Mila Schwartz *Editor*

Preschool Bilingual Education

Agency in Interactions Between Children, Teachers, and Parents

Springer

Multilingual Education

Volume 25

The book series Multilingual Education publishes top quality monographs and edited volumes containing empirical research on multilingual language acquisition, language contact and the respective roles of languages in contexts where the languages are not cognate and where the scripts are often different, in order to be able to better understand the processes and issues involved and to inform governments and language policy makers. The volumes in this series are aimed primarily at researchers in education, especially multilingual education and other related fields, and those who are involved in the education of (language) teachers. Others who will be interested include key stakeholders and policy makers in the field of language policy and education. The editors welcome proposals and ideas for books that fit the series. For more information on how you can submit a proposal, please contact the publishing editor, Jolanda Voogd. E-mail: jolanda.voogd@springer.com

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/8836

Mila Schwartz

Editor

Preschool Bilingual Education

Agency in Interactions Between Children, Teachers, and Parents

Editor
Mila Schwartz
Language Program Faculty of Advance Studies
Oranim Academic College of Education
Tivon, Israel

Printed on acid-free paper

This book is dedicated to the blessed memory of my beloved father, Mark Schwartz (1930–2016), and mother, Irena Rivka Schwartz (1937–2017), who were my hope and support and whom I will forever miss.

Preface

This volume provides an up-to-date collection of key aspects related to current preschool bilingual education[1] research from a sociolinguistic perspective. Bilingual education is a term used to describe an education system where instructions are given in two languages, one of which is the home language of some or all of the children. Our focus is on preschool bilingual education in multilingual Europe, which is characterized by diverse language models and children's linguistic backgrounds. An examination of the European experience will be particularly valuable in light of the growing need to consider the early learning of additional languages in Europe and to study the main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners (Edelenbos et al. 2006). Thus, this volume presents strategic approaches to promoting target language use (minority, heritage, second language, or foreign language) by children and, thereby, encourages the formation of *a strong professional community of practice among preschool language teachers.*

The book explores the contemporary perspectives on early bilingual education in light of *the threefold theoretical framework of child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education*. The volume examines preschool bilingual education as embedded in specific sociocultural contexts on the one hand and highlights its universal features on the other.

Each chapter includes a description of the sociolinguistic and historical background of the target bilingual preschool/s, namely a description of state and community language policy; the preschool's language model; and characteristics of the pedagogical staff, the children, and their families. (This information is summarized in Table 1.) The ways in which each study contributes to research on promoting language-conducive strategies and contexts in the preschool bilingual classroom are presented comprehensively by the authors. This book is a fundamental read for scholars and students of second language teaching, preschool education, and bilin-

---

[1] In this volume, "bilingual preschool" means any kind of setting (nursery, kindergarten, early childhood education center, etc.) in which language learning takes place before elementary school.

Table 1 Research settings

Chapter number	Author/s	Title	Preschool setting/s	State language policy	Language model and its aim	Children's linguistic background
2	Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović	Separating the languages in a bilingual preschool: To do or not to do?	Serbian−English-speaking bilingual kindergarten	Serbian is one the official languages	One person–one language model	Mostly monolingual (L1) Serbian-speaking children
				English is a modern foreign and socially prestigious language	Language separation by teacher	
3	Charles L. Mifsud and Lara Ann Vella	To Mix Languages or Not? Preschool Bilingual Education in Malta	Two English−Maltese-speaking kindergartens	Maltese and English as the official languages	Bilingual continuum of use between Maltese and English	Diverse linguistic backgrounds
				Maintenance of a balanced societal Maltese−English bilingualism	One-person-two-languages model	
					Language separation by type of activity	
				Both are taught as target language and language of instruction from the First Grade		
4	Réka Lugossy	Whose challenge is it? Learners and teachers of English in Hungarian preschool contexts	One private nursery and two private English immersion kindergartens	Hungarian is an official language	One-person-one language model (OPOL)	Nursery: diverse linguistic backgrounds Kindergartens: mostly monolingual (L1) Hungarian-speaking children
			Elite bilingual education	English is a modern foreign and socially prestigious language	Language separation by teacher	
5	Ekaterina Protassova	Longing for quality: Experiences of Finnish−Russian bilingual kindergarten in Finland	Finnish−Russian-speaking bilingual day care center	Finnish and Swedish are the official languages	Language separation by teacher while applying a language model based on a bilingual education formula (one teacher as a Finnish model, one teacher as a Russian model, and one teacher as a bilingual model)	Diverse linguistic backgrounds: (L1) Finnish-speaking, (L1) Russian-speaking, bilingual or multilingual children
				Russian is the language of the largest immigrant community		

Table 1 (continued)

