# “They know exactly with whom to speak German and with whom English”:

# Grade-R children’s language and literacy practices in the context of the linguistic and literacy repertoires and ideologies of four Cape Town bilingual families with German as a heritage language

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## Abstract

South Africa is a country of 11 official languages, with a majority of the population speaking at least two languages. Bilingual/multilingual upbringing is the reality of most South African children, and the transfer and maintenance of heritage languages is an important topic in the field of language and literacy studies. A range of different factors come into play in bilingual and multilingual parents' decisions about how to raise their children concerning languages. The field of family language policy (FLP) shows how language ideologies are involved as to how languages are managed, learned, and negotiated within individual families. Furthermore, families engage in a wide range of language and literacy practices in their homes, which are shaped by the FLP and their language and literacy ideologies. This case study, which draws on linguistic ethnography, focuses on the language and emergent literacy practices of four grade R learners in their bilingual/multilingual homes where German is the heritage language, in Cape Town, South Africa. The data was collected through interviews with the parents, observations of the children in their homes, and the collection of literacy artefacts. The observations focused on the language used during family interactions, noting the conscious and unconscious choices around family language policies, as well as emergent literacy practices and uses of digital technologies. Findings show that family language policy and the language ideologies of the parents influence the language and literacy practices of their children. Translanguaging (Garcia 2009) was used in all families, the children showed a variety of linguistic repertoires (Busch 2012), and they were able to engage in meaningful conversations in different languages. The heritage language process was influenced by the parents' own bilingual/multilingual upbringing, and the parents put a lot of value on the acquisition and maintenance of the heritage language, German. Emergent literacy practices took place in different languages and the children were able to draw on their linguistic repertoires to make meaning. The language and literacy ideologies of the school (in our case, a kindergarten with German as the language of teaching and learning) influence the emergent literacy practices at home, and the parents followed the lead of the school not to teach their children how to read and write at home. The children's language identity was shaped by their family language policy and their parents' reasoning to uphold their heritage language. Language ideologies play an important role in the negotiation of FLP and children are making their own language choices by using translanguaging to communicate. They, therefore, have an agentic role in their language-learning process and should be seen as co-constructing the FLP.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The field of language research, and the history and teaching of language is very broad and complex. South Africa is a very diverse country - linguistically, socially, politically, and culturally. Most people speak at least two languages and bilingualism/multilingualism is the reality for most children entering formal schooling. Languages are first learned in family homes, and different factors play a role in the decision-making around which languages to teach their children. Language ideologies and family language policy will influence parents' beliefs and attitudes towards bilingual/multilingual upbringing. Linguistic repertoires and linguistic resources are an important part of bilingual/multilingual upbringing, and children engage in a wide range of language and literacy practices that involve multiple languages.

Most people assume literacy learning and teaching only starts when children enter a formal school setting but, in South Africa, the first year of formal schooling is called Reception grade (grade R). Children aged 5 to 6 attend grade R; some of them have previously experienced early childhood institutional settings like play schools, creches, or preschools, but others have been primarily taken care of by parents or caregivers at home and have had no formal introduction to school literacy. I chose to centre my study around children attending grade R because I have previously worked with this age group and I was not interested in researching a formal school environment. Children aged 5 to 6 are slowly 6 introduced to literacy learning, showing an interest in learning how to read and write, and are curious about learning new things. Literacy learning takes place in a playful, interactive, and fun way, and they are not being formally taught in a classroom yet. In addition to this, I was curious to understand how these preschool children are engaging in emergent literacy in their bilingual homes.

My study focused on language practices, linguistic repertoires, and language ideologies, as well as emergent literacy shaped by this linguistic context, of bilingual/multilingual families, with children in grade R. The research included interviews with four and observations of three bilingual/multilingual families in Cape Town, South Africa. My goals of the study were to describe and analyse translanguaging acts, wider language practices, and the use of linguistic resources of bilingual/multilingual families. Furthermore, I wanted to understand better the relationship between language ideologies, family language policy, and the actual language and literacy practices taking place in family homes. After paying close attention to language issues in the families, a pattern of emergent literacy issues was recognised, and therefore emergent literacy practices became a

secondary focus in my research. My original goal of focusing on children's initial writing and reading shifted to a more holistic, flexible, and communicative approach. I paid close attention to natural interactions between the children and their parents, and the children and me as the researcher. I documented their engagement in language practices, emergent literacy practices, and meaning-making processes in multiple languages. I visited each family three to four times, conducted one interview with either one parent or both parents and collected literacy artefacts.

The overall aim is to describe and analyse linguistic repertoires, language ideologies, bilingualism, and emergent literacy practices in families with a heritage language. The study revolves around the following research questions.

- What linguistic repertoires do bilingual/multilingual families with a heritage language draw on, in a South African context?
- How do parents view the role of bilingual/multilingual upbringing and the use of a wide range of linguistic resources regarding their children's language and literacy development?
- What role do parents' language ideologies play in the development of FLP?
- What linguistic resources do children draw on when engaging in emergent and digital literacy practices?

This study is guided by the following objectives.

- Describe and analyse the linguistic repertoires of participating family members and parents' language ideologies.
- Make connections between family language policy and observed language practices within bilingual/multilingual families.
- Describe the use of linguistic resources during children's engagement with emergent literacy and digital literacy practices.

The research can help understand the role of using multiple languages in the home, the role of language ideologies in the process of negotiating family language policy, and the linguistic resources children draw on when engaging in emergent and digital literacy practices. I want to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of using a wide range of linguistic resources for communication, what family language policies are being implemented in bilingual/multilingual homes, and how children draw on their linguistic repertoire to make meaning. I want to analyse the language ideologies of parents speaking multiple languages, and how their viewpoints are influencing their language practices with their children. Informal environments like family homes have been part of literacy

research for a long time but mostly were conducted in the Global North (Prinsloo and Stein 2004; Stein and Slonimsky 2006; Stein and Newfield 2006).

Generally speaking, a lot of research has focused on White middle-class families in the Global North, and places like South Africa in the Global South have been neglected in the research field (McKinney et al. 2023, 20). This is one of the reasons why I situated my study in Cape Town, South Africa, and focused on the transfer and maintenance of the heritage language, German, in an African context. Even though there is much linguistic diversity in the Global South, the social structuring of diversity is often racialized and hierarchised and struggles of power and inequality have often overshadowed diversity. There is a growing critique of the view which sees named languages as autonomous bounded entities which are separated from other languages. Critiques of these older definitions of language are concerned with possible misinterpretations of how linguistic diversity takes shape in our modern multilingual and diverse society. My research shows the possibilities but also challenges of having different languages spoken at home, the benefits emergent literacy practices can give children when acquiring school literacy, and the perspectives of parents around language ideologies, family language policy, and bilingual/multilingual upbringing.

### 1.2 Rationale

I chose the research topic and questions due to previous personal and work experiences. I was always interested in learning new languages and my passion for teaching started from a young age. I am fascinated by how fast and naturally children learn a new language. During my various work experiences, I was often faced with challenges of multilingualism, diverse linguistic repertoires, and complex literacy practices. Language ideologies play a role in the negotiating of family language policy, and children speaking multiple languages can engage in a wide range of language practices, learning to make meaning through different modes of communication.

Emergent and digital literacy practices play a role in children's development, and bilingual/multilingual children have the benefit of using multiple languages when engaging in these practices. When being involved with emergent literacy practices at home, children can get to know the meanings of print, understand the relationship between written and oral language, and develop a joy for reading and writing. On the other hand, it can also possibly be a hindrance in a very culturally, socio-politically, and economically diverse country like South Africa where not all children have access to a print-rich environment, or they grow up with parents or caregivers who are not fully literate themselves.

South Africa has eleven official languages, and the majority of the children grow up speaking at least two languages. The reasons are that parents may speak different languages or dialects at home, or the children's home language is different from the language of instruction at school. Therefore, bilingualism and multilingualism have become the norm in South Africa, not the exception. Linguistic repertoires have been studied by multiple researchers (Martinez 2018; Layton 2014; Hall 2022; Berghoff 2021), and they explored mainly children's capability to draw on their linguistic repertoire when learning English as a second language in a classroom setting. Furthermore, there have been some studies on bilingual language and literacy development of very young children (Kenner 2009; Zhao and Flewitt 2020; Zhao and Kenner 2013; Cremin et. al. 2017), but I would like to add to the current research by focusing solely on the home environment of young learners. When considering the home environment of children, the concept of family language policy plays an important role as well. Family language policy has been a popular topic of discussion in the field of multilingualism, language development, and maintenance within bilingual/multilingual families. I first came into close contact with this topic during my initial research period for my theoretical framework, and I eagerly read studies done by well-known and established researchers (Spolsky 2012; Curdt-Christiansen 2009 and 2016; Sun 2020). Children play an important role in the negotiating of family language policy, and I found the research on the agentive role of children particularly fascinating (Maseko 2022; Smith-Christmas 2021). In my study, I wanted to not only look at the language practices used in families but also at the decision-making and thought process involved when deciding on what languages to teach your child. Language ideologies, linguistic resources, and linguistic repertoires of parents can be factors influencing their language choices.

I have chosen to research grade R learners because they are just entering a formal school setting and are still at the beginning of their formal literacy instruction. Though my focus will be on their home environment, there is always an element of school literacy present in other domains of life as well. English as a spoken language is of particular interest because of the hegemonic status of English as a medium of instruction, and ideologies around the English language fostering success and power. I focus on families who can speak English and German because these are the languages I can fully comprehend and transcribe. Cape Town has quite a big German-speaking community because there is a German international school, German kindergarten and international companies which cater to a German-speaking market and therefore need German-speaking employers. Namibia, a neighbouring country to South Africa, is a former German colony, and many Namibians today still have German heritage and can speak the language fluently. Namibia is quite a small country and does not have as many professional, economic, and educational opportunities to offer as Cape Town; therefore, lots of young Namibians decide to move to South Africa. Namibia is a popular holiday destination for

Germans, and speaking German has professional advantages; therefore, it is not surprising that learning German as a foreign language is a popular school subject. The learning and teaching of different languages have been a major research interest in the field of language studies for decades, but German as a heritage language in an African context has not yet been much researched, and I wanted to change that with my study and specifically focus on families where German is spoken at home. The acquisition and maintenance of a heritage language in a very multilingual and multicultural country like South Africa was of interest to me, and my research helps to close a gap between existing research on bilingual/multilingual language practices in home settings and the transfer of the heritage language, German.

Emergent literacy is an approach based on theories of socialization and according to Bloch (2006, 9), involves the construction of children's literacy in personal, useful, and meaningful ways as part of a developmental, personal, social, and cultural learning process. This is an important framework I used for the construction of my argument in my research.

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

Following on from this introductory chapter, in chapter 2, I review the literature and outline the theoretical framework as well as the main concepts that I use to support this study. The main concepts are language ideologies, linguistic repertoires, multilingualism, emergent and digital literacy practices, family language policy, and translanguaging. Chapter 3 is an outline of the research design chosen for my study, which is a qualitative case study drawing on ethnographic methods and situated in the broad field of linguistic ethnography. I explain how the data is collected and analysed. In Chapter 4 I analyse the data, addressing the issues of language ideologies, linguistic repertoires, family language policy, and language and literacy practices. I analyse how parents' language ideologies influence their language and literacy practices with their children, and if there is a discrepancy between what parents told me in the interview and what I observed in their homes, especially in the context of translanguaging. I also describe and analyse the linguistic repertoires of the family members. I use extracts from their interviews to highlight their linguistic repertoires and make connections to relevant literature and established research in the field. I further focus on discussing the relationship between the family language policy and language maintenance analysing certain language practices I observed in their homes and drawing connections to the language ideologies of their parents. In Chapter 5, I discuss the concepts of emergent and digital literacy, analysing observational extracts of the children engaging in those practices and drawing connections to the theory. The observations were analysed regarding translanguaging practices and family language policy. I paid close attention to the children engaging in emergent literacy practices and

connected the findings to issues of bilingualism and multilingualism. The parents' literacy ideologies were also taken into consideration and contradictions were found between their ideologies in theory and their practices in their homes. Furthermore, I looked at interview extracts of the parents in which they spoke about their children´s engagement with digital literacy and I analysed their digital literacy practices. Lastly, I looked at the concept of conceptualising literacy as autonomous and schooled and outlined the parents' opinions regards the connection between literacy learning and schooling. Chapter 6 is my conclusion and discussion. I summarised how I tried to answer my research questions and presented my findings. I showered the limitations of my research and suggestions for further studies.

# Chapter 2. Literature review and theoretical framework

## 2.1 Introduction

The theoretical framing for my research is the post-structuralist paradigm in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics and is informed by the following concepts within this paradigm: language ideologies and linguistic repertoires, bilingualism/multilingualism, emergent literacy practices and family language policy. Within this framework, the concepts of translanguaging, the use of language/literacy practices within family homes and digital literacy are also discussed. Even though each concept differs in its object of interest, they can all be tightly connected and have informed my methodology and approaches to analysis. I start by outlining the paradigm shifts that took place in the field of language studies, which emerged out of critiques of the earlier structuralist and traditional understandings of language. I also introduce the concepts of "languaging" and translanguaging.

## 2.2 Paradigm shifts in language studies

*Early language researchers: de Saussure and Chomsky*

The study of language has gone through major paradigm shifts and is an ever-evolving research field. Over the last century, perspectives on language, how children learn a new language, and how language and literacy are connected have changed. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss philosopher and linguist, believed that language is a system of signs, and a linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. People merely have an association between sound images and concepts of words they hear. In his opinion, signs are arbitrary, and the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. His differentiation between what he called *langue et parole* and his assertion that linguists needed to focus on *langue* and not *parole* led to the consolidation of the view of language as an abstract system, with the abstract rules and conventions of a signifying system being independent of individual users. The concept of *parole* describes concrete instances of the use of language by individuals in a series of speech acts. Chomsky's concepts of linguistic competence and linguistic performance were an overlay on the concepts of *language* and *parole*. Linguistic competence, as part of an overarching idea of language as a system and structure, referred to innate and tacit knowledge of language systems, while performance referred to the use of language in concrete situations. Chomsky theorised that the concept of Universal Grammar is what all languages have in common, and hypothesised that humans have an innate language acquisition device. He also thought that the diversity of linguistic phenomena was just an illusion (Garcia and Wei 2014, 6). Chomsky and Saussure are both key scholars in the field of linguistics and have had a major influence on shaping understandings of language within the structuralist approach.

*Definitions of "Languaging"*

The term "languaging" was, interestingly enough, not first introduced by linguists, but by two Chilean biologists called Maturana and Varela. Their theory of autopoiesis argued that we cannot separate our biological and social history of actions from how we perceive the world. For them all doing is knowing and all-knowing is doing. Their view on biological life informed their observations about language. According to Maturana and Varela (1998, 234-245), it is through "languaging" that the act of knowing brings forth the world. With "languaging" they described the simultaneous process of continuously becoming ourselves through our language practices. This process happens during interactions with other people, and while we are making meaning in the world. Another scholar who used the term "languaging" was Becker, an American linguist known for his studies of Burmese and Southeast Asian languages. He believed languages shape and are shaped by context, and learning a new language means learning a new way of being in the world. He focused his research mostly on interactions and cultural practices (Garcia and Wei 2014, 8). All these scholars made an impact on how we view language acquisition and maintenance today, and it is important when researching languages to understand the language paradigm of the past that influenced current perspectives and viewpoints. Only by understanding the past and how current language theory was formed, can we locate our research in the bigger picture of language theory.

*Perspective change in language research*

Perspectives on what language is and how language is used have evolved further in the post-modern area. New patterns of global activity have developed, and there has been an increase in the flow of people, capital goods, and discourses over the last thirty years. This change has been driven by the development of new technologies and a largely neoliberal global economic system which, in the process, produced new forms of global inequality. According to Becker (1995, 227), we entered a new way of being in the world that involves engaging with other people, often in virtual contact zones, who bring different origins, experiences and characters to social encounters. This can bring enriching experiences to people, but also challenges. Language is less and less understood by sociolinguists as a monolithic autonomous system and is now seen as a series of social practices and actions by speakers that are embedded in a web of social and cognitive relations. With these changes in the theorisation of language, a critique of the old, nation-state and colonial language ideologies has emerged. Scholars in the post-structural critical language field treat language as a contested space and describe language as resources which are used and made in re-appropriations by language users (Garcia and Wei, 2014, 9). These scholars challenge the static conception of language which allows only a few groups of powerful, superior and mainstream people to hold power, and argue that we need to embrace the fluid nature of actual and local language practices of all speakers. The battle

between a more traditional view of defining languages as separated, bound entities, and a modern view of language as fluid, changing and intertwined practices has therefore been the focus of language studies for some time. For my study, the views parents had about language, what language ideologies they believed in, and which language practices regarding bilingualism and multilingualism they engaged in were points of interest, and it was fascinating to see the similarities and differences between the families.

In the next section, I will focus on the critique of the traditional view of language and describe the reasoning behind people being discriminated against for the languages they speak. Colonial and national language ideologies play a big role in the development of the unequal value of languages, and this is something we in South Africa need to be particularly aware of due to our long history of Apartheid and discrimination.

*Critique of the traditional view of language*

Many people face discrimination in their lives because of the languages they speak. This can be backtracked to certain language policies concerning colonialism and nationalism. When the printing press was first invented, the printing industry needed homogenous linguistic groups to make the printing of a newspaper profitable; therefore, they needed a national language which all people could speak and read. It was believed that codification of a particular grammar and pronunciation would create a homogenous group, which would be classified as the speakers of the normative language - Standard English. This furthermore created an expression of a static superior national identity and was part of the development of national states. The idea of having the superiority of one language norm was always a component of European colonialism (Flores and Garcia 2013, 244). Today, these colonial and national language policies are still very much present in our education systems, even though it does not fit the reality of most of the students, especially in a very linguistically, culturally, and socially diverse country like South Africa. We need to embrace students' fluid language practices and should not delegitimise their mother tongues or family languages (Flores and Garcia 2013, 243).

Nowadays, scholars question the colonial and national language ideologies more and more. Khawla Badwan (2021, 4) argues that we need an "understanding of language not as a bounded, discrete, socio-political construct with a certain name (for example Arabic, English, French, etc.), but as a means of expression and performative being that transcends the boundaries and constraints of named languages." Boundaries are an ideological claim and language is much more than "just" a means of communication. It is a marker of belonging, a choice of being, an emerging decision of fluid affiliations, and a means of being an individual that exists in the world (Badwan 2021, 4-5). With this

view and when researching bilingual and multilingual families, the concepts of bilingualism and translanguaging play an important part. In the next section, I will introduce these concepts, show how definitions have changed, and point out the importance of engaging in translanguaging practices to access one's full linguistic repertoire.

### 2. 3 The concepts of linguistic repertoires and translanguaging

Linguistic ideologies influence the linguistic repertoires of people because what they believe about a language will have an impact on which language they want to acquire or maintain. Parents' language ideologies and linguistic repertoires will furthermore impact their family language policy and their decision-making about what languages to teach their children. I will start by defining linguistic repertoires and how Busch, Blommaert and Backus developed Gumperz 's model further.

*Definitions of linguistic repertoires*

John Gumperz's research in the field of linguistic repertoires took place as early as 1960. His work can be located in the language-in-use approach which was pioneered by Dell Hymes. Hymes (1977, 31) believed that the linguistic repertoire of a group or individual is an empirical problem that cannot be solved by solely observing interactions within the group. We need to take into consideration the language ideologies and metalinguistic interpretations of speakers and pay attention to each community's theories of linguistic repertoire and speech. His framework of language mostly showed the way we use language, because the way we communicate is mostly dependent on the context in which we use language. Coming back to Gumperz, he was the first to introduce a concept that he called the verbal repertoire, by which he meant the totality of linguistic resources available to members of a particular community (Gumperz 1972, 20-21). He pointed out that verbal repertoires are attached to speech communities or groups and repertoire are linked to competence or language knowledge. Furthermore, linguistic repertoires are a vital part of day-to-day communication and they are always linked to particular speech communities.: "[the verbal repertoire] contains all the accepted ways of formulating messages. It provides the weapons of everyday communication. Speakers choose among this arsenal the meanings they wish to convey" (Gumperz 1964, 138).

