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'You Dutch, not English': exploring language education policy in pre-school through researcher-child-relationality

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ABSTRACT

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

KEYWORDS

ECEC; language education policy; relationality; agency

1. Introduction

Linguistic diversity is increasingly common in Early Childhood Education and Care (henceforth: ECEC) centres, with many of these centres now hosting children with a wide range of family languages (Michel and Kuiken 2014). Frequently, ECEC centres pursuit certain forms of language management as part of their pedagogical guidelines. This vision, along with the actual language practices in situ, and the beliefs about how language should be used, brings into being every-day language education policy (Spolsky 2004). Language education policies in ECEC are configured at a field of tensions and move on a continuum (Zettl 2019). Yet, it has repeatedly been shown that restrictive monolingual language education policies may impact multilingual children's well-being and language development (De Houwer 2020; De Houwer and Pascall 2021).

The observation of the day-to-day of ECEC presents a promising approach in the emerging field of language education policies and multilingualism in ECEC (Alstad and Mourão 2021). When researchers conduct fieldwork in ECEC, they often take on different, sometimes simultaneously unfolding, social positions in interrelation with

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the participants and practices at the field site (Cekaite and Goodwin 2021). Examples of such positions range from observers to authority figures and potential play partners, each of which develop in relation to children, teachers, and the (material and ideological) ECEC environment. From the perspective of Karen Barad's agential realism, it could be said that all of these positionalities, as well as the ECEC environment are continuously 'becoming', meaning that they do not pre-exist as independent entities, but are rather being shaped in continuous processes of intra-relation. The notion of 'intra-relating' refers to a dynamic production of entanglements and mutual co-constitution (Barad 2007).

The field of language education policy, until thus far, foremost draws on more classical conceptualizations of social interactions. While interactional studies in this field show that children actively co-create, shape, and counter language policies in ECEC in situ with peers and teachers (Bergroth and Palviainen 2017; Skaremyr 2021), emergent interactions, or, with Barad, intra-actions between children and researchers,have hardly been analysed from that perspective (but see Almér 2017). Yet, recent methodological approaches and theoretical developments in childhood studies have advanced a relational vision on participation and knowledge co-creation in ECEC, highlighting the complexity of children's day-to-day lives, also characterised by a fluidity of power relations (Dennis and Huf 2020; Spyrou 2019). This line of thought might provide new pathways for the study of language education policy. Therefore, I set out to explore language education policy processes in an extended play sequence between me and a multilingual child during my fieldwork in a pre-school in the Netherlands. In so doing, I aim to explore how researchers and children mutually intra-act together with objects, space and policies involved, and might, thereby, also enact and explore language education policy together.

2. Language education policies in early childhood education and care

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

Recent studies on language education policies have highlighted children's and teachers' agency in shaping language practices in classrooms and schools (Menken and García 2017). In that sense, language education policy takes shape as 'lived policies' which are plural and might be competing in education since they are negotiated, interpreted and implemented in daily life in and through language practices in the classroom (Menken and García 2010). Through participation in every-day language use, structured by specific language policies, children get socialised into dominant language ideologies

which frequently entail a status discrepancy between the societal language and minority languages (De Houwer 2020; De Houwer and Pascall 2021).

Teachers are key stakeholders in language education policy processes, as, for example, Auleear Owodally (2012) shows for the case of multilingual Mauritius. There, teachers reinforce a standard language ideology through, amongst others, correcting children's pronunciation of a word which is similar in Creole and French, to the French variant.

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

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

Since the ways in which such intra-actions come into being is linked to the researcher's and children's positionalities and participation, I will introduce recent pertinent debates from childhood studies and their implications for research practices in ECEC-contexts next.

