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Child-initiated informings and conversational participation in a bilingual preschool

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores children's interactional competence in the context of bilingual early childhood education, looking specifically at how very young children initiate conversations with teachers by informing them about something interesting and new. Video recordings collected from ethnographic fieldwork in a Swedish—English preschool are investigated from the conversation analytic perspective, paying particular attention to multimodal aspects of naturally-occurring interactions. The analysis reveals that in initiating informings aimed at teachers in a multiparty institutional setting, children practice their bilingual skills in turn-taking and recipient design, and present their topic as relevant and coherent within the local material and conversational context. In so doing, children navigate institutional constraints on participation, secure teachers' recipiency, and establish themselves as knowledgeable speakers. Child-initiated participation in multiparty institutional settings provides a co-operative, transformative social process that constitutes an essential affordance for children's development of interactional competence in a bilingual educational context.

1. Introduction

The development of children's interactional competence that entails "the emergent, co-constructed ability to interact with others by making sense of each other's actions" (Salaberry and Kunitz, 2019: 2), or, more broadly, the "ability for joint action" through language (Pekarek Doehler, 2019: 30) is an essential component of child language acquisition. In naturally occurring talk, children display their interactional competence through a variety of skills, such as producing relevant speech acts; adhering to conversational rules; forming extended discourse genres, such as narratives; or in case of multilingual individuals, strategically choosing the appropriate language in a given setting (Cekaite, 2012). Prior research on monolingual settings has indicated that children use a range of social, verbal, and embodied resources to display and practice interactional competence (Butler and Wilkinson, 2013; Keel, 2015; Kidwell and Zimmerman, 2007; Lerner et al., 2013). This paper seeks to advance research on children's interactional competence by looking at a bilingual Swedish—English preschool with one teacher—one language policy.[1] Specifically, it examines how in a bilingual educational setting 2—5-year-old children issue informings for initiating conversations with teachers. Broadly defined as utterances with declarative syntax positioned as a first pair part of the

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   [1] Language policy refers here to a set of rules on language use among adults and children in a particular environment. In practice, these rules result in language separation, where one bilingual adult consistently uses only one language in interactions with the child, and other adults use other selected languages, respectively. For instance, 'one parent—one language' is a "principal of bilingual upbringing" that has been described as a widespread family language policy (Döpke, 1992: 1). In institutions of early childhood education, the "one-person one-language strategy" has been often considered "the best model to use to stimulate early bilingual language development" (Mård-Miettinen et al., 2018: 169).

exchange, informings are designed to deliver newsworthy and relevant information to the recipient (Gardner and Mushin, 2013, 2017; Norrie, 2013; cf. Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 2018: 266—269).[2] Children's informings can be seen as some of "early efforts at engaging other(s) in interaction that is *about*[3] something," which is essential for learning at large (Kidwell, 2022: 41). This paper offers an analysis of child-initiated informings in naturally-occurring interactions as an insight on the emic; that is, the participants' perspective on participation and engagement among children and teachers in a bilingual educational setting.

1.1. Children's conversational initiatives

While adults play a crucial role in eliciting and scaffolding children's talk, interactional studies demonstrate that already one-year-old children with minimal verbal skills regularly pursue adult engagement through interactional initiatives via joint attention towards objects (Kidwell and Zimmerman, 2007). Preverbal children are able to secure recipiency and uptake of their interactional initiatives through the design and sequential placement of turns, and actively participate in the negotiation of their communicative intent. Such negotiations (and clarifications) simultaneously serve "a training ground … in making their actions recognizable" and thus contribute to the child's interactional development as an accountable interactant (Kidwell, 2022: 44). Ethnographic longitudinal studies in the field of developmental pragmatics draw additional attention to children learning to participate in social interactions as integral to language learning (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1979). Conversation analytic studies on young children's interactional skills and participation in home settings have investigated requests (Butler and Wilkinson, 2013; Wootton, 1981), storytelling (Evaldsson and Fernandes, 2019; Searles, 2019; Waring, 2022), and assessment sequences (Burdelski and Morita, 2017; Keel, 2015) as typical interactional moves initiated by young children towards their parents. These studies cast light on the multifaceted nature of children's interactional competence as being dependent on the ability to understand and produce relevant talk, while placing it appropriately in the ongoing conversation.