Chapter number	Author/s	Title	Preschool setting/s	State language policy	Language model and its aim	Children's linguistic background
6	Karita Mård-Miettinen, Åsa Palviainen and Anu Palojärvi	Dynamics in interaction in bilingual team teaching: Examples from a Finnish preschool classroom	Finnish–Swedish-speaking bilingual preschool classroom	Finnish and Swedish as the official languages	Bilingual pedagogy, aimed to familiarize monolingual (L1) Finnish-speaking children with Swedish—the other national language	Monolingual (L1) Finnish-speaking children
7	Renée DePalma and María-Helena Zapico-Barbeito	The role of early childhood education in revitalizing a minoritized language in an unsupportive policy context: The Galician case	Five early childhood education centers aimed at promoting and supporting the use of Galician	Spanish as an official language, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician as co-official languages in the corresponding region Focus on the Galician language as a minoritized language in the northwestern region of Spain	Intergenerational transmission of Galician through different degrees of Galician immersion	Diverse linguistic backgrounds
8	Ana Andúgar and Beatriz Cortina-Pérez	EFL teachers' reflections on their teaching practice in Spanish preschools: A focus on motivation	Monolingual preschools with English taught as a second/foreign language	Spanish as the official language, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician as co-official languages in the corresponding regions	Diversity of models	-
9	Gunhild Tomter Alstad and Elena Tkachenko	Teachers' beliefs and practices in creating multilingual spaces: The case of English teaching in Norwegian early childhood education	Monolingual kindergartens with English taught as a second/foreign language	Norwegian and Sami are the official languages English is a modern foreign and socially prestigious language	Language awareness is a model aimed to introduce foreign languages to children during short sessions and to raise their awareness of other languages	Diverse linguistic backgrounds

Table 1 (continued)

Chapter number	Author/s	Title	Preschool setting/s	State language policy	Language model and its aim	Children's linguistic background
10	M. Teresa Fleta Guillén	Successful teachers' strategies to provide bilingual development in the preschool period	Bilingual preschool with English as a foreign language	Spanish as the official language, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician as co-official languages in the corresponding regions	English partial immersion	Monolingual (L1) Spanish-speaking children
11	Sandie Mourão	Play and peer interaction in a low-exposure foreign language-learning program	Monolingual pre-primary institution with English as foreign language teaching	Portuguese as an official language	Language exposure is a model designed to prepare children to learn a new language in the future Exposure to English during 30 minutes per week	Mostly monolingual (L1) Portuguese-speaking children
12	Mila Schwartz and Naomi Gorbatt	The role of language experts in novices' language acquisition and socialization: Insights from an Arabic−Hebrew-speaking preschool in Israel	Bilingual Hebrew−Arabic-speaking preschool	Hebrew and Arabic as official languages	Two-way immersion model in which two ethnolinguistic groups of children learn each other's language and culture	Diverse linguistic backgrounds

gual education in multilingual and multicultural societies. It might also be of special interest to education professionals, policymakers, and ethnolinguistic community leaders facing the complexities and challenges of elaboration and implementation of a language model, curriculum planning, team teaching, and practice in the bilingual preschool classroom. We hope that this shared contribution will be a source of inspiration for researchers of preschool bilingual education as well as for educators.

Tivon, Israel   Mila Schwartz

Reference

Edelenbos, P., Johnstone, R., & Kubanek, A. (2006). *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners. Languages for the Children of Europe: Published Research, Good Practice and Main Principles*. Final Report of the EAC 89/04, Lot 1 study. European Commission: Education and Culture, Culture and Communication, Multilingualism Policy.

Acknowledgments

Contents

Part III   Children as Language Experts and Models

Contributors

Gunhild Tomter Alstad Department of Humanities, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Elverum, Norway

Ana Andúgar Education Department, Catholic University, Murcia, Spain

María-Helena Zapico-Barbeito Department of Pedagogy and Didactics, Universidade da Coruña, Coruña, Spain

Beatriz Cortina-Pérez Language and Literature Department, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

Renée DePalma Department of Pedagogy and Didactics, Universidade da Coruña, Coruña, Spain

Naomi Gorbatt Literacy and Language Arts Department, Center for Educational Technology, Israel, Tel-Aviv, Israel

M. Teresa Fleta Guillén Department of Language and Literature Didactics (Spanish, French and English), Complutense University of Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Réka Lugossy Department of English Applied Linguistics, University of Pécs, Pécs, Hungary

Karita Mård-Miettinen Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Charles L. Mifsud Centre for Literacy, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Sandie Mourão Modern Languages, Cultures and Literatures, Universidade Nova, Lisbon, Portugal

Anu Palojärvi Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Åsa Palviainen Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Danijela Prošić-Santovac Faculty of Philosophy, Department of English Studies, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, Serbia

Ekaterina Protassova Department of Modern Languages, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Danijela Radović Research Department, Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia

Mila Schwartz Language Program Faculty of Advance Studies, Oranim Academic College of Education, Tivon, Israel

Elena Tkachenko Department of Early Childhood Education, Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway

Lara Ann Vella Language in Education Policy Unit, National Literacy Agency, Hamrun, Malta

Preschool Bilingual Education: Agency in Interactions between Children, Teachers, and Parents

Mila Schwartz

Abstract In this chapter, I have chosen to write a conceptual introduction to this volume. The chapter starts with what I consider the general motivation for this volume followed by reasons for conceptualizing preschool bilingual education as a distinct research area. The chapter then provides the theoretical framework which underpins many of the studies presented in the volume. Continuing with the theoretical elaboration of the overlapping spheres of child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education, the chapter underlines the commonalities among the contributions. The contributions' presentation is organized by addressing four interrelated topics: (1) Child's, teacher's, and parents' agencies in interactions; (2) Child's agency; (3) Teacher's and child's agencies in interaction, and (4) Parents', child's and teacher's agencies in interaction. The chapter is ended by summing up and outlining the structure of the volume.