Busch (2012) and Blommaert and Backus (2011) all developed Gumperz's model of the linguistic repertoire further and looked at it through a poststructuralist lens. Jan Blommaert (2010, 102) connected the concepts of linguistic repertoire and multilingualism. He described multilingualism as complex and specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined 'language,' while others belong to another 'language`. Multilingualism is a repertoire of styles and linguistic resources and we should widen our horizons to allow people to make use of the wide range

of resources they have available to them to make meaning, and not limit their capabilities to only using one particular language at a time. The concept of linguistic repertoire gives people a chance to be aware of the wide range of languages they speak, even if they are not fluent in that language. It can be beneficial for them to see themselves as bilingual or multilingual speakers and allow them to try out learning new languages.

*The concept of translanguaging*

Ben Rampton (2019, 2) believes that repertoires are always connected to particular communicative settings and spheres of a person's life and that they shift over time depending on the experiences the speaker has. Life is always evolving, we have new experiences, meet new people, and gain access to new linguistic resources. Therefore, our linguistic repertoire does not only include linguistic resources, but also a wider range of semiotic resources like images, pieces of writing, gestures, and speech. One concept that has been much researched and discussed is "code-switching," which describes the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by a bilingual speaker (Bullock and Toribio 2009, 12). With the new understanding of linguistic repertoires as the use of changing and fluid resources, the older concept of code-switching does not fit the current understanding of language anymore.

Otheguy, García and Reid (2015, 283) review the development of the concept of "translanguaging" which describes the ability of people to deploy their full linguistic repertoire without being restricted to socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages. Even though translanguaging sounds similar to "languaging", the two concepts describe different language practices, and unlike languaging which focuses on general language practices, translanguaging emphasises the competence of bilingual/multilingual speakers as they shuttle or alternate between codes within an integrated system. The origins of translanguaging can be traced back to Welsh bilingual education in the 1980s. *Trawsieithu* is a Welsh term first introduced by Cen Williams, later translated into English as translanguaging, and was used to describe a purposeful cross-curricular strategy for using two languages in a lesson for teaching and learning (Lewis et al. 2012, 3).

In my research, I looked at the linguistic repertoires of family members and observed their language practices in their homes. Translanguaging was frequently observed, where the children use linguistic resources in one sentence or even one word. It has become clear that there is a wide range of perspectives and concepts concerning language, and in the next section, I will briefly outline the shift

to more modern perspectives and critiques being mentioned regarding holding on to language ideologies introduced in colonial times.

*Shift to modern perspectives on language*

All of the above concepts indicate a shift in the current understanding of what language includes, and how people can use their linguistic repertoire. These new approaches to language and literacy are trying to provide alternatives to more traditional perspectives and are trying to go beyond the individual speaker to provide a full, inclusive, and evolving understanding of language. In the Global North particularly, language has been historically separated from the material world and separated humans from other living things. This can be linked to the language ideologies introduced by colonialism that focussed on racialised language hierarchies. The communication of languages and the unequal value that is put on language resources until today has been influenced by patterns and thinking of colonial times (McKinney et al. 2023, 26-27). Even today, multilingualism still produces differences and hierarchies that play a role in structuring access to symbolic and material resources in society. Under capitalism, multilingualism is often presented as an economic asset, both as a property of a product and an embodied capacity of skill of individual people, according to Joan Pujolar (2012). In this context, we need to acknowledge that there are still hierarchies that exist between different languages that were first introduced by colonialism and the unequal power dynamic brought by colonialism. Until today, we have racialised language hierarchies, and these racialised language hierarchies influence what languages are seen as important, and which languages are more likely to be taught to children in bilingual/multilingual families (McKinney et al. 2023, 32).

Every person has certain language ideologies, and these will shape their decisions around what languages to use, value and, implement in their homes. In the next section, I will introduce the concept of language ideologies and outline how certain language ideologies enhance a traditional belief of languages as bounded, autonomous, and static entities.

### 2.4 Language ideologies

Language ideologies are cultural representations, whether explicit or implicit, of the intersection of language and human beings in a social world. They are "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1997, 193). Woolard and Schieffelin (1994, 56) see language ideology as "the mediating link between social structures and forms of talk". Ideologies are important for social and linguistic analysis because they are not just about language. They also connect language to group and personal identity, morality, aesthetics, and epistemology. Through this connection, language ideologies underpin fundamental

social institutions. Language ideologies influence how people hierarchise language, and which language has value on micro and macro levels. Language ideologies play a role in families, as well as school policies and government regulations. For centuries governments used the controlled use of languages as a primary way of managing diversity (Flores and Garcia 2013, 243).

Foucault (1980) described language ideologies "as the sets of beliefs, values and cultural frames that continually circulate in society, informing how language is conceptualised and represented as well as how it is used." Such ideologies are always constructed through discourse that refers to a system of power and knowledge. Even though each person has their own language ideology, language ideology often refers to a network of beliefs and values that exist across several people and sites, as discussed by Woolard and Schieffelin's (1994, 55) view of language ideologies as the link between social structures and forms of talk. When defining languages as boundaried, stable systems that exist with or without speakers and across a range of contexts, this can be described as a language ideological construct. Furthermore, the ideology of autonomous, clearly separable and boundaried languages is central to monolingual and monoglossic ideologies. The study of language ideologies only became more well-developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s and studies about the ideological process of the construction of languages have been even more recent (Makoni and Meinhof 2003; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Of course, language ideologies play out in the language practices of bilingual or multilingual families. The concept of family language policy (FLP) has helped me understand how this works. Below I introduce FLP, describe factors that influence FLP, and also show some critique of scholars in the language research field concerning FLP, along with suggestions for expansion in the research. Global South and minority languages in particular are often left out of the research; therefore, I was happy to contribute a particular perspective with my research in Cape Town.

### 2. 5 Family language policy

Family language policy (FLP) describes how family members make sense of the multiple languages they use in their everyday lives and the decisions they have to make regarding which languages to keep and which ones to let go of (Curdt-Christiansen and Sun 2018, 257). The decisions of which languages to use and which to abandon are influenced by language ideologies and attitudes; this can include emotions, identity, cultural, and political beliefs (Curdt-Christiansen and Sun 2018, 259), which can be both implicit and explicit and are constantly negotiated. In the following section, I talk about factors that influence FLP and introduce Spolsky´s model as the cornerstone of FLP conceptualisation.

*Factors influencing family language policy*

A model often referred to concerning FLP is Spolsky's (2004, 2009) which includes the three components of language practice, language management, and language ideology. He differentiated between sociolinguistic, sociocultural, socioeconomic, and socio-political forces that influence parents' language choices. When studying FLP, it is important to look at the analysis of language beliefs or ideologies (what people think about language); language practices (what people do with language); and efforts to modify or influence those practices through any kind of language intervention, planning, or management (what people try to do to language).

FLP, as such, describes how family members can set the choice of what language is used at home, how it is practised and how it is regulated. Children engage first with language socialisation at home, and they learn how to communicate mostly from parents, caregivers, and close community members. The language choices parents make play a big role in the language development and socialisation of children. Therefore, FLPs shape children's developmental trajectories, connect to their later formal school success, and determine the maintenance and future status of minority languages (Larasati et al. 2018, 285). Parental involvement in the development of an FLP can improve children's overall development and their language use at home and help them to better socialise in school and the community. What parents think about the language will influence how they treat the language, i.e., if they see the language as important or just as a language they like to speak informally. It should also be noted that FLP as a sociocultural practice includes not only families' everyday practices in their homes, but also how they engage in education, religion, and public spaces (Curdt-Christiansen and Sun 2018, 259).

A range of factors influence the decision-making process of parents regarding FLP. Some examples are parents' socioeconomic background, their expectations of child bilingual/multilingual outcomes, their knowledge of bilingualism/multilingualism, and their language management through provision in the home language/literacy environment. A big desire of most parents is for their children to have educational success and achieve a good high school or university diploma. Therefore, they value the language taught in educational institutions highly and want their children to be fluent in the language of learning and teaching in school. Parents' negotiating of FLP will consequently be influenced by the languages valued in schooling, and national or educational languages will be pushed. Parents want their children to engage in school-based literacy and activities which they base around educational achievements. Their encouragement of the use of the language of teaching and learning (of their children's school) at home will influence their FLP (Curdt-Christiansen and Sun 2018, 263). They want their children to learn the language used in school well and often will encourage the children to

participate in extra homework or activities to be more immersed in the valued language. This shows the influence of national language policies and language in education policies on FLP. During my interviews with the parents, I asked them for the reasons behind their decision to send their child to a German kindergarten, and all of them emphasised their desire to eventually send their children to a German primary school and get a German education.

Family language practices show not only the agentive role of the parents but also of the children. Children are always active socialisation agents within families, and they often exercise their agency through investments in language-learning strategies to overcome difficulties in their multiple language development. Children can establish their agency in FLP by having different language proficiency, ideologies and resources from their parents. Negotiations over cultural norms, language practices, and language policies are the norm in multilingual families. It has been suggested that children use the following socialisation practices to take part in the decision-making of FLP. (1) medium requests, (2) metalinguistic comments, (3) language brokering, (4) sociocultural socialisation, and (5) majority language teaching (Curdt-Christiansen and Sun 2018, 268).

A medium request describes the child's opposition to their parent's language of choice through the use of resistance strategies. The child continues to use their preferred language, for example, the language used in school instead of the parent's heritage language. Children often also use code-switching to take control of their interactions with their parents. Metalinguistic comments describe the evaluation of language choice at a metalinguistic level. The children set rules for what languages should be used for interactions and they define who can correct whom in their preferred language. Children in multilingual families are often more fluent than their parents in the majority language and therefore can act as "linguistic brokers" for their families. They can engage in different types of language practices in various social domains such as schools, homes and public spaces. In a way it can be empowering for children and improve their language abilities, at the same time, it takes power away from their parents and reverses the typical parent-child authority in terms of linguistic capital. Sociocultural socialisation occurs when children have greater access to the new language of the country their family migrated to and the children socialise with their parents into an increased understanding of the linguistic and sociocultural aspects of the new country. The children act as cultural mediators and help their parents to connect to the majority of the population Majority language teaching describes when children help their parents to learn the language of the new country and socialise them into the learning of the linguistic components of the language that is spoken by the majority of the population.

This shows the agentic role of the children in the negotiation of the FLP and how children influence the language practices in their homes. The language choices children make will influence their parents' language choices and children can be an important part of the socialisation and integration of their parents into a new country. Children often act as bridges between their former home country or heritage and the new country the family migrated to. Children can learn new languages rather quickly and often are less afraid to speak a new language in comparison to adults who are more afraid to make mistakes. When families want to transfer and maintain their heritage languages, children play an important role in that process because their language choices will influence how fast and fluently, they will learn the heritage language. Some children also refuse to speak their heritage language and rather "stick to" their preferred language which is often the language spoken at school and by the majority population.

There are some critiques of the scholarship in FLP especially concerning the location and participant variety of most studies. In the next section, I will draw on the work of Rafael Lomeu Gomes and introduce his request to draw on a decolonial approach when researching FLP. He furthermore critiques using Spolsky´s framework as the base for the development of further FLP conceptualisations and gives suggestions for expanding the field.

*Critique of family language policies*

Rafael Lomeu Gomes appeals for a critical approach to family multilingualism. He points out that FLP has mostly been researched in the context of the Western world, and we need to look at the intersectional dimensions of social categorisations such as social class, gender, and race. The Global South has not been part of a lot of research mentioned before, and minority languages also have been mainly left out.

FLP is mostly situated in transnational practices that either privilege the material basis of economic relations of production, or give value to the cultural domain in which personal relations gain meaning (Gomes 2018, 51). This means that the scholarship puts forward the idea that either the national language will be taught to the children due to economic reasons and educational success, or that families choose to obtain their minority language for cultural purposes, sentimental connections, or family relations. Parents believe that learning the national language will give children better chances of integration, access to economic growth, and social privileges. According to Gomes, the field needs a decolonial approach, and research needs to focus more strongly on lived experiences, language practices, beliefs, and language management of families living in the Global South (Gomes 2018, 52).

Gomes (2018, 60) argues that recent research still does not challenge the notion of languages as autonomous systems. He suggests that a decolonial approach would investigate the entanglements between culture, economic, and political processes, and it would encourage debates on transnational practices, identity negotiations, and language use. By critiquing the use of Spolsky's framework in FLP research, he hopes to spark discussions about issues that have not been explored yet, and that will contribute to the development of the field of FLP (Gomes 2018, 64-65). In my research, I also focus on White, middle-class families, though in a South African context, and the transfer and maintenance of the heritage language German which, in this particular combination, has not been well-researched yet. I am aware of the critique that certain scholars voice regarding FLP, and I analyse my data with a critical look regarding the underpinning language ideologies and language and literacy practices within families and consider that FLP in theory sometimes does not align with the practices in reality and this also influences emergent literacy. In my next section, I will look at the shifts in paradigms in literacy studies. I will outline the conceptualisation of literacy practices and introduce the concept of literacy as a sociocultural practice.

### 2. 6 Shifts in paradigms in literacy studies

Language ideologies shape which language practices people engage with, and this also plays a role in their literacy practices. Different concepts such as literacy as a social practice played a role in how I conceptualised emergent literacy in my research. The majority of people still see languages as bounded separate entities which are acquired in a staged and sequenced way. How people understand and conceptualise language acquisition will influence their perspective on language and shape the way they teach their children their language. The same goes for teaching literacy because our language ideologies influence how we conceptualise literacy, what literacy is important to us, and how we teach our children about literacy. In the following section, I will define literacy drawing on Street's theoretical framework and show how scholars of the New Literacy studies brought about a change in the conceptualisation of literacy.

*History of the conceptualisation of literacy practices*

Linguistic resources are an important part of our daily communication and they will influence with whom we can talk, how we can communicate our needs and wishes, and what opportunities are given to us. Another important part of human interaction and communication is literacy, a research field which has been undergoing some major changes in the last thirty years and is undeniably connected to the understanding of language in today's world. A big change in the field was brought by the New Literacy Studies, a body of work drawing on fields such as linguistics, history and anthropology.

Literacy is now seen as a social practice, and literacy practices just like language practices change depending on the setting and with whom you are engaging. Literacy practices in school are different from when you are at home with your family, on the playground with friends, or in church with other believers. According to Brian Street (1992, 4), reading and writing are both social and cultural practices. These practices are part of a child's socialisation, and children grow up observing and engaging in ways their family members, friends, and community members use reading and writing in their own lives. This fundamentally influences the literacy development of a child. The ways we use reading and writing are not only dependent on the context, but also on our values, attitudes, awareness of power in literacy, and established histories of literacy practices. Street's view of literacy has informed the research of other scholars of the New Literacy Studies, and his distinction between autonomous and ideological views of literacy has brought about a paradigm shift. The autonomous view sees literacy as a skill, while the ideological view sees it as a social practice. Street (1992, 5) described the conceptualisation of literacy in the autonomous model as a discrete, neutral technical skill, where the focus is on decoding; it can be taught and assessed universally across contexts and it is aligned with skill-based approaches. Here the focus is on teaching technical skills, and the learning success of students can be assessed through large-scale comparative studies. This is a very school-focused view on literacy, and this ideology still influences educational policies today, especially in countries of the Global South. In the following section, I will talk about literacy as a sociocultural practice, I will show that literacy is more than learning how to read and write and show the importance for children to be involved in literacy practices and literacy events.

*Literacy as a sociocultural practice*

We engage with literacy in a way that is aligned with our deeply embedded social and cultural patterns. Children usually engage with literacy first in their homes before entering a preschool setting; therefore, their caregivers' literacy behaviours, ideological beliefs and cultural upbringing will influence the way a child is taught how to read and write. But literacy is more than just a skill, something that is written on a piece of paper, or a story people read. According to David Barton (1994, 3), literacy is something people do, it is an activity located in the space between thought and text. Literacy goes beyond learning how to read and write and it is connected to social and cultural beliefs and patterns. It is influenced by a range of different factors and is a socially constructed and important part of our everyday communication. We engage every day in a wide range of literacy practices without paying too much attention to them; for example, when reading the instructions on the oatmeal box, looking on Google Maps for the best way to get to work, or replying to a WhatsApp message. We communicate to be involved with people, and from a young age, we are taught to connect literacy practices with schooling and educational success.

David Barton (1994, 34) focuses on literacy as a sociocultural practice. For him, people's use of literacy is important, and literacy in his view starts with everyday activities and not from the beginning of formal schooling. This can be described as engagement in emergent literacy practices for children and, it is an important part of their literacy development. Literacy is a social activity and can be described in terms of literacy events and practices. Written words play a role in all literacy events; for example, when a caregiver reads a book to a child, writes a shopping list, or talks with a partner about news read in the newspaper (Barton 1994, 36). Literacy practices on the other hand are social practices associated with the written word in which literacy is utilised and carried from one particular situation to another similar situation. While taking part in literacy events, people draw on their literacy practices, this includes particular ways of saying (talking about information and knowledge), doing (accessing and using information) and relating (engaging with information) (Barton 1994, 37). Children need to be involved in both literacy events and literacy practices to have a wide range of exposure to different literacy activities and familiarise themselves with habits which will be useful for learning in school and general formal schooling. These early forms of engagement in literacy practices amongst pre-school children are called emergent literacy which often brings in the role of digital technologies in literacy.

### 2.7 Emergent literacy and digital literacy

*Emergent literacy practices*

Elizabeth Sulzby and William N. Teale (1986, 727) explain that the term "emergent literacy" was first introduced in the early 1980s, influenced by the research of Marie Clay (1966/67) and was part of the conceptualisation of what young children learned about reading, writing and print before entering a formal school setting. Sulzby and Teale (1986, 728) describe emergent literacy as unconventional reading and writing behaviours that develop into the conventional reading and writing practices of formal schooling. Young children are in the process of becoming literate from as young as one or two years old, even though it is not-yet-conventional literacy behaviour at the time. These literacy practices usually take place in family homes and community settings, but also in play schools, preschools and kindergartens (Sulzby and Teale 1986, 728).

Emergent literacy research has been influenced by the research on oral language development from the early 1970s and by the work of Jean Piaget (Swiss psychologist) and John Dewey (American philosopher and psychologist) on children's development. Emergent literacy centres the child as his or her constructor of literacy. Storybook reading is an emergent phenomenon and includes activities where children are being read to, and also activities where children start to read themselves. The interest lies in figuring out what concepts the child internalises about book reading, and what concepts

he or she applies in these situations. Furthermore, researchers want to understand how book reading contributes to children's writing, intellectual, emotional, and oral language development (Sulzby and Teale 1986, 730-731), including observation and analysis of storybook reading of young children. They discovered that young children's independent, not-yet-conventional reading of books is nourished through interactive book reading and can be used to strengthen their literacy development. This shows the importance of implementing emergent literacy practices in children's home settings, and that not only conventional school literacy is beneficial, but also alternative and more interactive approaches.

*Emergent writing practices*

Emergent writing is a part of emergent literacy practices and shows that children start writing in emergent forms like scribbling, drawing, and non-conventional spellings long before they start to learn conventional writing (Sulzby and Teale 1986, 737). Written language is part of emergent writing practices which is connected to oral language. Researchers are interested in exploring the connection between written and oral language and looking at emergent literacy practices of young children can be a great perspective to understand the connection better.

Gunther Kress (1997, 2) describes literacy as unstable, dynamic and fluid, and points out that other forms of communication are making their way into the domain of literacy which was formerly dominated by written language. Visual modes of communication are becoming more and more popular, especially among children, and we have to rethink our conceptualisation of literacy to integrate it into the means of learning and the curriculum (Kress 1997, 4-5). While children are learning to read and write, they are becoming experienced makers of meaning, and they are making meaning through signs of any medium that is available to them. This can include a wide range of modes and materials; for example, paper, scissors, Lego blocks, and toys. According to Gunther Kress (1997, 10), all signs and messages are multimodal. No signs or messages just exist in one mode; for example, language or writing. A writer makes different choices while writing; for example, writing on a laptop or in a notebook, paying attention to grammar and layout. All this will influence the meaning of the written text. Writing is usually done by a person, although nowadays there are artificial intelligence programs which can produce written text. From a traditional perspective, children need to understand that the print on paper was written by a real person for them to see themselves as writers. They need to comprehend that written texts are the product of someone who has written them and that they are also capable of writing their own stories and sharing their experiences on paper. Studies on emergent writing (Aram and Yashar 2022, Puranik et al. 2018,

Byington and Kim 2017, Choi 2021) mostly focus on children's composition or creation of their own stories and letters.