3. Towards relationality in childhood studies

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

Recent discussions in childhood studies have called into question the understanding of knowledge that underlies such research approaches, which imply seeing knowledge as a product portraying a representation of reality rather than a process or practice (Spyrou 2017). Inspired by posthumanist and new materialist ontologies, this critical movement within childhood studies foregrounds children's interdependences with their surroundings (Balzer and Huf 2019) and acknowledges that children are vulnerable and not independent entities (White 2011). As part thereof, it aims to account for power relations as they dynamically emerge in context-dependent ways as part of assemblages, a concept

introduced by Deleuze and Guattari, to capture the fluid and evolving (re-)configurations of diverse elements (Deleuze and Guattari 1988; Spyrou 2019). Consequently, for the field of childhood studies, post-humanist childhood scholar Spyrou instead suggests that 'relationality may provide a fruitful (re)-orientation' (2017, 436).

A keen focus on relationality and connectedness yields new perspectives for an understanding of agency in research. While participatory approaches have long claimed to empower children by providing them with opportunities to participate in research (e.g. through drawing, taking photographs etc.), many of those opportunities are adult-/researcher-designed and if they are narrow and pre-conceptualised in the first place, might run the risk of locating child agency merely in the opportunities that the researcher provides the child with (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008). However, children also exercise agency without the researcher needing to provide for it, and this agency emerges collaboratively as part of interrelations (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008). Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) report, for example, how children in ECEC appropriated their research methods and the researchers in unexpected ways, e.g. by demanding to draw on the researcher's notepads with their pens, managing to direct their attention to specific phenomena, and sitting in their laps during circle time when the researcher just wanted to observe and write notes. In this line, Spyrou (2019) influentially calls for researching children's agency in terms of relational ontologies. As such, agency is acknowledged as relationally produced and enacted dynamically and, thereby, distributed in constantly emerging assemblages. Therefore, agency can also be seen as 'becoming', as it is continuously co-constituted in mutual entanglements, as part of the according intra-actions (Barad 2007).

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

4. Methodology and reflections on the fieldwork

4.1. Research context, fieldwork and analysis

The empirical basis for this paper stems from 4.5 months of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in a pre-school in the southern province of Limburg in the Netherlands between autumn 2020 and spring 2021.[1] During fieldwork, I conducted participant observation as well as audio recordings and video recordings for multimodal analysis and had informal chats with teachers and children. Parents of participating children

and teachers gave their informed consent before the beginning of data generation, and the project received ethical approval from Maastricht University's Ethical Review Committee Inner City Faculties.[2] The main research interest was children's participation and agency in light of linguistic diversity in ECEC.

While I was sometimes more in the background, documenting my observations, the children often engaged me in emergent situational projects like ECEC routines, play, conversations etc. In my pursuit of a more linguistic approach, I was initially unsatisfied with my high visibility in the audio- and video-data. However, after a few weeks of fieldwork, I noticed that becoming part of the field in the ways that I did, actually added to my research insights. Consequently, I started to pay more attention to situations which emerged between children and me during fieldwork and analysis. Following Emerson's strategy of the analysis of so-called key events, I was particularly struck by one 'key event', a play moment that the multilingual child Daniel and I co-created. This intra-action is the main focus of this paper. Working with key events is 'a way of grounding ethnography (…) that honors and grows out of field researchers' working sense that their analysis are tied to particular in-the-field-events that stimulate (…) original lines of inquiry and conceptualization' (Emerson 2004, 427). Drawing on this strategy, I parsed how the sequence unfolds across turns, inspired by an ethnomethodological approach. Ethnomethodology pays close attention to the ways in which participants structure their interactions, and assign meanings locally and on the spot (Laurier and Bodden 2020). Following the new materialist paradigm, I broaden the perspective in order to include the material surrounding and evolving agencies as well.

4.2. Introducing the ECEC field site and child Daniel

The pre-school was attended by toddlers between 2.5 and 4 years old, typically on two to four mornings a week. The pedagogical team consisted of two ECEC professionals who self-identified strongly as working in the domain of Early Education in contrast to 'just childcare' (field notes on informal chat, 02/11/2020). In line with their understanding of their work, the teachers enacted a strong school-oriented ideology. As such, the day at the pre-school was tightly structured, and the teachers, for example, sanctioned children who did not adhere to the rules of the pre-school based on the reason that this would also not be acceptable in school anymore. This school-orientation was co-created by the children who regularly uttered their anticipation to finally go to school, or emphasised that their siblings, for example, already attended school.

