

Bilingualism Versus Translanguaging in a Swiss Day-Care Center: A Space Analysis of Language Practices and Their Janus-Faced Effects on Social Inequalities and Educational Opportunities

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Abstract

Based on an ethnographic study of institutional language policies in bilingual Swiss day-care centers (French/German), we discuss implications these policies have in terms of balancing or even intensifying educational inequalities. Referring to a space analytical approach, we investigate to what extent language practices are regulated in relation to imaginations of the social order

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of languages in the social space surrounding the institution. In terms of social justice, our findings raise the question whether bilingualism is more likely to push back translanguaging rather than support it.

Keywords

Bilingualism · Day-care center · Inequality · Switzerland · Translanguaging

1 Introduction

The increasingly widespread understanding that day-care institutions for children under the age of 4 serve not only a care function but also an educational one is being accompanied by growing expectations that they can promote equal opportunity.¹ Assuming that “language” is an “obvious element in promoting equal opportunities” (EKM and BFM 2012, p. 14), educational, social, and integration policies in Switzerland focusing on preschool care and educational institutions anticipate that day-care will “contribute to promoting the local national language” (Edelmann 2010, p. 203²). Accordingly, a number of empirical studies focus primarily on inequality as *educational inequality* and explore the potential of preschool language education and support for creating equal opportunities and preventively reducing educational disadvantage (see, for day-care centers and playgroups, e.g., Edelmann et al. 2013; Isler 2014; Vogt et al. 2015). Moreover, there are now a number of ethnographic studies that take a closer look at everyday life in formally monolingual and multilingual early education fields to see how the way linguistic practices address and socially position speakers produces hierarchical differences (on kindergartens in Switzerland, see, e.g., Kassis-Filippakou and Panagiotopoulou 2015; on preschool childcare in Luxembourg, see Neumann 2012a; Seele 2015; on Kindergartens in Germany, see Diehm et al. 2013a; Kuhn and Mai 2016; for international comparisons, see Panagiotopoulou 2017). Based on the premise in social theory that one function of language is to produce social orders (Heller 2006; Blackledge and Creese 2010), these studies assume that the hierarchy of languages points to hierarchical orders of power and domination. It reflects “social dominance relations” and stabilizes them by “symbolically legitimizing them” (Niedrig 2002, p. 3 f.). The aforementioned studies do not reduce

¹For empirical findings on Switzerland, see Burger (2013) and Knoll (2018).

²Original German quotations are translated into English.

questions of social inclusion and social justice merely to educational success. In relation to inequality, inclusion, and social justice, they often address and analyze language more (but by no means exclusively) regarding the *situated* reproduction of social relations of dominance and inequality more generally.

The main interest of German-language studies on power and inequality addressing how multilingualism is dealt with in pedagogical fields is on the institutional devaluation of marginalized minority languages in monolingual settings and the normative and standardizing effects of early promotion of the majority language. This chapter, in contrast, focuses on *bilingual* Swiss child day-care. Here, it cannot be assumed in advance that only *one* language is considered to possess prestige and be worth promoting. As we shall show, however, even in bilingual day-care centers, the two formal languages of the institution—the official cantonal languages, German and French—can be assigned unequal legitimacy. The hierarchy of both languages does not necessarily “reflect” the “social dominance relations” (Niedrig 2002, p. 4) of the majority and minority languages, but can serve as a countermodel designed to resist the language relations in the surrounding social space.

In the following, we shall apply the methodological heuristic of the “language regime” (Busch 2013, p. 127, translated) in two steps to develop a spatial-analytical perspective on linguistic modes of regulation (Sect. 2). Then, using interview data from an ethnographic study, we shall show how the German and French languages are related to each other hierarchically in the constitution of the local language regime, and how generationalizing, ethnicizing, and spatializing differences are produced and reproduced in this process. This reveals a separation of languages that aims to establish and protect purity of language and problematizes the mixing of languages to be found in children’s translanguaging practices (Sect. 3). The chapter concludes with thoughts on analyzing the relation between language policies and questions of social inequality and educational opportunities (Sect. 4).