Heath's seminal study (1982) highlighted a connection between the practices children engage with and learn at home and those which are required for success at school. Heath (1982, 51) looked at three communities and described particular literacy events and practices taking place in these communities. One community was called Maintown, in which mainly white, middle-class families lived, where Heath described bedtime story routines in the homes of families. 'In Maintown, children grew up in a print-rich environment, they engaged in school-oriented book reading, and they learned certain customs, beliefs and, skills related to written material. The children would learn to label certain objects in a book, to ask "What" questions and were socialised into IRE-sequences (invitation, reply, evaluation), all skills valued in a school setting. After the children learned 'what 'explanations, they would be introduced to reason explanations and affective commentaries. They learned not only to take meaning from books, but also how to talk about explanations for certain storylines, hierarchise knowledge, display knowledge of a subject, and pay selective knowledge to certain items. All this helped the children to be easily integrated into school-based literacy and react to the scaffolding of the teacher (Heath 1982, 56).

In contrast, poor, working-class families lived in the two other communities. Roadville was described as a countryside town, where farm workers who did not value education as much as the families in Maintown mostly lived. The children were read to by their parents, but they focussed mainly on words and letters with very limited interpretations of meaning. They learned how to handle books, how letters make words, and that accuracy is the main goal for reading. When entering school, the children did well for the first three years but struggled later on with working independently and forming their ideas and interpretations of concepts. The last participating community was called Trackton, a town with a strong focus on labour and passing down traditions. In this community, there were no bedtime routines present. Sometimes older siblings read to the younger children or played pretend school with them. Parents encouraged children to use their imagination to create stories about their own lives and experiences. These children were able to tell engaging stories, using a variety of poetic devices, sound effects, and movement. Their narratives were very diverse and could not have been told in this way using standard storytelling structures which we associate with White, middle-class, monolingual schooling tasks (Kurchiko 2019, 543). Later in school, they were not used to the kinds of questions a teacher asks, they were unable to identify characters in books, and were not familiar with habits revolving around book reading.

Shirley Brice Heath identified in her study the closed nature of the community and their culture as the reason for the prevalence of linguistic differences (Garcia 2017, 55). She focused on language differences, not deficits. This study made clear that the home environment of children plays a big role in their development of literacy practices. How children are being socialised into literacy will affect their literacy behaviour, their language ideologies, and language practices. The participants of my study were White, middle-class families and I could see many connections between the literacy practices I observed and the ones Heath described in her study of the Maintown community.

*Digital literacy practices*

Children engage in a wide range of activities and literacy practices at home. One domain which is becoming more and more important is the access and use of modern technologies like iPads, phones, computers, and PlayStations. Young children are very used to engaging with different forms of digital play and activities such as playing games on their parents' phones, watching YouTube videos or colouring apps on their iPads, video calling their grandparents, or listening to audiobooks on their digital radio device. Children are engaging not only with emergent literacy practices from a young age, but many of these now involve digital literacy practices. This also has become evident to me in my observations, and I decided to include the engagement with these practices into my study because it is a very relevant topic and access to digital literacy can open possibilities for children to engage with a wide range of literacy learning tools and educational activities.

Digital literacy according to Levy (2009,78) is how children develop strategies to use and read different screen texts with fluency. Digital literacy can be seen as part of emergent literacy, and most children have been exposed to digital literacy from a young age, either through parents' phones, computers, or iPads. Levy (2009, 84) shows that pre-schoolers have become competent users of digital technology and have developed transferable literacy skills. This means that they had acquired skills that allowed them to use unfamiliar technologies with fluency. Through being exposed to digital literacy, children have access to text in different modes and media outlets. In my research, I focused on the home setting of bilingual grade R learners, but I also visited the children in their German kindergarten twice and observed some literacy practices in the classroom. During my observations with one of my research participants, Foster, I observed his engagements with digital literacy, and it was interesting to see his ability to navigate computer games without much formal introduction to school-based literacy.

## 2.8 Conclusion

With this theoretical framing and the main theoretical concepts discussed above, I conclude this chapter, having defined what I understand as languages and which historical developments and paradigms shifts informed my study. In my next chapter, I outline the research design.

# Chapter 3. Research design

## 3. 1 Choice of qualitative case study approach, using ethnographic methods

My research is a qualitative case study using ethnographic methods of data collection. Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions and experiences. Generally, qualitative studies seek an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting and rely on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives. I chose a qualitative study because I was interested in directly working with participants and hearing about their personal views on language ideologies, linguistic repertoires and communicative practices in bilingual/multilingual families. Secondly, I was interested in emergent literacy practices of young learners and how these take shape in bilingual households. I value people as meaning makers in their own lives and believed that by choosing a qualitative approach I would find diverse and valid answers to my research questions.

I had initially focused my research on emergent literacy practices of bilingual grade R learners, but during initial observations and interviews with parents, I realised the children were not engaging in emergent literacy practices as much as I had expected. The kindergarten that all the participating children attended, had specifically asked the parents not to teach reading and writing at home as the German school they would attend wanted all of them to start the process of formal literacy instruction together. I therefore decided to broaden my focus from literacy practices in bilingual/multilingual families to instead explore the topics of family language practices, translanguaging, linguistic repertoire and language ideologies in my research.

Cape Town is a multilingual, multicultural city that is a fascinating sociolinguistic environment. Because South Africa has eleven official languages, many people from other parts of South Africa choose to move to the city for financial, professional and educational opportunities. Therefore, Cape Town offers a wide range of schools for parents to choose from for their children, with every neighbourhood offering multiple public schools to choose from, starting from kindergarten (including grade R). The public kindergartens and schools are almost free to attend, but when parents decide to send their children to a heritage language school, they have to be willing to pay private school fees, which are usually expensive. Cape Town offers various international school systems with foreign languages as the language of teaching and learning such as German and French and with foreign curriculums such as American and British-based curriculums. Private kindergartens have the advantage of teaching certain heritage languages such as German which will help the children in their German language development and offer them advantages when entering a primary school where

German is also the language of teaching and learning. The two languages I can speak fluently are English and German, therefore it made sense to focus on families who spoke both languages fluently.

I chose the case study approach because I was interested in observing interactions within families involving the focal child, in their home settings as they communicate with each other naturally. A case study has clear boundaries in terms of the place and the time, and the researcher needs to be able to clearly explain the setting of the chosen case. The researcher needs to "paint a picture" of the case, looking at it from different angles (Cresswell 2007, 95) using different forms of data collection. My research included four family homes whose children were at the same German kindergarten in Cape Town, and I observed and interviewed them over six weeks. Before choosing the participants, I visited the German kindergarten once to speak to the teacher and parents of the grade R class in person to introduce myself and find the most suitable candidates for my study. Not all the children in the grade R class grow up bilingually or live with both of their parents, but I decided to only focus on two-parent households as I thought it would be interesting to have two parents present at the interview to hear their opinions on the topics of language ideologies, linguistic repertoires, language practices and family language policy. I also read in previous research that the one-parent-one language approach is often recommended when raising children bilingually, therefore I wanted to be able to observe the interactions of the children with both parents and pay attention to the language practices they are using with each parent.

Within the qualitative case study, I drew on ethnographic methods of data collection. Since ethnography aims to better understand the social interactions of a group of people and to discover social phenomena without any assumptions or strict hypotheses it is important to research with an open mind. Hammersley (1994, 8-9) points out that ethnography can be used to trace patterns of relationships among social phenomena in their natural context which would not be possible by using experiments or social surveys. Using an ethnographic approach helped me to interpret interactions and language practices in the family environment and describe how the families position themselves in the emergent literacy and bilingualism discourse. In the following section, I describe my research site and participants. I introduce the four families and discuss their heritage background, linguistic repertoire and their connection to the heritage language of German.

### 3. 2 Description of research site and participants

*Research site*

My research site is four family homes, having German as a heritage language, spread across the southern suburbs of Cape Town, linked by their choice to send their children to the German

kindergarten. The family homes I visited were located largely in upper socioeconomic areas of Wynberg, Newlands, Hout Bay and Observatory.

After their initial reply, I sent information letters for parents which explained my research topic, goals and methods (interviews and observations). I was then able to spend the morning in the grade R classroom and met the teacher, assistant teacher and the children. Only five children in the class are raised bilingually, the rest of the children are either raised monolingually, either in German or English. The families only speaking English at home are an exception, because the kindergarten prefers for the children to have at least one German-speaking parent at home to foster the child's German language development. In the end, four families agreed to participate, one of them was the staff member of the branch I contacted. The data collection part of the research took about four weeks. I conducted interviews with all four families, three were conducted using English and one in German, translated into English. I was only able to conduct ongoing observations in the homes of three of the families, although I was able to observe the fourth child at other children's homes and gained some sense of the home environment while conducting the interview.

*Research participants*

I start by introducing the four 5 to 6-year-old children in the context of their families and homes. To anonymise them, I have given them the names Foster, Luca, Roxanne and Tsikana. The four families are of great interest because they have similar language backgrounds, but different social experiences and language practices. After all, language learning and bilingual upbringing is a very complex and individual journey. The languages spoken in the families are English/German (Foster and Luca), English/Afrikaans/German (Roxanne) and English/German/Portuguese (Tsikana). All families can be described as middle-class families, all parents are working either part-time or full-time and they live in houses in suburban areas. An interesting observation was that besides Tsikana's parents, all parents either have their own business or work freelance, which gives them more flexibility, they all have offices in their homes and are mostly present for the children in the afternoons. Two of the families have outside support for child care, Luca's younger brother is looked after by an English-speaking nanny and Roxanne is taken care of one afternoon per week by a German-speaking au pair. Foster's English-speaking grandmother lives with the family and also helps out with child care.

Foster's and Tsikana's mothers are both German nationals, they grew up in Germany and moved to Cape Town 10 and 15 years ago respectively. They both speak German as their mother tongue and therefore wanted to teach their children German from birth. Roxanne's parents, Luca's mother and Foster's father are South African nationals, I am not sure if they all grew up in Cape Town or moved

to the city later in life. Roxanne's paternal grandparents immigrated to South Africa from Germany when Roxanne's father was an infant, her grandparents only spoke German at home and her father grew up bilingually. Kim's parents (Roxanne's mother) did not properly teach her German at home and she spoke mostly English at home, but German with her grandparents. Kim still feels a connection to her German heritage and roots and would like Roxanne to learn the heritage language German from a young age because she now regrets not learning the language fluently when she was a child herself. Luca's father is a Namibian national and moved to Cape Town 15 years ago. His parents who still live in Namibia today are both of German heritage and he grew up speaking it at home, only learning English at school. He wants his children to learn German from a young age to have a connection to their German heritage and be able to speak to their grandparents. They started teaching Luca at two years old and Sebastian, his younger brother from birth. Below is a chart introducing all four families and I described the number of children in the family, the ages of the children, the family members and the spoken language of each family member.

| | **Number of children, ages and spoken language** | **Family members and spoken languages** |
|---|---|---|
| **Foster** | - Foster, 6 years<br>- Hunter, 4 years<br>- they speak German to mom and English to dad and grandmother<br>- they speak mostly German to each other, sometimes switch to English | - mother speaks German and English<br>- father speaks English<br>- grandmother (living with them) speaks English and Afrikaans |
| **Luca** | - Luca, 6 years old<br>- Sebastian, 18 months old<br>- speaks English to mom and German to dad<br>- Luca mostly speaks English to his brother<br>- His brother does not talk much yet | - mother speaks English and understands basic German<br>- father speaks German and English<br>- nanny speaks English and Xhosa |
| **Roxanne** | - Roxanne, 5 years old<br>- half-brother, 11 years old, visits two weekends a month<br>- speaks English to mom<br>- dad speaks Afrikaans to her, she responds mostly in English<br>- speaks mostly English to half brother | - mother speaks English and understands basic German<br>- father speaks English and Afrikaans<br>- half-brother speaks English and Afrikaans |
| **Tsikana** | - Tsikana, 5 years old<br>- Zion, 3 years old<br>- they speak German to mom and Portuguese to father<br>- they mostly speak German to each other | - mother speaks German and English<br>- father speaks Portuguese and English<br>- Zion attends English speaking creche |

Figure 1. Chart of participating families

### 3.3 Process of data collection

I visited the families of Foster and Luca three times, Roxanne, four times and Tsikana once (for the interview). On the first visit, I introduced my research project in more detail, asked the parents to sign the consent forms and conducted the interview with the parents. I furthermore asked children to sign assent forms. They were created in a child-friendly way and each child had to circle happy or sad smileys for indicating their willingness to participate in my study. The interview was audio recorded on my phone. Both Roxanne and Luca's parents were present and in Foster and Tsikana's cases, only the mother was. Most interviews were conducted in English except for the one with Foster's mother. That interview was conducted in German and the translation of the interview was translated into English. During the interviews, I asked the parents about the languages spoken at home, their engagement with emergent literacy, their views on bilingual upbringing and their language ideologies. Part of the interview was a stimulated recall prompt where I asked them to describe one usual weekday and one weekend day in their lives concerning language and literacy events and practices. All the interviews were transcribed and where necessary translated by me.

I furthermore asked them for consent to collect literacy artefacts in the form of pictures, audio and video recordings of homework, artwork, book reading and playtime. I did not remove any items from their homes, I only took photos of the literacy artefacts. During my first visit, the children showed me their rooms, books and toys. I took photos of literacy artefacts and got familiar with the families. The second and third visits were used for observations of the language and literacy practices of the children. I engaged in play, drawings, art and craft activities and storybook reading with the children. I let the children dictate the activities and engaged in free play with them. I did not ask them specifically to show me literacy events and practices, because I wanted the observation to be as natural as possible and I was interested in seeing the ways the children engage with emergent literacy, the language practices they use and the interpersonal interactions in the family. During the observations, I recognised underlying language ideologies, family language practices and language practices which had not been mentioned in my previous interview with the parents. I noted that these language practices and FLP are fairly unconscious processes and explored this as a possible divide between what they believe in theory and what they, in reality, practice in their homes. The differences between theory and practice may not be a divide or a contradiction but reflect the complexity of human interaction and language use especially when sharing meaning is the dominant goal.

To make my data collection more extensive I used ethnographic methods as well. According to Hammersley (1994), ethnography is social research which examines "real world" situations using observation and informal conversations. As a German speaker and not a South African I was open

to identifying and noticing different social and cultural interactions in the family homes as a local researcher and I was able to connect on a more personal level with the parents and children. The language furthermore helped me to connect with the staff at the German kindergarten and made my approach with them and the parents more meaningful, because we have a shared heritage background and language. The data was collected through field notes of observations, collection of literacy artefacts and conduction of stimulated recall interviews with parents or caregivers. The observations and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Non-English communication was translated and included in the transcriptions.

The emergent literacy practices I observed included book reading, drawings and arts and crafts activities. I knew from observations at the German kindergarten that they teach the children the alphabet, letter sound recognition, and phonics and have them engage in arts and crafts regarding the alphabet. In the family homes, explicit literacy engagement was not very evident and besides Roxanne, the children did not show much specific interest in reading and writing. An interesting observation was that all four parents mentioned the children are currently interested in numeracy and learning more about numbers. It could be that the kindergarten curriculum in the phase of my observations focused more on numeracy teaching and the children engaged with different activities relating to numbers and therefore showed more interest in the topic. The artefacts that I was interested in were multilingual homework assignments from their grade R class, drawings, scribbles, arts and crafts pieces and any other materials including literacy resources.

### 3.4 Description of Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis as the main research analysis process. I developed a table and codes which helped me to identify my key concepts in the data. These key concepts are further discussed in Chapter 4. Clarke and Braun describe the concept of thematic analysis in their work which falls under the umbrella of qualitative research methods. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data (Clarke and Braun 2013, 12). The authors stress it is an analytic method which is theoretically flexible because when looking at patterns of language it is not important to have a particular theory of language in common.

There are six phases when conducting thematic analysis; these stages do not have to be seen as a linear model, where one stage needs to be completed before moving to the next stage. Thematic analysis is a recursive process and includes the following steps. familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up. (1) The researcher needs to get familiar with the collected data, listen to audio recordings and note initial

analytic observations. (2) The researcher needs to label important features of the data, and codes need to capture the semantic and conceptual reading of the data. (3) A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. The searching for themes is an active process in which the researcher constructs themes and then collects all the coded data relevant to each theme. (4) The researcher needs to check that the themes "work" concerning the extracts and full data set. He or she needs to define the nature of each theme and the relationship between the themes. (5) The researcher needs to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme, identify the "essence" of each theme and come up with informative names for each theme. (6) The researchers need to write up the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell a coherent and persuasive story about the data, especially concerning existing literature (Clarke and Braun 2013, 13).

I used extracts from the interviews with the parents and observations with the children for my analysis. Firstly, I created charts for each interview and observation. For the interview, I included the following columns. transcription, interpretation and code. For the observation, I followed the same chart sample and also included the time frame of the activity and what was going on (description of activity). These charts helped me to write my analysis chapter and I used the transcriptions from the charts to further analyse my data. For the analysis, I chose interesting extracts of the observations with the children which showed translanguaging, emergent literacy practices and engagement with digital literacy. To show the parents' understanding of their linguistic repertoires, language ideologies and family language policy I mostly focused on the interview transcriptions. I also analysed their engagement with the children during my observations and was surprised to find a lot of translanguaging happening and a very interesting and complex presentation of their linguistic repertoires. I interpreted the data through key concepts in my theoretical framework and analysed these areas thematically. The analysis was categorised into sub-sections. language ideologies and linguistic repertoire, family language practice and language practices, all in Chapter 4 while emergent literacy and digital literacy are analysed in Chapter 5.

*Validity checks and limitations*

To make sure my research is valid I followed Maxwell's (1992) definitions of descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity. As a descriptive validity check, I used audio recordings of the interviews with parents and caregivers and observation of literacy activities taking place in the participants' homes, these audio recordings were then transcribed and translated. To make sure my research includes interpretive validity I conducted stimulated recall interviews and conversations with the parents or caregivers to surface congruence and discrepancy with what I have observed in the family homes and what the participants report to believe. To address theoretical validity, I used the

theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2 and I analysed the families' verbal interactions through Thematic Analysis (Clarke and Brown 2013). The research is field research and therefore the focus was on studying people and events in a real-life context. Therefore, external validity and reliability have to be excluded because the research is a singular, individual project which only takes place once (Knobel and Lankshear 1999).

The focus was on small-scale research and did not intend to present a generalised truth. It focused on showing how language practices are being used in particular family contexts and how these discourses are being viewed from particular families' perspectives. The scale of my research was limited to four families due to time and resource limitations and my focus was on collecting meaningful and detailed data for each family. I decided it would be more beneficial for my research to visit each family three times instead of having more families but then only one visit per family. I wanted to build a connection with the children to gain insight into their natural language and literacy practices at home and observe them in a natural and trusting atmosphere.

**3. 5 Research ethics**

My research ethics have been informed by Hammersley and Traianou (2012) and the Faculty of Humanities guide of research, research with human participants (2010). Furthermore, I took the Research Ethics Guide of the School of Education from UCT (2022) into account.

