively learn with children and parents, build trust and improve their skills in communication was to cross the boundaries in communication, which many of them strove to do although not all had succeeded.

Communicating with parents who did not share a language or were new to Icelandic was a challenge that some of them were acting on. Petra stressed that it was all about having the courage to cross the threshold in communication and use different means of communication when a shared language was lacking. My findings indicate that discussing how they could improve their communication with parents was supportive for those teachers still mastering the art of crossing the threshold in communication. Through participation in the learning community the teachers were building consensus on the importance of enhancing empowering conversations with parents. An important condition for such a culture to emerge is to acknowledge that societal and political factors undergird negative assumptions and beliefs. They influence power relations within schools and can lead to marginalisation of children and families. Teachers need to understand how these factors influence their attitudes and beliefs, are constantly being reshaped, and impact their actions (Cummins, 2004, 2021b; Nieto, 2010). I argue that the relationships that the teachers were developing with multilingual children and their families were the heart of the learning at The Circle, as Cummins (2004) discusses. Teachers avoided the deficit model (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Cummins, 2004, 2021b) and used empowering discourse when discussing children and families. Children got the message that they were competent, worthy of being loved and cared for (Siraj-Blatchford, 2003), and parents were seen as valuable partners (Brooker, 2002b; Epstein et al., 2002). This is a fundamental factor in creating learning spaces for multilingual children and influences their feelings of being accepted. My argument also builds on Cummin's (2021a, 2021b) framework for societal power relations, identity negotiation, and academic achievement, suggesting that when people are empowered through interactions with others they are enabled to achieve more.

An important factor in creating socially just and inclusive learning space at The Circle was the teachers' aim to meet different needs of children and families in an equitable manner. This was evident in the teachers' claim about the issue. Furthermore, in their narratives they recounted how they had consciously decided to do whatever was needed to support parents if it benefitted the children, even though they were often

criticised by people outside the preschool. Their attitudes and will to meet diverse needs of children and families, some connected to challenging social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, align with the main goals of inclusion, multicultural education, and critical pedagogy which highlight that all children, regardless of background, should experience social justice and success in schools (Banks, 2010; Cummins, 2004; Nieto, 2010; Rachid & Igbida, 2022; Sapon-Shevin, 2007, 2008). Petra described how they worked with the service centre in the neighbourhood to ensure that children whose parents could not pay the school fee, could still come to the preschool. She gave an example of parents who were striving to get support for their multilingual boy and how she regarded it as the preschool's responsibility to help, for instance in a meeting with an Icelandic psychologist who spoke a complex technical language. This correlates with Whithead (2010) who points out the need for professionals to deliver information in sensible human terms instead of "staying safely in the cocoon of professional jargon" (p. 216).

The position of Freyja as a special education teacher and Sif as the support teacher for multilingual children was helpful for implementing the preschool's vision and curriculum goals of meeting diverse needs of children. The teachers tried to avoid situations where children were removed from the group for special education support, although that was an alternative if needed. Stigmatising grouping of children was also avoided. Children were offered various opportunities to play and learn together in pairs as well as in small and big groups where teachers strove to scaffold and guide their participation. These findings can be reflected in results from research showing that more hours spent in teaching Icelandic or in special education do not seem to benefit multilingual children (Ólafsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2002). One father explained how pleased he was with the way the preschool practiced inclusion where all children were playing and working together. Based on his own experience of working in a school in Reykjavík, he anticipated that this would not be the case, since in his school the immigrant children were grouped together away from the Icelandic children and thus marginalised. This is in line with Banks' (2010) theory of schools as social systems and the two important dimensions of multicultural education: a) equity pedagogy where teaching and learning is modified to facilitate the learning of diverse groups and b) empowering school culture where grouping and labelling practices are examined and acted on. It was thought-provoking to compare these inclusive practices and equitable actions to stories from parents that were critical of the support that the municipality offered to their son who was facing developmental challenges. They praised Freyja and the other teachers for their work in the preschool while explaining that what they needed most was not something more from the preschool but from the external support system. The parents felt that the specialists from the municipality were just writing endless reports instead of doing what they found necessary for the child. At the same time, they explained that this would be even worse in their country of origin where the boy probably would have been sent to a special school. The way they were

comparing their experience in Iceland with their home country mirrored their wish for inclusive education for their son. Assessing and meeting the needs of multilingual children must be a collaboration between the preschool, the parents, and professionals belonging to the broader support system with the main aim of benefitting the child in question. Doing that in a successful way creates opportunity both for the child and the other children who benefit from learning together in an equitable and inclusive preschool. Aiming for inclusive education coincides with Sapon-Shevin's (2007) definition of inclusion and social justice. She argues that when children and adults not only learn about differences but live and participate in an inclusive democratic learning space, social justice comes alive. Such learning spaces motivate children and the teachers to take a stand, act, and call attention to injustice instead of practicing 'powerful silence'.

Another important dimension of creating equitable learning spaces for multilingual children involves investigating how teachers document children's language development and learning. Findings from research show that too often assessment is carried out from a monolingual perspective, assessment tools are biased, not linguistically appropriate, and the overall language development of children is overlooked (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; Esteban & Moll, 2014; García & Kleifgen, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Hélot, 2021). The teachers in my study were critical of the assessment tools they were using and did not find any of them linguistically appropriate as they were all intended to assess the Icelandic language development of the children from a monolingual standpoint. Even though they could somewhat build on the results to get an idea of important gaps in children's development of Icelandic, they often experienced that there was a lack of guidance on what to do next. As described in the chapter on findings, this was a work in progress and Birta stressed that they probably could do better in building on the results and mentioned a lack of time as a challenge. One of the assessment tools they were learning to apply and make use of was *TRAS* which Sif described as the most appropriate tool they could use at the time of the study. Still, using *TRAS* was time consuming and only a few of the teachers had the necessary qualifications to carry out the assessment. In some instances, multilingual teachers, most often Polish-speaking, informally assessed children's language development in their home language. In collaboration with children and their parents, the teachers were developing *individual learning plans* building on results from assessments while enhancing the strengths and interest of each individual child. Linguistically appropriate and unbiased tools to assess the language development of multilingual children are rarely available. This is a universal challenge as documented in Icelandic and international research (Cummins, 2021a; Figlarska et al., 2017; García & Kleifgen, 2010). The teachers in the present study were aware of the challenges of building on monolingual assessment tools and applied critical thinking, and critical pedagogy when they attempted to go against the flow by questioning the tools and looking for alternative ways to document children's

learning and development from a strength-based, empowering perspective. Þórðardóttir (2011) claims that there is still a gap in research on how different factors influence the language development of multilingual children, which affects decisions on appropriate clinical and educational language practices with the children. I argue that even though there remains a gap in research on these factors, language development and learning from an educational and sociocultural perspective cannot be studied without observing the social context. In line with the social and multilingual turn, teachers and researchers need to rethink how to test and assess language development of multilingual children (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Cummins, 2004; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; García & Kleifgen, 2010; May, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). Even though it is important to understand the language learning and development of the individual child, it is also of great significance that teachers who work with multilingual children have knowledge about multilingualism and their diverse trajectories of language learning (Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021a; De Houwer, 2009; Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith, 2001; Neaum, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Tabors, 2006; Whithead, 2010).

In this subchapter I have discussed how the teachers at The Circle were transforming their practices to create inclusive, just, and equitable learning spaces. My findings are in line with the social and multilingual turn, highlighting the importance of rethinking how power issues, school climate, attitudes, and beliefs can either hinder or foster multilingual children's learning and participation (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Banks, 2010; Cummins, 2021b; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Hedegaard, 2008; Hélot, 2021; May, 2014; Nieto, 2010). In the next subchapter I discuss how the teachers enhanced the participation of multilingual children.

5.2 Enhancing active participation of multilingual children

When I started to generate data, my aim was to document how teachers scaffolded and guided linguistic participation of children with language and literacy, on the one hand within planned activities and during child-initiated activities on the other. Even though I could have arranged my data according to this categorisation, I soon realised that the boundaries between child-initiated activities and those led by the teachers were not always clear. Usually, the teachers gave a lot of space for child-initiated talk and discussions in organised activities. During free play or child-initiated activities the teachers were often around, extending sentences or adding words and artefacts, as I highlight in my findings. I argue that this was rooted in the culture of communication emerging at The Circle where the participating teachers looked at it as their role to reach out and engage children in communication and active participation, hence enhancing understanding and building relationships. This is in line with research showing that young children learn language through communication without being formally instructed. When the learning context is inspiring, children are engaged in linguistic participation and their multilingualism is not considered a hindrance. In this

way they are socialised into language through communication with peers and adults (De Houwer, 2009, 2013; Neuman, 2007; Nieto, 2010; Rogoff, 2003; Schwartz, 2018; Tabors, 2006). Bergroth and Palviainen (2017) stress that children are not passively socialised into a language since their agency and communicative actions are always involved in shaping this process. This is also documented in findings from the study of Skaremyr (2021). In a similar way the teachers in my study saw it as their responsibility to enhance children's linguistic participation and agency across the curriculum and create language learning spaces where multilingual children and their peers were engaged in communication. Simultaneously, the teachers were critical of their own practices, they doubted that they were doing enough and some of them wondered if it was possible for them to provide the same quality of language stimulation in organised activities as in child-initiated activities. As Sif explained, organised work with language and literacy was important. Of no less importance was supporting children's participation and understanding in real experiences across the curriculum, even though that was a challenging and long-lasting process, requiring the teachers to be continuously on their toes. By weaving together discussions of findings from teacher-organised and child-initiated activities, I highlight that when teachers become aware of their responsibility, they can create conditions for language learning through all situations that arise during the preschool day.

This is underscored with the belief that teachers' pedagogical choices are important for multilingual children's opportunities of participation, as well as being beneficial for their language learning and emergent literacy (Cummins, 2021b; Kultti, 2012, 2014; Reynisdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2022; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Neaum (2012) has described emergent literacy as the gradual process where young children acquire knowledge, understanding of concepts and skills *through and about communication*. Likewise, Rogoff (2003) stresses that *communication during participation in shared experiences* is the key factor of the way in which young children's language proficiency develops. Routine activities in the preschool, such as mealtimes and getting dressed for going outside, going to the bathroom, free play and cleaning up after free play, were used for discussions and language learning. During these routine activities, the teachers guided and scaffolded children's linguistic participation. Pictures and visuals around the preschool were used to scaffold meaning and give ideas for working with language in different spaces. Examples of these were the words and sentences that hung over the sandbox and helped the teachers to enrich the children's vocabulary, pictures showing the sequence of children's handwashing, and a daily plan supporting the children's autonomy. These practices indicated which rules were in force in the educational setting (Cummins, 2004, 2021a) and how access was given to different language tasks. This was important both in relation to context-embedded and context-reduced interaction and practices and helped increase children's *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) and *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) (Cummins, 2004, 2021a). At the same time, it became very clear how difficult the

reality of the preschool's daily life could be when teachers were doing their best to create language learning opportunities as often as possible.