The dominant language of the pre-school was Dutch, which was also mostly spoken by the attending children. In addition, the teachers used the regional minoritised language Limburgish at times with individual children of whom they knew that their parents raised them in Limburgish. The teachers also used Limburgish to communicate amongst each other (Rickert 2022). Children themselves commonly answered in Dutch when addressed in Limburgish. 6 out of 23 children[3] had an additional family language other than Limburgish beside Dutch, but they did not use it in the pre-school. Due to the Corona pandemic, parents could not access the pre-school beyond the cloakroom. These occasions presented the few times when I heard languages other than Dutch or Limburgish in the pre-school: There, I heard parents speaking Spanish and a few words of Arabic to their

children. If there was no possible way of communicating in Dutch or Limburgish, the teachers used English to talk to a parent, but never to a child.

One of the few children who had an additional language to Dutch (apart from Limburgish) was Daniel,[4] who plays a central role in this paper. At the beginning of fieldwork, I talked to Daniel's father on the phone in the process of establishing consent. He told me that the family mainly used Albanian at home ('our language' as he referred to it), and sometimes also used Dutch. The father also indicated that he found it important for Daniel's bilingual development that Daniel spoke Dutch in the pre-school, since it is the language of the society in which they live.[5]

Daniel was three years and nine months old at the beginning of fieldwork. As soon as he turned four, he left the pre-school to go to elementary school. Beside Dutch and Albanian, Daniel also had limited knowledge of English. On my first day after I got to know him, the teachers, knowing my research interest, explained to me that Daniel speaks Albanian with his parents. Following up, they critically added that he watches a lot of TV at home, which is 'where he got his English' from (fieldnotes; 26/10/2020). In fact, Daniel sometimes used a few words of English during play (e.g. 'granny', or 'hold this'; fieldnotes 16/11/2020) with me and with peers, but not with the teachers according to my observations. I never saw the teachers commenting about his English use to him directly, but throughout fieldwork, they repeated their comment that Daniel watched a lot of TV at home to me several times.

4.3. Researcher positionalities

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

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

Besides, my recording devices as well as my notebook had an impact on how I was perceived in the field. I explained to the children that I wanted to remember what we did at pre-school and that I wrote down our activities and filmed for that purpose. The children, who were very aware of the many rules in the pre-school, used these rules to exercise power on me: One day, for example, I asked a group of children if I

may join while they play with their toy cars on the mat. After they agreed, I sat down and jotted my notes, following to which one of them told me that 'one may only be here if one has toys'. Subsequently, I stopped jotting down notes and started to play with toy cars (fieldnotes, 25/11/2020).

5. Joint enactments of language education policy between researcher and child

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

The corner was decorated according to the pre-school's seasonal topic of Sinterklaas as can be seen in Figure 1. Sinterklaas is a Dutch festival for the name day of Saint Nicholas on 6 December. On the evening before, children (and often also adults) receive gifts, traditionally inside a shoe which they have put out for Sinterklaas and his helper 'Zwarte Piet' to fill, as explained by the teachers.[6] In the pre-school, there were extensive