In comparison to research on talk among parents and children, studies on teacher—child interactions tend to focus primarily on educational aspects and show, for instance, that classroom talk is dominated by initiation—response—evaluation sequences (Mehan, 1979) and teachers' factual or procedural informings (Gardner and Mushin, 2013, 2017). Although teachers may encourage children's participation through posing follow-up questions (Bateman, 2013) and by eliciting storytelling (Bateman and Carr, 2017), children's interactional initiatives in the classroom settings are limited by "the local institutional norms of participation" (Cekaite, 2007: 58) and thereby require teacher's ratification. Since multiparty participation frameworks are a significant characteristic of preschool settings where "one-to-one, private conversations [are] the exception rather than the rule" (Pallotti, 2001: 326; also Pursi, 2019), children are faced with particular challenges in negotiating speaker's rights and initiating or advancing their topics of choice (see Blum-Kulka and Snow, 2002; also Davidson and Edwards-Groves, 2018 on multiparty talk in primary school; Deniz Tarım and Kyratzis, 2012 on multiparty talk in a heritage language classroom).

This paper aims to examine teacher—child interactions in a bilingual preschool as an institution of education and care. Notably, the conversational context of a preschool is not constrained by the teacher turn-allocation system typical of a conventional classroom, allowing greater opportunities for children's interactional initiatives. Specifically, the focus of the paper is on investigating children's informings as a type of telling that "convey unsolicited information to a recipient" (Norrie, 2013: 37; cf. Anna and Pfeiffer, 2021 on children's noticings in German). The analysis of childrens' informings—particularly those initiated amid complex and challenging multiparty setting in competition with ongoing conversations, activity shifts, teachers' instructions, and other children's pursuits of the teacher's attention—may provide new insights into how children navigate institutional and interactional spaces amid bilingualism.

1.2. Bilingualism in early childhood education

Research on bilingual development from birth through preschool years in the context of early language education reveals a great variety of contextual factors, teaching practices, and learning outcomes, and utilizes various research methods (Schwartz, 2022). Immigrant children and their socialization in the majority language, with respect to local language policies and societal language ideologies, is one prominent research subject in this field. Fewer studies have examined bilingual educational settings where young children learn to talk in two or more languages simultaneously. These studies focused particularly on teachers', parents', and children's attitudes regarding various languages and teaching methods (e.g., the edited collection by Schwartz, 2018). Focusing on children's perspectives, interactional studies using multimodal conversation analysis have been productive in gaining understanding on how social actions can be accomplished in multiple languages (e.g., Björk-Willén, 2007; Björk-Willén and Cromdal, 2009). For example, the ability to separate and discriminate between languages is an important achievement for bilingual children (Genesee, 2019), and interactional research has demonstrated how young children develop these skills by calibrating the recipient design of their utterances in interactions with parents who speak different languages (e.g. Filipi, 2015). It remains, however, less understood how young children participate in early

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[2] Informings bear resemblance and overlap functionally with the emergent forms of various actions in children's discourse, e.g. announcements, assessments, noticings, explanations (e.g., Fasulo et al., 2021 on markings). In comparison to requests, informing does not require the recipient to grant or decline the request. Instead, by informing, a child pursues some recognition from the adult that what is said is new, exciting, interesting, or meaningful.

[3] Italics in the original.

bilingual education. This paper seeks to address this gap by investigating how children initiate conversations with teachers in a bilingual preschool with one teacher—one language policy. Children's developing bilingual interactional competence will be discussed.

2. Data, setting, and participants

The present study is based on a video-ethnography conducted in a bilingual early childhood education and care center in an urban area in Sweden. Called *förskola*, or 'preschool' in Sweden, these centers constitute an environment where 1—5-year-olds can stay during their parent's working hours, for about 40 h a week. This form of childcare and early education is subsidized by the government and available to all socioeconomic groups. Swedish preschools follow a national curriculum (Skolverket, 2019) that emphasizes orientation to children's rights, education, and care, and presents language as both the context and medium for achieving its goals (for more information about Swedish preschool curriculum see Bateman and Cekaite, 2022). In preschools, children participate in a wide range of activities that balance structured classroom-type educational activities, like daily circle time, mealtimes, etc., with less formal activities, for example, free play indoors and outdoors. Transitional spaces, such as the dressing room, corridors where children wait for the next activity, or walking/taking public transportation to outdoor playgrounds, represent other significant interactional environments for teachers and children.