1 Introduction

1.1 *Motivation*

The role of bilingual education in early childhood in promoting a child's life-long love of language and bilingual proficiency seems to be unquestionable. In this volume, "bilingual education" is used as an umbrella term to define an education system in which instructions are given in two languages, one of which is the home language of some or all of the children. The European Commission has argued that early language learning has enormous potential for the development of children's

M. Schwartz (✉)
Language Program Faculty of Advance Studies, Oranim Academic
College of Education, Tivon, Israel
e-mail: milasch@bgu.ac.il

identity, values, empathy, and respect, all in addition to learning a second language (hereafter L2):

> Opening children's minds to multilingualism and different cultures is a valuable exercise in itself that enhances individual and social development and increases their capacity to empathize with others. […] As young children also become aware of their own identity and cultural values, ELL [Early Language Learning] can shape the way they develop their attitudes towards other languages and cultures by raising awareness of diversity and of cultural variety, hence fostering understanding and respect. (European Commission 2011, p. 7)

The aim of various Commission initiatives in Europe is to promote and support implementation of language learning in the early childhood education sector. This process inevitably faces a variety of challenging questions for the contemporary successful development of preschool bilingual education. Thus, the motivation for this volume is derived from five phenomena: (1) the growing interest of policy-makers, ethno-linguistic community leaders, practitioners, and researchers in early bilingual development and education; (2) the increasing understanding that early bilingual education is a unique event in children's development and that preschool plays a critical role in their socialization; (3) the growing awareness of the necessity to examine early bilingual education within specific socio-cultural contexts on the one hand, and to search for universal features on the other; (4) the need to consider the early learning of additional languages as well as maintenance of minority, heritage, and immigrants' languages; (5) the necessity to examine strategies underlying efficient language teaching for very young learners (Edelenbos et al. 2006), and (6) the widespread modern trend of teaching English in certain Central and Eastern European countries as a foreign language (EFL) in preschools due to parental pressure to introduce the EFL as early as possible because they believe in 'the younger the better' slogan, meaning that younger children could make quicker and easier progress in EFL, than older children (Nikolov 2016).

1.2   Why Do We Need to Focus on Preschool Bilingual Education As a Distinct Research Domain?

Early childhood is a critical period in a child's intensive social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development. Preschool serves as the first transitional step from children's first and most intimate home environment and offers the first trust-building experience of the wider social environment and socialization. Children do not voluntary choose either monolingual or bilingual preschool but are subject to their parents' preferences. Their first encounter with the novel language[1] as a novel learner overlaps with separation from home and meeting new actors in their

---

[1] In this volume, "novel language" refers to the second/foreign language that the child encounters in the bilingual preschool.

lives—teachers and peers. A successful encounter with a novel language is inevitably connected to such ecological conditions as creating a low-anxiety and secure atmosphere that will be conducive to target language perception and production (Schwartz et al. 2016). As has been recently shown, the bilingual preschool teachers' starting point is the children's essential need to be understood, and regardless of the language they use, this should be their main concern:

> It is very hard for a kid to know that if he needs something he won't be understood. Basic things that kids need – a drink, going to bathroom. He needs to know that if he needs something, he will get it. Even if he can't yet say it in Hebrew (the child's L2) …The demand to speak only Hebrew might discourage him and turn him away from the language (the L2 Hebrew teacher, Dina, in the Russian−Hebrew-speaking bilingual preschool, in Schwartz et al. 2016, p.159).

In the above citation, the teacher emphasized that the most important task is to create a sense of security for young children that their basic needs would be met regardless of the language used. A distinctive characteristic of preschool education is to have the child's development needs constantly in mind. Drawing on this feature, in this volume, I highlight the need to focus on preschool bilingual education as a *distinct research domain*. Based on an ecological perspective on bilingual development and education during the early years, this volume calls for a closer look at the bilingual preschool classroom as an "ecosystem" (van Lier 2010), with its diverse aspects and dynamic interactions among them, which require more *theorizing*. This includes a research focus on interactions among such central aspects as child's, teacher's and parents' agency, children's socio-linguistic backgrounds, language models, and teachers' language strategies and classroom contexts creating a language-conducive environment.

The second reason for emphasizing preschool bilingual education as a distinct research area is the growing evidence that an early start *per se* in bilingual education is an insufficient prerequisite for children's better or faster progress in L2 than their older peers (e.g., Cameron 2001; Edelenbos et al. 2006). Young children have a biological predisposition for language learning (e.g., Kim et al. 1997). However, as has been recently shown, even in cases of intensive exposure to their L2 in the bilingual classroom through the natural environment of peer interaction and/or structured teacher-led activities, the children's L2 production skills considerably lagged behind their listening comprehension skills (e.g., Spanish and English, in DePalma 2010; Irish in Hickey 2001; English in Kersten 2015; Swedish in Södergård 2008; Arabic in Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017). This phenomenon was frequently evident in situations in which young children encountered the target language mostly within the classroom context. In this case, the novel language, such as the EFL in certain Central and Eastern European countries, was not supported by the children's home and close environment. Even a factor such as the status and prestige of the English language, does not play a motivating role from the perspective of young EFL learners (Nikolov 1999).

2   Theoretical Perspectives

Parents play a significant role in lobbying for preschool bilingual education as a part of their family language policy (King et al. 2008; Schwartz 2010). This pro-active family language management might interact with and be influenced by the surrounding ethno-linguistic community and preschool (policy-makers, teachers, and peers). These elements are often separated as pieces of a complex puzzle, which are then examined systematically. However, these human spheres in their relationships create an environment or ecosystem that, in multiple ways, become conducive to a child's bilingual development and education (van Lier 2004, 2011). Thus, five major theoretical concepts have inspired this volume: a notion of agency, Leo van Lier's concept of "ecology of language learning," Lev Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the "human mediator," Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological perspectives, and Joyce L. Epstein's (2011) concept of "educational partnership."