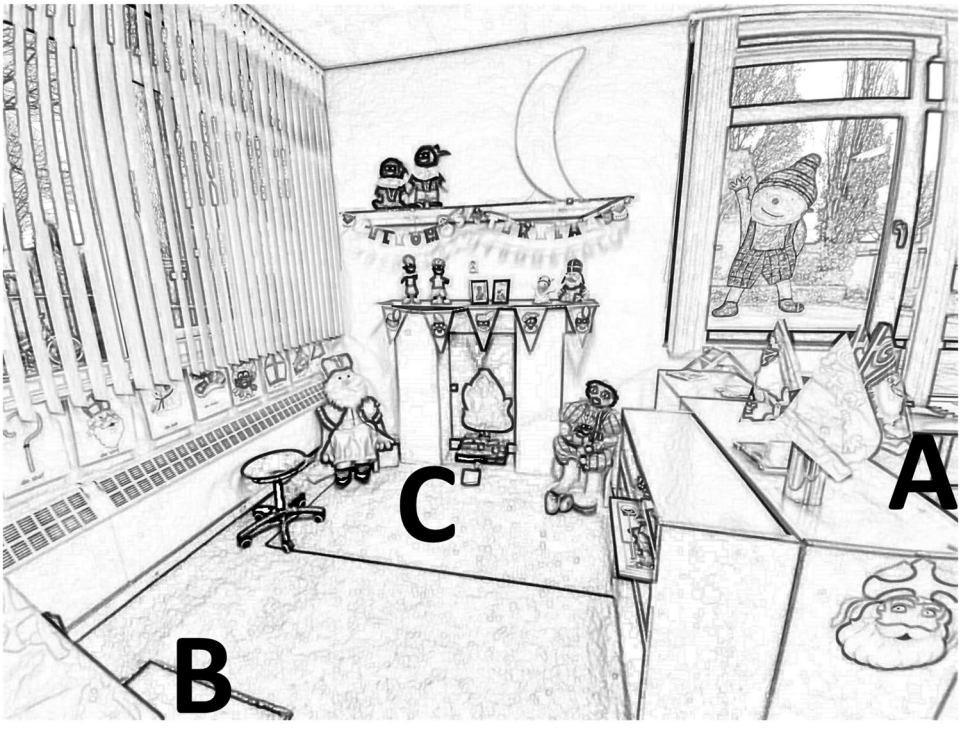

Figure 1. The Sinterklaas-corner.

preparations for Sinterklaas which included colouring shoes, crafting topical artwork, and singing different Sinterklaas songs throughout multiple weeks. When Daniel and I played in the corner, the children's shoes were lined out in area C (see Figure 1). Additionally, there was a box with costumes of Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas which the children could use to dress up during free play. No other children were present in the corner, or its immediate surroundings, while Daniel and I played there.

5.1. 'So Dutch good'

Daniel and I play in area A (see Figure 1), when I ask him if he speaks English. This question seems to come unexpected to him as it triggers a strong reaction on his side. In the transcripts and translations, English speech is marked in italics, Albanian is underlined, and Dutch is unmarked.[7]

Knowing about Daniel's multilingual competence from the teachers and parents, I wanted to ask him where he learnt English and what he could say in order to get his perspective, and directly do so in English, as can be seen in Table 1. With this approach, I initially aimed to include the child's perspective, as many participatory approaches do (Gallacher and Gallagher 2008). This contributes to my 'becoming researcher' at this point, relating to the ECEC norms by breaking them in terms of language choice, and Daniel's 'becoming participant', due to his reaction which, in turn, is met with my interest. Instead of verbalising his perspective, Daniel firstly expresses his orientation to speaking English in the pre-school through embodied reactions: He shakes his head in negation (l.5) even though he had already used a few words of English with me on previous occasions, and after I ask 'no?' in English (l.6), he opens his eyes widely. Struck by his negative reaction, I aim to prove that he actually does understand English and probe an answer when I ask him in English what his name is (l.9). After he demonstrated that he understood my question in English by replying with his name, I respond with 'Ah', followed by approving laughter (l. 10). Thereby, Daniel and I co-create a so-called 'Initiation-Response-Feedback' (IRF) sequence. IRF sequences are a common practice

Table 1. 'YOU Dutch not *English*'.

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

in classroom discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). In this IRF, I take the position that is classically associated with more institutional power and authority, i.e. the one who performs the question for known information (Daniel's name), and feedback (Mehan 1979). Huf and Kluge (2021, 261) write that in ECEC, 'child-centredness is enacted as a performance of children's need to be educated', and I orient toward this logic through initiating the IRF in English.