The preschool where this study was conducted differed from regular monolingual Swedish preschools since it provided education and care in two languages, Swedish and English. Teachers in this preschool had "predefined language roles" (Mård-Miettinen et al., 2018: 171), and followed one teacher—one language policy when interacting with the children. The preschool was organized in three groups according to the children's age (1—2-year-olds, 3—4-year-olds, 5-year-olds). The data used in this study includes children from all age groups. Each group of children had co-present English- and Swedish-speaking teachers who took turns in leading daily activities, thus attempting to provide the children with evenly distributed input in both languages.

The data were collected in two fieldwork periods, lasting two weeks each. The research project was approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority; informed consent was obtained from teachers, children, and their guardians. A total of 8 teachers and 32 children participated in the study. The children and teachers came from various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. The information about the teachers, their education, and experience of learning and teaching languages was available on the preschool's website. During fieldwork, daily activities in the preschool were observed and video-recorded. These included mealtimes, teaching activities, independent play, and preschool outings, resulting in approximately 80 h of data. The observation focused on the activities rather than on specific teachers or children. Two cameras were used; one hand-held and one stationed on a tripod. The hand-held camera was used when following the children and teachers outdoors. The camera on the tripod was used during indoor activities, including circle time, crafting, or free play. The researcher was sensitive toward children's conduct during recording; whenever the children or teachers displayed uneasiness or unwillingness to be recorded, the recording was stopped. All names used in the transcripts are pseudonyms; images are modified to preserve participants' anonymity.

3. Analytical methods

The present study is part of a research project on bilingual early childhood education. Conversation analysis is used as the analytical method for understanding linguistic practices that structure social interaction among children and teachers in this setting (cf. Bateman, 2015). Following conversation analytic procedures with the attention to sequentially-organized unfolding interaction (Sacks et al., 1974), video-recorded data were viewed to identify recurrent patterns of interaction where children engaged teachers in a conversation. In this process, a particular interactional strategy that children employed regularly, namely child-initiated informings, emerged inductively as a unit of analysis. Episodes with child-initiated informings were transcribed and analyzed in terms of turn design, turn-taking procedures, actions, and multimodal aspects of interaction (cf. Deppermann, 2013; Mondada, 2018). Such informings occurred regularly during transitions between structured activities that were characterized by the children's and teachers' preoccupation with some manual, physical, or organizational tasks, for example, dressing, walking, or waiting for others, which allowed children to approach teachers outside of strictly organized educational interactions.

4. Findings

The analysis of the data demonstrates that children habitually monitored the interactional environment and exploited the possibilities of issuing informings toward the teacher, particularly in conversational environments that extended beyond structured teacher-centered activities; for example, during transitional activities. In the following sections, the analysis will demonstrate how children and teachers jointly made informings recognizable as such (4.1.1.). Specifically, it will be explicated how children employed participant-relevant language choice, turn design, and topic selection as the interactional resources to design informings as relevant for the recipient. It will be demonstrated how by forming joint attention, recycling children's utterances, issuing follow-up question, teachers supported children's informing as a regular interactional practice, also contributing to the development of children's narrative skills (4.1.2.). The analysis will further present children's and teachers'

collaborative strategies for making informings relevant by situating them in the immediate material context (4.2.1), as well as in the discursive context constituted by the prior and ongoing conversations within the multiparty participation framework typical of the early childhood education setting (4.2.2).

4.1. Making informings recognizable

4.1.1. Pursuing understanding of child-initiated informing

The analysis showed that the social actions projected in young children's informings were not always readily recognized by teachers. The children, however, demonstrated their persistence in achieving teachers' interpretation of their contribution as a particular kind of social action (e.g., an informing). Teachers' understanding of young children's conversational initiatives was constrained by, for instance, the child's (mis)pronunciation, rudimentary turn design, the lack of a preface for a new topic, etc. Notably, in a bilingual educational context, language choice was an additional factor that contributed to the establishment of a specific interpretative framework. Not only did the child have to select a normatively appropriate language—English or Swedish—when addressing a specific teacher, the teacher could attribute problems in understanding to the child's language choice. In cases of such difficulties, the potential meaning of young children's initiatives could be worked out through an interactionally-extended sequences that required the speaker and the recipient to engage in persistent, collaborative attempts to establish the action.