2.1   Agency

Agency is a concept in modern educational theory and practice (Biesta and Tedder 2006). A key question in contemporary social theory concerns empirical conditions of agency; namely, how agency is possible or what enables individuals to engage with the situation at hand in an agentic way (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Within the field of social theory, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) defined agency as "the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations" (p. 971).

Additionally, human agency as a social engagement takes place within environments or contexts (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). More specifically, Biesta and Tedder (2006) argue that the people's agentic orientations need to be linked to a particular situation. In analyzing this situation, we need to address the question of economic, cultural, and social capital resources. Furthermore, the researchers highlight "an ecological understanding of agency, i.e., an understanding which always encompasses actors-in-transaction-with-context, actors acting by-means-of-an-environment rather than simply in an environment"(p. 19). Finally, Biesta and Tedder (2006) suggest that our knowledge about these orientations could be gained by analyzing the actors' reflections on their actions.

In the preschool bilingual education field, recent research shows a growing interest in exploring bilingual children's agency in interaction with adults and peers (Almér 2017; Schwartz and Palviainen 2016; Bergroth and Palviainen 2017). Almér (2017) focused on bilingual children's voices and beliefs about languages as aspects of their agentic behavior. Drawing on the notion of interactive agency (Van Nijnatten 2013), Almér suggests viewing bilingual children's voice about their languages and language choice not as a separated agentic behavior but as an interactive agency resulting from a dialogue with an adult who can hear this voice.

Bergroth and Palviainen (2017) added to this discussion by exploring how children's communicative actions with peers and teachers might reflect preschool language policy. It is interesting that, in some cases, the children's agency was expressed in clear resistance to the minority language policy of using the Swedish language by communicating in Finnish. Thus, this limited research draws attention to the child not as "something that needs to be molded and guided by society in order to become a fully-fledged member" (Lanza 2007, p. 47), but someone who should be viewed as an active agent in the language learning process. The current volume deepens our understanding of children's agency in language learning by "focus on the ecology in which this agency is achieved" (Biesta and Tedder 2006, p. 20) in the bilingual preschool classroom.

2.2   Ecology of Language Learning

The notion of *ecology of language learning* promotes the elimination of boundaries between the linguistic and the non-linguistic domains. It means the interrelationships between language learning in the classroom environment as the micro-context and the out-classroom socio-linguistic and socio-cultural environment as the macro-context. Van Lier (2010) defined the aim of an *ecological perspective on language learning* in terms of "to look at the learning process, the actions and activities of teachers and learners, the multilayered nature of interaction and language use, in all their complexity and as a network of interdependencies among all the elements in the setting…"(p. 3). Van Lier's concept of *ecology of language learning* is applicable to a language classroom and includes key aspects such as a learner's language perception; teaching quality (language teaching principles, strategies, and actions), and contexts conducive to language learning and learner agency.

From an ecological perspective, children's L2 perception does not occur merely because of the target language input in the classroom and structured grammar and vocabulary instruction. This process is mediated by diverse teachers' strategies (e.g., elicitation, verbal and non-verbal encouragement) and contexts (e.g., language learning areas). Children's language perception is scaffolded, in particular "during novel, unpredictable moments in activities" (van Lier 2004, p. 92).

Within current theories on second language acquisition, this ecological perspective is connected to *the interaction approach* proposed by Gass (2003), Gass and Mackey (2007). This approach "takes as its starting point the assumption that language learning is stimulated by communicative pressure and examines the relationship between communication and the mechanisms (e.g., noticing, attention) that mediate between them" (Gass 2003, p. 224). It was suggested as a critical element within the *Input, Interaction, Output Hypothesis*, which "describes the process involved when learners encounter input, are involved in interaction, receive feedback and produce output" (Gass and Mackey 2007, p. 181). Putting together the interaction approach and the ecological perspective means an environmental contribution to L2 acquisition.

The classroom as an ecosystem might provide *language-conducive contexts*. I suggest defining the language-conducive classroom contexts as contexts rich in multisensory activities with a wide array of semiotic resources and diverse teacher-child and peer interactions, encouraging the child's engagement in the novel language learning. The creation of these classroom contexts aims to support comprehensibility of linguistic information and to enhance the children's L2 production (van Lier 2004). In addition, van Lier (2010) asserts that the language-conducive environment affects the learners' openness to L2 and is essential for the expression of their agency. In this case, our focus should be on exploring the relation between children's agency, language-learning contexts (e.g., type of activity; activity place, multisensory information within a context of activity) and L2 perception (van Lier 2004, p. 88). That is because, as far as early bilingual education is concerned, the ecology of language learning is influenced by the types of activities and relationships that can be developed between actors (teacher−child, peer−child, parent−teacher, parent−child), which determine the quality in the bilingual preschool. An ecological approach states that "the perceptual and social activity of the learner, and particularly the verbal and nonverbal interaction in which the learner engages, are central to an understanding of learning. In other words, they do not just facilitate learning, they *are* learning in a fundamental way" (van Lier 2010; p. 246).

Drawing on van Lier's ecological perspective on language learning, in the current volume, we examine how teachers, children, and parents as agents interact to create favorable contexts for novel language learning in bilingual preschool settings.

2.3   Sociocultural Theory and Teachers', Peers' and Parents' Mediation

Van Lier (2004) suggested that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory "illustrates an ecological approach to cognition, learning, and language" (p. 246). His ecological perspective on language learning is related to sociocultural theory by stressing the teachers' role in providing artifacts, activities, and resources mediating children's language learning.