Many situations were complex with multiple things going on at the same time. This was often exhausting for both the teachers and the children, especially those children new to the school language. During challenging situations, the teachers often showed exemplary care and respect, for instance when Halla was taking care of a few children while Daniel waited with his hand on her shoulder, knowing that he would eventually get her attention. This was also documented in the interview with Halla when she told me about a boy they had been very concerned about because of his slow progress in Icelandic. The focus had been on supporting his Icelandic, but the teachers observed that he was facing other challenges that needed urgent response; he had a negative sense of self, was not participating or communicating with the children, seemed unhappy and did not seek support from the teachers, to name a few of these. When the teachers realised this, they shifted their focus away from the language support as the main issue to his wellbeing and participation. They showed him more care and made sure that he understood that they were always there for him. In a few weeks the boy became more engaged, seemed happier and more linguistically active than before, both in play and communication, and displayed a higher level of trust in his teachers, going to them for support. In their research, Einarsdóttir and Ólafsdóttir (2020) found that one of the factors undermining multilingual children's participation, wellbeing, and belonging was that they did not seek assistance from their teachers. To reverse this the teachers in their study found it most important to work better with Icelandic and help the children adapt to the preschool's culture. Einarsdóttir and Ólafsdóttir (2020) suggest that teachers need to create social spaces where children can learn to trust their teachers and look for their support. This aspect is something that can be identified in the way Halla described their work with the boy. Even though learning the language of the school is one of the major goals of education, factors supporting wellbeing, inclusion, and active participation can never be overlooked as they are fundamental in the educational process.

The importance of creating a social space where children's participation is enhanced through care and trust is vital from the very first day a child enters a new language environment. Overall, the findings from my study show that the teachers attended to the children's initiative while the multilingual children generally displayed trust in their teachers and looked for their support. I did not observe silenced children or children that were repeatedly marginalised in play or other activities, although some of them needed a lot of support from the teachers in order to participate and interact with other children or the teachers. As mentioned in the Method chapter, the social, cultural, and economic background of the children in The Circle was diverse. Some of them belonged to families that matched many of the linguistic and pedagogical practices carried out in the preschool, such as reading for the children, while other children belonged to family backgrounds that did not. Although the teachers did their best to

meet the diverse needs of the children based on their different backgrounds and linguistic diversity, it calls for further research regarding in what ways challenging socio-economic and cultural background influences interactions and participation among children, teachers and families and the outcome for children as documented earlier (Brooker, 2002a, 2002b; Egilsson et al., 2021; Leifsdóttir, 2014; Rogoff, 2003; Þórðardóttir, 2012).

When Ina started as a new child at the preschool, without any prior knowledge of Icelandic, I filmed how Sif created a space of empowering communication and trust where she guided Ina's participation in different activities. Even though Ina was not using many words in Icelandic, she was active and engaged from the very beginning. The importance of such engagement is highlighted by Skaremyr (2021) who insists on the need to build on newcoming children's communicative acts. Ina was active from the beginning, and I did not observe that she entered a silent stage. The silent stage has been criticised in research because of its unforeseen consequences for children's linguistic participation, language development, and learning (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Gibbons, 1985; Roberts, 2014). While the study at hand presents examples of how Sif scaffolded and guided the linguistic participation of Ina, it simultaneously shows how Sif opened spaces of communication between Ina and the other children and became a role model for other teachers. This sent out the message that Ina was competent and worthy of being loved and cared for, regardless of her inability to speak Icelandic (Cummins, 2021b; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003).

During collaborative analysis, when Dísa and Sif discussed the video recording from the session where Sif had organised a hide and seek game with Ina and two other girls, they described a learning space of trust and care, as well as welcoming and empowering communication where everyone felt capable. The words Dísa and Sif used to describe Ina's actions were that she was *laughing, smiling, included, participant, competent*. Their words and the communication between Ina and Sif, where Ina took the lead and pretended that she had a lipstick on her hand, can be reflected in findings from Skaremyr (2021). She argues that the communicative acts of newly arrived children allow them to participate in the preschool practices and should be considered as a factor in their second language acquisition. I find that this excerpt and the teachers' discussions about it capture exactly the essence of guiding linguistic participation and wellbeing where children's identity is not limited to their proficiency in the school language. Siraj-Blatchford (2003) claims that in the long run the child's feelings of experiences shape her negative or positive understanding of self, and that in return affects the way the child enters participation in activities in the language of the school. I find it very important to look at this in light of criticism of the silent stage as a part of children's second language acquisition. Ina was described by Sif as being open and interested in communication, she was very good in expressing herself with body language and looked for situations and people, children, and adults that she could learn from. At the same time, Sif expressed the importance for Ina to experience an

open and empowering learning context where everything was visual and where people were smiling, embracing, and welcoming her. Teachers and researchers must understand that newly arrived children are diverse and while some of them are outgoing and curious, others are withdrawn and insecure or even victimised by trauma. Starting preschool is not the same experience for all children and teachers must observe and understand the diverse needs of children. I argue that much more research is needed regarding the way newly arrived children are guided and scaffolded in their linguistic participation in preschools in Iceland. Furthermore, I stress the need to look more closely at the relationship between possible prolonged silence in newcoming preschool children and findings from research showing how slowly they learn Icelandic, how they become marginalised in play and other activities, why they prefer to play with children who speak their language, and why they do not look for support from their teachers (Einarsdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2020; Figlarska et al., 2017; Hafsteinsdóttir et al., 2022; Haraldsdóttir, 2013; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018; Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019).

In order to provide welcoming and supportive language learning spaces that enhance the active participation of multilingual children, there is also a need to build on children's linguistic background with supportive and inclusive practices (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2021b; García & Wei, 2014; Kirwan, 2014; Pesková, 2021). The teachers in the study were all supportive of children's multiple home languages and had launched different projects to affirm, support, and make different languages visible and accessible. The bilingual book of communication proved to be a very effective tool for including children's different languages and connecting their home language and Icelandic. An example of this was when the mother of a child drew a picture of a body and wrote all the names of body parts in Polish and Icelandic, and later the teachers looked at the book with the child and discussed the words in both languages. While affirming children's identity, as discussed further in the next subchapter, the bilingual books also became a tool to discuss vocabulary and language face-to-face, developing children's BICS and CALP across languages (Cummins, 2021a). The teachers were open to the use of different languages among the children and communicated a view that favoured the learning of many languages, showing that the teachers were open for multilingual practices (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2021a; Hélot, 2021; May, 2014). Sif explained that by exhibiting interest in children's home languages the teachers were opening a welcoming space of trust in the hope of increasing parents' and children's interest in learning Icelandic. Some teachers explained how they were learning a few words from the children and Freyja gave an example of a Vietnamese girl who enjoyed questioning the teachers about words that they tried to learn but easily forgot. Learning together with the children like this had an impact on Freyja who got a clearer understanding of how exhausting it could be for the children to be surrounded by Icelandic all day long. An example of language

scaffolding across languages was when Sif entered the play of three Polish-speaking children in the cloak room with great enthusiasm and played with language and artefacts when connecting words in Icelandic and Polish. The children were open for Sif's participation in the play, indicating that this was something that they were used to and accepted. Findings from video recordings and observations show that even though the teachers accepted and affirmed children's home languages, most of the time teachers asked the children to translate the words into Icelandic and hardly used translanguaging practices during communication (Alstad, 2013; García & Wei, 2014). Even though the teachers favoured multilingualism, and findings show that they encouraged linguistic transfer through different practices, they might have understood multilingualism from a monolingual perspective. Nevertheless, the teachers managed to cultivate a climate of language awareness among the children and their families that, according to research, is not only beneficial for a deeper understanding of the language but also leads to more complex thinking and learning, supporting the literacy development of multilingual children (Kirwan, 2014).

Among the projects that the teachers carried out to support language and literacy across languages was to systematically increase children's access to books and printed material. The teachers explained that all the preschool practices with books involved encouraging parents to read for their children while providing children with access to print materials, not only in Icelandic but also in other languages. Halla explained that when she went with the children to the city library she directed their attention to the multilingual books, and sometimes the preschool borrowed or bought multilingual books for children and parents to take home. Findings from various research shows the importance of maximising multilingual children's access to print and enhancing their literacy engagement, since those are important factors in their emergent language and literacy development and learning (Brooker, 2002a; Cummins, 2021a; Cummins et al., 2015; Heath, 1982; Neaum, 2012; Neuman, 2007; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Rogoff, 2003; Voorhis et al., 2013). When children brought books in their home languages to preschool the teachers read the book if they knew the language and scaffolded discussions with the children in the group. When they did not know the language, which was usually the case if it was not Icelandic, English, or Polish, they asked the child that brought the book to tell the story by looking at the pictures. Birta described how she guided a child's linguistic participation in Icelandic while giving the child the power and the voice to be the storyteller for the other children. Parents described this activity as rewarding for the children and some of them sent books in their home languages while others only sent books in Icelandic. This is in line with findings from studies presenting how pleased and engaged children and parents generally become when their home languages are affirmed through preschool practices (Lauritsen, 2014; Pálmadóttir, 2022; Stephensen, 2018). All the participating parents collected books in their home language and some of them also in Icelandic. This does not mean that all parents at The Circle had access to books or preferred reading books over other

literacy activities at home. By providing different projects with books, text, and vocabulary the teachers were displaying their understanding of the linkage between language and literacy and the importance of continuous work with both context-embedded and context-reduced vocabulary. By maximising children's access to print, both in the language of school and the home language, the teachers supported children's literacy learning and motivated their literacy engagement across languages (Cummins et al., 2015).

Other practices carried out to connect literacy, vocabulary, and languages included work with *Text talk,* a practice well known in Icelandic preschools, as documented in research (Figlarska et al., 2017). Teachers sent home words and concepts in English and Icelandic and prepared different posters in Icelandic, English, and Polish with pictures of clothes, body parts, fruits, and other vocabulary themes they were working with. These posters were then hung up in the cloak room for parents to see. Furthermore, the teachers encouraged parents to translate and discuss the words in the home languages. Even though some of these practices can be compared to findings in the study of Figlarska and colleagues (2017), the teachers in that study hardly connected the vocabulary they were working with to the home languages of the children, since they looked at it as the main responsibility of parents to work with home languages. Regardless of the multilingual practices the teachers at The Circle were applying, they explained that they did not have the knowledge to 'teach' other languages than Polish and wished for a more linguistically diverse group of teachers. When comparing these practices to Chumak-Horbatch's (2012) model of linguistically appropriate practices, it can be argued that for Polish, and even sometimes English, the teachers were applying inclusive practices, scaffolding, and guiding children's multilingual and multi-literate lives very regularly. Language practices with other languages were mostly supportive, although they occationally had inclusive dimensions. As findings from research reveal, supportive and inclusive practices with languages are more likely to engage children's active participation, motivate them to use and build on their languages, and create curiosity and excitement for diverse languages (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Mary & Young, 2021). As for the Icelandic context, the study of Stephensen (2018) offers insight into how the different home languages of multilingual children are included in preschool practices, with a positive outcome for children's engagement and participation, comparable to the findings of this study.