Having been approached as potential multilingual before, Daniel, however gets involved in 'becoming Dutch speaking', again: He admonishes me, showing awareness that I had breached the informal language education policy to only speak Dutch in the pre-school. His language policing extends from the explicit admonishment to a micro-level, his use of Dutch instead of English, the language I had used immediately before (Amir and Musk 2013). In this situation, Daniel asserts his agency by relating to the language norms which count as valid implicit knowledge in the pre-school. Thereby, he presents himself as more knowledgeable about language use in the pre-school than I.

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

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

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

5.2. 'You also speak Albanian?' – 'No. Never'

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

Daniel looks at me with wide eyes and claims that he would never speak Albanian. Attempting to mitigate the hierarchisation inherent in the frame of the language education policy that Daniel enacts, I tell him that I find it a nice language (l. 20), which he questions with 'nice'? (l. 21). After I explain 'I find it a beautiful language. But I can't speak it' (l.22), Daniel gets back to English, which I had used just before, and he

Table 2. 'You also speak Albanianian?' - 'No. Never, no.'.

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

eventually suggests that we speak English then (l.25). The relational trajectory in which I exercise my researcher agency by showing appreciation of Daniel's family language leads to different participatory affordances than those in other social constellations in ECEC, e.g. with teachers.

While children have repeatedly been shown to orient toward monolingual language education policies, there is also research underlining that children take joy in carving out informal and ludic spaces for multilingual language use (Cekaite and Evaldsson 2019). This also applies to Daniel: The idea to subvert the language education policy together with an adult in the pre-school and use another language than Dutch leads him to gasp and jump several times on the spot (l. 26), probably as a means of expressing excitement.

5.3. 'Who can I call? My dad or granny?'

As the intra-action further unfolds, Daniel moves to area B in the corner (see Figure 1), and introduces a toy phone into our play. After he has enforced a Dutch-only language policy, and I have signalled my more liberal language attitudes toward him through my use of English, my continuous interest in his linguistic resources as well as my valorisation of his multilingual repertoire, he carefully starts to blend multilingual resources into our play as shown in Table 3:

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

Table 3. 'Who can I call?'.

26	Daniel	(takes a toy phone and sits at a small table, Marie joins him there) *Who* can I call? My dad or *granny*?	(takes a toy phone and sits at a small table, Marie joins him there) *Who* kan ik bellen? Mijn papa of *granny*?
27	Marie	Mh, *granny*	Mh, *granny*
28	Daniel	Okay (pretends to dial a number multiple times, animates the sound of phone dialling, then passes the phone to Marie). Here	Oké (pretends to dial a number multiple time, animates the sound of phone dialling, then passes the phone to Marie). Hier
29	Marie	I will speak? With *granny*?	Ik ga spreken? Met granny?
30	Daniel	Okay	Oké
31	Marie	Okay, *hello granny, my name is Marie.*	Oké, *hello granny, my name is Marie.*
32	Daniel	(whispers into Marie's ear) *Where are you?*	(whispers into Marie's ear) *Where are you?*
33	Marie	*Where are you?* (2.3s break) She, she is home	*Where are you?* (2.3s break) Zij, zij is thuis.

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

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

Yet, I as an adult and researcher, am also influenced by the dominant pre-school language education policy, and my awareness of it plays a role in the choice of location where I playfully invited Daniel to engage with his multilingual repertoire in the first place. Considering spatial configurations as an important part of how researchers become part of the ECEC-settings they are studying (Albon and Huf 2021), it must be noted that the Sinterklaas-corner is not located centrally in the pre-school classroom, so that other children and teachers were out of earshot during our multilingual play.

5.4. 'Now my dad'

As Table 4 shows, following Daniel's initiation to call his father, Daniel refers to his mother again, this time both in Dutch and English (l. 40). After I questioningly repeat his words, it is unfortunately not clear on the recording if he says 'Ah, **can** speak English' or 'Ah, **not** speak English' (l. 42). In the situation itself, however, I understood Daniel's reaction as an encouragement to keep speaking English, which is why I

Table 4. 'One, two?'.