2 Methodological Considerations

2.1 A Spatial Analysis of Using the Language Regime to Produce Difference in Day-Care

Since the so-called *spatial turn*, theoretical perspectives in the social sciences have generally regarded space as a phenomenon that is not only generated through being practiced but also changeable (Soja 1989; Lefebvre 2006). Based on the assumption that the production of space is linked closely to social conditions

(Günzel 2008, p. 11), the analytical focus of studies applying spatial analysis is on the entanglement of space, society, and power. Sociolinguistic studies, such as that of Heller and Duchêne (2012), reconstruct the connection between language, space, and globalization with the help of such a spatial-analytical approach. Busch (2013), in turn, analyzes the entanglement of language, space, and time using the example of the language dispute in Austria. Drawing on Lefebvre's (2006, p. 333) theoretical analyses of the threefold dimensionality of space, she develops the heuristic of the language regime that she understands, following Coulmas (2005), as that "bundle of habits, legal regulations, and ideologies" that "restrict the speakers' choice of linguistic means in spatially situated interactions" (Busch 2013, p. 135). In the following, we shall apply these methodological considerations to the field of day-care centers using interview data. Referring to Busch (2013, p. 135), the first dimension of *spatial practices* would include habitualized, institutionalized, and routinized language practices that re-/produce social space (Busch 2013, p. 137). In day-care centers, these would be collective practices such as circle times, mealtimes, reading aloud sessions, or handicraft lessons. With the second dimension of *spatial representations*, Busch (2013, p. 137), following Lefebvre, summarizes scientific discourses and ideological conceptions of spaces that are located on a societal level. With regard to educational organizations, however, this also includes assumptions about which linguistic practices are taken to be "legitimate and desirable" in which of the above-mentioned settings, as well as the explicit regulation modes in language practices such as "house rules, decrees, and laws" (Busch 2013, p. 137). Under the third dimension of *representation spaces*, Busch subsumes the "lived in and experienced" space (2013, p. 138). From an analytical point of view, this is about "how subjects read the space and how they relate themselves to it, how they "interpret" it, and how they "shape it" (Busch 2013, p. 138). These three dimensions of linguistic space are entangled in multilayered ways and usually cannot be distinguished from each other clearly in empirical research. Nonetheless, they evoke perspective-broadening focuses of attention when it comes to interpreting the data material.

In the following, an expert interview conducted in the ethnographic study "Linguistic Landscapes. Case Studies on Pedagogical Practices in Dealing with Multilingualism in Bilingual Day-Care Centers,"³ will be used as a basis to examine the corresponding day-care center as a "small-scale language regime"

³The study was directed by S. Neumann and M. Kuhn with the collaboration of K. Brandenburg and L. Tinguely from January 2014 to August 2015 with funding from the Jacobs Foundation and Stiftung Mercator Schweiz.

(Busch 2013, p. 127).⁴ The interview conducted with a manager of a bilingual day-care center in a municipality of Western Switzerland can be analyzed not just in terms of the discourses *on* language and space (spatial representations) that are entrenched within it. It is far more the case that analyses can also question—indirectly—the speaker’s self-positioning *in* space (the representation space) and the spatial location of language practices (the spatial practices).

On the spatial/temporal entanglement of language regimes

Starting from a sociolinguistic perspective, situated language practices cannot be analyzed in isolation from the historical, sociopolitical, and institutional contexts in which they are embedded (Heller 2006; Pennycook 2010). In a spatial theory interpretation, the assumption of such a context dependence of language practices primarily refers to the sociohistorical conditionality of each space (Foucault 2006; Lefebvre 2006). Busch (2013, p. 139) transfers this premise to the field of language with Bakhtin’s concept of the “chronotopos” (2008) when she points out that in every speech act, “references to different space–time structures” can be discerned, and that ultimately, every language regime “can be thought of as such a chronotopos linked to other times and spaces”.