My findings show that Icelandic, English, and Polish were the dominant languages at The Circle; Icelandic as the language of school and the society and English as the language most often used in communication with parents and sometimes children and in translation of information, indicating its significance as a *lingua franca*. In addition, Polish was widely supported within the preschool. English was also mentioned by the parents as the language children were learning from TV and computers and through the widespread use of English in Icelandic society, which was also noted by the teachers. This raises multiple questions regarding the way multilingual children

experience themselves when they understand that some languages have higher status than their own. Furthermore, it calls for teachers to consider in what ways dominant and privileged languages influence children's and adults' linguistic participation. Petra stated that she tried to avoid using English when communicating with parents and tried to use Icelandic. Halla explained that the teachers had discussed whether it was fair to support the Polish language and they had come to the conclusion that it was fair, since they would do the same for other languages if possible. Even though it can be looked at as an act of equity and a linguistically appropriate practice to support the Polish language, it involves a challenge both in respect to other languages and the way Polish-speaking children play and learn together. Speaking a dominant language that is not the language of school can lead to the marginalisation of children speaking that language. Furthermore, lack of interaction with peers and adults speaking the school language can have a downside for their social and academic success, if not attended to. The teachers were aware of this, and Petra explained how they tried to create situations where children who spoke the same language were not always paired together. These findings can be looked at in relation to results from a study showing that the vocabulary of Polish-speaking preschool children in Iceland is comparable to their monolingual Polish-speaking peers while their vocabulary in Icelandic is below their Icelandic-speaking peers (Figlarska et al., 2017). It is also interesting to compare my findings with those from a study revealing that it took children less time to learn English than Icelandic in Icelandic compulsory school, something that the authors link among other things to the low global economic value of Icelandic (Þórðardóttir & Júlíusdóttir, 2012).

When the number of multilingual children, and thus linguistic diversity, grows in preschools like The Circle, where thirteen languages were spoken in addition to Icelandic, it becomes an unreachable target to 'teach' all the home languages of the children. Ólafsdóttir and colleagues (2022) studied the attitudes of Icelandic preschool staff towards language stimulation of multilingual children and found that participants had different beliefs regarding the preschool's responsibility to teach or stimulate home languages. Findings from my research and several other studies (Alstad, 2013; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins & Early, 2011; Kirwan, 2014; Mary & Young, 2021; Emilsson Peskova, 2021; Stephensen, 2018) indicate that supportive and inclusive practices are more likely to engage children's active participation and provide them with opportunities to become motivated and excited about language. Based on these findings, I call for further discussion and research about how preschools in Iceland can support the home languages of multilingual children. I argue that when teachers manage to cultivate a climate of language awareness by affirming, supporting, and including all the home languages of the multilingual children in the group, they become more likely to meet the children's multiple language and literacy needs. When Icelandic-speaking teachers have the knowledge and skills to scaffold and guide linguistic participation of multilingual children in the language of school, by including

their home languages, they are providing more opportunities for richer communication and deeper understanding.

Examples of free play and child-initiated activities where teachers actively attended to the children's play show how the teachers responded to the children's language-use. The teachers scaffolded children's Icelandic learning by, for example, modelling, guiding, and extending language, adding artefacts or ideas, labelling the learning material, and giving meaning to the task at hand (Bodrova, 2008; Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Kozulin, 1998; Moll, 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Sif explained the need for the teachers to be observant during play, and to document whether children were making progress, participating, or being marginalised. She stressed that all children need social relationships and that when they encounter difficulties they withdraw, which negatively influences their learning if teachers do not respond. To find out if the children themselves experienced marginalisation or exclusion from their peers the teachers interviewed all the children in the Green Division and asked them to choose pictures of their friends and discuss their relationships with each other. The teachers documented the children's answers, and the document became a practical tool for the teachers to understand better how the children perceived their participation. This is in line with studies from Icelandic preschools arguing for the need for the active participation of all children, with a special focus on children learning Icelandic as a second language (Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019). However, the teachers did not always share the same view regarding their role in the play, as became clear when Dísa and Sif discussed their participation during collaborative analysis. Sif was confident that they were not disturbing the children's play by entering it as teachers, which for many multilingual children meant that she provided a learning opportunity with language. On the other hand, Dísa was more insecure regarding her role, claiming that she did not want to disturb the play. Samuelson and Johansson (2009) stress that when adults avoid participation and are afraid of disturbing or destroying the play, children miss important learning opportunities. Findings from Icelandic research show that many children, including some multilingual children, need more support from their teachers during play (Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2017; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019). It was an eye-opener to hear the teachers discuss their different views and critically reflect on their role while they watched video recordings. I realised how this activity opened a learning space for the teachers where they themselves got an opportunity to collaboratively reflect and discuss the benefits of their actions for the children. This was highlighted in the discussions between Sif and Dísa who noticed how Sif motivated a boy in the play who was not used to playing with the other children in the same way as he did with the guidance of Sif.

Hands-on activities such as carrying out roles like *The master of keeping things tidy* presented multiple language learning opportunities. Often when these activities were

carried out, the children were in pairs or small groups with a teacher, and sometimes even alone with the teacher, as in the case where Sif invited Donek to assist her in selecting pictures for a word-poster. Like the teachers explained in interviews and discussed during collaborative analysis, these were activities that provided important language learning opportunities for the children. This is congruent with research showing how routine activities can support language learning, communicative development, and active participation for multilingual children (Kultti, 2012, 2014; Smidt, 2009). In her study on mealtimes and how they provided conditions for language learning and active participation of multilingual children, Kultti (2014) identified three key features that can be mirrored in the sequence of preparing and having lunch in the Green division. Each of the seven modules in the sequence carries a high level of repetition and vocabulary, means of communication, and chores that the children learn simultaneously and gradually while participating repeatedly in those activities over time. In addition, they get an opportunity to learn from each other and collaborate when carrying out the chores in pairs with the teacher. In the excerpts I presented in the chapter on findings, Dísa scaffolded and guided Magda's and Alfonso's linguistic participation and extended and modelled language-use, as when she asked Magda about the glasses.

My findings also show how the children discussed non-present topics, both when Magda was telling Dísa about her mother who knew how to make a red soup, and during the mealtime when Daniel was telling Dísa and the other children at the table about his bike. The later example clearly shows the important role of Dísa who guided Daniel's linguistic participation with care and high expectations. Simultaneously, it exemplifies how frustrating it can be for the child learning the school language, to participate in conversation around non-present topics. Furthermore, it shows the patience the other children need to have to maintain the conversation with Daniel. All these factors contribute to the self-efficacy belief of the child (Bandura, 1997). Hence, they are crucial for the child who needs to sustain participation during conversation to develop the shared thinking needed for deeper understanding (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). This also relates to Cummin's (1984, 2004, 2021a) distinction of BICS and CALP. A child who does not get an opportunity to take part in conversations at her own pace and in line with her own language competence will have a harder time developing basic interpersonal communication skills. When support, time, and space is given for face-to-face discussions, moving from context-embedded to context-reduced vocabulary, the language development of the child is actively supported (Cummins, 2021a). The pedagogy and practices of the teachers in this language-learning context also influence the way other children in the group engage in conversation with the multilingual child. For continuous language development and learning of the school language the child needs ongoing and repeated opportunities to participate in such conversations. Even though explicit support and scaffolding of input and output is needed during conversation (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Cummins, 2004, 2021a; Kozulin, 1998; Rogoff,

2003; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009), findings from research show that hours spent in special education do not necessarily benefit second language learners (Thomas & Collier, 2002; Þórðardóttir & Júlíusdóttir, 2012). Therefore, teachers should see the language learning opportunities available in different activities and have the appropriate knowledge and skills to act on them. During the collaborative analysis, the teachers discussed the importance of their presence and how they were able to provide important language learning opportunities. Dísa highlighted that the process of setting the table with two children became a quality activity. She and the children had a wonderful time together and she got an opportunity to do things with them that she did not necessarily think about every day. Kultti (2014) argues that mealtime activities provide a learning context where children can take part at their own pace according to their language competence and that the teacher's participation is fundamental for creating these conditions.

Sif provided support for the multilingual children by creating effective language learning spaces. Most often she invited other children to join in, building on her caring and inclusive pedagogical and professional perspective of peer learning through the guidance of a teacher. This is in line with research showing that children learn a lot from each other, and that when the teachers are observant of language learning opportunities, they add a valuable dimension to peer learning (Kultti, 2014; Rogoff, 2003; Samuelson & Johansson, 2009; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). In the excerpt where Sif was playing the pairing family game with three girls she created conditions of reciprocal learning between her and the children. When the teachers discussed the excerpt during collaborative analysis it became clear that Sif was consciously choosing to have these three girls together and creating conditions where everyone felt capable. By creating learning spaces like this, Sif influenced the way Ina was perceived in the group of children and played a role where she was accepted as a participant in their play, despite her limitations in Icelandic. In the excerpt where Sif was working with four boys in an art session drawing faces and discussing similarities and differences, Sif guided the linguistic participation of the multilingual boy and created conditions that allowed for his sustained engagement in the conversation. When the multilingual boy was the only one left with Sif the two of them kept on discussing the pencil sharpener that had become the centre of attention. The conversations that took place between Sif and the boy were of a very high quality, exhibiting many of the most important aspects of linguistic support that need to be in place for a child who is learning to communicate in a new language. The factors I identified while analysing the video were guided participation (Rogoff, 2003), sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009), the combination of background knowledge and the affirmation of identity (Cummins et al., 2015), movement from contextualised to context-reduced conversation effective for the development of BICS and CALP (Cummins, 2004, 2021a), as well as scaffolding and modelling (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009).

In the interviews, the teachers discussed how they had collaboratively reflected on their reading practices, which led to the adjustment of the practices to meet the literacy needs of a diverse group of children. Some of the practices have already been discussed above and involved book projects and work with text and deeper vocabulary. The teachers explained that reading for the children during circle time in the big group was no longer a part of their practices. During collaborative analysis Sif explained that it was just a waste of the children's time to read a book in the big group if they were not paying attention or understanding what was being read. Petra explained that more often than before, teachers sat down with a book and those children who wanted to join came to the teachers, or the children themselves chose a book and went to the teacher. She described how a teacher, who was very good at this, had been a role model for the others and that she and the teachers had collaboratively reflected on her practices. When the teachers read for a small group of children, they and the children got multiple opportunities to discuss vocabulary related to the text and the teachers were able to scaffold and guide the children's linguistic participation, which would have been much more challenging in a larger group.