Vygotsky (1978) saw the child as first doing things in a social context, helped in many ways by other people and language, and gradually shifting away from reliance on others to independent thinking and action. This approach to children's mental development highlights the critical role of teachers in shaping the most favorable conditions for enhancing and regulating their development. Vygotsky's theory of learning and development has been transformed and adapted to different educational frameworks, including the L2 classroom (Lantolf and Beckett 2009; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Such adaptations perceive the institutional context, such as a school, as a formative setting for the child's developmental process. In the particular

setting of the bilingual classroom, children acquire their L2 abilities through interaction with teachers and peers.

The ability to learn through interaction and mediation is characteristic of human intelligence. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the notion of the human mediator and emphasized that "what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (p. 211). In an entire range of ways, knowledgeable teachers and peers mediate and make the world accessible to children. With the help of adults and peers, children can do and understand much more than on their own.

In this volume, we explore how major theoretical principles and concepts included in Vygotsky's mediation strategies—scaffolding, identification of the child's zone of proximal development, and modeling—are realized in the teachers as well as peers' mediation aimed at encouraging L2 acquisition in the bilingual classroom at preschool age. A substantial number of studies have focused on mediation strategies provided by teachers in L2 classrooms. The focus was on strategies such as corrective feedback and its relation to L2 acquisition (e.g., Lyster et al. 2013), modeling (e.g., Cameron 2001; Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017), and the zone of proximal development (e.g., Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Ohta 2001). Most of these studies drew on observations of students in secondary L2 classrooms. For that reason, this volume will expand our limited knowledge of how teachers and peers realize main principles and concepts of mediation among preschool children.

2.4   Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Perspectives

Vygotsky's theory of learning and development and van Lier's concept of ecology of language learning are closely connected to the Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) bio-ecological perspectives on the world of children and their development. I believe that this perspective is essential for our theorizing of an interaction between child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in preschool bilingual education. Bronfenbrenner views the world of the child as consisting of five ecological systems of interaction: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem. Each system depends on the contextual nature of the child's life and offers an increasing diversity of options and sources of development. In the context of bilingual preschool development and education, three systems of the child's life are particularly relevant: the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. The microsystem includes the child's initial set of interrelations in terms of developing trust and mutuality with family and other caregivers (e.g., preschool teachers). The mesosystem helps to connect two or more systems in which child, parent, and family live (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005). The linkage between home, community, and preschool is an example of such system enactment in developing and educating the bilingual child. The mesosystem moves the child beyond the dyadic relations towards a link with the wider community by creating more expansive relations.

The macrosystem as a system of cultural, educational beliefs, societal values, and community events and projects is a powerful ecological system for building educational partnerships among the preschool, the family, and the surrounding community.

2.5 Educational Partnership

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) bio-ecological perspective on the world of children and their development is associated with Epstein's model of the overlapping spheres of influence of home, school, and community. Within the framework of the sociology of education, Epstein (2001) called for a replacement of the old ways of thinking about parental involvement with innovative ways of organizing effective programs of school, family, and surrounding community partnerships. The researcher claimed that children's academic progress is a result of overlapping spheres of influence of home, school, and community, which share the responsibility for their success. This theoretical model views the educational partnership as manifest in the school, families, and the community sharing goals. This partnership might occur on an institutional level (e.g., shared events of school, families, and community members) and an individual level (e.g., teacher−parent discussion of the child's work). The parental engagement includes such involvement as communicating, volunteering, learning with the child at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community both at school and at home (Epstein 2001; Epstein et al. 2002).

Naturally, the partnership of school, family, and the surrounding community can be particularly influential during early childhood. Recently, Bergroth and Palviainen (2016) suggested applying Epstein's concept of educational partnership for bilingualism. The successful partnership develops social ties, which, in turn, generate social capital that is beneficial for all partners (Simon and Epstein 2001). Within the idea of partnership in a preschool bilingual education framework, teachers, parents, and community members, including researchers, can exchange information, ideas, and language teaching resources that are helpful for children's bilingual development. The current volume explores how this partnership could enhance children's openness to a novel language and their willingness to acquire it.

3   The Current Volume: New Theoretical and Empirical Issues

This sub-section strives to highlight the unique theoretical and empirical contributions of this volume as well as of each chapter to the field of preschool bilingual education, therefore, I find it appropriate to underline the commonalities among our chapters and to organize the presentation by topic and not by chapter. This structure

has been chosen also because most of our contributors addressed more than one novel issue in their examination of preschool bilingual education. Thus, through the analysis, the following four interrelated topics emerged: (1) Child's, teacher's, and parents' agencies in interactions; (2) Child's agency; (3) Teacher's and child's agencies in interaction, and (4) Parents', child's and teacher's agencies in interaction.