Methodologically, this means that we have to take an additional analytical step and reconstruct a local language regime along with the constructions of difference implemented within it by also focusing on the historical and extralocal framings. In the following, we perform such a contextualization of the empirical findings on the constructions of difference in the early educational language regime in two ways: First, the expert interview itself serves as such a contextualization. By this, we follow Seele’s assumption (2015, p. 160), borrowed from Pennycook (2010), that the sociohistorical conditions of language practices should not be viewed as a statically given context, but rather as being accomplished and recontextualized locally in everyday practice. On this basis, we can ask: Which sociopolitical and/or historical phenomena are appropriated in what way in the interview? How does the person interviewed use these to contextualize the language regime of the institution? In the interview, this means that *practices* of contextualization can be traced that are carried out by the person being interviewed *herself* (*first-order contextualizations*). When analyzing difference and inequality, we can, in turn, ask the following questions: What modes of regulating and enabling language practices

⁴For this chapter, the heuristic of the language regime was applied retrospectively to the data after it had been collected and, together with an expert interview, this analysis here refers to a more limited database than that in Busch’s ethnography (2013, p. 172f.).

does the person invoke during the interview? What differences does she construct thereby? When doing this, we focus on the representations of space and the representation spaces as well as the spatial practices that can be reconstructed from the interview. Second, we draw on social science literature and legislative texts to contextualize the language regime against the background of the historically developed and contested language situation and the legal de-/regulation of institutional day-care in this particular Swiss canton (*second-order contextualization*).

3 Constructions of Difference in the Local Language Regime of the Day-Care Center

3.1 Spatial Representations and Representation Spaces

The heuristic of spatial representations focuses the analysis on the discourses *over* language and space invoked by the manager, the ideas she formulates regarding which language practices are considered “legitimate” in the day-care center, and the explicit ways they are regulated through house rules, decrees, and laws (Busch 2013, p. 137). The use of the two formal institutional languages of German and French is regulated in different ways for the individual groups of speakers.

Generation-based construction of difference: The rights of children—the duties of professionals

Giving the children the opportunity of not having to speak German. I think it's important that we keep this open. Hence, no pressure, that's very important.

The explicit formulation that the children should not be pressured into speaking German makes it apparent that they are implicitly and, so to speak, conversely granted the right to speak French in everyday activities at the day-care center. For the professional staff, in contrast, the manager imposes relatively rigid language requirements that are intended to exclude their use of French.

So, I'll also try to picture it and say when you come in the door, turn on the switch, [speak] German⁵ ... Well, I stand by the fact that I'll correct very quickly then and simply go there and say no, not like that, and either they do it or they have to look for another job.

⁵In this location, this means various dialects of Swiss German.

Whereas the children should not be forced to speak German, the staff members, in turn, are required to submit unconditionally to a monolingual language regime in the day-care center (*turn on the switch, [speak] German*). Language-related misconduct is ultimately sanctioned by exclusion from the organization (*they have to look for another job*).

Insofar as German has a continuous legitimacy in everyday life at the day-care center whereas French is a legitimate language only for the children, both languages are brought into a hierarchical relationship with each other, thus, creating an inequality between German and French (Brandenberg et al. 2017, p. 265). At the same time, the respective symbolic capitals of the children's languages of origin are also assigned a different rank. Although francophone children are allowed to speak their language of origin every day at the center, German is still the language to which, and "in which, and through which children are educated" (Neumann 2012a, p. 188). Furthermore, the language regime of the day-care center is institutionalized in line with the "generational order" (Alanen 2005). It acknowledges different ways of regulating language for different speakers in the field: Whereas children are expected to adapt receptively, staff members, in contrast, are expected to actively use the German language. This leads to a generational differentiation between children and professional staff, which, in turn, is the basis of a pedagogical order (Brandenberg et al. 2017, p. 266).

From the perspective of the heuristic of representation spaces, the (self-) positioning of the manager *in space*, and her ways of appropriating and shaping the language space (Busch 2013, p. 138), this sequence brings to light that the manager presents herself as a kind of "language police officer" who monitors adherence to the language regime and intervenes promptly in the event of any language-related misconduct on the part of the staff (*correct very quickly ... not like that*). In doing so, she assigns to herself and her management team (see *we* below) a central role in maintaining the institutional language regime of this conceptually bilingual institution. This is described as being a laborious task:

So, all the work with parents, then the whole team, that also took a lot of energy, because we always had to make sure that the educators didn't slip into French.