Research with human participants needs to be seen as a privilege and not a right. Therefore, it needs to be carried out with social sensitivity and responsibility and with respect for the dignity and self-esteem of the participants (UCT 2022, 1). The researcher needs to follow some guidelines to ensure their research is ethical, ensuring the human rights of the participants and that their findings have a high degree of validity. They also should not misuse their position as researchers for personal gain (UCT 2022, 1). When conducting research several distinct ethical principles need to be kept in mind. minimising harm, respecting autonomy, protecting privacy, offering reciprocity, and treating people equitably (Hammersley and Traianou 2012, 2-3). In the beginning stages of my research, I filled out a research ethical clearance form which I submitted to the ethics committee of the School of Education at UCT. The approval of the ethical clearance is attached in the appendix (see appendix number 1)

All four parents (interviews) and three children (observations) were asked to sign consent forms before their interviews and observations respectively (see Appendix number 2). When initially approaching the families, the kindergarten sent a letter of mine (see appendix number 3) to the parents

detailing all important information about the nature and purpose of the study, to ensure they knew their participation was entirely voluntary. They had the option to decline to be interviewed and/or withdraw from the study at any time during the process. All the identifying information was treated as confidential. The participants' integrity and personal space were respected; therefore, the interviews and observation only took place at a suitable time for the families. The interviews were conducted in privacy and they were kept relatively short, about 30 min at a time. The parents could choose what they wanted to share with the researcher and they could also choose what literary artefact the researcher was allowed to photograph.

The privacy of the kindergarten and individuals has been protected, and all parties have been given pseudonyms and any other identifying features removed to ensure anonymity. The consent forms pointed out that confidentiality is a key aspect, and that information and opinions shared within the interview and observations will be treated as such. I aimed to be culturally sensitive when evaluating and analysing the data and I followed the guidelines provided by UCT and asked my supervisor for guidance when needed. The data collection and research methodology have been designed to provide the participants with the ability to voice their opinions and personal experiences during the interviews. I had my analysis endeavour to be rigorous in nature, feasible and justified within this context. Due to the nature of the study, there is a low-risk factor for harm or "costs" to the participants as a result of taking part in the study, but contingencies such as assurance of anonymity and full disclosure of information are in place to minimise any potential risks for them.

### 3. 6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined my research design and I explained the reasoning behind choosing a qualitative research design and ethnographic case study approach for my research. I introduced the participants and research site and gave a brief description of the participating families. I explained how I collected the data for my study and justified why I chose a thematic analysis approach to analyse the data. Lastly, I outlined the research ethics behind my studies and how I protected the dignity and anonymity of my participants. In the next chapter, I analyse the data concerning the topics of language repertoires, language ideologies, and family language policy language practices. I focus on emergent literacy in the chapter after that.

# Chapter 4. Language repertoires, ideologies and family language policy in the four families

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my findings related to my research questions on language repertoires, ideologies, and family language policy. I outline the language background of the children in the context of the participating families. Each child's linguistic repertoire and language practices are described, followed by those of the family members' language use and linguistic repertoire. I draw on the interviews with the parents to discuss their language ideologies, focusing on the current language environment of the homes, and how the families shape their values, beliefs and attitudes toward language. I also explore their current language practices and how these link to their language histories, social environment and the language practices of their children. In the following chapter, I move on to explore how this wider linguistic environment shapes the emergent literacy practices of the children.

## 4.2 Background information of the four children and their families

The families participating in my research are all multilingual. Each family consists of two parents who speak different languages. The nationalities of the families are German, South African, Namibian and Mozambican. The foreign parent has been living in Cape Town for at least ten years and all parents speak their mother tongues to their children. All families practice a one-parent language approach, some of them from birth (Foster, Tsikana), while some only started raising their children bilingual from the age of two (Luca, Roxanne). All children have been attending a German kindergarten from the age of three and will be attending German primary school next year. A requirement of attending grade 1 at the German primary school is for the children to be fluent in German, and one parent needs to be a German native speaker. As a result of these requirements, all parents are very eager to improve their children's German. The general family language of all families is English, and three of the parents have English as their mother tongue (Foster´s father, Luca´s mother and Roxanne's mother). From observations, I gathered that Roxanne, Luca and Foster have English as their preferred language, while only Tsikana prefers speaking German at home.

*Foster*

The family consists of Foster (6 years); his brother, Hunter (4 years); mother, Anne; father, Ruan and grandmother, Marie. The mother is from Germany and moved to South Africa ten years ago. She only speaks German to the children. The father is South African, and he speaks English to the boys and his wife. The grandmother grew up speaking Afrikaans but now speaks English to all family

members. The family language is English and the boys communicate mostly in German with each other. They learned both German and English from birth. They attended an English-speaking creche, then started at the German kindergarten at the age of three. The goal is for Foster to attend German primary school. The mother corrects the boys when they make grammatical mistakes in German and she only replies to them in German. Foster is interested in numeracy, but not so much in reading books or literacy. He likes cars, playing games on his phone, and playing in the garden with his brother. He likes music and listening to audiobooks on the phone and he is currently taking piano lessons. He can write his name and recognise the letters that are in his name. He uses translanguaging practices, but he is fluent in both languages. He sometimes uses English words for comic characters and connection words (but, and).

*Luca*

The family consists of Luca (6 years); his brother, Sebastian (18 months); his mother, Tash and his father, Chris. The family employs a nanny to provide full-time care for Sebastian. She speaks English to the children. The mother is South African and only speaks English to the boys. Her family background is English-speaking and she learned some basic German skills. The father is Namibian with German heritage and he speaks mostly German to the boys. The family language is English. Luca started at the German kindergarten at the age of three, and when he started, he understood German but did not speak it. For the first two years, the parents both only spoke English to him. When his brother arrived, they changed the approach and Sebastian learned German from birth. Luca attends speech therapy and occupational therapy, both with German-speaking therapists. It is very important for Tash and Chris that Luca improves his German because they want him to attend German primary school. He likes reading books, playing board games, and doing arts and crafts. He can write his name and some numbers, but he reverses certain letters and numbers (U, 5). He is interested in numeracy more than literacy. He uses translanguaging when speaking German, mainly for comic character names and nouns he does not know in German. He is fluent in both languages.

*Roxanne*

The family consists of Roxanne (5 years); her mother, Kim and her father, Werner. Her half-brother, Eric, comes to visit them twice a month for the weekend. Kim is South African, grew up English-speaking, and has a German heritage. Her grandparents emigrated from Germany to South Africa before they had children. She understands basic German but never learned the language fluently as a child. The father is South African with an Afrikaans family background, and he has been fluent in English and Afrikaans from childhood. The family language is English; the father speaks Afrikaans to Roxanne but she often responds to him in English. He encourages her stepbrother to also speak

Afrikaans to her, but she also often responds in English to him. She started attending German kindergarten at the age of three, and she did not speak German at the beginning. She had an English-speaking nanny who provided full-time care for her before starting kindergarten. Last year she spent time with a German au pair for five afternoons a week, and she learnt a lot of German from her. She can write her name and recognise some letters. She is interested in literacy and numeracy and is looking forward to starting her German primary school. She likes reading books, drawing, and playing in the garden. She uses translanguaging when she speaks German, mainly for nouns she does not know in German. She is fluent in both languages.

*Tsikana*

The family consists of Tsikana (6 years old); his brother Zion (3 years old); his mother, Esther, and his father, Akin. The mother is German and came to South Africa about 15 years ago; she only speaks German to the children. The father is Mozambican and speaks Portuguese to the boys and English to his wife. The family language is English. The grandparents of the boys, from the mother's side, spend around six months of the year in Cape Town and also speak German to them. Tsikana has attended the German kindergarten since he turned three. Previously he attended an English-speaking creche. Zion attends the English-speaking creche until he reaches the required age and goes to a German kindergarten. Tsikana can write his name and recognize the letters that are in his name. He is more interested in numeracy than literacy. He likes reading books, playing with Lego, and playing outside in the garden. He mostly speaks German to his brother. When I observed him playing with Roxanne, he sometimes switched to English for a full sentence and then went back to German. He is fluent in all three languages.

### 4.3 Linguistic repertories in the family contexts

When the families introduced themselves, they also shared information about their linguistic repertoire. The focus was mainly on the languages they speak at home and to their children, and it was not specified if or when they learned any additional languages, for example, foreign languages at school.

In the following extract Luca's mother describes her family situation regarding languages.

> It is the four of us. Chris, myself Tash, Luca who is turning six now and then Sebastian who is one. It is a **dual language.** We speak English together and **obviously; I speak English to the boys** but **Chris speaks German to the boys**. We watch **Netflix in German and German news**. So just to **bring out their German.** We read history books and more difficult German

> books; Chris yesterday read more difficult books and easy readings for me and then I'll read it with him. **It is predominantly English** because Chris and I speak English to each other.

This extract shows a strong emphasis on the children learning German and how the parents are "pushing" German towards the children. They use media and books to immerse their children in the German language and use the 'one parent one language' approach. It is interesting to highlight that they point out that English predominates because it is the language, they speak to each other. A domestic helper takes care of the younger brother during the day and was also present during my observations. She speaks English to the boys, although her mother tongue is isiXhosa. During my visits, Luca responded in English to his mother and mainly in German to his father, but his father was only present towards the end of one of my observations. He works out of the house during the day. He spoke a mix of German and English to his brother Sebastian, who is not very verbally responsive yet due to his age.

The next extract is from an interview with Roxanne's father where he describes the language situation within their family and outlines their family background.

> The main language in the house is English because **I default to English when I speak to Kim (**Roxanne's mother). Kim speaks mainly English, but **I am trying to speak Afrikaans to Roxanne most of the time.** That is my mother tongue. Lately, it is a little bit hard sometimes, because the three of us sitting around the table decide to keep switching languages. It's a German word here and there and they are slowly learning. I think we should also mention that Roxanne has a stepbrother. She usually responds in English. I remember he was speaking Afrikaans to her but she responded more in English to him. So, my stepson, Roxanne's half-brother comes to us every other weekend. **He also tries as much as possible to speak Afrikaans to her** which is great. That is, e**ven though he goes to English school, he now continues to speak his mother tongue.** So, **I was raised in English, but my dad is German and I had German grandparents** who could not speak much English. So, they just spoke German to my brother and me. But **we responded to them in English**. But I have got the vocabulary of grandparents. I understand it, I can watch German TV programmes and things like that. Unfortunately, my reading is not great. I think once I have read a book through once, the next time I can read it and I do not stumble, that kind of thing.

The family language is English and, interestingly, the father describes it as defaulting to English. They have the 'one parent one language' approach, meaning each parent speaks their language to the child. During my observations, Roxanne responded to her mother in English and mainly in Afrikaans

to her father. Her father has a separate office space in the house and was not present during my visits. During one of the observations her German-speaking au pair was taking care of her and she only spoke German to her. Roxanne´s mother has an interesting family background; as her grandparents (Kim's grandparents) emigrated from Germany to South Africa, they never learned English fluently and raised their son (Roxanne's grandfather) mainly in German. Interestingly, German was not transferred to the next generation and Roxanne's mother did not grow up speaking German at home; instead, she only acquired fluency in English. During further conversations during my visits, she voiced regret for not learning German fluently as a child. Roxanne´s father is fully fluent in English and Afrikaans, and his son (Roxanne's stepbrother) has Afrikaans as his mother tongue. Interestingly, he points out that his son can sustain his mother tongue, even though he is attending English English-speaking school. A majority of South African children attend schools where they speak a second language as English medium schools are the choice of most parents.

In the following extract, Tsikana´s mother describes the languages they speak within their family.

> Esther. So, we are a family of four. Mum, I am German, and my dad is from Mozambique. But both children were born here in South Africa. **Dad speaks only or mainly Portuguese to the children. I speak mainly German** to the children. My partner and I, **speak together English**.
>
> Isabel. Is there anyone else regularly coming over like grandma, au pair or nanny that gets involved with the kids?
>
> Esther. In the beginning, we had a **nanny**, who was looking after both of my children till, they went to school, and **she spoke only English**. Then I am lucky that **I have my parents around from Germany** who are living here in Cape Town for six months.

The family uses the 'one language one parent' approach. The practices they are using are feeding into their FLP which I will discuss later in the chapter. During my visit, Esther only spoke German to the children, and Akin was not present for the interview. The family language is English and the children were exposed to English from a young age due to their parents speaking English together. The children´s grandparents from Germany are present in their lives and they get extra exposure to German through their presence. Tsikana is fluent in speaking German and he speaks German to his younger brother Zion. His mother puts a big emphasis on their children developing accurate German skills and she tries to expose them to different German media, traditions, and books.

The following extract shows Foster´s mother introducing her family and the languages they speak.

> There are five people in the household. There are my husband and his mother. **The two speak English and my mother-in-law grew up in an Afrikaans-speaking household.** The children are four and six years old. We three speak German. So, **I always speak German with the two** of them and my husband and my mother-in-law speak English with the children. **We adults speak English to each other.**

The family members speak three languages - German, English, and Afrikaans. The family language is English and the parents follow a 'one parent one language' approach. The children used a lot of translanguaging during my observations and they switched between English and German regularly. The children respond in German to their mother and in English to their father and grandmother. Interestingly, the grandmother´s mother tongue is Afrikaans, but she does not speak it to her grandchildren. I am not sure if Foster´s father is fluent in Afrikaans or not. The children are both fluent in German and English but tend to switch more to English when they play together during my observations. The family visits Germany every two years and they speak to their German grandparents regularly. The media, books, and toys used in the house are both English and German, although the phone games I observed them playing were all in English.

According to Gumperz (1972, 20-21), people all have a verbal repertoire at their disposal, by which he means the totality of linguistic resources available to members of a particular community. He points out that verbal repertoires are attached to speech communities or groups, and repertoires are linked to competence or language knowledge. All parents in this study seemed to view languages as bounded separated entities. They did not seem to favour any particular language but all wanted their children to develop sufficient German language skills to be able to attend German primary school. Translanguaging was evident in all four homes, although the parents did not mention it in the initial stage of the interviews. Furthermore, the hegemony of English was visible in all four homes, while at the same time, all families had a strong emphasis on maintaining and improving their children's German-speaking skills. During the research, it was mentioned by all parents that they assumed their children would "pick up" English due to the fact they live in an English-speaking environment and English, in comparison to German, does not have to be taught. The parents seemed to assume that English is an easier language to learn, in comparison to German and children will learn it easily by living in an English-speaking environment. The linguistic repertoires of all research participants are diverse, even though they did not mention all languages they can speak or previously learned. The focus was mainly on the languages the children were speaking actively in their homes.

### 4.4 Language ideologies

As discussed in Chapter 2, language ideologies are about how people hierarchise language and which language has value on micro and macro levels. Language ideologies play a role in families, as well as school policies and government regulations. For centuries, governments used a controlled use of languages as a primary way of managing diversity (Flores and Garcia 2013, 243). For example, when Namibia was a German colony, German functioned as the official language from 1884 to 1915; from 1920 onwards, it was replaced by English and Afrikaans as the official languages, to which, however, German was added again as a semi-official language in 1984 (Pütz 1992, 306). These language choices were ostensibly made to manage the language diversity of the country because Namibia has 24 indigenous languages and they needed one common language for educational, political, and economic purposes. Another example can be related to Tash´s comment about South Africa being an English country because South Africa has eleven official languages and only 10 per cent of the population speak English as their first language. On the other hand, especially in Cape Town, you can feel the hegemony of English with English being spoken in the shops, restaurants, media, and a lot of the schools in the city centre.

The extracts below show examples of the parents' ideologies, from Luca's and Foster's families.
In the following extract, Luca´s parents talk about their language ideologies.

> Tash**.** I do try and **remind Luca to speak German** to him. He does **revert to English** at the moment. I think maybe once Sebastian is responding …. So, I do try and instil because I know from other friends that they have said even though they are much more predominantly German in the home, the boys tend or the kids tend to play in English. **Being in an English country,** they tend to come to the playground and hear English and we have heard that also from the kindergarten. **We do not mind him speaking English,** if he gets older that might change.
>
> Chris. If his German friends come and he speaks to friends in German. If some speak English, they both speak English to the one and so they **are ready to switch us over.** He was doing it naturally, **the only problem with some people is that they prefer English.**

The parents put a strong emphasis on improving Luca´s German-speaking skills. However, he still chooses English as his preferred language, which might be related to the fact that his mother's mother tongue is English. Interestingly, she mentioned that they "do not mind him speaking English" (as a preferred language) because it is her mother tongue and South Africa is an English country (according to her). The parents see languages as bounded entities with one language being strongly separated from another language. They are not familiar with the concept of translanguaging. Luca's father's comment that some people "prefer to speak English" and how that can be seen as an issue also feeds

into the discussion about language ideologies. It is very normal for children to have a preferred language, but also to make use of the full linguistic repertoire available to them; this idea is more and more embraced and not shamed (Meisel 2019, 131).

Translanguaging describes the dynamic meaning-making discursive process of bilingual speakers and going back and forth between seemingly static languages and ethnolinguistic identities. This allows the emergence of fluid border identities that transcend national borders and challenge homogeneous language constructs (Badwan 2021, 248). This idea is contrasted by Luca´s parents who are concerned that his German might not be developed to an age-appropriate level by the time he enters primary school, therefore they remind him to speak more German to his brother. In countries like Germany where there is only one official language, monolingualism could be interpreted as an educational goal, but with the global immigration streams, it is less and less common for children to grow up with one language, even in countries with only one official language.

Furthermore, schools often reflect national and colonial structures of power maintenance where bilingual education programmes remain an instrument of control, as bilingualism is perceived to be the simple addition of two autonomous languages (Garcia and Flores 2013, 256). We need to understand that translanguaging can transcend language and cultural hierarchies and facilitate a functional interrelationship of discourse and identities that is necessary for minority students' linguistic and educational development (Garcia and Flores 2013, 255-256). The nation-state relationship and power dynamic which still exists in lots of people's minds, such as Luca's parents, is slowly being challenged with a more positive view where children can switch between two languages and are comfortable to use their full linguistic repertoire. South Africa is a country with eleven official languages, and it should not be seen as a disadvantage when a child enters primary school without fluid language abilities in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Luca's parents' language ideology is reminiscent of a national and colonial language ideology which can be traced back to the fact that his father grew up in Namibia, a former German colony, and his mother during Apartheid in South Africa, but I do not have further data on this.

Foster´s mother shared in the following extract about the changed language policy of the German kindergarten regarding language ideologies.

> Anne**.** They told us at the beginning of the year that they have learned in the kindergarten that they no longer want to **prevent the children from speaking English by hook or by crook** so that they [the children] **do not internalise that English is somehow a worse language.** So especially in the main kindergarten time from 8.00 am. to 1.00 pm. During that time the

> teachers always spoke German with them as far as I know. And then after 1.00 p.m., there is afternoon care and I think the teachers who do the afternoon care do not speak German that well, so a little more English may be spoken there. But I think they do the **main part in German.** They learn a lot there too. Words and vocabulary are practised a lot. **Even in the afternoon, it is not like they do not speak German, just a little less.** I find it interesting that t**hey know exactly with whom to speak German and with whom English**. My husband understands a bit of German, but he does not dare to speak it, because he still feels a little bit insecure. I think you learn a lot just by listening.

The German kindergarten has a clear language policy which encourages staff and children to speak mainly German to each other. There is a difference between the main kindergarten hours between 8 am and 1 pm and the afternoon program called Aftercare which takes place between 1 pm and 5 pm. Each group is taught by a pair of kindergarten teachers and a teaching assistant. The grade R class I observed called Sonnengruppe (sun group) was taught by a German mother tongue teacher and an Afrikaans mother tongue teaching assistant. I was not present during Aftercare hours but was told the children of different groups are all combined into one Aftercare group. Therefore, different age groups mix and there is a diverse mix of teachers and teaching assistants looking after the children. The children can also attend different afternoon activities which are offered in English and German, dependent on the activity instructor. It was interesting to hear that the German kindergarten stopped preventing the children from speaking English to each other and now allows them to express themselves in a more linguistically diverse way, using translanguaging practices during the main kindergarten hours. From my observations (for a previous research project) the children were encouraged to speak German during circle time and group activities, but on the playground or during free play time the teachers did not mind them speaking English to each other.