3.1 Child's, teacher's, and Parents' Agencies in Interaction

Schwartz and Palviainen (2016) have recently proposed the theoretical perspective of interaction between preschool, family, and community in conceptualizing advantages and challenges of preschool bilingual education. They claimed that to educate a truly happy bilingual child, we need to examine the child's, the teacher's, and the parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education. Drawing on the ecological perspective on language learning, the current volume broadens this perspective. Its theoretical framework is presented as a model in Fig. 1. The model highlights that the child's ecosystems in the preschool bilingual education system are constructed through the child's, the teacher's, and the parents' acting *not as separate actors but as partners in interaction*. The eleven original contributions in this book show how these agents' acting is *strongly interrelated* and *aims to meet the child's essential developmental needs*. In addition, as can be seen in Fig. 1, the model includes aspects of the child's, teacher's, and parents' agentic behavior as overlapping spheres of acting, which will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

3.2 Child's Agency

As far as preschool bilingual education is concerned, successful bilingual development seems to be impossible without the child's willingness and positive attitude towards this process (van Lier 2010). "The fuel for learning in an ecological perspective is not 'input' or 'exercises,' but *engagement*" (van Lier 2010, p. 98). Furthermore, van Lier claims that child's agency in the process of language learning depends not only on his or her individual characteristics (e.g., a degree of identification with the cultural community of the target language) but also on the learning contexts conducive to the expression of this agency. The ways to create an inspiring context for language learning are addressed in this volume.

   Child's agency in early bilingual development and education is a novel research direction that has been recently suggested by Schwartz and Palviainen (2016). Drawing on Ahearn's (2001, p. 112) definition of agency as "a socio-culturally mediated capacity to act," Bergroth and Palviainen (2017) recently defined the notion of the child's bilingual agency "…as the socio-culturally mediated capacity of the child to act, as it is reflected in the child's communicative acts" (p. 4).

- Child's willingness to perceive a novel language and use it for communication

 - Children as language experts and models

Child's agency

Teacher's and child's agencies in interaction

Parents', child's and teacher's agencies in interaction

-Teachers' reflections

- Language-conducive classroom contexts

- Language-conducive strategies

- Diversity in children's linguistic backgrounds and flexible language use

-   Partnership for bilingualism

-   Parents' choice of bilingual preschool education

-   Funds of knowledge

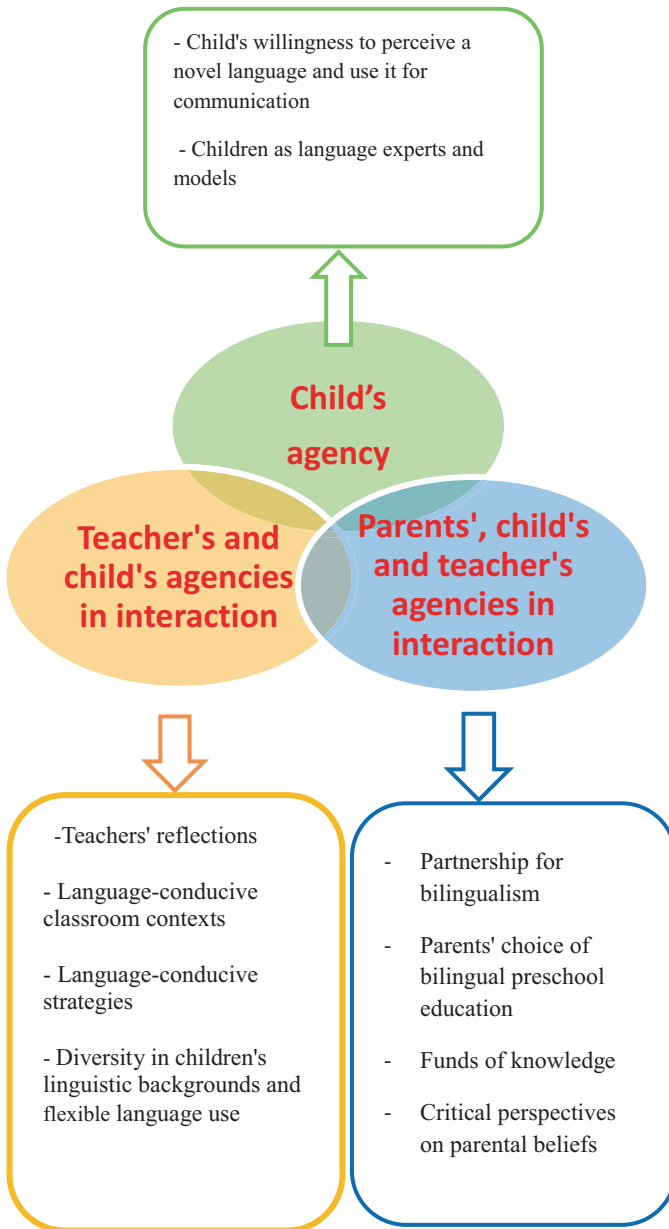-   Critical perspectives on parental beliefs

Fig. 1 Theoretical framework of overlapping spheres of child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education.

This volume complements and extends our understanding of the child's agency by exploring its main aspects such as: the child's willingness to perceive a novel language and to communicate in it and the child's agency in classroom peer interaction and learning.

3.2.1 Child's Willingness to Perceive a Novel Language and Use It for Communication

The ecological perspective on language learning views the *child's openness* to a novel language as a key factor in the learning process (van Lier 2010). Children as young as 3−4 years old are already developing ideas about language. Almér (2017) showed that 4−6-year-old bilingual children consider their linguistic repertoire as useful for talking to people who speak other languages. In addition, the young bilinguals can create beliefs about languages in their environment and can describe them as "right," or "funny "(Crump 2014). These beliefs can mediate their attitudes towards novel languages as well as influencing their language practices (Crump 2014).