Contextualization

On the level of a second-order contextualization, the textual "house rules, decrees, and laws" (Busch 2013, p. 137) relating to the regulation of language practices also have to be analyzed from the perspective of spatial representations. From a social theory perspective, it can be assumed that they prefigure a local language regime without determining it (Nadai 2012, p. 51). A distinction can be made

between the nonlocal political documents of the regional authority of the canton such as recommendations and laws on the one side versus the local documents on the institutional level such as the pedagogical concepts and curricula on the other side. On the political level, the language regime of the day-care center is *deregulated* in two ways: In the cantonal Law on Supplementary Family Day-Care Facilities (FBG) (Grosser Rat des Kantons 2011), the associated implementation regulations (Staatsrat des Kantons 2011), and the cantonal standards and recommendations for institutions and facilities for child care (Direktion für Gesundheit und Soziales 2010), there are—in contrast to Kindergartens—no requirements regarding the use of the two official cantonal languages German and French.⁶ Moreover, these documents define only a care but not any educational function for day-care centers. This type of institution “meets the parents’ care needs while simultaneously ensuring educational supervision” (Direktion für Gesundheit und Soziales 2010, p. 9). As a result, it is hardly surprising that these documents contain no recommendations relating to language education. Thus, neither the promotion of language nor the use of the official languages is regulated politically.

In contrast, the concept of the day-care center formulates the programmatic intention to guarantee⁷ “the balance” between the two languages German and French by “mostly bilingual staff” (see also Brandenburg et al. 2017, p. 263). If one understands a pedagogical concept as a textual representation of everyday (language) practice, then, in view of the theoretically proclaimed equality of both languages, one can observe only a loose coupling between the situated language practices and their document-based regulations—and, thus, a discrepancy between the institutional program and its practical implementation. This is an issue that can be registered frequently in day-care centers (Neumann 2012a). However, the manager does not interpret this discrepancy between the bilingual concept and the monolingualizing practice as a relapse behind her self-formulated bilingual claims:

Yes, simply you know what is written down, yes, the mission statement. Well, we have a brochure in which it says that our crèche is bilingual ... Well, we are bilingual because we only speak German, otherwise we would be French-speaking.

⁶For schools, and thus for the Kindergartens for 4–6-year-olds that are part of the school system, the territorial principle is used to regulate that the language of instruction must correspond to the official language of the municipality of a school district: either German or French. If a school district includes French and German-speaking or bilingual communities, attendance at public schools in both languages is guaranteed free of charge.

⁷For reasons of anonymization, no source is given here.

As this seemingly paradoxical statement already suggests, the manager legitimizes the monolingual German language regime of the day-care center as a necessary strategy to counter the dominance of French that she justifies with an—in this case, language-based—construction of difference, in which an ethnicization of different groups of children is embedded.

An ethnicizing construction of difference: French- and German-speaking children

It's not just like that with the children, we have maybe eight or nine German-speaking children in a group and maybe only three or four French-speaking ones and then the groups simply speak in French. So, the German speakers learn French, the French speakers do not learn any German ... That is also one reason why we said, well, those who speak French, they can just as well learn German.

This example given by the manager has to be understood as fictitious, inasmuch as the ratio of two-thirds German and one-third French-speaking children discussed here is not consistent with the more equally balanced occupancy figures at the day-care center. It is to be understood far more as a complaint designed to dramatize the personal experience of French being spoken as a matter of course even when German-speaking children are in the clear majority. With an ethnicizing differentiation between German- and French-speaking children, she states that there is no mutual learning, and thus implicitly positions francophone children as being unwilling to learn. The manager concludes from this that it is acceptable to expect the francophone children to do what the German-speaking children—through their willingness to learn—do almost as a matter of course: namely, to learn the other language. In this way, she makes the French-speaking children responsible for the seemingly natural dominance of the French language. By emphasizing that this is not just the way things are with children, she construes the dominance of the French language as a general problem rather than a problem specific to children. Against this background, the monolingualizing language regime of the day-care center is brought into play as a necessary strategy to resist the dominance of French.