According to Flores and Garcia (2013, 243), all languages are valuable, and speaking different languages is a privilege, not a burden. The two authors point out some features schools need to take into consideration when trying to implement multilingualism. Schools need to learn to embrace the fluid language practices of their bilingual students, not shame students' home languages. They also need to help make classrooms a linguistic third space in which students can make use of their full linguistic repertoire (Flores and Garcia 2013, 243). Bilingualism in this context is still often seen as the mastery of two separate and distinct languages, but according to Flores and Garcia (2013, 245), we need a heteroglossia perspective which acknowledges multilingual speakers' fluid language practices (Flores and Garcia 2013, 245). I can see how these ideas are slowly starting to filter through the more recent research and are challenging the older, colonial ideologies. I can also see this in my

data, for example when Foster´s mother talked about the changing language policies at the German kindergarten where they now allow children to use translanguaging practices and the children's full linguistic repertoires instead of restricting them to only communicating in German. Furthermore, all children during my observations used translanguaging practices, and the parents did not correct the children and rather let them use whatever language they wanted for communication purposes. Foster´s mother points out that they still speak German in Aftercare and their children improve their German by attending German kindergarten. This shows how the parents value the importance of enrolling their children in a German-speaking environment, and the maintenance and improvement of their German skills are seen as a major goal. Furthermore, it shows their belief of English and German as separate and distinct languages which need to be acquired separately. Her comment about the children knowing to whom to speak English and to whom German also strengthens this hypothesis.

### 4. 5 Family language practices and translanguaging

Language practice in families involves the varieties and patterns of language use that are established in the context of particular language ideologies. When talking about language practices, I describe how the family members communicate, what languages they use, and if the children use translanguaging approaches when they talk to me, the researcher, their parents, or siblings. I spoke to the parents during the interviews about their language practices and how they are incorporating the different language resources in their homes. The term translanguaging had not been mentioned specifically by the parents, but it was very clear that it was an important aspect of bilingual upbringing. It was evident in their homes as a practice used not only by the children but also by the parents when communicating with their children.

*Translanguaging approach to language practices*

The term translingual describes, according to Busch (2012, 3), the way different communicative resources are used to create meaning, and what features of heteroglossic language practices give meaning to their speakers. In a translingual space, new identities, values, and practices are being created. Translingual space here describes a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging (Busch 2012, 3). Translanguaging can help bilingual children make meaning, and it allows them to make full use of their linguistic repertoires. Bilingual students, in particular, can profit from meaning-making that comes from being able to use a wide range of linguistic repertoires, and the use of integrated and mixed codes. It is important to recognise children's full linguistic repertoire for meaning-making to enable them to take up positions as knowers and legitimate learners from the very beginning when they enter a school setting. This can help them achieve better results in schooling and make them feel valued (McKinney 2017, 10).

In the following extract, Luca´s parents describe their language practices within their family and the reasoning for only teaching Luca German from the age of two.

> Chris**.** Lots of our friends are German. So, it is a **mix.**
>
> Tash. My family and most of our friend group are bilingual or German here, **they are all German, but they are also English.** Maybe German and English. They can all mix it up.
>
> Chris. **I probably spoke to him in German from the age of two**. You want to have the **same understanding.** Please do not touch it. **You do not want two languages. If you cannot copy someone else.** That was our thesis.
>
> Tash. He is doing **direct translations.** So, the **sentence structure is not great,** which I am not necessarily picking up, because I do not obviously, know the German sentence structure that well. His speech therapist is saying to look out for these things. And **obviously, Chris (Luca´s father) has to correct him.** Not like drilling in, but just to tell him the correct way of saying it. And she said, **you just need to repeat it because he will start dropping the wrong structure, but at the moment, he is doing direct translations.**

It is interesting that his father only started speaking to Luca in German at the age of two. His point was that the child might not understand the meaning of instructions in two languages, and you want to have one family language. When their younger son Sebastian was born, the parents changed their family language practices and spoke to him in German from the beginning. Luca uses direct translation as a language practice and the parents encourage him to use the correct grammatical sentence structure by correcting his mistakes. The family is very interested in pushing German in his last year of kindergarten and they encourage him to speak as much German as possible. They mention having a mixed friendship group consisting of English- and German-speaking people. It is interesting how the father puts it, that they are German, but also English. It shows the normality of being bilingual in South Africa and the hegemony of English. You need to know English when living in South Africa, otherwise, you will have a hard time being integrated professionally, educationally, and socially.

I did not ask for a reason why the parents sent him to speech therapy, but speech therapy usually focuses on the correctness of language, especially when working with direct translations. Generally, I could feel anxiety from the parent's side about Luca´s language development, because he started speaking later than the "average" child and his parents want him to have very good German speaking skills by the time he enters primary school. All parents focused on the language development of their children and expressed the wish for their children to be able to communicate fluently in German when they start school because the language of teaching and learning is German at the German International

School. Luca´s, Roxanne's and Foster´s mother mentioned in conversations about school readiness tests and also language tests for the children as a requirement to be accepted at the German International School. Therefore, it is understandable that they are offering qualitative and quantitative exposure to German to their children and are "pushing" their engagement with the German language.

In this context, the approach of translanguaging could be used as an advantage in Luca's language development. Translanguaging here "refers to a process of going on between different linguistic systems, including different modalities and going beyond them" (Makalela 2015, 4). Multilingual speaker uses their discursive space to make use of their context-sensitive and strategic choices from different language systems to achieve communicative goals. It should not be seen as a disadvantage that Luca uses direct translations and sometimes the grammatically wrong sentence structure in German, but rather be embraced as him making use of his full linguistic repertoire. If implemented correctly, translanguaging approaches can amplify success and they can be used as an intellectual, social, and linguistic resource. Ultimately, they can enhance multilingual and multimodal meaning-making. Translanguaging can be used as a tool for "drawing on children's sociocultural resources, eliciting prior knowledge and ensuring deep understanding" (Guzula, McKinney and Tyler 2016, 213). The acts of translation have the potential to enhance children's simultaneous development of language and literacy in both languages. Luca's parents still see German and English as separate bounded entities and want him to develop grammatical correctness in both languages, therefore his mother points out that his father should correct his mistakes when speaking German. Their goal is for Luca to speak German fluently and grammatically correctly. They are aware of the negative impact that drilling approaches can have on the motivation and learning of children, and therefore choose a gentler approach of repetitive corrections and positive reinforcement.

Foster´s mother describes in the following extract which family language practices their children are engaging in, and when Foster prefers to use English words instead of German words.

> Anne**.** I am not so sure. They speak a lot of **German to each other, but also a lot of English.** I think they always have so many **grammatical particles from German** that they simply **attach to English words** where they cannot think of German at the moment. For example, the older one went to occupational therapy for a while and the occupational therapist also told us that from time to time **he could not think of English words** and then she always had to look up what he was saying right now. But overall, they get by pretty well in both languages, I think. At most, you sometimes think that they almost **always mix both languages.** At least while they are still so young, they **cannot tell the languages apart** one hundred per cent. But I think that will come later.

Foster´s mother mentions that the boys speak both English and German to each other. During my observations, it seemed like they would often initially start speaking to each other in German while playing, and then switch over to English. The younger boy, Hunter, in particular, seemed to choose English as his preferred language more often. The children only spoke German to me and their mother, and their mother sometimes prompted them with the German word if they could not think of the word in German. Interestingly, she mentioned that the boys attach German grammatical particles to English words when they cannot think of the actual German word. That is part of translanguaging, making use of the full range of linguistic resources available to you. Foster went to occupational therapy and sometimes struggled to remember the English words for certain things. It is also normal for children to have different levels of language acquisition in the two languages, and the main goal should be for the children to be able to express themselves to make meaning. Generally, I did not get the feeling that Foster´s mum was very concerned about her children's language development in either of the languages, and she seemed confident that both languages would develop fully and that the children would be able to use German and English fluently.

Translanguaging can be described as "the process of making meaning, sharing experiences, understandings and knowledge through two languages" (Probyn 2019, 220). It can be limiting for the children to only use the target language because they are not allowed to use a large part of their language resources in their multilingual and sociocultural repertories to construct knowledge (Lin 2019, 6). The crucial role of translanguaging and trans-semiotising in the dynamic flow of co-making of knowledge and all available means of meaning-making needs to be recognised (Lin 2019, 12). Therefore, it can be seen as positive that Foster's parents allow the children to speak whatever language they prefer and they do not correct them when they are mixing the two languages. His mother also points out that they might not be able to tell the two languages apart, but my observations proved that they know which language to speak to whom, and they can also name the two languages they speak. I think they rather use translanguaging very naturally and fluently and therefore are only concerned about expressing fully what they want to communicate rather than sticking to one particular language. Translanguaging here refers to "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage to make sense of their bilingual world" (Lin 2019, 8).

In the following extract, Roxanne´s parents describe their family language practices and which languages Roxanne uses to communicate.

> Kim**.** With me, she mostly speaks English. She counts in English and she **mostly speaks English, but I think that's kind of the default** because she is **very comfortable in German at school.** What I have noticed is there have been a few times where judging by **her sentence**

**construction** and the way she has to carefully think about how she is saying something in English that she **had been thinking in German.** So that to me is quite interesting

Werner. She was fine. **Initially, she spoke a lot more Afrikaans.** She spoke both Afrikaans and English initially and then it became just English and now that **frequency slowly starting to come back.**

Roxanne's mother describes that she mostly speaks English, although she is very comfortable speaking German at kindergarten. Her mother's mother tongue is English; therefore, the family language is English. It was interesting to hear that she already started to use German sentence structure when speaking English and that she probably also thinks in German sometimes. Roxanne spoke more Afrikaans initially but seemed to now prefer to speak English and German. I am not sure when the switch happened, if she started to learn German and, in the process, "dropped" her Afrikaans, or if there was less Afrikaans language input provided in her environment. According to Ortega (2014, 42), there is a link between the amount and quality of language input and language development in terms of word learning and grammatical development. Furthermore, there are links between the affordances realised in the linguistic environment of the child and his or her language development in the additional language. It is clear that language learning needs sufficient exposure conditions, and relevant and qualitative linguistic input in the child's surroundings must be present for him or her to achieve age-appropriate language acquisition (Ortega 2014, 43). Generally, all learning is input-driven, material, emergent, particular, and unfinished (Ortega 2014, 47). Even if Roxanne is not reproducing much Afrikaans herself at the moment, she is picking up receptive linguistic resources and she will be able to improve her spoken Afrikaans when she is immersed in sufficient exposure conditions. Afrikaans is part of her linguistic repertoire and she always has the opportunity to fall back on these linguistic resources. Afrikaans and German have similarities regarding sentence structure and vocabulary, therefore knowing Afrikaans will be helpful when learning German and vice versa.

The FLP also plays a role here because her father is responsible for providing her with sufficient language socialisation into Afrikaans culture and heritage. I will introduce the concept of FLP in more detail in the next section. There can be different reasons for parents not speaking enough in their mother tongue to their children and therefore not providing them with rich and diverse language input. I did not ask Werner specifically why he does not only speak Afrikaans to her. During my observations, he was only present for short periods and then he spoke a mix of English and Afrikaans to her.

When completing homework with Roxanne, I witnessed her engaging in translanguaging practices.

Roxanne**.** Das meant wenn es beide Farben sind, dann ist es **turquoise** is (It means, when it is both colours, then it is).

Isabel. Türkis (German).

Roxanne. **I do have skin colour somewhere**. Das ist (that is) **skin colour**

During Roxanne's Kikus class, the teacher gets help from an "assistant" which is a cuddle toy. Kikus is the extra language support class for children whose mother tongue is not German. We were doing homework for this class and I asked her questions about the class.

Roxanne**. It is not a real human; it is a cuddle toy. A knitted toy**

Isabel. Ist das eine Puppe oder ein Tier? Oder was ist das? (Is that a doll or an animal? Or what is that?)

Roxanne. Eine Puppe und es ist ein Mann. Und er hat nur zwei Haare geflochtene zusammen (A doll and it is a man. And he only has two braided hair).

Roxanne can switch easily between German and English and she uses translanguaging naturally. She can make use of the various linguistic resources to make meaning. If she cannot think of a particular word (here colours and nouns), she switches to English. Her stronger language is English but she is very comfortable communicating in German as well. She is not afraid to make mistakes and she can fall back on a broad vocabulary spectrum in English. For her, it is important to share her thoughts and she uses translanguaging to express her full range of communicative needs. Generally, she is a very chatty and open child and she does not seem to mind switching between languages.

Roxanne, her au pair, Lisa, and I were each drawing a picture when I observed her engaging in translanguaging practices with her au pair.

Lisa**.** Ich bin bei Esthers Eltern im Haus im Fahrstuhl stecken geblieben (I got stuck in Ester's parents' house in the elevator)

Roxanne. Was? (What?)

Lisa. Die haben ein Fahrstuhl im Haus. **Elevator**. Da bin ich stecken geblieben (They have an elevator in the house. Elevator. There I got stuck)

Roxanne. Was ist ein Fahrstuhl? (What is an elevator?)

Lisa. Ein **Elevator**, Spatz (An elevator, my dear)

Roxanne asks for translations when she does not understand a word. She can draw on all linguistic resources available to her. She has the metalinguistic awareness to be able to understand direct translations. Translations are part of translanguaging and can be used for the child's understanding

or to help others understand what they are trying to communicate (Garcia et. All 2011, 47). Translations are a way to mediate understanding, and translanguaging can be used as an intellectual, social and linguistic resource. It can help children enhance their multilingual meaning-making by using it as a tool for drawing on children's sociocultural resources, eliciting prior knowledge, and ensuring deep understanding (Guzula, McKinney and Tyler 2016, 213). The acts of translation have the potential to enhance children's simultaneous development of language and literacy in both languages. Translations can be used as a tool for collaborative meaning-making across languages, and they can help to bridge two different cultural worlds. In a study conducted by Manyak (2004, 17), she found positive results from using translanguaging and translations in a primary-grade English immersion class in the US which was attended by English- and Spanish-speaking students. Her results show that translations can promote interpretive discussions of children's literature among students of different language backgrounds, and position bilingualism as a special emblem of academic competence. Furthermore, Manyak argues that the use of translations equips diverse students with valuable resources for life in the 21st century (Manyak 2004, 17). Roxanne asking for translations for words she does not understand can be seen as a positive learning impact, where she is making use of the resources available to her and is not afraid to speak up when she does not understand something.

During the observations, I played a lot of board games with Luca. In the following extract, we were playing a game where the players earn pocket money to buy certain items.

> Isabel**.** Wie viele **coins**, Münzen brauchst du um was zu kaufen? (How many coins do you need to buy something?)
>
> Luca. Drei (three) … Er ist wie eine Räuber. Du kannst ihn wegschießen. Du kannst eine Pirat wegschießen. Wenn du hast nur einen Pirat, du kannst es zusammen auf dem **pile** da machen. (He is like a robber. You can shoot him away. You can shoot away a Pirat, if you only have one pirate, you can put it together on the pile over there) … Du musst drei abgeben, am Besten von den **coins**. Du hast ganz viele. (You have to give away three, best from the coins. You have a lot)

As I introduced the English term "coin", Luca responded by also using the English term in an extended stretch of German, although he also used the English word "pile". In this extract, the two English words are both nouns. He uses translanguaging to make meaning and it is more important for him to communicate what he wants to say than using the target language. He is comfortable switching between languages and uses translations as a tool to mediate understanding (Garcia et al., 2011, 47). He explains a card game with the linguistic resources he has, and by allowing him to speak freely and

not interrupting him when he uses English words, he can express his thoughts and feel heard. Generally, it is useful for children´s language development to let them freely talk and ask them more questions to elaborate more on the discussed topic (Manyak 2008, 451). During my observations I witnessed Luca´s mother asking him questions about what we were doing, and even though he spoke mostly in English to her, she didn't interrupt him when he used a German word now and then. Luca does not seem to be scared of using translanguaging practices and, after the initial stage where he was more shy and less talkative, he is a very open and communicative child.

With translanguaging the starting point is not language as an autonomous skill, but rather the ability to make meaning in the speech community in which the speaker is present at any given moment. Bilinguals can mix and choose features that may be considered parts of different autonomous languages (Garcia et al. 2011, 35). Children can perform hybrid language performances and their linguistic profiles are never static (Garcia et al. 2011, 41). For example, in this extract, Luca can fall back on his English linguistic repertoire while having a conversation in German. He can use his linguistic repertoire flexibly. It is important to understand that bilingualism does not mean one language added to another language, but rather a plurality of languages which mixes different aspects or fractions of language behaviours that are needed to be socially meaningful (Garcia et al. 2011, 42). Children are capable of integrating bits and pieces of new linguistic practices into their complex and growing bilingual repertoire; this way they are creating hybrid language identities (Garcia et al. 2011, 45). Luca can express himself colourfully and engagingly, where he draws on diverse linguistic resources and openly communicates what he wants to share. His parents taught him that he could use whatever language he wanted, and he created an inclusive and engaging language environment for himself.

### 4. 6 Family language policy

Family language policy describes how family members make sense of the multiple languages they use in their everyday lives and the decisions they have to make regarding which languages to keep and which ones to let go (Curdt-Christiansen and Sun 2018, 257). FLP is seen as a dynamic sociocultural practice and it contains aspects of family members' everyday life including emotions, identity, and cultural and political allegiances (Curdt-Christiansen 2018. 423). According to the research of Curdt-Christiansen (2013) and Lanza (2007), decisions about which languages to practice and which ones to abandon are shaped by the ideologies and attitudes of family members. FLP plays a big role in bilingual upbringing and even though I did not ask the parents specifically about their FLP, during my observations I could see certain FLP taking place and them having an influence on the family language practices within their homes.

Lanza (2009) discusses different discourse strategies for parents when interacting with their bilingual children; these strategies are minimal grasp, express guess, repetition, move on, and code-switching. When allowing their children to code-switch the parents are not so concerned about the status of the individual languages. When using code-switching and the move-on strategy, the child might not develop the language properly. When using the minimal grasp strategy, they signal the value they hold for the particular language and hope the value they hold for the language is passed on to the child (Curdt-Christiansen 2022, 4). The discourse strategies parents choose to use reflect their language ideologies. The key concepts for language acquisition are receptive and expressive vocabulary and the provision of quality and quantity of vocabulary input by the parents (Curdt-Christiansen 2022, 5). Generally during my observations, I saw all parents engaging with their children in conversations and encouraging them to talk a lot. The parents usually spoke in their mother tongue to the child and allowed the child to use their linguistic repertoire freely. They engaged in translanguaging practices and usually did not correct them when using an English word in a German sentence and vice versa. Gregory's (2008) study of Bengali families in East London demonstrated that children learn new words from siblings through playing in a home context. During my observations I only saw Hunter and Foster engaging with each other in playtime, Roxanne is an only child and Luca´s brother, Sebastian, is too young to fully talk yet. He was present during the observations but he did not engage in play time with his older brother.

While I was playing a dice game with Luca, he communicated with his mother in English and then continued the conversation with me in German. (Kniffel is when you get the same animal with all five dice, you get the highest points with this dice move)

> Luca**. Mama, make sure he does not break it this time.** Kuck, Kniffel. Jetzt muss ich eine zehn. Aber ich darf nicht nochmal Kniffel haben. (Look, Kniffel. Now I need a ten. But I am not allowed to have Kniffel again)
>
> Isabel. Ist das wie du deine zehn schreibst? Du kannst doch eine zehn schreiben. Eine eins und eine null. Das kannst du bestimmt. (Is that how you write your ten? You can write a ten. A one and a Zero. You can surely do that)
>
> Luca. Ich hab das so gemacht. Das weißt du bestimmt. (I did it this way. You know it surely)

Luca has metalinguistic awareness because he knows who he is speaking to and he chooses the language accordingly. He always speaks English to his mother and he can switch between languages easily. The family follows the 'one parent one language' FLP, but sometimes his mother also speaks some short German phrases to him. Smith-Christmas (2017) describes the 'one parent one language' approach as the combination of one parent from a majority-language-speaking host society and the

other one from another minority-speaking Western country. In this case, the child's linguistic experience is mostly limited to the nuclear family (Abraham Degu 2021, 28). In another essay, Smith-Christmas (2022) created a framework describing a child's agency in FLP at the intersection of compliance regime, linguistic competence, linguistic norms, and power dynamics. The process of FLP is filled with language choice dilemmas triggered by competing linguistic demands, and it is partly shaped by the existing family dynamics and power constellations within the family. Lastly, it is mediated by family members varied linguistic proficiencies in the particular languages spoken in their homes. Another important factor is that the language children choose to speak at home has also an impact on the language practices at home (Abraham Degu 2021, 26). Family members constantly negotiate what languages are spoken and which language is given value. Language choices lead, over time, to family linguistic norms; children have an agency role in the process of FLP, and their language choices and practices will always influence their parents' (Abraham Degu 2021, 30).