In an excerpt where Dísa was reading for five children, she provided them with clues to the text without showing them the pictures, scaffolded and guided their participation, modelled their language use, repeated words, extended language, and was observant of their literacy engagement. Excerpts from reading sessions with Halla show how she introduced words and concepts belonging to deeper vocabulary, discussed ethical questions that the children needed a lot of support to understand, and explained words by connecting them to their lives. Research from Iceland shows that there is a gap in multilingual children's vocabulary in preschool and elementary school, underlining the importance of applying a pedagogy that focuses on work with deeper vocabulary as early as in preschool (Figlarska et al., 2017; Hafsteinsdóttir et al., 2022; Haraldsdóttir, 2013; Ólafsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2010; Reynisdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2022; Þórðardóttir & Júlíusdóttir, 2012). This is in line with Cummins' (2021a) claim that CALP starts to develop when the child participates in interaction and actively engages with literacy, collaborative learning, and talking about text. The way the teachers connected language to children's lives, both during reading sessions and during conversations, can be analysed along the framework for literacy engagement (Cummins et al., 2015). Even though small groups of children provided teachers with better opportunities to attend to their literacy needs, they can also lead to less dynamic interaction and reciprocity between the children. This creates a need for teachers to actively evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of their pedagogical choices. Furthermore, it can become a challenging chore to decide what children belong together in the group. If not carefully planned, small reading groups can involve missed learning opportunities and lack of engagement for some children in asimilar way as larger groups.

Findings from research show that identity affirmation has been ignored in relation to language development and learning of multilingual children (Cummins, 2004, 2021b;

Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins et al., 2015). Affirming identity and connecting to children's lives, while guiding and scaffolding their linguistic participation during child-initiated and adult-organised practices, was a continuous part of the teachers' pedagogy, as discussed further in the next subchapter. This was also visible when children participated in projects like *Menningarmót* (e. *The flying carpet – Intercultural encounters*) and *Töfrataskan* (e. *The magic box*) and when they brought things from home to show and discuss. These projects provided language learning opportunities for the children, where they built on artefacts and experiences that they themselves knew better than anyone else. With the guidance of the teachers who created the language-learning context and enhanced the active agency of the multilingual children, they co-constructed their practices with their communicative actions (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Schwartz, 2018). In the following subchapter I discuss in more detail my findings in relation to affirming children's identity.

5.3 Identity and sense of belonging

Positive identity is crucial for children's development and overall learning, and their experiences during the preschool years play a significant role in fostering their sense of belonging and sense of self (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008). Teachers' choice of pedagogy and practices, the prevailing discourse, attitudes, and beliefs are all closely related to whether children experience their own agency and develop an identity of competence and capability. My findings suggest that for children with a linguistically and culturally diverse background it was essential that they were given a space to develop an identity without devaluing their cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge, which is congruent with findings from earlier research (Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins, et al., 2015; Esteban & Moll, 2014; Emilsson Peskova, 2021). Language and identity are closely related, and by developing learning spaces where language and literacy were in focus and where the children's identity, sense of self, and belonging were being affirmed, the teachers provided opportunities to connect language and identity. In their discussions about the children, which included examples of their participation and referred to their learning and development, the teachers used empowering discourse and displayed high expectations for the children. These findings are congruent with studies that emphasise the need to avoid the deficiency model in education for multilingual children and build relationships of care and love (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2010; Cummins, 2021a; Nieto, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). In interaction with the children during situations where they needed support or guidance for mastering tasks, the teachers used empowering communication and encouragement aiming for children's self-efficacy and autonomy. The teachers stressed how important it was for the children to experience their own capability and how rewarding it was when the children overcame challenges that had been hindering them. A positive sense of self influences children's learning and participation and is important for their emerging self-efficacy belief (Bandura, 1997; Jónsdóttir, 2007). Siraj-Blatchford (2003) argues

that language is a significant factor in shaping identity and that the way children's languages are perceived influences the way they feel about themselves. Both the teachers and the parents in my study emphasised the importance of valuing languages and cultures. Halla explained that one reason for supporting diverse languages was for all the children in the group to get to know and respect others. Clearly, the teachers were creating a community where diverse cultures and languages were valued and respected.

In the preschool's curriculum, goals, and values, as well as through teacher practices, children's identity was regarded and respected as multiple (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008). The teachers avoided fitting the multilingual children into a fixed identity and displayed an understanding of their culture and background as personal and diverse. Most of the parents described how important it was for their children to belong in their own language and culture while also feeling at home in the preschool and the preschool's culture. Starting preschool in a new language and experiencing practices that were very different from those at home put pressure on both the children and the parents, as was documented in the interviews and observations. The challenges involved not only language issues, but also various other concerns, such as playing outside in all kinds of weather or experiencing napping arrangements and customs different from what the parents and their children were used to. The teachers acted on these challenges by developing practices that supported the children during the transition time such as creating the *bilingual book of communication*, welcoming diverse languages and collaborating with parents. The learning was reciprocal, as explained by the parents, and their experience of participating in the preschool's activities provided them with valuable information, not only about the preschool culture but also about Icelandic culture, which influenced their belonging and identity within the preschool and society at large. The experience and participation of children and families in diverse cultural and social contexts, both at home and in the preschool, constantly modifies and influences their identity and sense of self. Acknowledging that the identity of children and families is not fixed or stable is therefore a prerequisite for an inclusive understanding of identity (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008).

The *bilingual book of communication* used at The Circle to connect to children's lives and languages, proved to be an empowering pedagogical tool, resembling the creation of identity text as described by Cummins and Early (2011). This was evident in the way the children became actors in co-creating the book, how the book presented words and vocabulary both in Icelandic and their home languages and displayed pictures and stories based on their interests and strengths. All the teachers mentioned the bilingual book of communication, and some gave examples of how empowering it was for the children to participate in communication with the help of the book, affirming their participation and identity as being capable and worthy of belonging (Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). Freyja explained that for many of the children the book was something that made them proud, it belonged to them and they could choose to take it

with them and show it to others. The book was also a tool for manifesting the identity of multilingual children as emergent multilinguals, for instance when it was used to present words and vocabulary in their languages (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins & Early, 2011). One teacher discussed the importance of the book for a boy who was facing multiple behavioural issues and regularly having conflicts with other children. The boy's book became a tool for shared understanding, bridging the gap between his lived experiences in the preschool and at home through pictures and words. This had a positive effect on his participation in the group and contributed to his wellbeing, something that the teachers saw as directly conducive to his progress in Icelandic. With the bilingual books of communication, the teachers co-created an interactive learning space where identity was affirmed, the teachers learned about the children, and the children and their parents got an opportunity to become proud of their multilingual talents. Simultaneously, the book strengthened the relationship between the child and the teachers and the ties between home language and the language of school, which positively influenced children's identity and self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Brooker, 2002b; Brooker & Woodhead, 2008; Cummins & Early, 2011; Levy, 2011). This is in line with research stating the importance of building on children's linguistic and cultural repertoire and indicates how children are always activating both or all their languages (Cummins, 2021a; Emilsson Peskova, 2021).

As discussed earlier, children are socialised into a language through communication, while simultaneously being powerful actors in shaping the process through their communicative actions (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017). In my findings, I present examples of children expressing their agency through communicative actions in a learning space that affirms their identity as worthy of belonging and where their voices are acted on. This was documented in several play scenes where the teachers gave attention to the children's play with words and artefacts. Some of the examples involve conversations initiated by the children, such as when Magda and Alfonso were setting the table for lunch and Magda started to tell Dísa about her mother and called Dísa 'mom' in Polish. Such word use by children is not uncommon in schools that have been described as family-like and where children feel safe and included (Epstein et al., 2002). In another excerpt documented during Ash Wednesday, Magda asked the teachers to play the Elsa song from the *Frozen* movie in Polish. By doing so she created a space where her identity was affirmed by all the participating children and teachers when they danced and listened to the song. This was also documented in the excerpt where Sif welcomed Ina, a child new to the preschool, and Ina took the lead in the communication with her body language, gestures, and agency, showing Sif something red on the back of her hand. At first Sif thought it was a wound but then Ina made clear it was a lipstick and pretended to put it on her lips. During these and other interactions, I observed how the teachers' pedagogical choices created democratic and interactive spaces. Democratic and interactive learning spaces ensure that teachers listen to children, build on their competences and collaboratively co-create understanding while

affirming identity (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2017; Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003, 2009; Skaremyr, 2021). The teachers used various media such as pedagogical documentation and individual plans, pictures of the children on the homepage and preschool walls, and bilingual books of communication, to affirm and present children's multiple identities of capability and belonging.

Esteban and Moll (2014) have suggested that when children and families are invited to present their funds of knowledge with their own voice and choose the resources that they find essential for their personal self-definition, these resources and narratives become funds of identity. The participating teachers organised projects with the children and their families, such as bringing artefacts, books, or narratives to the preschool, thus making a connection to children's worlds through their funds of identity. All the preschool children took part in these activities except for the bilingual book of communication. This was only carried out with the multilingual children, in accordance with the teachers' emphasis on providing equity by meeting diverse needs of children with diverse practices, in congruence with prior studies (Rachid & Igbida, 2022; Ragnarsdóttir & Kulbrandstad, 2018). Organising projects for all children, where they were given a platform to connect to their own lives, strengths, and interests in a way that affirmed their multiple identities, was one example of an inclusive act of critical pedagogy and critical multicultural education (Banks, 2010; Esteban & Moll, 2014; Nieto, 2010). The teachers found it important that the children and their families got the opportunity to define their identity themselves, instead of forcing a stereotypical view of culture on the diverse families. This was manifested during *Menningarmót* when some of the children connected directly to the homeland and culture of their parents while other children brought toys or artefacts that mirrored their interests, such as the girl who had co-created a story with her father. Parents mentioned *Menningarmót* as an event where they could learn about the other children in the group. Some explained that it was not centred around their ethnicity or country of origin since it was the children themselves who decided what to share and talk about. During *Menningarmót* a space of respect for diverse languages was created when participating children, parents, and teachers sang in diverse languages, and where conversation between children, teachers, and parents took place in different languages. The teachers explained that the project made the children and families proud, as also documented in the study of Lauritsen (2014). Participation by the teachers gave them the opportunity to affirm their identity as well, for example, Petra's interest in minerals which she shared at the event. Simultaneously, these practices were engaging and motivating for the children, as Dísa explained while doing a pedagogical documentation of a session with a boy who decided to bring a picture of his father in *Töfrataskan* to show to the other children, which meant a lot to him. Furthermore, these projects enhanced collaborative relations of power where children and adults felt valued and competent (Cummins, 2021b).

The only project organised as an event involving parent's participation in the preschool was *Menningarmót*, although sometimes the teachers only included the children. Even though the teachers had managed to develop good collaboration with many of the parents, and the participating parents had very good experiences of the preschool, this was not the case with all the parents, as will be discussed further in the final subchapter. The teachers were concerned for the children's feelings when they did not manage to reach out to parents and when parents did not participate in events they were invited to. For some children, lack of parental participation can cause disappointment and sadness, which in turn affects their sense of belonging. Children's sense of belonging influences their behaviour, wellbeing, and identity (Pálmadóttir, 2022; Sapon-Shevin, 2007, 2008; Brooker & Woodhed, 2008). Thus, it is important for teachers to be observant of children's behaviour and respond to their feelings with care and understanding. If parents don't attend preschool events intended for family members, children may feel that they and their parents are not part of the community. This is something that must be considered and critically reflected on by teachers also from a social justice perspective. The teachers at The Circle reflected on family participation and as a result changed the way they invited family members. When teachers practice inclusion and build on children's and parents' funds of identity through empowering communication, they are sending out the strong message that everyone is important in the preschool community and showing their profound commitment to welcoming all families (Brooker, 2002b; Hellman et al., 2018; Lauritsen, 2014; Sapon-Shevin, 2007). Reaching out and working with all parents is a fundamental issue, highly connected to children's overall success. In the final subchapter, I will discuss further how the teachers reached out to parents in order to build bridges between home and preschool.