Excerpt 1 illustrates a situation when the meaning of the child's initial verbal turn is negotiated in an extended interactional sequence unfolding during a transitional activity when teachers and children are getting ready for going outside. Two-year-old Emil—who is already dressed—sits next to an educational poster depicting a list of words in Swedish sign language. Emil is quietly inspecting the images on the poster (Fig. 1.1); he then turns away from the poster, looks with a smile at the camera (and the researcher) and says something that sounds like *you know* (line 02), cuts off briefly, before turning toward the teacher (line 03) and completing his utterance *(æ pi: si:)* (line 04). The teacher acknowledges Emil's initiative, but both participants appear to run into trouble.[4]

Excerpt 1 <apelsin>[4]
Teacher (English-speaking), Emil (2y 5m old)

```
01 emil        [#observing the poster
   teacher     [#helping another child putting on her shoes, looking away from Emil
   fig         [#fig.1.1
```
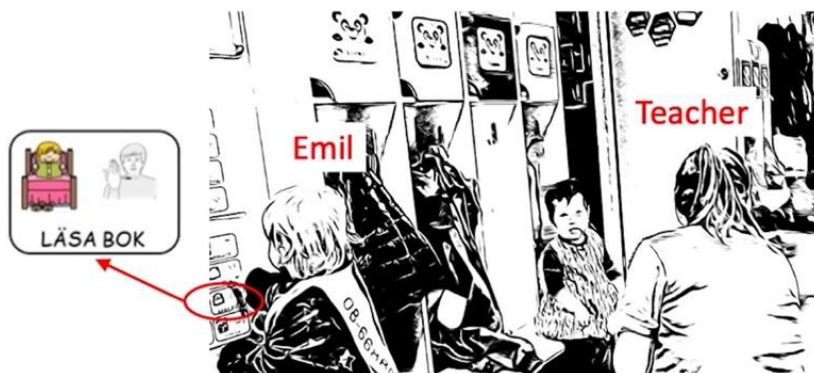

fig.1.1

```
02 Emil        #+(you know=is-)
               #+gaze to the camera

03 emil        turns to the teacher

04 Emil        +(æ  pi:  si:)
               +gaze to the teacher
```

[4] Transcription conventions are summarized in the appendix.

```
05 Teacher      #+Apelsin?
                  orange
   teacher      #+turns head to Emil
   fig          #fig.1.2
```


fig.1.2

```
06 Emil         (Yeah)?

07 Teacher      We don't have apelsin. We don't have orange.
                                 orange

08 Emil         No +this!
                   +pointing to the poster

09 Teacher      #+Where?
                #+frowning, looking in the poster
   fig          #fig.1.3
```
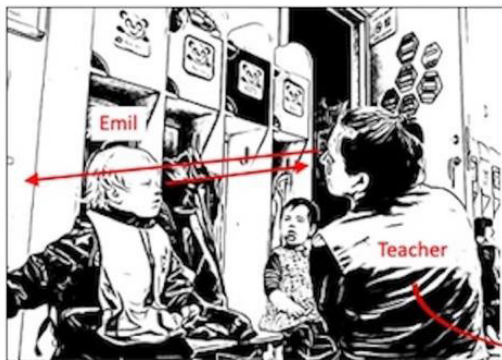

fig.1.3   fig.1.4

```
10 Emil         +No thi:s.
                +looking at the teacher, pointing at the poster

11 Teacher      +Where?
                +looking at the pointed direction

12 Emil         No thi:s.

13 Teacher      #+What's wrong Emil?
                #+moving toward the poster
   fig          #fig.1.4
```