Moreover, when first exposed to a novel language, children might feel "uncertain, helpless, and afraid of the unknown" (see Lugossy in this volume, chapter "Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts", p. 122). In this volume, the EFL teacher in Réka Lugossy's study (chapter "Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts") vividly describes the children's reluctance to be engaged in structured English lessons. This observation raised a reasonable question about the appropriateness of an unnatural learning context in the preschool classroom. The teacher's reflections stimulated a modification of her approach towards offering a natural and enjoyable context for language learning. She reported: "…when I did not emphasize the fact that we started the English lesson, and just invited them to sing a song or a rhyme, they felt more comfortable," so "I gave up giving lesson-like lessons" and "I gave them more freedom to do what they like" (p. 122). This phenomenon of reluctance in the perception of a novel language and its active usage appears to be prevalent in preschool classroom settings, which differ from naturalistic contexts as in the case of the EFL in Europe. This is mainly because "unlike first language children, foreign language learners are not immersed in a continual stream of spoken discourse…" (Cameron 2001, p.60).

Furthermore, young children can express their negative feelings not only regarding the unnatural means of exposure to the unknown language but also regarding how the target language is used by teachers in the classroom. For example, in this book, Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović (chapter "Separating the Languages in a Bilingual Preschool: To Do or Not to Do?") examine 6-year-old children's attitudes towards strict language separation by teacher (the one-person one-language model) in the Serbian−English-speaking bilingual kindergarten. The interview with the children, which took the entertaining form of a puppet play,

revealed that most of them felt uncomfortable with the EFL teacher who used only English in communication with them, and preferred the combined use of English and Serbian by the L2 teacher.

3.2.2 Children As Language Experts and Models

Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) suggested that children's talk with their peers provides an opportunity for a "more equal participant structure" than asymmetric adult−child interaction and as a result, might facilitate discourse skill development (p. 298). Few recent studies to date have focused on direct observations of children's talk with their peers and L2 acquisition (e.g., Cekaite and Aronsson 2005; Schwartz and Gorbatt 2016). The existing limited data suggest that this talk is a means of promoting L2 development and acquisition. During their interaction, children have abundant opportunities to learn pragmatic skills, e.g., discourse management such as encouraging talk in L2, and linguistic skills, e.g., talking about different languages and giving collaborative attention to language form in L2. In addition, through active involvement in talk with peers, the L2 learners endorse their language socialization (Blum- Kulka and Gorbatt 2014).

Two contributions in this volume (chapters "Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Program" and "The Role of Language Experts in Novices' Language Acquisition and Socialization: Insights from an Arabic−Hebrew Speaking Preschool in Israel") extend our knowledge on the role of young children's peer talk and interaction in novel language learning and mediation. First, Sandie Mourão (chapter "Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Program") presents novel data on how child's agency is expressed in child-initiated play in a low-exposure EFL context. The study is based on Vygotsky's (1978) perception of child's play as a leading activity, which supports the development of intentional behaviors, imagination, imitation of adults' socio-cultural activities, and as a result, creates a zone of proximal development for the child. In this chapter, Mourão explores the role of child-initiated language play as children's agentic behavior in the context of a resourced English learning area in the classroom. She shows that even in the context of low exposure to foreign language learning, children imitate the teaching strategies of their English language teacher. The author vividly illustrates how, through child-initiated play, children became actively engaged in the novel language learning process, hence becoming agents. The child's agency was empowered by the fact that, alongside promoting the use of English during free play in the English learning area, the use of the children's first and dominant language, Portuguese, was entirely legitimate. Thus, during play, both children's languages were used and created their linguistic repertoire that permitted peer language mediation and learning. The child's agency was expressed in peer scaffolding of novel words in English, and in using Portuguese to negotiate meanings, to navigate games, and to support the relationship between the peers.

Furthermore, Schwartz and Gorbatt (chapter "The Role of Language Experts in Novices' Language Acquisition and Socialization: Insights from an Arabic−Hebrew

Speaking Preschool in Israel") draw our attention to peer language mediation within an interesting context of bilingual Arabic−Hebrew-speaking preschool. The authors' focus is on an under-researched phenomenon of young language experts, seven bilingual (L1) Arabic- and (L2) Hebrew-speaking children, who were at an advanced stage of competence in L2 and played the role of L2 "teachers." Drawing on Vygotsky's perspective on mediation, the authors show how children as young as 5 use mediation strategies such as meaning negotiation, paraphrasing, gesturing, modeling, and imitating the language of teachers' behavioral patterns to encourage their peers' L2 learning. This research is innovative in its exploration of how children can play an agentic role as active classroom language managers and social leaders in initiations of inter-group communications between the Arab and Jewish children.

3.3 Teacher's and child's Agencies in Interaction

3.3.1 Teacher's Reflections

Recent sociolinguistic research on bilingualism in different learning spaces has shifted its analytical lens from the focus on languages as discrete and bounded units to the study of language as social practice and teachers as social agents. This shift of focus has foregrounded the connection between language ideologies and practices with the purpose of illuminating how teachers understand and interpret their own language-teaching activity (e.g., García 2009; Heller 2007). In this context, Priestley et al. (2012) called for more theorizing of various aspects related to the teacher's agency phenomenon. When theorizing the teacher's agency process, one needs to relate to multifarious factors that influence this agency, such as contexts within which teachers act. These include educational policy, teachers' beliefs, professional and personal experience, and identity (Priestley et al. 2012). Priestley et al. (2012) identified three fundamental principles concerning teacher agency: teacher agency promotes changes in their practices; teacher agency is achieved under ecological conditions such as social structure, cultural forms, and the material environment, and teacher agency should be investigated with reference to past and present experiences of agents. Moreover, Biesta and Tedder (2006) suggest that our knowledge about teachers' agency could be gained by analyzing their reflections on their actions. The use of reflections permits teachers to construct and reconstruct their professional experiences, identify problems and obstacles in their practice, find solutions, and critically examine their pedagogical ideology and practice (Luttenberg and Bergen 2008).