I observed the one-parent language approach in all families. The exposure to German is mostly limited to the environment of the kindergarten and at home in the nuclear family. Luca´s parents mentioned having a lot of German-speaking friends and therefore their children meet other German-speaking children outside of the kindergarten environment. Foster´s mother mentioned the importance for the children to know that other families in Cape Town are also German-speaking and she does not want her children to only associate German with her, but also with other people outside their household. I assume Tsikana's and Foster´s mothers have both German-speaking friends in Cape Town because they have lived in the city for a long time and usually people tend to have a network of people from their home country when living abroad. Furthermore, the FLP is influenced by the language-speaking skills of the parents, As mentioned before Luca´s mother and Roxanne's mother only speak very limited German and therefore their children usually communicate in English with them. Both mothers mentioned their wish to learn better German and this might change their FLP in the future. Growing up with siblings also has an impact on language development and the negotiation of FLP. Tsikana, Luca and Foster speak a mix of German and English to their siblings, with Tsikana being the only one who seemed to prefer speaking German. It shows that children have an agency role in the negation of FLP and language practices within families can change for example when parents separate, one parent acquires better language skills or a domestic help with different language skills enters the family.

Foster and Hunter were playing in the living room with a big stuffed animal (monkey). Foster uses translanguaging practices while communicating with his mother.

Foster. Ich mache den König. Ok du kannst nicht mehr. Ich mache den König. Ich bin der König **of the** Affen. (I make the king. Ok, you cannot anymore. I make the king. I am the king of the money)

Isabel. Der Affenkönig (The monkey king)

Anne. König der Affen bist du? (King of the Monkeys, are you?)

Foster. Jetzt muss ich mein Dings bauen. (Now I have to build my thing)

Foster´s family used the one-parent language approach and generally, the mother only speaks German to the boys. During observations, she spoke English to her husband and mother-in-law, but when she addressed the children, it was always in German, even when they spoke English to her or used translanguaging practices. Foster´s mother is a native German speaker which will have an impact on their FLP and fluent language skills in English and German played a role in the negotiating of FLP, because she can express herself fluently in both languages. The children sometimes use translanguaging practices when communicating with their mother and she will repeat the grammatically correct German version back to them. This gives some inside about the compliance regime and power dynamics within the family (Abraham Degu 2021, 29-30). During the observations the mother spoke softly to the children, she gently corrected them when using English words or grammatically incorrect German and then moved on with the conversation. This can also be described with a move-on approach, described by Lanza (1992, 629). These interactions between Foster and his mother furthermore show the agency role of the child in the negotiating of the FLP and the children's impact on the choices of the language practices of the parents. By using translanguaging practices Foster encourages his mother to be more aware of the language practices she engages in and might encourage her to be a good role model by using his full linguistic repertoire.

Foster was playing a phone game where he had to prepare meals for a character. His mother corrects his grammatically incorrect German when he communicates his actions in the game.

Foster. Mama, ich mache **strawberry juice** für er. (Mom, I am preparing strawberry juice for him)

Anne. Für sie meinst du? (For her you mean?)

Foster. Nein, **strawberry** (No, strawberry)

Anne. Ja aber, für sie. Das ist ja ein Mädchen, das du hier gerade bekochst. (Yes, but for her. That is a girl, that you cook for)

Foster's mother corrects him when speaking grammatically incorrect German, and she prompts him with the correct German word when using English particles in his German sentence. It is interesting

in the above extract that she stressed the right personal pronoun but did not repeat the word for strawberry in German. Her teaching the children grammatically correct German can be traced back to particular language ideologies and the belief that a language needs to be learned in a certain way. It is important for her that the boys learn the grammatically correct way of speaking German, and she is teaching them by repetition of words and structures. She does not drill into the grammar but rather uses a subtle and more gentle approach embedded in the meaning they are making in the moments of play. It can be said that this family follows a laissez-faire FLP because they let the children code-mix and code-switch (Curdt-Christiansen 2022, 5). It is more important for them that the children can express themselves freely and that they are making use of their full linguistic repertoire regardless of whether they choose some English words in their German sentences. They follow the 'one parent one language' approach and the mother always speaks in German to the boys. Foster's mother provides a lot of language input in German by only speaking German to the boys. The children have daily exposure to receptive and expressive vocabulary and their mother is very involved in the boys' daily activities. The family does not have a domestic helper and the children are watched in the afternoon by either their mother or grandmother.

### 4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the linguistic repertories, language ideologies, family language practices, and FLP of the participating families. I described several engagements of the children with translanguaging practices and highlighted the importance of allowing children to use their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning. Even though parents did not specifically mention in the interviews using a translanguaging approach, I could witness, during my observations, the children communicating in German while using English words and vice versa. The parents allowed their children to use any preferred language and encouraged them to speak a lot by asking questions and giving them communicative prompts. Foster's mother corrected his grammatically incorrect German twice but did it in a very gentle and subtle way. She uses the repetition of the correct German grammar to teach her children the "right" German way but does not scold them for making mistakes. I could see the intersections between FLP, language ideology, and family language practices during my observations, and want to highlight the importance of letting children use translanguaging practices to communicate and make meaning of the world around them. In the next chapter, I focus on emergent literacy and digital literacy practices. I will introduce the two concepts and show, with the help of my data, the importance of using these practices for children's language and literacy development.

# Chapter 5. Emergent literacy and digital literacy

## 5.1 Introduction

The original intention for my research was to focus mainly on emergent literacy practices of bilingual grade R learners. However, early on in the process, I realised that the management of the German kindergarten strongly discourages parents from teaching their children to read and write at home, because they want all children to start from the same base level when entering grade 1 at the German primary school. Therefore, the families I observed were hesitant to engage their children too much in early literacy practices, especially regarding their writing. This is a powerful ideology that flowed out of the wider linguistic environment and shaped the family literacy practices. Having explored these wider linguistic environments in the previous chapter, I now show how elements of the repertoires, ideologies, practices and policies, as well as some of the contradictions and processes of change and fluidity, flow into and shape the engagements with literacy that I observed.

## 5.2 Overview of literacy practices in the participating families

Roxanne was, according to her parents, interested in literacy practices and curious to learn how to read and write. The three boys (Luca, Tsikana and Foster) did not show much interest in literacy learning or reading books. I had all four children sign their consent form for the research and Luca and Foster struggled to write their own names. During my observations at the German kindergarten, I attended a morning circle with their grade R class and I saw their teacher engaging them with early literacy learning. This involved letter and sound recognition and reading (or memorising) the days of the week, the current date and month and some numbers. During my first visit to their homes, the children showed me their books and I took photos of different literacy artefacts like drawings, alphabet and number posters as well as some early literacy and numeracy workbooks. All families created print-rich environments for their children and engaged in bedtime story reading. Foster's mother shared that the boys are not very interested in actual books, and she sometimes lets them listen to audiobooks for bedtime stories. Luca recently (at the time of my first visit) got a tiger box, which is a device to play children's audiobooks and he also enjoyed listening to stories before bedtime. Roxanne was the only child I read some stories to during my observations and she was always very interested and engaged. During my observations, I encountered less engagement with literacy than I originally expected. I was surprised by this, although on reflection I wondered if my research methods may have limited exposure to such practices. I had hoped that the stimulated recall interviews would elicit some evidence of literacy practices that I was not able to observe, but there was not much data from these related to literacy, and it may well be that longer observation periods could have revealed more. All three children did engage a lot in drawings or some kind of art project, and this is an

important part of emergent literacy. Besides the children writing their names, I did not witness any other early writing attempts or practising letter sound recognition. I observed some engagement with emergent literacy practices in their family homes, for example, storybook reading and drawings with Roxanne, and doing arts and crafts activities with Luca. During the interviews, the parents seemed to connect literacy with conventional reading and writing and were not aware that literacy engagement can include a much broader range of activities such as colouring, scribbling, rhyming, playing school and recognising certain letters in pieces of writing.

I discussed the concerns of parents regarding the teaching of literacy to their children in the bilingual family environment. Roxanne's and Lucas's mothers both mentioned to me that they feel worried about their children attending German primary school and they feel unequipped to teach their children reading and writing in German because they are both not fluent in the language.

Roxanne's mother commented on the disadvantages of raising bilingual children, one of them was about not being fluent in the language of teaching and learning of her daughter.

> Kim. I could see some disadvantages. There are some challenges. For example, I want to start helping her more with schoolwork. She is very interested in learning how to read and write and I want to start helping her with that. But **I am not quite sure where to start.** I am thinking because of the German school, I should start in German. But **I have no idea how to teach your child to read and write in German.** I would have to figure it out in English, but I think then she would have a pretty good head start. But because German is very much a third language that I am still learning, I would not know how to go about it. That is a challenge. But I think I would not see any other negatives. She often asks for this app, I have an app on my phone called Reading Eggs, which teaches through games. It **teaches children the English alphabet**, and **I have been holding back on that because the kindergarten has said that they prefer to get them going in German.** We **have not found a German equivalent reading and alphabet learning stuff.** It is a lovely app that teaches basically through playing games.

It is interesting to note that Roxanne is already interested in learning how to read and write, because none of the boys are, according to their parents. Roxanne's mother mentioned that German is her third language and she does not know how to teach reading and writing in German. This indicates that she understands that there is a difference in literacy in German and English. For example, the German alphabet has 4 extra letters (ä, ö, ü, ß). Furthermore, it is a fascinating comment about the

German kindergarten not wanting the parents to teach the children the alphabet in a different language as they would rather have the children first be introduced to the German alphabet.

During the interview with Luca´s parents, I asked them about what is involved in literacy learning for children. His mother shared some differences in teaching literacy in English and German.

> Tash. Just reading from a young age, Sebastian is not interested, after just two pages he closes the book. Luca loves his stories, he loves having a book read to him, and he enjoys it. So, I am hoping just the love of books kind of leads the way into it. Some children just understand the concept. My niece when she was in grade one, picked up reading straightaway, she understood the concept. Obviously from English, we have those Dr. Seuss books in English, and they are fantastic for getting children to start reading because of the rhyming of easy sentences. That is how she started. **I do not know what German books there are which are equivalent.** We are starting to repeat, repeat because it is the rhyming. It will be interesting because obviously, **they learn German.** So, for me i**t will be a difference,** I will have to guide **him in a German way**. From **the phonetic sounds,** which are also **very different to English**. That is going to be interesting.

Tash notes the differences in teaching literacy in German and English, especially when it comes to teaching phonetics and sounds. She mentions, like Roxanne's mother, that she does not know much literacy teaching material in German. However, she is aware that engaging in rhyming can help children to be familiar with phonetics, and it is part of learning how to read. What the mothers say comes back to the view of languages as bounded separate entities as was outlined in Chapter 4. When it comes to literacy, every language is then viewed as having its system which needs to be learned separately, for fear of confusion and/or boredom. There's a sense that teaching one might contaminate the learning of the other. It also shows the ideology of the German kindergarten which states that it is the school's "job" to teach children about literacy and it is not necessary for parents to teach and engage their children "too much" with literacy at home. Therefore, the language and literacy ideologies of the kindergarten shape how literacy practices take place in family homes. It is quite a rigid ideology to only associate literacy learning with school literacy because it does not give credit to other forms of literacy such as emergent literacy practices as well as the rich and fluid language practices that take place in the homes.

### 5.3 Engagement in literacy events in the home

During the interviews, I asked the parents to share their engagement with literacy events. There was quite a lot going on in the homes, despite the strongly held beliefs outlined above. Literacy events

and literacy practices are key to understanding literacy as a social phenomenon. Literacy events can be described as concrete evidence of literacy practices. Shirley Brice Heath (1982) developed the notion of literacy events as a tool for examining the forms and functions of oral and written language. According to her, (1982, 93) literacy events are "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants 'interactions and their interpretive processes". Any activity in which literacy has a role is a literacy event. As Barton and Hamilton (2000, 8) say "Events are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them. The notion of events stresses the situated nature of literacy, that it always exists in a social context". The concept of literacy events describes a wide range of activities which are not limited to schooled forms of reading and writing, like decoding. Literacy events are defined by their members' common social practices with written language, for example, talking about family letters, attending religious services or poetry readings, and reading scientific articles are common ways of interpreting these practices. However, the parents tended to interpret my questions through the lens of schooled literacy, with the emphasis on what skills the children might be learning rather than the wider social practices in which they might be engaging, like going to a restaurant and reading a menu, or inquiring about a letter received or reading signs and notices in the environment.

I asked Roxanne's parents about their engagement with literacy at home.

> Kim. At the moment she is very interested. I would say that in **terms of reading or writing, it is mostly English** because that is most of what she encounters on television or what we are doing. We try when we have to help her write a message on a birthday card or whatever to **write it on paper** and she **carefully copies it.**
>
> Werner. **She writes in English and German** and sometimes she responds to it. So, she recognises, although, I think it is also important to say **we do read to** her every night she chooses a variety of books. But she does many defaults to the English and we do have more English books than others. But that then? we also return to Afrikaans and German, and then she corrects us when we read because of the pronunciation. She notices the letters, that there is an r an a and an O in there, and that they are also in her name. She knows that.

Roxanne's parents are helping her to engage in literacy by reading her bedtime stories and writing her examples of messages she can copy. Roxanne has started to notice letters in pieces of writing, especially the ones in her name. Letter recognition is an early stage of learning how to read and is part of emergent literacy. They understand that emergent literacy practices are important for children in their literacy development, and they are following her interest in learning how to read and write. They mention the difference between German and English in terms of exposure and therefore,

understand that language plays a role in literacy learning. It is interesting that despite the strongly held beliefs about separating the languages, they are not too bothered that she is writing "in English and German". It's also interesting that she corrects her parents' pronunciation as it is unlikely that this would happen much in a monolingual household, so in this way, Roxanne is gaining a metalinguistic awareness of languages. Although this is not an issue that has been much researched, awareness of pronunciation may also be an important part of bilingual literacy learning. Although Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998, 850) listed vocabulary, conventions of print, emergent writing, knowledge of graphemes, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, and phonological awareness as the skills and knowledge base of emergent literacy, this list would seem to pertain more to emergent literacy in monolingual homes.

I asked Tsikana´s mother about their engagement with literacy at home.

> Esther. Tsikana is asking. Numeracy was never his strength. But all of a sudden, we are trying to teach him a little bit more about simple **number recognition,** like your passcode on your cell phone. He has a passcode on the on the iPad. Especially passwords we teach them, your telephone number and writing his name. On his last birthday, we did it the old school way and **we wrote the invitation cards,** so he had to **write all his friends' names, and he copied the letters.**

It is interesting to note that Tsikana´s mother sees numeracy as a part of literacy learning and that Tsikana is recently more interested in numeracy. Luca´s and Foster´s parents said something similar, and I wonder if their interest in numeracy was sparked by something taught in their grade R curriculum. She is helping Tsikana with his literacy learning by giving him writing examples to copy, just like Roxanne's mother mentioned in a previous extract. Copying seems to be a common method to engage children in literacy learning.

I asked Foster´s mother about their engagement with literacy at home.

> Anne. **Not much reading and writing ye**t, especially since **neither of them are in real school yet**. At the moment we are more **working on numbers,** they are working with **Anton's app i**n the evenings. I think it is cool that it is available in many languages, at least in different European languages. We just set it up to German and I think we **will explore the other subjects a bit later.**

Foster is also interested in numeracy, like Luca and Tsikana. His mother encourages his engagement with numeracy by offering him a literacy learning app. He was the only child I observed engaging in

digital literacy practices during my observations. His mother seems to have the ideology that the school will teach the children literacy, and she comments that the boys do not engage much with reading and writing because they are not in school yet. This shows that the ideology of seeing literacy as an autonomous system which is learnt in a staged and sequenced way, from the basic building blocks up. She seems to believe there is no need for engagement with literacy at home in the form of exposing the children to explicit reading and writing when the children are not yet attending primary school.

I asked Luca´s parents about their engagement with literacy at home.

> Tash. We **read every night bedtime stories,** we have mostly German books and then sometimes I will give them an English book. And then we bought that tiger box in Germany now, which is quite nice for him. He enjoys it. He can listen to the audio when he is lying in bed. He likes songs, I download playlists of German children's songs from Spotify which are quite familiar. The **kindergarten in terms of reading dominates.** We have the German radio thing. If he watches a film or something, we put it into German for him. Some of the audio will be in English too. He is not writing, **he is just trying to write his name,** which is not correct yet. But he i**s interested in numbers**, so now we are starting to count. He is counting between English and German. He will say it first in German, and then he will say it in English. He **understands the number of sequencings in both languages**, I can see that starting to happen.

Luca´s parents engage him with literacy by reading him storybooks and following his interest in numeracy. He understands the number sequencing in English and German. They also use audiobooks and music to engage him with literacy. Interestingly, they mention that “the kindergarten dominates in terms of reading”. I am assuming they are talking in terms of German language input when providing reading material. Roxanne’s mother mentioned to me that the children are allowed to take books home from kindergarten over the weekend, but the kindergarten only provides German books. Luca is learning how to write his name, even though it is not written correctly yet, according to his mother. I also witnessed on the consent form, that he wrote C mirrored. He engages with literacy in English and German because his parents present his books, songs and TV shows in both languages.

I asked Luca´s parents about homework assigned by the kindergarten.

> Tash. When we met with the teacher, she said that in **grade one they expect them to count up to 10.** And **they do not expect them to write because that happens next year,** otherwise, the children are bored. She is **starting to teach them,** but she says it in a fun way. So, it is

not like just sitting down they play games, and they do funny ways of bringing up **the letters and numbers for the kids to remember.** I **bought some books now to trace numbers and letters,** so he can start getting the feel of it. So, I do not know how much they need to do at home, but **she [the teacher] has not indicated that we have to do extra lessons.** I know that some of the parents asked for some **worksheets** and that we at home are doing the same thing that she is doing in school, but **she has not provided any** so I am assuming it is not necessary. I think we have a teacher meeting in June, they do a term meeting. I think then they also select which **children need to do the school readiness test.** We will find out if Luca is one of them or not.

The mother mentioned that the kindergarten not expecting the children to be able to read and write yet, (as the German kindergarten will teach literacy in grade 1 – "that happens next year"), indicating that learning to read and write is a very specific school-based process. In addition, there is some anxiety about how the process is regulated by the school, as there has not yet been an indication that there should be extra lessons but there will be a "school readiness" test. Amongst the families studied there was a sense that this process is highly regulated and separated from everyday life, needing extra lessons and taken out of parents' hands.

However, Tash had bought Luca some literacy learning books where he could colour letters, trace letters, and learn about phonetics and sound-letter recognition. Luca showed me these books during my first visit; however, he has not started engaging with these workbooks yet. The kindergarten also does not provide any homework or worksheets for the children to practice literacy at home. The only worksheets I saw in Luca´s kindergarten folder was from Kikus's class, and these were mostly colouring in tasks.

I asked Tsikana´s mother about what kind of activities parents can provide at home to encourage children´s literacy learning.

> Esther. I think it is little tasks like starting to **write their names,** Mama, Papa and family names or general **counting things** when setting the table. Put five forks on the table and five spoons. Back in the day, we used to learn the clock, sitting there with a proper clock and **learning time.** I think if you use daily things to involve the kids more, for example, your **telephone number and how to do things**. You show them.