(approx. 2 min later, teacher continues interacting with Emil, dressing other
children, talking with other teachers)

```
28 Teacher      +Which one?
                +sitting in front of the poster, gaze at the poster
```
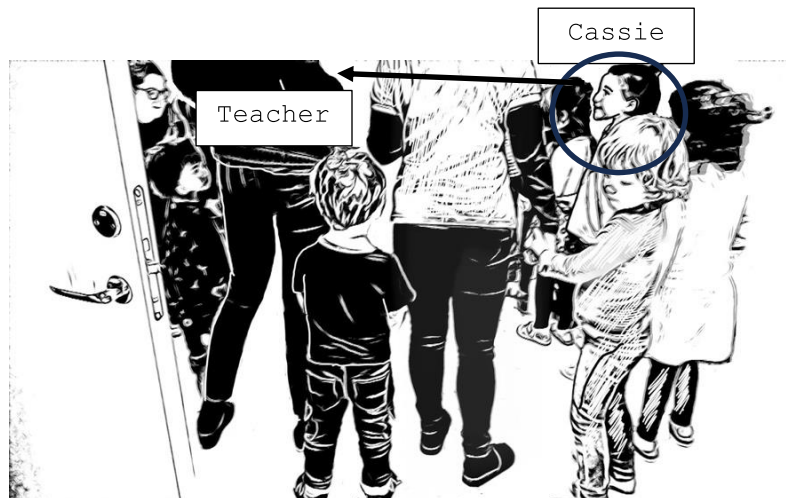
```
29 Emil       +This!
              +pointing at the poster

30 Teacher    This is läsa bok. Läsa book. Book. +It's reading a book.
                       read book read
                                                 +signing ''read'' in Swedish

31 emil       gaze at the teacher, (2sec)

32 teacher    turns away from Emil, to another child
```

Emil directs his utterance at the teacher when she is not engaged in a conversation with other children or adults. Emil's "*æ pi: si*." (line 04) has no clear referent, and in her response, the English-speaking teacher displays trouble in understanding by initiating a repair with the Swedish word for orange, *apelsin* (line 05), as a candidate understanding. When interpreting Emil's utterance as a request for a fruit snack, something often distributed in the dressing room, the teacher draws on the situational setting and the child's bilingual repertoire. Emil initially responds with an affirmative *yeah* (line 06), although changing his facial expression from smiling to frowning.

After the teacher treats Emil's utterance as the request that cannot be granted (line 07), Emil is clearly not satisfied with her interpretation and relaunches the prior action with *No this!* (lines 08, 10, 12), pointing at the poster on the wall. In asking "What's wrong Emil?" (line 13), the teacher acknowledges a lack of mutual understanding; she interrupts her ongoing activity, moves closer to Emil, and grants him her subsequent recipiency. When the teacher follows Emil's gesture (line 29), she notices the image that he is pointing at on the poster. The teacher reads the text in Swedish *läsa bok*, translates it to English as 'read a book' (line 30), while simultaneously demonstrating the word 'read' in Swedish sign language. In doing so, the teacher displays her orientation to the complex bilingual conditions of the educational setting where lexical information is presented interchangeably in different languages. When Emil silently gazes at the teacher without uptake, the teacher treats the interaction as complete and moves away to dress another child.[5]

This extended and likely somewhat frustrating for the participants exchange reveals not only the child's limited linguistic competence, in terms of pronunciation, lexicon, etc., but also highlights his social and interactional skills along with the teacher's willingness to ratify the child's conversational initiation. Emil was successful in pursuing the teacher's response and attention, and remained persistent in conveying his meaning, monitoring and attempting to correct the teacher's interpretation. When the teacher treated Emil's utterance as a request, he did not align with this interpretation—that is, did not cooperate with the teacher's on the projected course of action (cf. Stivers, 2008; Stivers et al., 2011: 21–22). Instead, the child was pursuing some recognition from the adult that his informing was exciting, interesting, or meaningful.

4.1.2. Advancing and negotiating the informing as a rudimentary narrative

Informings initiated by older children displayed their evolving linguistic and interactional skills along with their greater sensitivity towards the recipient's institutional characteristics, i.e. language choice, in a bilingual educational setting. Excerpt 2 illustrates how 5-year-old Cassie succeeds in engaging a Swedish-speaking teacher in a conversation by first producing an informing and then advancing her informing as a small story in the teacher's institutional language; i.e., Swedish. The situation unfolds as children and teachers are waiting to enter their respective classrooms and are engaged in multiple conversations (Fig. 2.1). Cassie summons a teacher, Monica, and volunteers an informing, presenting it as a simple, yet recipient-relevant, narrative with a contrastive punchline "I saw you yesterday actually but you did not see me" (line 01). Carefully monitoring the recipient's availability, Cassie launches her telling when the teacher comes into her proximity and is not occupied with talking to someone else.