How are teachers' reflections related to their agentic behavior in the bilingual preschool classroom? Réka Lugossy (this volume chapter "Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts") shows how the EFL teacher in Hungary, through her self-observation and critical reflections, analyses her interactional and teaching problems and modifies her teaching strategies

during the nine months of self-observation. Furthermore, Ana Andúgar and Beatriz Cortina-Pérez (chapter "EFL teachers' reflections on their teaching practice in Spanish preschools: A focus on motivation") reveal how, in a situation of a lack of clear EFL legislative guidelines in Spain and specific professional preparation for early language introduction, teachers as agents implement their own instructional methods and strategies. Based on the 32 EFL teachers' reflections, the researchers identify which strategies are effective for creating an agency-rich environment. Concerning the interaction between the child's and the teacher's agency, the teachers highlight that "showing empathy to children" and addressing their emotional and developmental needs should be at the forefront of the EFL teachers' minds in preschool education (p. 230). Furthermore, the teachers believe that the uniqueness of the early childhood context compels them not only to act as high-level professionals, but also to be "… very natural and spontaneous" to create an agency-rich context and to conquer children's hearts (p. 230). The teachers also reflect on the necessity to respect the child's agency during the silent receptive period of bilingual development ("It is more important to promote participation than to press them to express orally") (p. 232).

In addition, in chapter "The Role of Early Childhood Education in Revitalizing a Minoritized Language in an Unsupportive Policy Context: The Galician Case", Renée DePalma and María Helena Zapico Barbeito examine future preschool teachers' reflections on their potential agentic role. The contributors focus on a question that has not been researched to date: how future preschool teachers evaluate their own capacity for promoting a minoritized language (Galician) in early childhood education in Spain. The teachers' capacity to act was investigated in an intriguing context of the lack of a clear-cut language education policy aimed at intergenerational transmission of the Galician language. This situation has the potential for agency of teachers who can "critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations" (Feryok 2012, p. 97). In addition, the researchers found that the immediate educational environment and its language-use norms, such as the tendency to use Galician in less formal language-conducive contexts (lunch and free play time), influence the teacher's agency. Furthermore, this chapter promotes a broader concept than teacher's agency—teachers' collective agency, which is realized in the professional community's commitment to supporting the minoritized language even in the context of the weak language education policy in Galicia. DePalma and Zapico Barbeito assert that the collective agency is an act of policy making by improving the social status of the minoritized language and reducing stereotypes concerning its use in society.

3.3.2   Language-Conducive Contexts in the Classroom

Van Lier (2010) invites us to imagine a "metaphorical room" in a language learning classroom "for a variety of expressions of [child's] agency to flourish" (p. 5). The present volume complements and extends our understanding of how bilingual

classroom contexts, the "metaphorical rooms," are supportive of child's agency. We assert that the creation of the agency-rich environment is a major task of bilingual preschool pedagogy, which becomes a joint project for teachers and children.

Many authors in this volume examine language-conducive classroom contexts. Réka Lugossy (chapter "Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts") shows how, through critical reflections, the EFL teacher realized that the children's reluctance to be engaged in the structured English lessons gave rise to a reasonable question about the appropriateness of an unnatural learning context in the preschool classroom. Drawing on her painful experience, the teacher admitted that the building of natural contexts was more fruitful than structured teaching for breaking the ice in relationships with children and their willingness to perceive a novel language. Interestingly, the children's generally infrequent L2 production was evident mainly during mealtime as a natural context that enables rapid memorization of basic formulaic language and initiation of labeling activities.

Furthermore, Gunhild Tomter Alstad and Elena Tkachenko (chapter "Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Creating Multilingual Spaces: The Case of English Teaching in Norwegian Early Childhood Education") draw our attention to the potential of outdoor activities for creating a meaningful context for children's novel language learning. The researchers show that providing a natural physical environment for the EFL input related to plants, animals, water, and rocks in Norwegian kindergartens attracts children's attention to English as a novel language and prepares them to learn English in the future. In line with Lugossy's findings, Alstad and Tkachenko found that building merely on structured and teacher-led activities promoted neither perceptual diversity nor child's active engagement in the EFL learning process. At the same time, a more holistic approach towards EFL teaching and learning encouraged the children to initiate activities in informal language-learning settings such as free play and mealtimes.

Sandie Mourão (chapter "Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Program") also explores the role of the resource area for learning English in the preschool classroom in Portugal as a context that induces child-initiated language play. The language-learning area is defined as "…physical space, in the classroom" designed "to stimulate and facilitate children's use of the target language they have previously been introduced to and practised with the teacher" (Robinson et al. 2015, p. 7). While playing in this area, the children are provided with diverse resources during the teacher-led language-learning sessions, which stimulate interactive learning. These include puppets, flashcards, picture books, and board games, as well as clothes for dressing up and role play.

Another feature of the classroom context is patterns of teacher−child communication and interaction, which are central to language learning. As mentioned above, Gass and Mackey (2007) claim that the centrality of interaction is an essential link between input and output in L2 development. In chapter "Scaffolding Discourse Skills in Pre-Primary L2 Classrooms", Teresa Fleta claims that the young children's encounter with the second or foreign language, to which they are not exposed in