

# Inclusive and Exclusive Language Use in German (Pre)schools: Perspectives and Experiences of Turkish Mothers

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## Research Question

**How do Turkish mothers perceive and experience inclusive and exclusive language use in German (pre)schools?**

The part of the ISOTIS Project:

- 22 Qualitative Interviews: Berlin and Bremen, Germany

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## Introduction

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Linguistic Minorities in European Societies are mainly addressed with „integration“ debates

In Germany:

- Turkish population largest community with migration background (appx. 2.8 million) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018a)
- Turkish: the most frequently spoken foreign language in German households (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018b)
- Turkish children has lower academic scores (e.g. PISA) (OECD, 2015)

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## Research Gap

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### **Previous studies:**

Promoting multilingualism, teachers' attitudes and language support in (pre)schools, (Kratzmann, Jahrei, Frank, Ertanir, & Sachse, 2017; Kratzmann, Lehrl, & Ebert, 2013; Wiese et al., 2017)

Perspective of children (Agirdag, 2010; Celik, 2017)

Parents focused: home-school relationship (Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Hachfeld, Anders, Kuger, & Smidt, 2016), language complementary schools (Feuer, 2006; Lytra, 2012)

### **Research Gap:**

Parents' experiences and perceptions: Educational institutions' linguistic practices

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## Theoretical Background

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- Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development (1974; 1975; 1979; 1986; 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994)  
→ Language: Human-Context processes in different systems
- Language is a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity (Giles, 1977; Soehl & Waldinger, 2012)
- Bourdieu (1977a): Symbolic power relations through language btw. groups and the concept of habitus (1977b; 1998)
- Inclusive and Exclusive Institutional Habitus (Bourdieu, 1998; McDonough, 1997; Reay, 1998)

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## Historical Background

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**Turkish Migration since 1960s** (guest workers, family reunion, political refugees, asylum seekers, highly skilled migration of Turks)

### **German educational responses to socio-linguistic diversity**

- Intercultural Education focused „European dimension“ (Hoff, 1995)
- Assimilationist „foreigner pedagogy“ until 1990s: (Faas, 2008)
- Recently innovative approaches, language support, the role of teachers (e.g. Gogolin & Neumann, 2009; Jungmann et al., 2013; Kratzmann et al., 2017, Panagiotopoulou, 2016)
- National level vs. regional/local level (Brubaker, 2001; Kratzmann et al., 2017)

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## Methodology: Qualitative Interview Study

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**Sampling:** Subsample of the ISOTIS WP2 quantitative study

- 12 Mothers in Berlin, 10 Mothers in Bremen (child age range: 3-6 (before primary school) and 8-12 (primary school))
- Mixed generation of migration (1st, 2nd, 3rd gen.), diverse SES and employment status
- Diverse ethnic background (Turkish, Kurdish)

**Method of Data Collection:**

- biographical + semi-structured interview (Nurse & Melhuish, 2018)

**Method of Data Analysis:**

- Qualitative Content Analysis (Mayring, 2004; Schreier, 2012)

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## Findings: Inclusive Educational Habitus

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### Valuation of the Turkish Language:

He [target child] was talking in Turkish in preschool with some of his friends. It was not forbidden [to talk in Turkish]. Now also the [current] school is the same (...). **They [children] feel accepted in a way.** They do not feel like “my language is bad so; I should not talk”. At least **the child does not feel excluded.** (Asli, Berlin)

**In preschools you can find a Turkish or Arabic educator.** When you go to a pharmacy, you can communicate in many languages. Or there are Turkish, Arabic or Russian doctors. In my day in the past it wasn't like that at all, everything was solely in German. (Fatma, Berlin)

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## Findings: Inclusive Educational Habitus

### Recognition of Support Needs (German & Turkish): Wishes

Other than speaking in German, at preschool they haven't given any **additional [German language] support** such as preparing the kids for the school or any language support. I would have expected them to do something different for the children who would begin to go to the school in the next year. Our preschool does not provide such services (Ebru, Berlin)

Not as activity, but **I'd wish that he would get Turkish classes**. I've heard some schools offer these courses for couple of hours after school period is over. I'd want Turkish classes would be added to the curriculum because I am not sure whether I'd be adequate to show the literary analysis of a sentence or its grammar. I'd like my child to be able to read Turkish books and enjoy them. That would suffice but I don't know whether I'd be adequate to teach it to him. (Ceren, Bremen)