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

subsequently say the numbers 'one, two?' in English (l. 43), while I pretend to dial numbers. Daniel seems to see this as an invitation to continue to count in English, so he complements my counting with 'three' (l. 44) and, after I confirm through repetition of that number, 'four' (l. 46) etc. Thereby, we co-construct the counting sequence as an Initiation – Response – Feedback sequence again (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). My questioning counting in the beginning (l. 43) forms the initiation, Daniel's continuation of the counting the response, and my acknowledging repetition constitutes the feedback. Giving shape to our intra-action in this classical, educational way, we jointly bring into being child positions and adult positions here, which give rise to 'becoming English-speaking'. Counting is an educational activity that is very frequent, for example, during circle time in the pre-school. Therefore, through engaging in counting here together, we also jointly include an educational activity in our play. Björk-Willén and Cromdal (2009) observed that peers in ECEC frequently engage in activities which 'make normative forms of participation (…) relevant' (1516), thereby showing an orientation to the instructional and educative pre-school culture. Daniel and I do the same here. In so doing, we relate to pre-school logic and endow the English resources a value within the frame of the pre-school, which they get through an academic activity like counting.

5.5. 'Marie, we will count!'

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

When I ask Daniel if he can count in Albanian (l. 49), he agrees (l. 50) and proceeds to find countable objects, namely shoes which stand in front of a chimney. The children had coloured these shoes before, as can be seen on Figure 2, and arranged them in area C of the topical corner (see Figure 1).

Daniel proceeds to count the shoes next, first in Dutch. Continuing to 'seep education into free play' (Björk-Willén and Cromdal 2009) with an educational activity, I slowly start to count in English after we finished counting in Dutch together (l. 59). Thereby,

Table 5. 'Marie, we will count!'.

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

Figure 2. Coloured shoes before they got arranged in the Sinterklaas corner.

I continue the ongoing action of 'becoming researcher' of multilingual practices, continuing to enact my interest in Daniel's language skills. After I reached the number three, Daniel continues until ten in English (l. 60). Hence, after I gave him another confirmation that he may and is encouraged to use his multilingual resources in our intra-action, he also does so.

5.6. 'Okay, you will be the Piet now'

I am still struck by Daniel's negative reaction when I asked him about speaking Albanian. Therefore, I set out to explain to him that I would also speak another language with my parents (l.65). However, Daniel has already decided on a new activity, so I let go the

Table 6. 'Okay, you will be the Piet now'.

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

conversation about language use and follow his lead, which is to dress me up with a costume of Zwarte Piet that is available in the Sinterklaas-corner:

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

5.7. 'Marie? Okay!'

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

The co-creation of a 'Zwarte Piet', embodied by me, gave rise to Daniel using his Albanian resources in this specific situation in pre-school, something he had been very opposed to in the beginning of our play (section 5.2). After Daniel and me had engaged in 'becoming multilingual', establishing together that the use of multilingual resources is part of our play, he now wants to and does extend our play to include Albanian in addition to Dutch and English. I was physically transformed by putting on a costume, and, as such, become less of a figure that is related to pre-school, and more related to play, which, in turn, afforded the use of Albanian. By dressing me up, Daniel agentively arranged for a setting in which he can enact speaking Albanian and therefore, become manifest in our intra-action as Albanian speaker.

After Daniel has counted to six in Albanian, I start to repeat the numbers he says (l. 71–79). In so doing, we enact an orientation to instructional activities and learning again, but this time with reversed roles: I as an adult in the pre-school learn from Daniel, the

Table 7. 'një, dy, tre'.

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

child. Daniel's moves to dress me up are part of our play of relating to language education policies and the careful in-situ becoming of multilinguals with specific repertoires and interests.