The mother again mentions numeracy learning as part of literacy learning. She also includes learning about the time and reading a clock in the field of literacy learning. She has an interactive and hands-

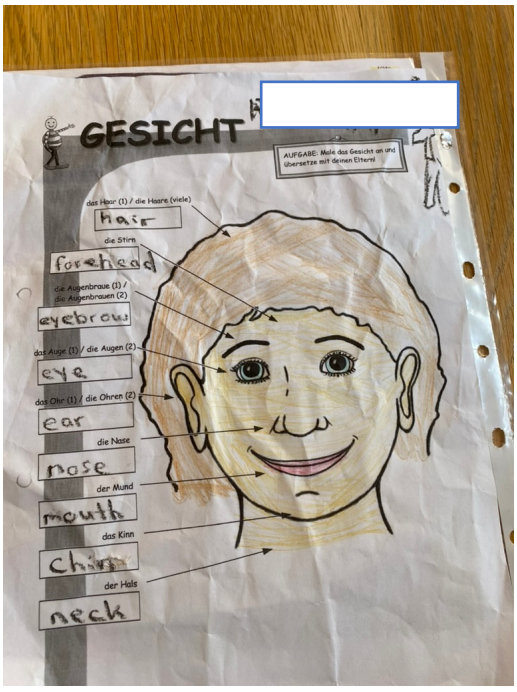
on teaching approach and encourages her children to be involved in daily activities. She likes teaching them about numeracy while engaging in household activities, such as setting the table or giving someone your phone number.

### 5.4 Emergent literacy practices amongst children

Emergent literacy according to Bloch (2006, 9) is the construction of children's literacy in personal, useful and meaningful ways, as part of developmental, personal, social and cultural learning processes. I discussed the theoretical framework of emergent literacy practices in detail in Chapter 2.

*Roxanne's engagement with emergent literacy*

In the following section, I draw on observations related to early writing, starting with an episode with Roxanne, where her mother asked me to help her finish her Kikus homework. I did some research on Kikus and it is an interactive multilingual Language-Learning Software. I assume the teacher uses this software for her classes and that is the reasoning behind the name of the class - Kikus. This is a German language class in kindergarten, which takes place once a week for all bilingual children. In this week's class, they learnt about body parts, and Roxanne had a worksheet to complete, which showed the outlines of body parts, with arrows pointing to certain body parts which need to be labelled. Roxanne pointed to a body part and named it in English and German. I wrote the body part in English and Roxanne coloured the face. She also wrote her name on the top (not included due to the need to anonymise).




Isabel. Was ist das hier? (What is that?)

Roxanne. Eyebrow.

Isabel. In Deutsch? (In German?)

Roxanne. Augenbraue

Figure 2. Kikus's homework from Roxanne

With colouring in, children learn how to hold a colouring pen and how to stay within certain lines. This can help them to acquire writing-related skills. Roxanne is already able to colour in neatly and stay inside the outlines. Emergent writing describes children's practices of scribbling, drawing and non-conventional spellings. This usually happens long before they start to learn conventional writing (Sulzby and Teale 1986, 737). I have not observed Roxanne's writing during my observations (besides her name). I asked her if she could write the words of the body parts herself, however, she said they had not learnt how to write yet.

We then read the English picture storybook "Aurora and the Helpful Dragon" which she chose from her bookshelf. It was evident that Roxanne lives in a print-rich environment as she has a wide range of books in English and German to choose from. While reading, I asked questions, mainly using German, and Roxanne pointed out objects. I also commented on events happening in the book. I tried to keep her engaged by labelling different animals and objects. By letting her choose the books she wants to read I gave her independence to make her own decisions and kept her interested in the activity. She showed the ability to use her bilingual language skills to make meaning and had the metalinguistic awareness to be able to translate animal names from German to English.

> Isabel. Wo ist der kleine Drache? (Where is the little dragon?)
> Roxanne. Er hat Feuer gespuckt. (He spit fire)
> Isabel. Und hier auch. (Also, here)
> Isabel. Ist er schwimmen gegangen? (Did he go swimming?)
> Roxanne. Er ist runtergefallen. (He has fallen down)
> Isabel. Was ist das? Kennst du das Tier? (What is that? Do you know the animal?)
> Roxanne. Das ist der kleine Vogel, was hilft ihm. (That is the small bird which helps him).
> Isabel. Ein Papagei. Weißt du was Papagei ist auf English? (A parrot. Do you know how to say parrot in English?
> Roxanne. **Parrot.**

Storybook reading is part of emergent literacy practice, it is socially created and interactive (Sulzby and Teale 1991, 731). With very young children the adult usually focuses on labelling and commenting on items in pictures. While reading I pointed to the actions the dragon is doing, for example, he spits fire and he went swimming. Another storybook procedure which is associated with middle-class socialisation as described in Heath's study (1982), is asking W-questions. I used this strategy when asking Roxanne "Where is the little dragon?" and "What is that? Do you know the animal?". Book reading can facilitate literacy development and the implementation of certain

techniques can help to increase expressive language use and general language abilities (Sulzby and Teale 1991, 736-737). For bilingual children it is thus important to engage with books in both languages and give them opportunities to make use of their linguistic repertoire. I tried doing the same when asking Roxanne for the translation of a parrot and naming the animals she encountered in the book. The parents of bilingual children are encouraged to provide reading material in both languages and children need to be given the space to use their full linguistic repertoire when engaging in storybook reading. I engaged Roxanne in reading comprehension and wanted her to be an active part of the process and make use of multiple languages to make meaning.

The dynamics of book reading display the language and literacy socialisation of a white middle-class family. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (2005, 480), a child in this social class is generally seen as a social object when being engaged in social interactions with adults where the child is seen as a communicative partner and addressed in a dyadic turn-taking model of communication. The caretaker is taking the perspective of the child, and the adult is trying to reduce the competence gap by simplifying their speech or interpreting what the child is expressing. Roxanne is old enough to express her thoughts and participate in the conversation. The turn-taking is taking place and she is valued as a conversation partner.

*Roxanne's engagement with alphabet learning*

Even though the school does not encourage engagement with literacy, and wishes the children to focus on reading and writing in German, Roxanne does engage with the alphabetic principle as can be seen in the following event where Roxanne shows me a literacy learning workbook. The exercises in the book include tracing letters finding a certain letter in pictures and colouring them. The workbook is in German. She sings the ABC in English. I tried encouraging her to sing the song in German, but she refused and told me she only knew the song in English. I assume she did learn the alphabet song in German in her grade R class, but she might not be confident enough to sing it in German. She has the metalinguistic awareness to know that English and German are different languages. Her engagement with literacy at home seems to be mostly in English and even though she is confident and fluent in speaking German, she seems to be hesitant to engage with literacy in German.

In the following extract, she showed me her literacy learning workbook and engaged in a conversation about the alphabet song.

Roxanne. ABC die Katze liegt im Schnee (ABC the cat lays in the snow)

Isabel. Sehr gut (Very good)

Roxanne. Ich kann es nur auf English. (I can only say it in English)

Isabel. Es war doch richtig. ABCDE. Was ist das? (Points to F) (But it was correct. ABCDE. What is that?)

Roxanne. Ich will es nur auf Englisch machen. Sings ABC song. (I can only do it in English)

The German alphabet has four extra letters in comparison to the English alphabet (ä, ö, ü, ß). Therefore, the German alphabet has 30 letters instead of 26. When writing with an English keyboard, you can use ae for ä, oe for ö, ue for ü and ss for ß. A speciality of writing German is that all nouns are capitalised. Names of people, places, institutions, countries, etc. are also capitalised. The phonetic sounds of German and English are quite similar. For example, when citing the alphabet in German, you would not include the letters ä, ö, ü, ß, you only say/sing the 26 letters. Confusing phonetic sounds in German are E and I because German E sounds like an English I and German I sounds like an English E. The two sounds that sound quite different in German and English are W and Y. It is often said that correct spelling in German is difficult to learn because you write the words often differently to their sound. Children at primary school will learn conventional spelling from the beginning, they are not allowed to write words like they sound to them. From my own experience, I would say that German primary schools are very focused on teaching grammatically correct spelling from grade one and children are not encouraged to use inverted spelling or writing words according to how their spelling sounds to them. Roxane can write her name correctly. Luca and Foster both struggled with writing their name correctly and mirrored some letters in their name. For now, that seemed to be expected by the parents, but when entering school, they are probably encouraged early on to "stick to" conventional spelling.

During my observations with Roxanne, I saw she owns literacy learning books and she engages with literacy by tracing the letters finding certain letters and colouring them. She is starting to recognise certain letters and create a system in her head to connect the sounds and letters. I did not see her engage in writing practices, but I saw an alphabet written on her board, she asked me to read some paragraphs in a literacy learning book out loud to her and she sang the alphabet song for me. Her parents mentioned she is more and more interested in learning how to read and write and is looking forward to going to primary school.

*Roxanne's engagement with drawings*

We were sitting on the floor and each drawing a picture of a beach. While drawing Roxanne was practicing her pencil grip and fine motor skills which will help her later to learn how to write. While drawing we had conversations about whales. Lisa, her German au pair who takes care of her once per week, had mentioned beforehand that she went to Hermanus last year and saw some whales there.

> Roxanne. Ich habe schon Orkawale gesehen. (I have already seen orcas)
>
> Lisa. Oh, ja natürlich. Du bist ein kleiner Spinner (Oh yes of course. You are a little tale-spinner)
>
> Roxanne. Was ist das? (What is that?)
>
> Lisa. Du (You)
>
> Roxanne. Was it das? (What is that?)
>
> Lisa. Das ist jemand der flunkert, der manchmal Quatsch erzählt. (That is someone that tells stories, who sometimes talks nonsense)
>
> Roxanne. Ich erzähl nicht Quatsch (I never tell nonsense).

Figure 3. Drawing of the beach from Roxanne

She can share her thoughts in German and make meaning through linguistic resources available to her. She can draw on her linguistic repertoire and can have meaningful conversations in German. She asks for explanations if she does not know the word in German. She is interested in learning new words and she has metalinguistic awareness to recognise that different languages have different words for the same object. She can use translanguaging naturally during the conversation. The pictures we painted were not related to the conversation.

Elisabeth Lanza conducted a study of American-Norwegian families' strategies (2007). The one strategy I observed in the above extract is called "move-on strategy". This strategy describes the adult not intervening and letting the conversation take its course. In the conversation the au-pair, Lisa, does not try to steer the conversation in a certain direction. She lets Roxanne participate freely in the conversation and encourages her to make use of her full linguistic repertoire. She lets Roxanne ask for explanations of words she does not understand.

*Luca´s art and craft activity as emergent literacy*

Luca and I did some arts and crafts together. He got a set to build swords and put stickers with tape on it. The shapes of the stickers are printed on the sword and you need to put the correct shaped sticker on it. In the end, you glued the actual sword plate and the hand holder part together. We engaged in a conversation about the material needed for the art project.

> Luca. Du meinst **glitter glue** (you mean glitter glue)
>
> Isabel. **Glitter glue** ist das auch. Du meinst Glitzerkleber. (It is also glittering glue. You mean glitter glue)
>
> Luca. Wir können auch diese benutzen, Glitzerstifte. Ich hole dann eine **safety mat.** (We can also use these, glitter pens. I will take now a safety mat)

We continued sticking the stickers on the sword. I wanted to know if he knew the names of the shapes and asked him to name the shapes.

> Isabel. Es gibt Sterne, es gibt Kreise. (There are stars, there are circles)
>
> Luca. Es gibt die **Mantel** und es gibt Dreiecke, und es gibt die **Mantel** (There are the mantel and there are triangles, and there are the mantel).
>
> Isabel. Diese Quadrate gibt es auch. Die sind aber schön hier gemacht. (There are also squares, they are done pretty).

He uses English words for nouns he does not know in German. He knows some shapes and he uses the word "mantel" to describe lozenge (die Raute). Mantel means coat in German; he came up with his word for the shape lozenge. He uses translanguaging to make meaning and he uses his imagination to come up with his own words. I am assuming he learned the shapes in kindergarten as part of the grade R curriculum. By sticking the shapes to the drawn-out lines of the shapes on the sword Luca is practising fine motor skills, which will help him to hold a pencil correctly when learning how to write. Children in white middle-class families are part of conversational exchanges, they are seen as sociable and capable of intentionality (Ochs and Schiefflein 2005, 475). The meaning of the conversation is negotiating between child and adult (Ochs and Schiefflein 2005, 478-479). In this context, it is always

a child-centred orientation and the child gets socialised into reacting to a certain type of social and cultural system (Ochs and Schiefflein 2005, 500). Luca has learned that conversations with adults are usually dyadic and take place in turn-taking patterns. He contributes to the conversation, can speak freely and is not stopped by his limited language knowledge of certain topics (here shapes). He issues his full linguistic repertoire and is seen as an equal conversation partner.

A lot of the activities I observed reminded me of Heath's study which demonstrated different kinds of "schooled" activities. These "schooled" activities are valued by middle-class schools and children in middle-class families like Lucas often engage in this particular kind of activity already at home before entering primary school. By providing arts and craft activities, especially such where school-related skills are practised the parents provide opportunities for Luca to engage in emergent literacy practices and get a head start before entering primary school. This is a very common factor in White middle-class households and can be linked to Heath's study which found that White middle-class families value the same literacy activities and literacy models as schools (Heath, 1982, 15).

**5. 5 Emergent literacy practices involving digital literacy**

I only observed digital literacy practices with Foster during observations, but also parents of the other three children mentioned engagement with digital literacy in the interviews. Roxanne used to be allowed to watch TV in German during the week and in English on the weekend. Now the family decided to only let her allow to watch TV on the weekends, but she did not specify in which language she is watching TV. Concerning audio mediums, Roxanne's mother mentioned the following. "In the morning we play songs on the way to school with some German CDs, so yes songs." All families are trying to expose their children to a lot of German entertainment and they use a wide variety of technologies to give their children extra language input. Luca is watching German TV before bed, but according to his mother "Some of the audio will be in English too.". The families are using often audiobooks and music to engage their children in German entertainment. Luca´s mother mentioned. "He likes songs, I download playlists of German children's songs from Spotify which are quite familiar." With internet access there are almost endless possibilities for parents to access music, books, audiobooks and videos for children in multiple languages. The parents also bought Luca a tiger box which is a device for listening to audiobooks, you can purchase licenses for audiobooks online. It is a German toy; therefore, I am assuming the audiobooks are all in German because the father mentioned you can only buy them in Germany. It was interesting that Luca´s mother mentioned "the kindergarten in terms of reading dominates", I am assuming she meant that the kindergarten only introduces the children to German books and they only read German books in circle time. Roxanne's

mother also mentioned that the children are allowed to take books home over the weekend and they are all German books.

Tsikana´s mother uses digital technologies to engage her son with numeracy. She mentioned to me, “We are trying to teach him a little bit more about simple number recognition, like your passcode on your cell phone. He has a passcode on the iPad.”. It can be more interesting and interactive for children to learn about literacy and numeracy when it is integrated into their day-to-day life, they can see the connection of why it is useful to learn how to read numbers and letters and can feel more independent when they can, for example, navigate their own iPad. Tsikana´s parents are also using music to provide language input in different languages. His mother told me: “My husband is playing a lot of Portuguese music for the children, children's songs, which are available online”. It is evident again, that access to the internet can be very helpful in providing a wide range of resources to children and a lot of media online will be accessible free as well. The family followed the one-parent language approach; therefore, the father is responsible for providing media language input in Portuguese and the mother in German. His mother made that clear in the following quote. “The same with if they have screen time. From my side, I always put something on learning effective like Sendung mit der Maus or documentaries which then will be in German.”. It shows their interest in engaging their children in learning supportive content, they want to provide language input and expose their children to educational content. This can be linked to parents’ wish to engage their children in school literacy-related activities because when watching documentaries, they will be exposed to topics, they will also encounter in school. Furthermore, Tsikana also likes to listen to music and audiobooks and audiobooks are also a good resource to “train” children´s imagination, because they do not have the characters in picture form like on TV, but have to imagine themselves how characters and places might look like.

Foster is the only one who has his phone, but I assume the other three children also get to engage with their parents´ phones sometimes. Foster´s mother told me the boys are not very interested in books, but more in “more digital stuff, but that is all pretty easy to get on the internet.”. The access to the internet provided an almost endless resource supply for parents, especially if they know the language well and are familiar with websites providing content for children and families. The children are also allowed to watch TV and they watch in German and English, depending on which show they like to watch. The mother does not seem to be too concerned only providing them media exposure in German, because they already speak a lot of German at home due to her being a native speaker. The mother likes to engage Foster with numeracy and literacy with the help of an app on the phone, “at the moment we are more working on numbers, they are working with Anton app in the evenings”.

Using apps and games can be a great way to introduce children to literacy. Roxanne's mother also mentioned an app called "Reading Eggs" which introduced the alphabet in English and Roxanne enjoys digitally engaging with literacy. The activities in the apps are available in different languages and parents need to choose which language and media outlet they want their children to use. Especially for bilingual families, it can be difficult to decide in which language to start teaching their children about literacy and numeracy and providing equal input in all languages. Foster´s mother mentioned the advantage of having an app which provided learning games in multiple languages. "I think it is cool that it is available in many languages, at least in different European languages. We just set it up to German and I think we will explore the other subjects a bit later.". Foster is also allowed to play games on his phone and I observed him playing different games. They all did not provide much language input, but he had to navigate digital literacy and encountered some letters like x for closing the ad or the start button for starting the game. The above examples from the parents' interviews about the children´s engagement with digital literacy show the importance of providing media content in different languages and show the possibilities for engaging digitally with literacy from a young age.

*Foster´s engagement with digital literacy*

Forster played different games on the phone. He cannot read yet, but he knew which buttons to press to make the ads disappear. He used a trial-and-error approach to find the correct buttons. He knew how to turn the WIFI on the phone off to play games offline without ads. He knew the play button would start the game. We had a conversation while he played the game.

> Foster. Ich geh jetzt mal hoch, ich fliege (I go now up, I fly)
> Isabel. Fliegst du? (Are you flying?)
> Foster. Ja kuckst, ich kann fliegen. Warte lass mich **raus Wasser. I**ch schwimme nicht mal. Nein (Yes look, I can fly. Wait let me out water. I do not even swim?)
> Isabel. Bist du gestorben? (Did you die?)
> Foster. Oh man nein ich hab noch drei Leben. Mist. Oh man. Jetzt hab ich halb von einem Leben. (Oh no, no, I still have three lives. Damit. Oh no. Now I have half of a life)
> Isabel. Hast du ein Leben verloren schon? (Did you lose a life?)
> Foster. Warte wie krieg ich mehr Leben? (Wait how do I get more lives?)
> Isabel. Musst du was suchen vielleicht? Oder Lebensenergie, ich weiß nicht. Essen? (Do you have to search for something maybe? Or live energy, I do not know? Food?)

I introduced the concept of digital literacy in Chapter 2. Digital literacy according to Levy (2009,78) is how children develop strategies to use and read different screen texts with fluency. Foster was the

only child I observed engaging in digital literacy and I will show his interactions with phone games in the following sections. The phone games I observed did not have many sounds, writing or general language involved, but if they did, they were in English. During conversations with me and his mother, he uses German with some translanguaging practices.

He knows how to operate the game, he can use the buttons to move the player, and knows that he needs to find food for energy. There is music in the background, but otherwise, there is not much language happening. There are symbols for food and energy, but there is no writing underneath them. I assume the game is in English, but I cannot remember with certainty. Even though he cannot read yet, he can navigate the game and he knows he still has three lives left and needs to look for opportunities to regain a life. According to Levy (2009, 84), children learn transferable literacy skills when engaging in digital literacy and this can also be seen with Foster. Even when engaging in new games, he can use skills he learned while playing other games and he can navigate new technologies with ease. Foster is already very good at navigating the phone and he memorised certain words or buttons to start the game, choose his character, and check for how many lives he has left. Coming from a middle-class family he has had access to technology from an early age and already had his phone at the age of six. Even though there are no specific literacy learning programs, he is playing and engaging with digital literacy and becoming familiar with multimodal texts. This aligns with the statements of Levy (2009, 84) who points out that children of the current generation acquire digital literacy skills from a young age and engagement with multimodal modes of literacy needs to be encouraged. He can make use of his linguistic repertoire by playing the game in English and communicating with me in German. You could tell that he played the game before and he knew how to navigate it quite effortlessly.