Contextualization

Well, I started there 30 years ago as an intern and the majority of us spoke French ... That we consistently speak German with the children, that started about 12 or 13 years ago ... We have worked out quite purposefully, simply from the experience over the last few years, so simply really that the German language comes first, yes.

The manager describes the “chronotopos” (Bachtin 2008) of the language practice at the day-care center in relation to other times (Busch 2013, p. 139). By citing the 30-year-old experience with the hegemony of French as the reason for the change in the language practice introduced some 12–13 years ago, she herself undertakes an institutionally historical contextualization of the currently dominant language regime (*first-order contextualization*).

3.2 Spatial Practices

The heuristic perspective of spatial practices targets the language practices in the everyday life of the day-care center that reproduce the social space and, thus, reconstitute it over and over again (Busch 2013, p. 137). By applying this analytical approach to the observational data from the project, we can show how different spaces are created by the different ways in which language practices are regulated. This can be seen in, for example, the spatial formation of the children’s circle times: When the professional staff ask for a German translation of something the children have said in French, the children’s French language is no longer considered to be as legitimate to use within the circle time in the same way as it is to use it outside (Brandenberg et al. 2017, p. 265). For the data from the interview, however, the analytical perspective on spatial practices, which focuses more on the microlevel of everyday life, has to be readjusted. In this context, we can ask which space-related references the manager is actually using to constitute the language regime of the day-care center when talking about the local language practice. The manager spatializes what happens in language by separating the inside from the outside of the daycare center in two different ways.

Spatializing construction of difference I: Day-care center versus the city

In order to be bilingual, we have to upgrade German here in city X. If we were in another city, it might well be the other way around.

With the statement to “*upgrade German*”, the manager is describing the directive that the professionals should speak only German with the children. In a spatial localization (*here in city X*), she constructs the monolingualizing language regime as a necessary regional requirement (*we have to*), whereby she brings the day-care center into play as a place that aims “to preserve valued elements of a threatened language” (Heller 2006, p. 52).

Contextualization

This linking of the local language regime of the day-care center with “other spaces” (Busch 2013, p. 139)—namely, with the relation of the German to the French language in the surrounding social space—can also be read as a practice of *first-order contextualization*. The manager is referring to the fact that the ratio of language majority to minority is different in city X than in Switzerland as a whole. Although far more people speak German than French in Switzerland, the situation in city X is quite the opposite. Here, German is spoken by only a minority.⁸ By doing this, the manager sets up a border between the “inside” of the day-care center and the “outside” of the social language space, and she legitimizes the precedence of German practiced in the daycare center⁹ as being due to the hegemony of French outside.

On the *second-order* level, the language regime of the day-care center can be contextualized within the framework of the cantonal and nationwide language debates. Historically, there has always been a contested relationship between German and French in Canton X that lies on the language border between French- and German-speaking Switzerland. The language policy debates in the canton were initiated by the demands of the German-speaking population, which is explained, among other things, by the fact that especially the German-speaking regions had suffered from political neglect and economic underdevelopment until the 1950s (Helbling 2004, p. 10). In particular, reforms of the cantonal school law led repeatedly to conflicts between the language communities (Helbling 2004, p. 8). Indeed, an independent German-speaking school system was established only in the 1970s. At the cantonal level, it is only since 1991 that all official documents have to be available not only in French but also in German. The fact that the “language issue” seems to be about more than language is made clear by the way that the language border between German-speaking Switzerland and French-speaking Western Switzerland is sometimes also described with the (criticized) concept *Röstigraben* as a cultural border dividing French-speaking from German-speaking Switzerland. When it comes to institutional early childhood education, parents in French-speaking Western Switzerland, for example, are unfamiliar with

⁸This leads to the paradoxical situation, according to Helbling (2004, p. 5), that both language groups in the canton often refer to themselves as a “minority”.