Excerpt 2 <I saw you actually>
Teacher (Monica; Swedish-speaking); Cassie (5 yo)

```
01 Cassie     #Monica:! Jag såg dig [(faktiskt) du såg inte mig.
               Monica:! I   saw you (actually) you did not see me.
   fig        #fig.2.1
```

---

[5] Notably, Emil continues studying the poster, repeating the same '*æ pi: si*', and trying to engage other adults (including the researcher) and children in this interaction, which can be interpreted that his conversational initiative remained unrecognized by the teacher.

```
02  Teacher                              [Vad?
                                          What?
```


fig.2.1

```
03  Cassie      Jag såg dig igår faktiskt du såg inte mig. Jag såg dig. (0.5)
                I saw you yesterday actually you did not see me. I saw you. (0.5)

04  Teacher     Har du?
                Did you?

05  Cassie      Ah!
                Yeah!

06  Teacher     Var (skulle) det vara nånstans?
                Where could that be?

07  Cassie      När- när du gick till bilen #+där- där-
                When- when- you went to the car there- there-
    cassie                                  #+pointing repeatedly behind herself
    fig                                     #fig.2.2
```
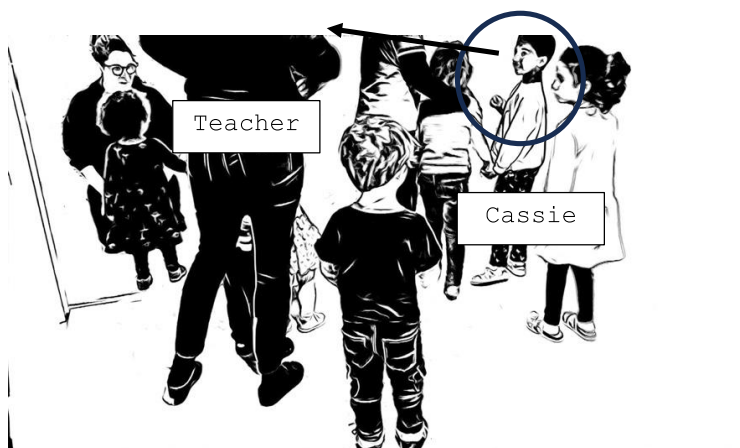

fig.2.2

```
08  Teacher     Jag såg inte dig  +[hjärta:t!
                I did not see you  [my hea:rt!
09  cassie                        +[turns away from the teacher, enters the classroom
```

Cassie's informing *I saw you actually you did not see me* (line 01) is not immediately recognized by the teacher who first indicates trouble in understanding with the repair initiating question *vad?* 'what?' (line 02) and follow-up questions (line 04, 06). Cassie's skills in recipient design are displayed in her response where she adds the time reference *igår* 'yesterday' (line 03) and then provides further details about the event: she saw the teacher as she was going to her car (line 07). By closely repeating Cassie's informing (line 08), the teacher displays her understanding and alignment with the child's course of actions. The teacher's affective stance expressed with a heightened pitch and syllable lengthening at the endearment term *hjärtat* "my heart" (line 08), confirms her orientation to Cassie's telling as requiring ratification. Cassie subsequently withdraws from the encounter, suggesting that the informing sequence came to a completion.

Excerpt 2 shows that Cassie's informing is designed to deliver a small story and that informing can, indeed, become a telling. For a young child, being able to formulate and deliver a rudimentary narrative is a complex interactional skill. With her informing, Cassie demonstrates her awareness of a bilingual early childhood educational context by choosing participant-relevant language. She identifies appropriate interactional slot; that is, when the teacher is not engaged in another conversation, and formulates a telling as novel and relevant for the recipient. Moreover, Cassie accomplishes this in coordination with multiple action trajectories that characterize preschool settings; namely, she introduces and negotiates her informing, while sustaining her physical participation in the main teacher-supervised practical activity—holding hands with another child and walking in line toward the classroom entrance.