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

6. Discussion and conclusion

Paying close attention to relationality in the field, including the researcher's web of relationalities, is a constructive approach to grasp the situated and dynamic dimension of language education policy. As a researcher, I oriented not only to Daniel but also to the material and ideological environment of the ECEC environment that I was embedded in, and Daniel did so too. In this way, we became entangled with language education policy as part of the intra-action. Daniel and I related beyond fixed categories of adult and child, researcher and participant, but more dynamically as play partners, and, importantly, as multilinguals with specific linguistic repertoires. As such, our joint play unfolded also in interrelation with language education policy as we engaged with it in a variety of ways through enacting it, challenging it, getting confronted with it, and subverting it. This process gave me as a researcher the chance to 'become and develop as research instrument' (Xu and Storr 2012, 14), as I related to language education policy in different ways myself, co-constructed with Daniel. Dynamic language education policy became observable as a process, brought about in a delicate intra-action as part of which our agencies got entangled with one another. Hence, my own relating and becoming of researcher, play partner, and multilingual, dynamically took shape relationally with Daniel who enacted multilingual agency and, amongst other actions, performed an agential cut in which he used the material affordances of the pre-school's thematical 'Sinterklaas'-corner.

Understanding this intra-action in its wider frame of the ECEC dynamics at hand, it became clear that for Daniel, the pre-school is constituted as a monolingual (or bidialectal, since it includes Limburgish) place to which his multilingual resources other than Dutch do not belong, and where their use is, therefore, 'not good' (section 5.1, l. 15). His initial language policing towards me constituted an enactment of a monolingual norm which he, similar as in the study of Cekaite and Evaldsson (2008), appropriated for organising social relation, in this case with me. However, meaning-making in the pre-school takes place as an assemblage, which can evolve and get reconfigured. In this situation, the malleable character of the embodiment of the researcher became visible, and the material environment of the thematical Sinterklaas-corner entangled with multilingual participation. As part thereof, counting as an education-oriented format became an accessible way for us to integrate multilingual resources into our play in a way that is meaningful in the pre-school context, which mirrors the strong educational orientation of the Early Childhood Education and Care setting in question.

As social settings like ECEC entail highly dynamic relations and processes, and each researcher and participant is an individual person in a different body with a distinct linguistic repertoire, intra-actions like the one analysed in this paper are not predictable and

plannable. An open attitude that accounts for children's agency by acknowledging children's active roles in shaping research encounters is needed in order to make such intra-actions meaningful for research. Such spontaneous, open-ended approaches require and enforce situated ethics, where ethical research is shaped together with participants on a moment-to-moment basis (Dennis 2018) as researcher agency and child agency dialogically intra-act. When including analysis of assemblages which emerge between researcher and multilingual children as a research site, an open and reflexive attitude toward the researcher's relationalities with the field, the participants, and phenomena at stake, is key.

Notes

1. Data generation was interrupted by a lockdown, which is why the 4.5 months were spread out over longer time. When the current COVID measures permitted, I visited the pre-school twice a week.
2. Reference: ERCIC_204_25_08_2020.
3. All of these children were born in the Netherlands and had parents (respectively grandparents in two cases) who migrated to the Netherlands.
4. All names apart from my own are pseudonyms.
5. Unfortunately, contact with the parents was very restricted in the kindergarten because of the pandemic. Therefore, I did not have the chance to engage in more informal conversations with the parents outside of the initial telephone call.
6. 'Zwarte Piet' ('Black Pete'), the helper of Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas), is a controversial figure in Dutch Sinterklaas who used to be (and sometimes still is) portrayed by blackfaced white people (for a critical discussion see van der Pijl and Goulordava 2014). The tradition of Black Pete was almost not problematised in the pre-school, except for slight adaptions to one song to a more modern version. There were costumes of Zwarte Piet and pictures and puppets of Zwarte Piet with dark skin but no make-up for blackfacing.
7. I decided to mark languages in this way due to the proportions that the respective language has been used.

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