5.4 Building bridges between preschool and home

Building strong relationship with parents around their children's learning and development is one of the factors in shaping the children's success. Meanwhile, discontinuities between home and school can have negative results for their learning. It is in children's best interests that their parents become familiarised with the school culture, that they experience an open-door policy where they are truly engaged and welcomed and where collaboration around language and literacy is enhanced (Brooker, 2002a, 2002b; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004; Esteban & Moll, 2014; Heath, 1982; Krüger & Thamin, 2021; Neuman, 2007; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Tabors, 2006; Voorhis et al., 2013; Whithead, 2010). As already discussed in the first subchapter, the teachers put a lot of effort into welcoming and reaching out to the families of the multilingual children, showing that they regarded parents as important partners. This is in line with Epstein and colleagues (2002) who highlight the positive effect of good partnership with parents on their children's learning and development. The teachers began the process of collaboration with parents when children started

preschool. They met with the parents and shared information about the preschool and gathered information about the child. As mirrored in The Circle's guidelines for communication with parents, the aim was to embrace communication with all parents, call on interpreters when needed, and enhance partnership with all parents around their children's learning and development. The guidelines stated that the teachers' role was to listen to parents and understand and discuss their views and wishes about their children in a culturally responsive and solution-oriented way. This is congruent with Whithead (2010) and Thomauske (2021) who argue that teachers must act in a culturally sensitive way and reflect on their use of language with parents so that it enhances mutual understanding.

The teachers expressed their interest in learning about the children and did their best to provide parents with effective tools for participating and learning about the preschool, as well as supporting them in the way they needed. Many of the parents described their experience of the preschool and the teachers as belonging to a family. Furthermore, parents highlighted that the teachers displayed genuine interest and care, their children felt safe, and they were listened to. One mother highlighted that the teachers were always prepared to help and her feeling was that even though half of the parents were immigrants they were always welcome, and it was just like belonging to a small family. Another example was Petra's story of the mother in the cloak room who was avoidant and did not approach the teachers. Petra tried to turn things around by approaching the mother every time she could, smiling and affirming her existence while telling her daughter how wonderful it was that her mother was there. In this way the mother slowly started to build trust in communication. These findings align with Epstein and colleagues (2002) describing the essence of a family-like school and findings from research emphasising the power of preschools that affirm and respect children's linguistic and cultural identities, provide safe, caring, cooperative and trusting educational contexts where parents experience themselves as active participants (Egilsson et al., 2021; Hellman et al., 2018). In the process of developing collaboration with parents of multilingual children and reaching out to them it is also important for teachers to be sensitive to the ways in which they approach parents and seek to include them in the preschool community. There can be several reasons for parents' insecurity or decisions to withdraw from partnership with teachers or other parents. Parents' wishes for partnership and belonging in the preschool community does not necessarily reflect their interest in their children's education. This needs to be approached with empathy, care, and understanding (Brooker, 2002b; Egilsson, et al., 2021; Nieto, 2010; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). This could be a factor related to my difficulties in obtaining participants in my research. Eventually it was Petra who assisted me by reaching out to the parents. I am aware that the parents who chose to participate were most likely among those who had already developed a positive relationship with the teachers and this, in turn, may influence my findings.

Parents confirmed that when their children started preschool the teachers invited them to a meeting where they discussed, among other things, children's language development and learning. The focus was on the role of the preschool in supporting the learning of Icelandic, welcoming home languages, and motivating parents by supporting the home language. Some parents explained that they did not have similar experiences from other preschools, neither regarding discussions about their children's language nor in the way the teachers reached out and welcomed them. They stressed that the way the teachers at The Circle supported them and their children was important for their wellbeing and learning. This is in line with earlier research showing that when preschools purposively reach out to immigrant parents, they are building a relationship of care and concern, which is beneficial for the children's learning and development (Brooker, 2002b; Egilsson et al., 2021; Krüger & Thamin, 2021; Pálmadóttir, 2022). Involving parents in partnership around their children's learning is a process that takes on different forms throughout the preschool years. The process of collaboration developed at The Circle resembles the findings of Krüger and Thamin (2021) who identified three basic forms of participation between teachers and parents of multilingual children. All these forms of participation were being developed at The Circle, although Petra and the teachers were still developing their practices and had not reached the aim of involving all families in the process. Such a process is not always successful or inclusive of all families but in a caring school community participants continuously aim at improving the collaboration (Epstein et al., 2002).

Even though the teachers and the parents discussed the importance of enhancing multilingualism and nuturing children's home languages and Icelandic, they did not all share the same view on language use in preschool and at home. Some parents argued for the need to separate the languages and felt that it was the preschools' role to teach Icelandic and that they should keep the use of Icelandic at home to a minimum. One father did not want the teachers to speak his home language to his children at preschool. He said that he and the teachers had made a rule to separate the languages, only using Icelandic in the preschool and the home language at home. Other parents explained that the preschool teachers had told them that teaching Icelandic was the role of the preschool not the parents. Separating languages in this way could be connected to a monolingual view, or possibly the belief that focusing on one language at a time can make the learning process of acquiring a second language more rapid (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021a; May, 2014; Whithead, 2010). However, findings from earlier studies show that a monolingual language learning context is usually not associated with faster or more successful learning of the school language and often results in children losing their home language (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004; García & Wei, 2014; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018; Whithead, 2010). Learning a new language while maintaining the home language involves great challenges for children and their families. When teachers establish relationships with parents that provide opportunities for reciprocal discussions around language policies

at home and at school and share practices and ideas on how to meet the multiple language needs of multilingual children, they are acting on these challenges in a powerful way. Furthermore, by collaborating they contribute to a caring community and the wellbeing and success of multilingual children that has been linked to harmonious bilingualism, while sharing the responsibility of meeting their multiple language and literacy needs (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; De Houwer, 2013, 2021; Epstein et al., 2002; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018).

All the parents in the study practiced different language and literacy activities at home with their children, including reading, singing, playing, and discussing words and vocabulary. Some visited the library regularly, some had books in Icelandic, and most of them explained that they regularly bought books in their home languages. Some parents described how proud they were when they experienced that their children were making progress in Icelandic while improving their home language, and some of them described how they motivated their children to learn both languages. Sif gave an example of how empowering it was for her, the children, and the parents when spaces of multilingualism were created, for instance when parents picked the children up or brought them to the preschool. In those instances, she wanted to share with the staff the empowering communication which took place when children navigated between their languages, speaking the home language with the parent and Icelandic with her. This was in line with her and the other teacher's views and beliefs that all the children's languages were important and should be welcomed and supported. The importance of maintaining and developing the home language should be looked at from many sides, not only in regard to language and literacy or the benefits for the cognitive development of children (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004, 2021b; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Whithead, 2010). Maintaining the home language in order to nourish the relationship with the extended family was a very important aspect of multilingualism at The Circle and mentioned by many parents. Furthermore, one mother emphasised the importance of the home language for sustaining her relationship with her child. For her and her son their home language was the main tool for communication as well as the language of parenting. The mother displayed her anxiety and the consequences for their relationship if they were not able to share a language. For her, the most important factor while thinking about the future was her son's progress in both the home language and in Icelandic.

Voorhis and colleagues (2013) found that all the parents participating in their study, regardless of social or cultural background, could provide good language and literacy practices with their children. Nevertheless, almost all of them wanted more information, ideas, and guidance to develop empowering interactions with their children. When teachers purposefully work with different projects and practices related to language and literacy in collaboration with parents, as was the case in my study, they are not only building effective relationships but also giving parents ideas and tools to enrich their language practices at home which are beneficial to the children's learning. Although

book reading and literacy practices are important and were greatly encouraged by the participating teachers through the book projects, there is also a need to send out the message to parents that everyday activities that enhance rich communication and interesting talk with new vocabulary is of great significance (Tabors et al., 2001a). Several other practices, like the bilingual book of communication, *Text talk*, making posters with words and pictures, singing in different languages, or asking parents to translate words are all tools that parents can use to enrich communication with their children. One mother explained how the teachers wrote a new word every week that she translated with her daughter into their home language. This work with vocabulary made her realise the importance of using more complicated vocabulary in her home language and motivated her to speak to her daughter more as an adult. This indicates that the teachers in the study were important resources when it came to discussing and learning about different aspects of language and literacy. This is in line with findings from an Icelandic study showing that preschool teachers were the main source of information about language and linguistic support for parents of multilingual children (Jónsdóttir et al., 2018).

Different language learning contexts have different effects on children's language developmental trajectories during the early years. When teachers purposefully aim for collaboration around language and literacy, they are supporting the language development and learning of multilingual children in a powerful way (Brooker, 2002a; De Houwer, 2013, 2021; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018; Purcell-Gates et al., 2011; Rogoff, 2003; Voorhis et al., 2013). Furthermore, purposeful collaboration with parents needs to include the whole process of partnership (Epstein et al., 2002; Krüger & Thamin, 2021). Preparing teachers for such a collaboration involves the need for them to learn about language development of multilingual children, understand different family language policies and how those influence children's learning in the preschool. Additionally, they need to understand the importance of collaboration with all parents in a culturally responsive way.

6 Conclusions

In this concluding chapter I discuss the contributions, implications, and recommendations that can be drawn from the findings of this study. The overarching research question addressed how learning spaces for multilingual preschool children were created, with special focus on the way teachers guided and scaffolded children's linguistic participation, affirmed their identities and voices, and developed partnership with parents. The findings illustrate that creating equitable, inclusive, and socially just learning spaces for multilingual children was a complex, multi-faceted, emergent process touching on all the dimensions of education (Banks, 2010). The emergent process involved multiple diverse practices and called for critical reflection, professional development, and a learning community where teachers, children, and parents learned from each other. Even though my findings show powerful, innovative, and resourceful teachers, they were facing multiple challenges and many of the practices they implemented were not yet sustained or taken up by all teachers in the preschool. My findings implicate the importance of building on children's linguistic and cultural diversity while developing partnership with parents. Furthermore, the study clearly demonstrates the role of teachers in creating the conditions for language learning to take place through daily activities, both initiated by the children and organised by the teachers.

In the next subchapter I will discuss the main contributions and implications that I draw from the study and then I turn to recommendations for teacher education and further research.