4.2. Making informings relevant in the material and discursive context

When initiating informings, children routinely indicated their relevance by drawing on the immediate material and interactional environment, invoking topical coherence verbally and with attention to material surroundings. Children used prior talk, such as a specific word or phrase said before, as a resource for making unsolicited talk relevant to their interlocutors (cf. Searles, 2019). Objects in the immediate perceptual field and environmental artefacts constituted another resource for children in nominating and clarifying conversational topics (Bateman and Church, 2017; Kidwell and Zimmerman, 2007; Strid and Cekaite, 2022). These resources were especially relevant in the bilingual setting, where children were practicing two languages, or when their linguistic resources were scarce.

4.2.1. Material situatedness of child-initiated informings

The analysis demonstrated that in the bilingual educational context, children made use of various resources for indicating the relevance of their informings, while the setting itself provided children with occasions to practice their bilingual repertoire. Children regularly referred to immediately available objects as topics of conversation and drew on nonverbal resources for communication when struggling with the language. In Excerpt 3 we observe how 4-year-old boy Oscar summons the teacher Rosalina by using her institutional language (i.e., English) and initiates an informing about the embroidery on his sweater. When lacking with a verbal description in English, he refers to the reversible sequence of the embroidery with "this" and does showing (line 1, line 3). This interaction unfolds in the dressing room where children are changing into their indoor clothes, while the supervising teacher engages in different interactions with several children simultaneously.

Excerpt 3 <tiger >
Teacher (Rosalina; English-speaking); Oscar (4 yo); Annie (4 yo); Cassie (5 yo), Simon (3 yo)

```
01 Oscar       Rosali:na:! +This-
                           +holding hand on his chest, steps toward teacher

02 Teacher     +Thank you Simon.
               +head turned away from Oscar

03 Oscar       [#+I can do like- this Rosalina.
               [#+brushing sequins on his sweater
```

```
04 Annie      [#Rosalina, which toilet?
   fig        [#fig.5.1
```
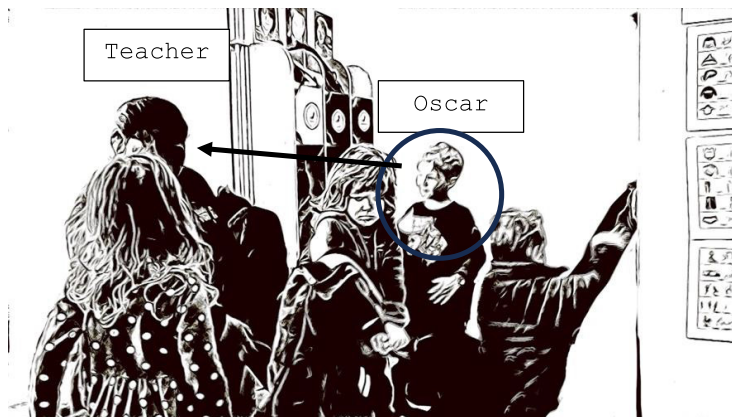

fig.5.1

```
05 Teacher    [+Put your indoor shoes first. Annie! Put your indoor shoes first.
              [+gaze to Annie ------>
   oscar      [+brushing sequins on his sweater

06 Teacher    [#+M::m! And which animal is that?
              [#+turns head to Oscar
   oscar      [#+brushing sequins on his sweater
              [#fig.5.2
```
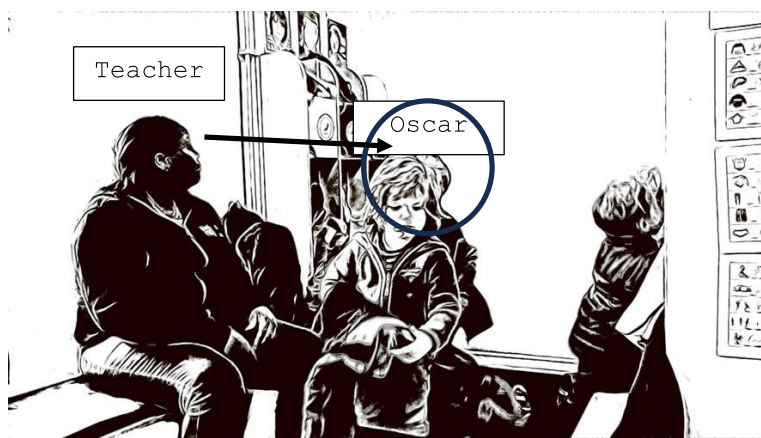