⁹Compare the aforementioned statement by the manager: “When you come in the door, turn on the switch, [speak] German”, in which the door symbolizes the border between the French/outside and the German/inside.

the preschool playgroups known as *Spielgruppen* that are very widespread in German-speaking Switzerland (Feller-Länzlinger et al. 2013, p. 17). In contrast, the use of crèche places for children under the age of 4 is higher in French-speaking than in German-speaking Switzerland (Neumann et al. 2015, p. 23).

On the national level as well, the issue of how to deal with Switzerland's constitutional quadrilingualism in education is still controversial (Arquint 2014). Current political debates, which have been put to the vote in some cantons via citizens' initiatives, focus, on the one hand, on the question of a "Standard German requirement" in Kindergartens in German-speaking Switzerland (Berthele 2010). This is sometimes interpreted as a threat to regional Swiss-German linguistic identity (Knoll 2016). On the other hand, foreign language teaching at elementary school level is under discussion, with critics seeing this as a threat to national unity (Ribeaud 2013). Hence, the local language regime at the day-care center has to be understood against the background of these current and historical language policy conflicts in the surrounding language space. The manager herself also goes on to refer to the family space.

Spatializing construction of difference II: Day-care center versus the family home

On average, the children attend for about sixty percent of the week. And if they speak only French at home, it's simply not enough for us to speak only two or three sentences of German. There just has to be consistency and that's what counts then.

The manager justifies the need to consistently adhere to the German-dominated language regime through the fact that the children *attend* the daycare center for only a few days a week and are otherwise exposed to the francophone language practices in their family homes.¹⁰ Here as well, a spatial difference is evoked between the inside and the outside, and the inside is constructed as a space to counter the outside by legitimizing the language practices inside the day-care center as a necessary pedagogical consequence to counter the language use established at the outside *place* of the family home (see also Seele 2015, p. 169).

The day-care center is presented as having a limited influence on this familial outside, so that the parents are also understood as addressees of the institutional language regime:

¹⁰In Switzerland, children attend their day-care centers for an average of 2.5 days per week. One reason for this is the high cost for the parents. In German-speaking Switzerland, parents pay two-thirds of the full costs; in French-speaking Switzerland, about one-third (Kibesuisse and Netzwerk Kinderbetreuung Schweiz 2015, p. 5).

Well, it is also the case that we also have to maintain our attitude when dealing with the parents. Well, I always first try to speak German with the parents, but most of them don't like to speak it; they have certain inhibitions. But I think that's where it starts. That is to say, demand something from them—from the parents as well and not just from the children. And after that, they are the example, I mean model.

Here as well, a necessity (*have to*) is evoked. It is also essential to persist with the monolingualizing practice vis-à-vis the parents. It seems that more is expected of them than of the children, because they should at least try to communicate in German. The manager seems to assume not so much incompetence in the francophone parents, but more of an inhibition and a reluctance to speak German. Following the motto “nip it in the bud”, she protests that parents should also be expected to use German, because they should serve as a practical language role model for their children (*I mean model*).

The manager aims not only to regulate the parents' language practices within the day-care center but also to suggest that parents adopt specific language practices in the family space:

Well, I think that's also important now, when parents ask ... that we really pass on the advice ... that is very important, that they simply stick to one language. Because otherwise, the child will mix them up very, very strongly indeed.

Although the *advice to speak only one language* at home does not seem to be handed out without being solicited (*when parents ask*), it is, nonetheless, assigned a very high significance (*very important*). Ultimately, it remains to be seen whether the manager is pushing for the use of a single common family language or proposing an orientation toward the widespread concept of “one person—one language” (Döpke 1992), according to which each parent should speak to the children in her or his first language and, thus, use only *one language*. Nonetheless, the proclaimed and evidently undesired effects on children of parents using several languages (*because otherwise*) are clearly highlighted: This leads to *the child* mixing up the languages *very, very strongly indeed*. As a consequence, a flexible and strategic shuttling between French and German—as is common in practices of translanguaging (García and Wei 2014)—is labeled not only as *needing to be avoided* but also as *avoidable* through a strictly monolingual mode of language use by parents. Hence, in the bilingual regime of the daycare center, the flexible use of different linguistic repertoires appears as both disadvantaging as well as an illegitimate practice. Finally, this demonstrates (again) that a bilingual concept is not in every case a fruitful basis for the implementation of a translanguaging environment. This applies in particular if a bilingual concept still sticks to monolingual norms of language use.