6.1 Contributions of the study and implications for policy and practice

This study contributes to the research field of education for multilingual preschool children. It highlights that the education of multilingual children is a multi-faceted, complex process that needs to be comprehensive, socially just, and inclusive. I build on multiple theoretical frameworks and methods of analysis rather than relying on a single theory. In this way I draw on a wide range of theoretical perspectives and findings from research rooted in different fields that all relate to the education of multilingual children. My belief is that we need to look at education for multilingual children from a broad perspective. Narrow focus in practices and policy should be avoided and multiple stories about the potential of multilingual children, their teachers, and families should guide the discussion. By building on varied data and using different analysing procedures I got an opportunity to examine the findings from different viewpoints. This

provided me, and hopefully the readers of this thesis, with a deeper understanding of the learning spaces being developed. Particularly, I gained a wider perspective and a new understanding through collaborative analysis of video recordings with the participating teachers, since that process gave me better insight into their work while they discussed their own practices. Furthermore, the collaborative analysis process gave the teachers a new perspective on their own work and created spaces for discussions regarding values, beliefs, and pedagogy in a way that they had not done before. Teachers who work with multilingual preschool children can benefit from using a similar approach when planning for the children's learning. Real examples of quality communication, linguistically appropriate support, and active participation of multilingual children, documented by themselves within their own preschool, can strengthen teachers' belief in the ability they have to create successful learning spaces.

To the best of my knowledge this is the first study in Iceland that focuses on how teachers guide and scaffold the linguistic participation of multilingual children during different activities. Furthermore, the study encompasses multiple aspects of the way teachers affirm identity, build relationships, and enhance the active participation of children in a way that other Icelandic studies have not. Partnership with parents has been looked at in different research and findings from this study confirm some of the earlier findings, in particularly the need for teachers to reach out to parents and build collaboration around their children's learning and wellbeing from a culturally sensitive perspective (Brooker, 2002b; Egilsson et al, 2021; Epstein et al., 2002; Figlarska et al., 2017; Hellman et al., 2018; Jónsdóttir et al., 2018; Krüger & Thamin, 2021; Ragnarsdóttir et al., 2016; Siraj-Blatchford, 2003; Withead, 2010). Additionally, my study contributes to discussions on how to build partnership with parents around language and literacy of multilingual children, as well as enhancing social justice and equity with appropriate support and empowering communication. By highlighting successful practices of teachers, I seek to provide inspiring stories of social justice and inclusion, and as such the study contributes to the important objective of reversing the marginalisation and deficit discourse dominant in the education of multilingual children worldwide.

The teachers in the study were in the process of transforming the learning spaces of the preschool to meet the needs of a diverse group of children and their families. The study contributes to the understanding that school reform and transformation of pedagogy and practices, responding to challenges that follow demographic and social changes, need to be an ongoing process touching on all the dimensions of education (Banks, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Ragnarsdóttir & Sveinsdóttir, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir & Blöndal, 2014; Ragnarsdóttir & Hansen, 2010; Ragnarsdóttir & Schmidt, 2014). Furthermore, it highlights the need for teamwork and the development of a learning community of teachers within the preschool, with access to support and resources from the municipality and external professional services. The study implies that without widespread collaboration and shared responsibility practices are less likely

to be sustained, negatively affecting the education of multilingual children and leading visionaries, such as Petra and Sif (Hansen et al., 2016). My findings indicate that many of the practices, values, and beliefs documented in this study are in line with the prevailing national policy and the policy in Reykjavík. Preschools in Iceland today are multicultural and multilingual just like the society at large, and citizens need to learn to live together in a democratic way. It is in the interest of all children in preschools and at all school levels to support and welcome linguistic and cultural diversity. The study provides practical suggestions for preschools that have not yet developed their practices for the education of multilingual children from a multilingual, multicultural, socially just, and inclusive perspective. Additionally, the study has implications for policy makers, practitioners, and educators who work with multilingual children within formal and informal education, as well as professionals working with and supporting teachers such as psychologists, speech therapists, and social workers.

The study highlights that equity and inclusion are powerful factors in creating learning spaces for multilingual preschool children. Social justice comes alive when democratic learning spaces are created and all children become active participants regardless of their ability to communicate in the language of school (Nieto, 2010; Sapon-Shevin, 2007). The same holds true for their families that at times need extra outreach and support from teachers, as documented in this study and highlighted by the participating teachers and parents. The study contributes to discussions regarding how young children can be guided and scaffolded during the preschool day through empowering communication and active linguistic participation. The culture of communication, documented in the study, illustrated how teachers saw it as their role to create conditions where time and space were given to children to provide multiple opportunities for practicing communication in the school language. At the same time, the teachers found it important to support children's multilingualism and provide opportunities to actively connect the learning of the school language and the home languages in collaboration with parents. The culture of communication was also mirrored in the way teachers built on the communicative acts of a newly arrived girl who started preschool while the study took place. These findings contribute to the understanding of factors that can influence or prevent prolonged silence of children new to the language of school (Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Gibbons, 1985; Roberts, 2014; Skaremyr, 2021).

My findings show that the teachers were in the process of implementing multiple practices to acknowledge and support all the home languages of children in partnership with parents. Nevertheless, I found that three languages were dominant. In addition to Icelandic and sometimes English, the Polish language was widely supported, and most often heard and used by the children and teachers. This contributes to discussions on how preschools can support and respect all the languages of multilingual children and prevent some languages from becoming more highly regarded than others. At the same time, it raises multiple questions regarding the role

of teachers, both Icelandic-speaking teachers and Polish-speaking teachers, and the participation of children who share the same language. While it is crucial to acknowledge and support all the languages of the children, it is important to prevent children who belong to the same language group from becoming marginalised, for example by interacting primarily with children who share the same home language (Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019). Even though it is important for teachers to provide a clear school language policy regarding what languages to speak or use and support, it is of no less importance to understand the power relations and the culture of communication within the learning space. The study shows that the culture of communication in the preschool involved that teachers included children and parents in communication in an empowering way, guided linguistic participation of children across languages, crossed the boundaries in communication and created collaborative relations of power (Cummins, 2021b). The teachers had developed guidelines for communication with parents and a policy of communication with children that were mirrored in many of the examples presented in the findings. In this way, the teachers systematically organised and framed the culture of communication they were aiming for, and in line with the preschool's ethos. This implies that without an understanding of the culture of communication at play within learning spaces, school language policies might easily be misinterpreted, resulting in social injustice and marginalisation.

The study shows how the identity of children was affirmed through different practices that presented an understanding of identity as multiple and not as fixed or fused by stereotypical factors. Teachers connected to children's lives and experiences through empowering conversation during organised and child-initiated practices and affirmed their funds of identity (Esteban & Moll, 2014). When discussing the children and their families, teachers avoided the deficit model and exhibited high expectations and empathy towards the children and their parents. The teachers criticised the available tools for assessing multilingual children's language learning and development and called for linguistically appropriate tools, time, and support. Simultaneously, the teachers were looking for ways to document children's learning and development from a strength-based perspective. The study underlines the importance of looking at identity as an important factor in children's emergent language and literacy development, something that is often ignored in research with multilingual children (Cummins, 2004, 2021b; Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins et al., 2015). Organising practices in a systematic way, as documented in the research, increased the likelihood that all the teachers in the preschool would eventually implement practices affirming multiple identities while maximising children's accessibility to language and literacy.

The participating parents all stressed their wish that their children would become multilingual, maintaining the home language while learning the language of school. Still, they described somewhat contradictory beliefs about the support and use of the languages both at home and in the preschool. Understanding the language learning

trajectories of multilingual children and the family language policy at play is of great importance. The study demonstrates the importance of planning and systematically organising discussions and partnership with parents around the language and literacy needs of multilingual children from the very beginning of preschool and onward. Furthermore, it adds to the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents in the emergent language learning and development of multilingual children, both regarding the language of home and the Icelandic language. Findings implicate that partnership with parents does not become a reality without culturally sensitive teachers who reach out and build detailed, comprehensive, and systematic structure around collaboration with parents. This structure must involve how teachers and parents collaborate around children's transition to preschool and how partnership around children's ongoing learning and wellbeing is structured. Furthermore, teachers need to aim for a family community where parents can meet and share through an active open-door policy where all parents feel welcomed. Understanding that attitudes, beliefs, and societal relations of power are at play during all communication with children and parents can aid teachers in realising that they themselves have the power to include or exclude (Cummins, 2021b). When teachers have the initiative, cross the boundaries, and develop collaboration with multilingual families they are contributing to the transformation of education for multilingual children. In the next subchapter I will discuss recommendations for further research and teacher education.

6.2 Recommendations for further research, teacher education, and professional development

The following recommendations are rooted in the findings and divided into discussions regarding further research, education for teachers, and professional development for in-service teachers and staff. One of the most important learning points that I take from this study is deeper understanding of the complexity of factors that influence multilingual children's learning and active participation. While it is very important to understand the nature of language proficiency, multilingualism, second language learning, and other linguistic factors, researchers also need to acknowledge the individuality of children and the very different language trajectories that multilingual children go through while learning a language. Findings from studies that highlight comparisons between multilingual and monolingual children born in the language of school and society are of limited relevance since the language development of monolingual children is constantly a moving target. Without comprehensive studies on the education of multilingual children and stories of successful children and successful schools it will be hard to reverse the deficit standpoint dominating the discourse in Iceland and internationally. Understanding the links between social relations of power and the way deficit discourse is nurtured with a single story of underachieving children learning the language of school is of great importance in reversing this. Although it is impossible to capture all the factors at play in one study, I find it important to change

the perspective of research from a linguistic or psychological viewpoint to a more holistic and sociocultural one. This could be done with collaboration of researchers from different research fields or by formulating an approach that combines psychological perspectives with research carried out in concrete settings where sociocultural factors are considered (Alstad & Mourão, 2021; Hedegaard, 2008). Studies with a very narrow focus hardly capture the complexity of the situation and leave out understanding of the most important factors affecting children's learning. Studies with a narrow focus have also been criticised for not providing guidance or clear directions for educational interventions and lacking answers to questions regarding the fact that some linguistically diverse groups experience persistent long-term underachievement (Cummins, 2004). Implementing action research or weaving active participation of teachers, children, and families into the research process could simultaneously give wings to multiple voices and transform practices. Such methods affirm that knowledge is not only generated through the perspective of the researcher, placing the teachers as passive recipients of knowledge. Collaboration of teachers and researchers who together pursue innovation and documentation of practices generates knowledge that facilitates change (Cummins, 2021b).

In this study I recognise that parents are important partners in developing comprehensive education for multilingual children. Teachers and parents carry the mutual responsibility of ensuring that the multiple language and literacy needs of children are met through guided linguistic participation (Rogoff, 2003) and rich access to printed material and literacy experiences (Chumak-Horbatch, 2012; Cummins, 2021a). Some studies of family language policy have already been done in Iceland and they present interesting information regarding the way parents support and guide their multilingual children's language development (Jónsdóttir et al., 2018). I call for further studies that throw light on family language policy, the preschools' language policy, the culture of communication within the learning spaces and how stakeholders ensure the literacy engagement of multilingual children. Research projects looking at the interplay between these factors and the way they influence the different trajectories of the emergent multilingual child could be instigated. Such a research project would benefit from an investigation of how teachers and parents collaborate around language and literacy, and how teachers connect to children's lives and affirm their funds of identity.