Figure 4. Photo of phone game played by Foster

The forms of play have changed in the last thirty years. Children nowadays play by pushing, holding and clicking buttons and icons. Foster was the only child that was allowed to play on the phone during my observations, but I assume that the other children are also allowed to play with digital technologies in the evening or on weekends. Luca and Roxanne's parents both mentioned letting their children play games on their iPads and watching TV. Lastly, I want to summarise that children engage in a wide range of emergent literacy practices and these are dependent on the families' resources, the socio-cultural environment, the time and quality of child-parent interactions, and also the interest of the individual child. Foster for example was very interested in engaging in digital literacy but showed no interest in storybook reading. Whereas Roxanne loved to be read to, but during the observations showed no desire to engage with digital multimodal forms of literacy.

### 5. 6 Literacy as autonomous and schooled

Street's (1984) concept of "the autonomous model of literacy" is based on the idea that the skills of reading, writing and enumerating are context-free and universal in time and space. Furthermore, it assumes that learning these literacy skills will generate consequences for cognition, social progress and individual achievement. In other words, they are generic skills. This model of literacy aligns with skills-based approaches which see literacy learning as the acquisition of sets of decontextualised rules and patterns, for example. phonics checklists, spelling rules and traditional grammar. This has an effect on how schools conceptualise and teach literacy, but it also has an effect on parents' ideology of literacy and how they engage at home with literacy with their children. In the observed families the parents thought that the children would learn reading and writing in school, and the German kindergarten even discouraged the parents from teaching literacy at home because they want all children in grade one in primary school to start from the beginning together. The autonomous model ignores sociocultural or home practices of literacy. In this model particular school-based approaches to literacy are valued. Schools have the power to dictate to families about what should happen around literacy in the home and parents accept the school's advice because they want access for their children.

In the following extracts, I present what the parents have said about their beliefs regarding literacy learning in school. It shows that the parents believe that literacy learning will take place mostly in school and that literacy is made up of acquired skills which have to be taught in a specific way. They do not seem to focus on the ability of children to make meaning already through different modes of literacy even if they cannot conventionally read and write yet. They seem to believe that alphabet learning will only happen in school and they do not seem to acknowledge emergent literacy practices as part of the children´s literacy journey, or at least they do not mention them in the interviews. The

answers of the parents, when I asked about literacy, were mostly school-based literacy, and there was a big focus on learning German fluently before entering grade one.

Tsikana´s mother pointed out that the requirements of the local Education department are quite high and the children are expected to learn literacy-related skills quite early on. This is different to German kindergartens where the focus is playing time, and the children only learn conventional reading and writing in grade one. She shared her thoughts in the following extract.

> Esther. I think what the **Western Cape Education Department** tells the schools to do is **quite advanced** and also some schools already take children from a very early age, so they can go into grade one at the age of five. So, for that, I think it is quite advanced the way they are teaching. But when I think back to my school there was nothing with writing or numbers in kindergarten, it was **only taught in first grade.** That is how I know it. I think it is a nice mix at German schools, the way they teach them slowly in first grade. If a child asks to be taught, you can give it to them but I think you **should not push them to try something they should not reach yet.**

Luca´s mother talked about what the school expects the children to know in grade one. She also mentioned that the kindergarten is slowly teaching them literacy in grade R already.

> Tash. When we met with the teacher, she said that in grade one they expect them to count up to 10. And they **do not expect them to write because that happens next year,** otherwise, the children are bored. She is starting to teach them, but she says it in a fun way. So, it is not like just sitting down they do games, and they do **funny ways of bringing up letters and numbers f**or the kids to remember.

It seems literacy is introduced playfully and the skills-based approach with phonics might start only in grade one.

Foster´s mother emphasised the fact that the children are not reading and writing because they are still attending kindergarten and not primary school.

> Anne. Not much reading and writing yet, **especially since neither of them are in real school** yet.

### 5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I used my data to analyse how the family shapes literacy practices, and how bilingualism in the family is expressed in engagements around texts. The families' language and literacy ideologies are similar in the way they conceptualise languages as autonomous, separate,

bounded entities. They also conceptualise literacy as an autonomous system learned in staged and sequenced ways and tied to each separate language. The parents all follow the school's advice and do not teach their children much conventional reading and writing at home. I am under the impression that parents see literacy as skills the children will learn at school and that their children´s engagement with emergent literacy practices in the home is not fully acknowledged as literacy practices. They are aware of the different literacy systems in English and German, and especially Roxanne's and Luca´s mothers mentioned their concerns about teaching their children literacy in a language they do not fluently speak. Their language ideology influences their literacy ideology and their children internalise these ideologies and therefore also do not fully acknowledge their capabilities in engaging in emergent literacy practices.

All of the children engage in emergent literacy practices such as colouring, storybook reading, arts and crafts activities and rhyming. However, it does not seem as if the parents acknowledge these practices as literacy practices, they keep saying the children will learn how to read and write in school and therefore there is not much literacy engagement at home. The parents' language ideologies shape how literacy practices take place in their homes. They seem to believe that literacy learning is solely the "job" of the school, and the school knows best how to teach children literacy. I want to point out though that I saw literacy and numeracy learning workbooks in Roxanne's and Luca´s house with activities such as tracing letters, colouring certain letters and counting objects.

In this chapter, I looked at the literacy practices taking place in bilingual/multilingual family homes. I analysed my data from the parents' interviews and children's observations regarding emergent and digital literacy practices with a special focus on the use of language while engaging in these practices. In the following chapter, I conclude my thesis by writing a full conclusion, outlining the limitations and giving suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 6. Conclusion

The main aim of the research was to generate knowledge of the lived language experiences of bilingual grade R learners, speaking German as a heritage language and growing up in the global South (Cape Town, South Africa). I was guided by the following research questions:

- What linguistic repertoires do bilingual/multilingual families in a South African context draw on?
- How do parents view the role of bilingual/multilingual upbringing and the use of a wide range of linguistic resources regarding their children's language and literacy development?
- What role do parents' language ideologies play in the development of FLP?
- What linguistic resources do children draw on when engaging in emergent and digital literacy practices?

My data collection consisted of interviews with parents and observations of children in their homes and this was analysed thematically. I interviewed four bilingual/multilingual families and did home observations with three of the families. The languages spoken in the homes were English, German, Afrikaans and Portuguese, but German was the common heritage language in all homes. I decided to have two analysis chapters. one focusing on language ideologies, linguistic repertoires, family language policy and translanguaging approach, and the other one focusing on emergent and digital literacy practices in the families. The decision came from the fact that I did not observe as many as originally anticipated emergent literacy practices as originally thought and my main focus of the thesis switched to issues of bilingualism, language ideologies and negotiation of family language policy.

I focused on investigating the language ideologies, linguistic repertoires and language and literacy practices of the family members and analysing the children's experiences, language and literacy practices and language socialisation in their homes. I especially looked at emergent and digital literacy practices used by the children in their homes and analysed the way they used language engaging in these practices. I furthermore examined the family language policy and the parents' views on translanguaging and emergent literacy practices and drew a connection to the language policy implemented by the German kindergarten their children are attending. Lastly, I explored the complexity of having spoken multiple languages at home, the influence of the kindergarten domain on the language family policy and the way children can make meaning by navigating multiple languages.

### 6. 1 Summary of findings

The findings show that all families have quite strong language and literacy ideologies. They see German as an important language for educational and professional success and are therefore putting a strong emphasis on providing a wide variety of German language input for their children. All parents wanted their children to speak German fluently when entering primary school and therefore provided a lot of language support and language and media exposure to the heritage language German. All families follow a one-parent one language approach and during my observations, the parents stuck to this approach. During the interviews, their language ideologies revealed that they view languages as separate bounded entities and German and English are learned separately. The parents, however, seemed to be flexible in their communication with their children and they did not mind them mixing different languages or using certain words from the other language. What was interesting to witness is that all children used translanguaging practices during conversations with me and their parents. There are therefore contradictions between the language ideologies the parents uphold and the language practices I observed in their homes.

The family literacy practices in the observed families do not seem to be strongly shaped by their family language policy. The parents seem to follow a more structuralist approach when it comes to literacy teaching, this means a bigger focus on phonics with a distinct emphasis on phonetics and phonology in each language. Roxanne's and Luca's mothers both mentioned phonetics being the building block to literacy learning and that they are aware of the differences in teaching children literacy in English and German. Their family language policy in practice seemed to contradict the quite rigid language ideologies that I picked up during the interviews. All families followed a much more implicit family language policy which gave room to negotiate the language practices daily. It is important to highlight that the children always have agency in the negotiating of family language policy and the language practices of the children will influence the family language policy. All children used translanguaging practices when communicating and the parents let them use their linguistic repertoire fluently and did not intervene when they used English words while speaking German.

The German kindergarten follows a strong language ideology and discourages the parents from teaching the children reading and writing at home. The children therefore will first learn literacy in German in school and therefore the parents all had a strong emphasis on the children being able to communicate in German fluently. They will learn German as a separate language with a specific phonics alphabet. At the same time, the parents are not bothered if the children are engaging with literacy in English, for example, Roxanne sang the alphabet song to me in English. Literacy can be

described as standardised language and therefore we often cannot pick up nuances like dialects, translanguaging and accents when seeing language in written form. When children learn German at school, they will learn a polished and grammatically correct form of German literacy and earlier mentioned nuances might get lost. The parents' structuralist language ideologies, which I picked up during the interviews, contradicted the fluid language practices I observed during observations. Fluency in two separate languages might be the ultimate goal with the understanding of bilingualism as two coexisting monolinguals. The process the child goes through to get to the goal is very fluid, and just as a monolingual child gradually learns to formulate and structure sentences. Parents are usually tolerant of all their children's efforts, so too these parents were tolerant of their children's forays into language learning. Presumably they see translanguaging, even if it is not named as such, as a stepping stone of an interim process to monolingual competence in two languages.

When looking at digital literacy it became evident that middle-class families have a lot of choices available to them and with internet access, the families have a huge variety of media options in various languages at their fingertips. The families were interested in providing a diverse collection of German language input in digital format to their children and were seeking out online material in German. They provided TV shows, audiobooks, games and music in German and they saw the benefits of having online resources available for language input and literacy learning. Fosters and Roxanne's mothers both mentioned using literacy learning apps with their children, for Foster, in German and for Roxanne, in English. It might be that there is less literacy learning material available in German, in comparison to English and it might be harder to access if German is not the child's mother tongue, but generally, I saw all families engaging in digital literacy in German.

The question of what meaning a heritage question has come up during my analysis and I questioned if there is a difference between mother or father transferring the heritage language German. I have not found previous studies on this issue. Family language policy therefore can be analysed under a gender aspect. The mother in each family often seemed to be the one implementing German in their family language policy and she makes sure the children have a sufficient exposure to German, even if it is not her heritage language. The fathers, except for Roxanne's father, all seemed to take German as a heritage language as family language policy for granted. This shows the important role of mothers in learning and maintaining a heritage language for the family as a whole. In Luca's and Roxanne's case, it was both the mothers who saw the importance of providing a lot of German language input. They looked for German TV, books and audiobooks for their children to encourage their German language development, at the same time they felt some anxiety about managing to give their children the support they would need at school.

The findings reveal that all four children used translanguaging to make meaning and engaged in emergent literacy practices in their homes. The children engage in meaningful conversation in multiple languages with their family members and the researcher and can draw on their wide range of linguistic repertoires effortlessly. The parents´ language ideologies and linguistic repertoires have an influence on their attitudes towards bilingualism and the family language policy they implement in their homes. The parents' language identities are informed by the languages they speak, their connection to their heritage and their wishes for their children to have access to German as a heritage language. They see German as a useful language to learn which can open doors for the children regarding attending German international school, getting an internationally recognised education, having access to the German-speaking job market and connecting to their family heritage. Learning German as a heritage language will give the children the opportunity to learn more about the history, culture and traditions of the German side of the family. This was besides the economic reasons, a big reason why the families chose to teach their children German. The parents 'language ideologies extended their beliefs and understanding to their children's language identities. Their language ideologies and family language policy they mentioned in the interviews did not always match the findings of the observations. The children used a lot of translanguaging during the observations, all families seem to have a laissez-faire attitude towards family language policy and let their children draw on all languages available to them to make meaning.

The parents´ past and current encounters with language formed the basis of their language beliefs and family language policy choices. The children are engaging in literacy and digital practices at home and they are encouraged to follow their interests. The German kindergarten discouraged the parents from teaching their children reading and writing at home and therefore I witnessed less emergent literacy practices than originally expected. The children were involved in an emergent play, storybook reading, drawing, arts and crafts activities and playing games on the phone. The emergent literacy practices were taking place mostly in German with translanguaging happening as well. I argue that multilingual homes have the challenge of rethinking and considering the concept of language identities as fluid and evolving as their language repertoires and language practices. The language and literacy practices children are engaging in within their homes will shape the way they can engage with emergent literacy in a school setting. The children can benefit from getting introduced to emergent and digital literacy from a young age and will be able to transfer their acquired skills from the home domain to the school domain. Parents should encourage their children to make use of their full linguistic repertoires and not limit them in their language choices when making meaning. The school would also need to transform their school language policies and language practices to reflect the multilingual repertoire of the children and encourage more fluid language practices. In terms of

emergent literacy practices, the school should not limit children's natural interest in engaging with literacy and learning how to read and write. Having an engagement with emergent literacy practices in the home and kindergarten domain can only be beneficial for their language and literacy development and should be encouraged both by parents and teachers.

### 6. 2 Limitations

Time constraints and the scope of a Master's dissertation are some of the biggest limitations of the study. The length of fieldwork limited my opportunities to record a variety of naturally occurring interactions. Added time to observe the family routines during school holidays when the children spent more time at home may have expanded my insight into the language socialisation processes in the home domain. All families were very busy and it was hard to find suitable times for the observations I was restricted to the times and days they offered to me. The quality of the recorded audio and videos varied, some of the audio quality was not the best because the children were not wearing microphones and were moving around a lot during the recordings.

### 6. 3 Implications

All children were engaging in some form of emergent literacy and translanguaging practices during my research. They are all able to draw on a wide range of linguistic resources to make meaning and engage in meaningful conversations. The families' language policy and the language ideologies of the parents influence the children's language and literacy development. The reality of the language and literacy practices at home often differs from the parent's attitudes and beliefs towards language voiced in the interviews. German as a heritage language has an important status in the families, they see German as a language for economic and academic success and they want their children to remain connected to their German heritage. The parent's language aspirations and language strategies to expose their children to German at their homes influence their language choices and their choices in which language they are engaging in emergent literacy practices with their children. The German kindergarten language policy and their wish to limit literacy teaching at home influences the home domain and might limit the children's engagement with emergent literacy.

### 6.4 Directions for Future Research

My study only focuses on the language and literacy practices of bilingual grade R learners growing up in middle-class families and speaking German as a heritage language. It would be interesting to analyse in what ways the language and literacy practices in working-class families differ from the ones I observed. I would suggest a longitudinal ethnographic study that investigates multiple case

studies of marginalised multilingual families ’language and literacy socialisation practices with children who attend schools where German is taught as a subject.

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## Appendix 1. Ethics approval letter

EDNREC20230201

3 February 2023

Isabel Kraus KRSISA003

Dear Ms Kraus

Re. Ethical Clearance for Research Project

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been granted by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your research project entitled 'Emergent literacy practices in bilingual grade R learners 'homes'.

This approval is valid for one year ending 28 February 2024.

I wish you all the best with your study. Yours sincerely,

Professor Carolyn McKinney

Chair - School of Education Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix 2. Consent form parents and children

**INFORMATION SHEET CHILDREN**

The children of my study are grade R learners who cannot read and write yet. They will be able to sign their name and indicate consent by circling a smiley face. The information sheet will be presented orally to the children.

Dear (child's name)

My name is Isabel and I am a Masters student at the University of Cape Town. I am researching how children, who speak two languages, are learning how to read and write. I will visit your home three times and I will watch you play with your parents and siblings and do your homework for school. I want to see what languages you use in your home and what activities and games you play with your family. Are you happy with me coming to your house?

This is not a school test, I will just take some notes for myself and take some photos of your books, artwork, homework and pieces of writing. I will take some videos of your games and activities too. You can always tell me not to take photos or videos if you do not want to share something. Your face will not be shown in the videos, I'm just interested to see what games and activities you do at your home. You can always decide to stop and I can come for a visit another time.

I will not be using your name but I will make one up. You can help me make one up for you too. This is an opportunity to choose your name. No one will know that it is you in my study. I also talked to your parents and they are happy with me coming to your house and taking photos and doing video recordings. But I want you to decide too if you want me to visit your family and spend time watching you play, read or write.

I will show you a consent form now that is where you indicate yes you would like to participate, or no you would not like.

Thank you

## Parent Consent form

### A case study of Emergent literacy practices in bilingual grade R learners' homes

| I consent to | YES | NO |
|---|---|---|
| 1. my child being observed in my home interacting with me | | |
| 2. my child being audio-recorded in my home during observations | | |
| 3 .my child being video-recorded in my home during observations | | |
| 4. the photographing of my child's pieces of writing, homework and art work, and discussing these | | |
| 5. Being interviewed | | |
| 6. Audio- recording of the interview | | |
| 7. being observed in my home interacting with my child | | |
| 8. being audio-recorded in my home during observations | | |

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that confidentiality will be maintained. I can withdraw my participation at any time.

Name. (Print)

(Signature)

(Date)

# Consent form for children

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to be videotaped. I will use these videotapes for my study called. Emergent literacy practices in bilingual grade R learners' homes

**Permission to be videotaped and photographed**

My name is. _____

I agree to be videotaped in my home ✅YES / NO ❌

know that I can stop the videotaping at any time ✅YES / NO ❌

I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only ✅YES / NO ❌

know that the videotapes will be stored safely ✅YES / NO ❌

I agree to be photographed during the study  YES NO 

I agree that my homework, pieces of writing and artwork are being photographed

 YES NO 

I know that I can stop this permission at any time.  YES NO 

I know that the photos will be used for this project only  YES NO 

I know that the photos and digital data will be kept safely  YES NO 

## Appendix 3. Letter to parents of Sonnengruppe

**Parents Information letter**

6th May 2023

Dear parents of Sonnengruppe

**A case study of Emergent literacy practices in bilingual grade R learners' homes**

I, Isabel Kraus, am a Master's student at the School of Education at the University of Cape Town. I am looking for participants for my Master's thesis research project. My research aims to explore emergent literacy practices in bilingual grade R learners' homes. I want to visit your home and carry out interviews with you regarding the way you use language in your homes, how you interact with literacy and the ways you teach your children how to read and write.

The research project involves visiting your home on three different occasions. Two visits will be on weekdays and one visit on a weekend. You can choose the times for the visits that suit your calendar. I will carry out two 30-minute interviews in which I will ask you about activities, games, homework and artwork you engaged in with your child. I am interested in the languages you use, what role bilingualism plays in your home, what emergent literacy practices you use and how your child engages in literacy.

During my visits, I will collect data through observations. The observations will last 30 min and I will take photos of your child's books, artwork, pieces of writing, homework from school and games. I will make field notes during the observations and collect video recordings of your child's games, activities and interactions with language and literacy. The child's face will not be shown on the video recordings, only the activities and interactions. The data collection is planned for two weeks in May and June 2023.

Participation is voluntary and the confidentiality of you and your children is guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in the writing up of the research. You may withdraw permission to conduct the research at any time.

Please fill in the form to indicate your consent for the research. You are welcome to ask any questions regarding this research by telephone or email me. 0665607608, +491743525794 (WhatsApp) or KRSISA003@myuct.ac.za. You can also contact my supervisor at UCT if you have any questions. Associate Professor Catherine Kell at catherine.kell@uct.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Isabel Kraus

# School of Education

## Declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.

2. I have used the Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in this essay/report/project from the work(s) of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

3. This essay/report/project is my own work.

4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

Signed by candidate

Signature _____

Date 21st December 2023

Note that agreement to this statement did not exonerate you from the University's plagiarism rules (http://www.uct.ac.za/uct/policies/plagiarism_students.pdf).