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## Findings: Inclusive Educational Habitus

### Attitudes of (pre)school staff: Linguistic capabilities of Mothers and Children

I was going to those meetings with my husband anyway. **Even if I didn't understand something the woman [teacher] was explaining it to me**. She was telling my husband that we would communicate one way or another and sending him back. She was a very good person. (Ömür, Berlin)

The reason why Talha [target child] loves his teacher so much is because that **his teacher has a lot of experiences with the kids of migrant families**. As I said, she remedies the situation, where Talha feels degraded, by saying that he knows two languages. The others aren't like that. For example, they tell him to speak slowly or speak more German. This attitude doesn't help the kid. But the **other teacher sympathizes with his emotions**. If there would be more teachers like him/her, or, you know there are these seminars called like 'Weiterbildung', if other teachers would take those seminars, that would be better while educating bilingual kids (Ceren, Bremen)

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## Findings: Exclusive Educational Habitus

### Discouraging the use of Heritage Language in (pre)schools

Mine [the target child] was also doing well but he was dallying with other Turkish kids, playing football and speaking in Turkish. His teacher warned [me] that he was speaking Turkish (...). **When he speaks Turkish they [teachers] try to separate them [children].** They advise me to speak in German with him (...) Then I started to speak with my broken German (Gamze, Bremen)

When she [the target child] started preschool, she was 2 years old and did not know any German. She had difficulties in the first week. The professional trainer asked if it is because she does not know German. **She recommended us to speak German at home too. But we said "this is not our task.** She can have difficulties but she will learn anyway. Our task is not to teach her German language, this is your task and we do not see it as an obstacle. We read on this issue. My husband is well informed about this issue too". So, she [the target child] overcame this problem within one week and adapted preschool without any problem. Later a mother in preschool heard my husband talking Kurdish to our children. And told him that **"you are in Germany, in order to adapt to here and get used to living here, you need to talk German with your children"**. (...) we had such difficulty just once but we took up our position immediately. (Meliha, Bremen)

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## Findings: Exclusive Educational Habitus

### Discouraging the use of Heritage Language in (pre)schools

**It wasn't allowed to speak in Turkish there [school]. Can you imagine?** It was forbidden to speak in Turkish. One day he came "Mom, you know, at the school there is a boy having an English mom and German dad, during the recess he talks in English and teachers pat on his back saying 'great job'" So this kid wasn't speaking German. So if the rule is to speak German only, then speaking any other language should be forbidden. My son is born Turkish so he speaks Turkish, Arab kid speaks Arabic and Italian kid speaks Italian. Italian, Spanish, English, French, they are well received, and even more than that great, fantastic! But when it comes to Arabic, especially Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, they don't accept. (...) Couple of times during their recesses, they made them write 'It is forbidden to speak another language other than German.' (Sevgi, Berlin)

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## Findings: Exclusive Educational Habitus

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“to reject a child’s language in the school is to reject the child” and the demand to “leave your language and culture at the school door” requires children to leave behind a central part of their identities (Cummins, 2001)

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## Conclusion

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Inclusive vs Exclusive Institutional Habitus linked to language use:

- Acknowledgement of Linguistic Resources and Needs
- The role of working staff (similar ethno-cultural background or having specialized training for intercultural contact)
- Children and Mothers feel (de-)valued
- Home-school relationship
- It can affect children’s socio-emotional well-being and school success positively

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## Discussion

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- Hierarchy of Languages and „Parallel Societies“
- Reasons of Attitudes of teachers: selective multilingualism?
  - Perceived advantageous of knowing languages with Western European origin
  - Experiencing difficulties for understanding language spoken by children
  - Prejudices towards certain cultures and languages
- Need of German Language Support for children without forbidding the heritage language
- Beneficial advices of teachers linked to home linguistic context

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## Limitations - Further Research Policy Recommendations

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- No mothers completely assimilated to Germany and no command of Turkish
- Generational differences can be highlighted in the future research
- Perspectives and practices of children and (pre)school teachers could be the focus in the future research

### **Policies:**

- Strengthening inclusive education linked to recognition and valuation of families' languages: adopting inclusive educational habitus in institutions
- Teachers' education
- National/regional/local level policies → strengthening policy-practice match
- Family targeted programs for creating awareness linked to importance of heritage language/bilingualism

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