Policy in Iceland and the Convention on the Rights of the Child state that all children should have the opportunity to maintain their home language while learning the language of school, thus aiming for active multilingualism. The multilingual turn has influenced the way we think about language and language education and is already influencing policy in Iceland (Hélot, 2021; May, 2014). The multilingual turn and the dynamic view of language development and language practices involves the recognition that children's linguistic repertoire is activated almost continuously (Cummins, 2021a; Emilsson Peskova, 2021). Inclusive and socially just multilingual practices do not only embrace the issue of which languages are being used but more

importantly which voices are engaged in communication, since marginalisation of children sharing the same language has been identified in Icelandic research (Karlsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2020; Rúnarsdóttir & Valgeirsdóttir, 2019). This indicates that even though preschools have a language policy that favours multilingualism, it can involve emphasis on teaching or stimulating only the most dominant home language spoken by some teachers. That may result in social injustice, exclusion, and lack of opportunities for the multilingual children to learn the language of school. Furthermore, multilingual children who do not speak the dominant languages (in this study Icelandic, English, and Polish) can get the message that their languages are not as valuable or important. Exploring how preschools can support all the children's languages while guiding and scaffolding the learning of the school language is of great importance. Such research should include a focus on translanguaging practices, children's agency, and the way teachers who do not speak the home languages of children can facilitate active linguistic participation of multilingual children across languages.

I argue that much more research is needed regarding the way newly arrived children are guided and scaffolded in their linguistic participation from the very beginning in preschools in Iceland. Hence, I stress the need to look at the relationship between possible prolonged silence in newcoming preschool children and findings from Icelandic research showing how slowly they learn the school language, remain marginalised in play and other activities, and do not seek support from their teachers. Exploring how teachers plan the transition to preschool for newly arrived multilingual children, create inclusive learning spaces, and tend to their overall learning and emotional and social needs simultaneously, should be in focus. Investigating how the culture of communication creates or prevents a dynamic space of interaction between children and adults could aid in such research. Moreover, longitudinal transdisciplinary research projects which follow a group of children from different sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds should be encouraged. I suggest that such a research project should start during transition to preschool and finish around the time children start fourth grade. The focus could be on the individual trajectory of learning the language of school without focusing solely on the comparison between the participating children and monolingual Icelandic-speaking children. The study could look at the relationship between the way newly arrived children are guided and scaffolded during the transition to preschool, and how teachers' scaffold and guide linguistic participation onward, moving from BICS (*e. basic interpersonal communication skills*) to the understanding and use of more academic or context-reduced vocabulary CALP (*cognitive academic language proficiency*). A more comprehensive study of this sort could involve parents, their family language policies, and practices with language and literacy.

The hallmark of preschool education in Iceland is the emphasis on learning through play, where children learn together with other children and their teachers. I believe that the Icelandic preschool sector would benefit from studies showing, in more detail than this present study, how child-initiated practices and free play can become valuable

language learning spaces. Action research which focuses on the pedagogy of play and how to scaffold, guide, and model linguistic participation could generate valuable knowledge. Such a research project could be carried out with researchers from educational and linguistic research fields.

My belief is that demographic changes caused by conflicts, migration, and environmental changes will continue to challenge societies around the world with unforeseen consequences. This stresses the need for lifelong education for everyone who works with multilingual children or the education of linguistically and culturally diverse children and families. Preschools in Iceland have been facing multiple challenges, some of them addressed in this study. These include demographic changes, lack of educated teachers, and lack of teachers with knowledge and skills for working with linguistically and culturally diverse group of children. Too few students graduate each year as preschool teachers in Iceland and many of them already work in preschools while managing their studies simultaneously. Education for preschool teachers has been criticised for the lack of appropriate preparation to meet linguistically and culturally diverse children and families, although this is gradually changing. At the same time, educational authorities in municipalities around the country are struggling to provide appropriate support and professional development for teachers and staff working in preschools. My recommendations are that universities providing education for preschool teachers and educational authorities collaborate in developing appropriate education for all those working with linguistically and culturally diverse groups of children. Such a collaboration could enhance the possibility of linking together research, university education, and professional development that could respond rapidly to contemporary challenges. Furthermore, the collaboration could provide a platform where all stakeholders actively learn from each other, including children and families. Therefore, my recommendations regarding the education of preschool teachers and professional development for those working in preschools are somewhat intertwined, calling for culturally and linguistically responsive learning communities. In a culturally and linguistically responsive learning community, all stakeholders respond actively to contemporary challenges and look at education for a diverse group of children as a multi-dimensional, comprehensive, and ongoing transformative process.

When teachers manage to cultivate a climate of language awareness by affirming, supporting, and including all the home languages in the group, while simultaneously supporting the learning of the school language, they become more likely to meet the children's multiple language and literacy needs. Understanding the relationship between multilingual practices, possible prolonged silence, and the need to enhance BICS and CALP in the language of school are factors that must be addressed in professional development and education of prospective teachers. Some of the participating teachers and parents in this study highlight that real understanding, knowledge, and skills on how to communicate and develop relationships and

understanding across languages and cultures will not be enhanced without active interaction of all stakeholders. Teachers must enhance their skills to cross the boundaries and reach out to parents in a welcoming and culturally sensitive way so that they become participants in their children's learning. Hence, professional development and education for preschool teachers needs active participation of diverse group of teachers, parents, children, and researchers who learn from each other. Such a collaborative generation of knowledge enhances the possibility of providing the appropriate education for multilingual children.

Preparing teacher students and providing professional development for in-service teachers must include learning about and understanding their own values, beliefs, and prejudices as these factors influence communicational skills and the way education for multilingual children is perceived. Culturally sensitive practices and real-life projects where multiple identities are affirmed can aid in such a preparation. Teacher students as well as teachers and staff in preschools need to understand that the reality of multilingual children is made of many stories. Identities are not fixed, and every child and family must get the opportunity to tell their own story with their own voice, building on their personal funds of identity. Language learning trajectories of multilingual children are very individual just like all experiences and backgrounds. While teacher education and professional development must educate persons about language learning and development of multilingual children, there is also a need to increase understanding of the effect of different home cultures and family language policies and how they influence children's language learning in the preschool.

The preschool in Iceland is by law the first stage of education and is fundamental for learning and development of the skills needed for children to become active participants in a democratic society. The first years of life are also fundamental for the brain development of the child, involving the development of the sense of self and the ability to form relationships with others (Raghavan & Alexandrova, 2014). As such it can be argued that these are the most important years in the life of every child and therefore, the learning and development in the preschool needs to be of the highest possible quality to ensure the prosperity of multilingual children.

For many multilingual families and children, starting preschool involves the first step into Icelandic society. During the preschool years, children and families get the opportunity to learn about Icelandic culture and traditions and belong to a preschool community beneficial for their democratic participation in the community at large (Hellman et al., 2018). Education for in-service teachers and teacher students must prepare them to become social activists who understand the importance of the preschool as the first stage of education and the first step for many parents into the society. Findings from this study illustrate that well educated teachers and in-service teachers who reach out for professional development understand their role and responsibility in creating inclusive and socially just learning spaces. Without

widespread support and collaboration across the educational sector, teachers will face more difficulties in transforming and sustaining socially just and inclusive learning spaces. Furthermore, current national policy in favour of equity, democracy and inclusion, which highlights active multilingualism and partnership with diverse families, must enhance systematic change of all dimensions of education. Such a policy needs to ensure that all dimensions of support are provided simultaneously, involving factors like equitable and just funding, consultation from professionals outside the preschool, collaboration with universities, and continuous professional development, to name few. In this way, education for all multilingual children will be transformed across preschools, securing that not only those preschools led by individual visionaries will succeed. It is my hope that my findings will inspire policy makers, preschool teachers, principals, researchers, and those learning to become teachers to actively consider all the dimensions of education when aiming for success and prosperity of multilingual children.

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List of appendices

Appendix A: Informed consent letter for teachers

Samþykki fyrir þátttöku í rannsókn

Undirrituð er að vinna að doktorsverkefni þar sem skoðað er sérstaklega hvernig leikskólinn skipuleggur starf sitt með börnum sem eru að læra íslensku sem annað/þriðja mál. Rannsóknin er að hluta til þátttökurannsókn þar sem óskað verður eftir þátttöku leikskólastjóra, deildarstjóra og annars starfsfólks á þinni deild í viðtölum, þátttökuathugunum og/eða úrvinnslu þeirra.

Markmið rannsóknarinnar er þríþætt: Í fyrsta lagi að skoða hvernig deildarstjórar skipuleggja náms- og leikumhverfi barna með tilliti til samskipta og þátttöku fjöltyngdra barna í skipulögðu og frjálsu starfi. Í öðru lagi að skoða með hvaða hætti er unnið að því að efla sjálfsþroska og sjálfsmynd (e. affirm identity) barnanna og í þriðja lagi að skoða samstarf leikskóla og foreldra um málþroska og læsi fjöltyngdra barna.

Skóla- og frístundasvið hefur veitt leyfi til rannsóknarinnar, óskað hefur verið eftir umsögn Vísindasiðanefndar HÍ og Persónuvernd verið upplýst um rannsóknina. Fyllsta trúnaðar verður gætt við úrvinnslu gagna. Hvergi munu nöfn barna, foreldra eða starfsmanna koma fram og gögn verða engum aðgengileg nema rannsakanda. Jafnframt er mikilvægt að taka fram að öllum gögnum verður eytt þegar að rannsóknin er fullunnin og niðurstöður hafa verið birtar.

Vonast er til að niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar varpi ljósi á það með hvaða hætti er hægt að stuðla að þróun leikskólastarfs fyrir fjöltyngd börn m.t.t. máltöku og læsis, virkrar þátttöku, mótun sjálfsmyndar og samstarfi við foreldra.

Rannsóknin mun fara fram á þessu og næsta skólaári og óska ég eftir því að fá að koma í nokkuð reglubundnar heimsóknir til að safna gögnum með viðtölum við leikskólastjóra, aðstoðarleikskólastjóra, deildarstjóra og annað starfsfólk deildarinnar. Þá mun ég óska eftir að fá að safna gögnum í vettvangangsathugunum með vettvangsnótum og myndbandsupptökum auk þess sem ég mun óska eftir að fá aðgang að skriflegum gögnum og skráningum um leikskólastarfið. Ég mun óska eftir því að deildarstjóri taki þátt í að skoða og greina myndbandsupptökur frá vettvangsathugunum. Þá mun ég síðar biðja deildarstjóra um að velja foreldra fimm barna úr barnahópnum sem tekin verða viðtöl við með þeirra upplýsta samþykki.