4 Conclusions on How Early Educational Language Regimes Relate to Inequality

In the institutionalized language regime of the bilingual day-care center, speakers are “restricted in their choice of linguistic means” by a range of regulations (Busch 2013, p. 135). By emphasizing the maintenance of the language regime by the professional staff as something that has to be monitored and declaring that nonacceptance is a justification for sanctions, the manager clearly reveals how language regimes are linked to power. Different rules on the use of language apply for the different groups of actors in the day-care center. Although the children are not expected to speak German, the parents *should* at least try to do so in the institution and the staff members *have to* do so. The ethnicizing and spatializing differentiations serve primarily to legitimize this generationally ordered language regime that—according to the manager’s statements—is only necessary *because* French-speaking children are supposedly not willing to learn and *because* the French language dominates the sociospatial and familial environment. It is only against this background that the manager can present the generationally differentiating language regime of the day-care center as a compensatory solution to problems (such as the threatening superiority of the French language and the unwillingness of francophone children to learn German), while the institutional practice of differentiation is itself involved in the construction of these problems (Neumann 2012b, p. 147 f.).

What opportunities for participation and education does the institutionalized language regime offer to the French- and German-speaking children, and what inequality-related effects are possibly associated with this?¹¹ In line with Heller (2006, p. 17), we can say that the language regime:

make[s] sense only if understood as part of [a] political ... mission, a mission which itself can only be understood as a part of minorities struggles for power.

Interpreted in this way, the regime aiming to protect the German speakers who are perceived as oppressed can, on the one hand, be read as a policy of empowerment for German-speaking children who are a linguistic minority in the social space. The day-care center presents itself as a political actor in the contested

¹¹This cautious formulation reflects the methodological challenges facing qualitative inequality research (Diehm et al. 2013b; Emmerich and Hormel 2017).

power field of languages. In line with this, the bilingual concept of the day-care center is still following a monolingual norm of language use and acquisition. At the same time, the regime of promoting bilingualism by privileging the German language places limits for a flexible use of language in terms of an active translanguaging by adults and children, which, for both French-speaking and German-speaking children, means that they are offered limited opportunities for learning how to cope with a complex linguistic environment. At the same time, this delivers comparatively more limited opportunities for participation in everyday activities for francophone children—at least until they have acquired receptive German language skills. What is applied to the French-speaking children here is a “subtractive bilingualism” (García 2009, p. 142): The use of the first language (French) is restricted in order to promote a second language (German). As a consequence, at an early age, these children gain the experience that their language of origin is assigned a lower status in the institutional hierarchy of languages. Looking at the educational relevance of the preschool institution of the day-care center, we, nonetheless, have to ask whether German-speaking children might not be disadvantaged in the long term when the day-care center so decisively does not feel responsible for teaching French. This is not just the language of the majority in the canton, but also the first foreign language in all German-speaking elementary schools in the canton—and, thus, ultimately an educationally relevant capital. In view of the realities of migration in society, this particularly affects those children whose family language belongs to neither one language group nor the other. Because the majority of migrants in city X acquire or have acquired the hegemonic lingua franca French and often do not speak German, these parents usually choose to send their children to school in the francophone part of the school system. In this case, the German language skills acquired by the children at the day-care center will result in a loss of educational capital in the francophone education system in which they will continue to be relevant only as a foreign language. Hence, the institutionalized language regime of the day-care center that either discriminates against or favors individual language groups in both cases impacts on inequality. The effects seem to be mutually entangled and, in terms of educational biographies, they correspondingly differ in their impact on the further educational pathways of different groups of children. Hence, effects can be disadvantageous in various ways and point to the Janus-faced consequences of institutional language policies in fields of education.

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