Til að rannsóknin geti farið fram, er nauðsynlegt að fá skriflegt leyfi þitt. Ég óska því eftir undirskrift þinni á meðfylgjandi blað. Ef þú óskar frekari upplýsinga mun ég fúslega veita þær í síma 693-9892 eða í tölvupósti á netfangið fridjons@hi.is

Leiðbeinandi minn og ábyrgðarmaður rannsóknarinnar er Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, prófessor við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands hannar@hi.is

Með fyrirfram þökk,

_____

Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir

Doktorsnemi við Menntavísindasvið HÍ

SAMÞYKKI

Hér með veiti ég samþykki mitt fyrir því að rannsakandi (FBJ) fái að fylgjast með starfinu á deildinni. Ég er einnig tilbúin(n) að koma í a.m.k. tvö viðtöl þar sem rætt er um starfið mitt. Ég hef lesið meðfylgjandi upplýsingablað og geri mér grein fyrir að ég get haft mikil áhrif á framkvæmd rannsóknarinnar sem og hætt við þátttöku hvenær sem er.

Nafn:_____ Dags: _____

Appendix B: Informed consent letter for parents

Parents' consent

The preschool of your child is currently participating at research that is looking at practices with multilingual children in preschools. The research is a part of the PhD work of Fríða B. Jónsdóttir. Her supervisor and guarantor of the project is Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, professor at the School of Education, University of Iceland. Her email is: hannar@hi.is

The principal of the preschool and the teachers and staff of your child's department have already consented that Fríða Bjarney could visit the preschool to observe the daily practices and to conduct interviews. The research has been reported to the Icelandic Data Protection Authority and the Ethics Committee of the University of Iceland.

The aim of the research is to research how the preschool supports language and literacy development of children who are learning Icelandic as a second language. The hope is that the findings can help to deepen understanding and knowledge of what is needed for the development of appropriate preschool practices for multilingual children.

Full confidentiality will be ensured, and the names and identity of teachers, parents and children will be changed when writing about the findings.

It is very important for my findings to hear what parents have to say. If you are willing to participate I ask you to sign the written consent below. The interview will take around 40 minutes and I can meet you at the preschool, in a coffeehouse or at your home whatever is best for you. You can withdraw from the research at any time if you don't want to be a part of it.

Written consent

I give my full consent for participating in a research interview with Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir. I have read the information above and know that I can add important information to the research and understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time.

Name of parent: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Semi-structured interview for parents

Viðtalsrammi fyrir foreldraviðtöl:

Stutt lýsing á fjölskyldunni

Tungumál á heimili

Leikskólabyrjun:

- Hvenær byrjaði barnið í leikskólanum, hvað var það gamalt
- Hversu mikið talaði barnið þegar það byrjaði í leikskólanum? (heimamál-íslensku)
- Hafði barnið áður verið í leikskóla eða hjá öðrum en fjölskyldu?
- Hvernig upplifðuð þið leikskólabyrjunina – fyrstu dagana og hvernig fannst ykkur barnið upplifa þennan tíma?
- Hvernig voru tengslin ykkar við leikskólakennara/starfsfólk?
- Var rætt við ykkur um tungumál barnsins, íslensku-heimamál?

Leikskólagangan í dag:

- Hvernig upplifa foreldrar hlutverk sitt varðandi málþroska og læsi barna sinna?
    - Íslensku/heimamál
- Hvernig upplifa foreldrar hlutverk leikskólans varðandi málþroska og læsi barna?
    - Íslensku/heimamál
- Hver er reynsla foreldra af samstarfi við leikskólann í dag í tengslum við málþroska og læsi barnanna?
- Hvernig upplifa foreldrar að leikskólinn sé að vinna með málþroska og læsi barnanna?
- Hvað finnst ykkur mikilvægast fyrir barnið ykkar í dag?
- Hver er sýn foreldra á sjálfsmynd barnsins, áhuga og þátttöku í leikskólastarfinu?

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview for leaders and teachers

Viðtalsrammi fyrir viðtöl við stjórnendur og kennara:

Stutt lýsing á reynslu og menntun

Hversu lengi hefur þú unnið í þessum leikskóla, hversu lengi unnið með fjöltyngd börn

Hvernig er starf með íslensku sem annað mál og bernskulæsi skipulagt, hverjar eru helstu áherslurnar?

Er unnið með heimamál barnanna í leikskólanum og þá hvernig?

Eru áskoranir eða tækifæri í vinnu með mál og læsi fjöltyngdra barna?

Hvernig er fylgst með framförum barnanna í íslensku sem öðru máli?

Sjálfsmynd barna – hvaða áhrif hefur hún á þroska barna, hvernig er hægt að styðja við mótun hennar í leikskólanum, hvað er gert og hvaða sýn er á hlutverk leikskólans í því sambandi?

Er fjallað markvisst um mál og læsi við foreldra fjöltyngdra barna? Með hvaða hætti og við hvaða tækifæri?

Taka foreldrar þátt í verkefnum heima eða í leikskólanum sem tengjast málþroska og læsi fjöltyngdra barna?

Appendix E: Information for the Icelandic Data Protection Authority

Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir

Dagss. 10.10.2016

Skipasundi 72
Hér með hefur Persónuvernd móttekið tilkynningu yðar.
Tilkynningin er nr. S8013/2016

	Númer
Tilkynning um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga	S8013
Er um að ræða nýja tilkynningu eða breytingu á eldri tilkynningu?	(•) Ný tilkynning ( ) Tilkynning um breytingu
Eldra tilkynninganúmer sé um breytta tilkynningu að ræða:	
Nafn	Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir
Nafn forsvarsmanns (s.s. forstjóra) **ef ábyrgðaraðili er fyrirtæki/stofnun:**	Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, leiðbeinandi og prófessor við Menntavísindasvið HÍ
Heimilisfang:	Skipasundi 72
Póstnúmer:	104
Staður:	Reykjavík
Símanúmer tengiliðs:	693-9892
Titill verkefnis(ss. nafn á skrá eða heiti rannsóknar)	Give wings to voices. The preschool as a just learning space for interaction and understanding.
Tilgangur vinnslunnar?	Vinnslan er liður í rannsókn vegna

	doktorsnáms og PhD ritgerðar tilkynnanda við Menntavísindasvið HÍ
Hvaða upplýsingar verður unnið með?	Hálfopin viðtöl við kennara og foreldra leikskólabarna, skrifleg gögn leikskólans og þátttökuathugandir á leikskólastarfinu.
Hvernig verður úrtak vinnslunnar fundið?	Þátttakendur eru valdir með markmiðsúrtaki. Þátttakendur verða stjórnendur, leikskólakennarar og foreldrar í tveimur leikskólum á höfuðborgarsvæðinu sem eru með um 50% barna af erlendum uppruna og hafa verið að þróa starf sitt til að koma til móts við þarfir barna og foreldra af erlendum uppruna.
Hvert verða upplýsingarnar sóttar?	Eingöngu í viðtöl, skrifleg gögn leikskólans og þátttökuathuganir þar sem m.a. verður safnað myndbandsupptökum
Verða upplýsingarnar sóttar í sjúkraskrá?	Nei
Ef upplýsingar eru sóttar í sjúkraskrá, er verkefnið?	Nei
Heimild(ir) til vinnslu persónuupplýsinga, sbr. 8. gr. laga um persónuvernd og meðferð persónuupplýsinga	samþykki hins skráða sbr. 1. tl.
Verður unnið með viðkvæmar persónuupplýsingar, sbr 8. tl. 2. gr. laganna?	Já
Viðbótarskilyrði um vinnslu viðkvæmra persónuupplýsinga, sbr. 9. gr. laganna?	Upplýst og skriflegt samþykki hins skráða sbr. 1.tl.
Frekari skýringar á þeim heimildum sem merkt er við hér að ofan (t.d. lagaákvæði eða ef byggt er á samþykki hins skráða skal hér greint frá efni samþykkisyfirlýsingar)	Þegar hefur verið fengið samþykki sveitarfélags til að leita eftir leyfi frá leikskólastjórum viðkomandi leikskóla sem hafa gefið munnlegt samþykki til þátttöku. Áður en rannsókn hefst munu þeir skrifa undir upplýst samþykki ásamt þeim kennurum og foreldrum sem taka þátt þar sem fyrirkomulag rannsóknar verður útskýrt nákvæmlega. Leitað verður eftir samþykki

	foreldra þeirra barna á vettvangi til þátttöku í vettvangsathugunum.
Ef aflað er persónuupplýsinga frá öðrum en hinum skráða, hvernig er þá uppfyllt viðvörunarskylda gagnvart hinum skráða, sbr. 21. gr. http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/2000077	
Ef aflað er persónuupplýsinga frá hinum skráða sjálfum, hvernig er þá uppfyllt fræðsluskylda, sbr. 20. gr. laganna	Í bréfi til þátttakenda með upplýsingum um rannsóknina og ósk um upplýst samþykki er gefið upp nafn, netfang og símanúmer rannsakanda (Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir). Þar segir m.a. að viðkomandi þátttakandi geti á öllum stigum rannsóknar fengið frekari upplýsingar hjá rannsakanda og geti hætt þátttöku í rannsókn á hvaða stigi sem er. Þá kemur fram að þátttakendur hafi aðgang að PhD ritgerð rannsakanda og heildarniðurstöðum rannsóknarinnar. Upplýsingar um viðkomandi þátttakendur verði eingöngu notaðar í fyrirfram skilgreindum tilgangi nema leitað verði eftir nýju upplýstu samþykki viðkomandi.
Verður persónuupplýsingum safnað með notkun eftirlitsmyndavéla eða annars konar vöktunarbúnaðar?	Nei
Verða upplýsingarnar afhentar öðrum. Hverjum?	Leiðbeinendur doktorsnema, vísindasamfélagið, þátttakendur og aðrir áhugasamir munu hafa aðgang að endanlegri doktorsritgerð ásamt þeim upplýsingum og túlkun höfundar sem þar fylgir. Viðtöl og vettvangsathuganir verða ekki afhent en þar sem rannóknin er að hluta til þátttökurannsókn munu þeir leikskólakennarar sem eru þátttakendur taka þátt í þeim hluta af greiningu gagna sem lýtur að myndbandsupptökum og vettvangsathugunum.
Verða upplýsingarnar fluttar úr landi?	Nei
Verða upplýsingarnar birtar á Netinu / Vefnum?	Nei
Hvaða öryggisráðstafanir verða viðhafðar ?	Dulkóðun, Afmáun persónuauðkenna

Ef annað. þá hvað?	
Nafn og/eða stöðuheiti þess sem ber ábyrgð á framangreindum öryggisráðstöfunum	Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir
Verður upplýsingunum/auðkennunum eytt og þá hvenær?	Já, þremur árum eftir doktorsvörn
Verður öðrum aðila (vinnsluaðila) með skriflegum samningi falin vinnsla upplýsinganna?	Nei
Nafn vinnsluaðila:	
Heimilisfang vinnsluaðila:	
Póstnúmer:	
Staður:	
Hverjar eru skyldur vinnsluaðila samkvæmt þessum samningi?	
Aðrar athugasemdir tilkynnanda:	