fig.5.2

```
07 Oscar      A- a tiger.

08 Teacher    A tiger. Do you- do you know the tiger song?

09 Oscar      E::hm-
10 Cassie     +I know.
              +off camera

11 Teacher    +Do you know it, Cassie?
              +turns head toward Cassie

12 Cassie     +Yeah.
              +off camera

13 Teacher    Which one?
```

```
14 Annie     +((singing)) I want to- I want to- be a tiger, I want to-
              +sitting on the floor, putting shoes
15 Teacher   Is that a new song Annie?

16 Annie     Yeah.

17 Teacher   Mhm. There is another one. ((singing)) T- t- t- t- t- ti-ger, (continues)
```

With pointing to the reversible sequins on his sweater, Oscar formulates an informing by using an available—and to him, exciting—object in the immediate material surroundings. Notably, Oscar's initial summons does not overlap with other's talk (line 01), which demonstrates Oscar's still developing understanding of a transition relevance place since he does not consider that the teacher is attending to other children (lines 02, 04). Oscar continues pursuing the teacher's engagement by calibrating his actions: he moves closer to the teacher, while continuously "showing" his sweater by brushing sequins up and down (line 03), and finally succeeding in securing the teacher's recipiency. The teacher Rosalina turns toward Oscar, gazes at him, and acknowledges him as the currently ratified speaker with the appreciative "Mmh" and a follow-up question. Oscar's informing is multilayered—he not only demonstrates his interactional skills in being able to identify relevant slots and a topic, but also clarifies his informing by invoking material objects. Moreover, importantly, Oscar displays his awareness of the participation rules and expectations in the institutional setting as he simultaneously continues changing from his outdoor clothes.

Excerpt 3 also shows how the teacher makes use of the child's informing by turning it in a conversational topic that is relevant and available for the co-present children. With the "question-as-response" (Church and Bateman, 2019: 277) "*And which animal is that?*" (Ex. 3, line 06), the teacher transforms the informing into an instructional routine. After Oscar responds that it is a tiger, the teacher follows with another question about "the tiger song" (Ex. 3, line 08). When Oscar hesitates (Ex. 3, line 09), the co-present children treat the interaction as open, exploiting the multiparty setting beyond the dyadic teacher–child participation framework initiated by Oscar. The conversation that follows allows other children to offer their answers to the question about "the tiger song," including Cassie (*I know*, line 10) followed by Annie (singing, line 14). The teacher grants them the floor (line 11 and 15, respectively). The informing sequence, initiated by one child and subsequently expanded by both the teacher and co-present children, becomes a participation ground affording the participants a co-operative space to contribute knowledge in the relevant language; in this case, English.

4.2.2. Discursive coherence of child-initiated informings

Along with the material environment, the unfolding interactional context provides an important ground to which children orient while both developing their own conversational openings and establishing their relevance. This can be seen in Excerpt 4, where children engage in the complex task of tracking opportunities to occupy the position of the knowledgeable participant and achieve topical coherence by recycling prior talk. Here, a group of children are crafting, and one girl, Annie, explains to the teacher that her drawing depicts Annie's dad (lines 02, 04). The teacher turns this into a teachable moment by suggesting that Annie writes her name on the drawing (lines 06–07), as two children, Yvonne and Henri, join in practicing spelling. After several attempts to take the floor (lines 09, 22, 25), Henri issues an informing about his mother picking him up that day (line 27), and adapts it to the language of the previous conversation, Swedish.

Excerpt 4 <pappa-mamma will pick me up>

Teacher (Swedish-speaking); Annie (4 yo); Henri (3 yo); Yvonne (5 yo); Lars (5 yo)

```
01 Teacher   +Kan du förklara för mig vad du har ritad?
              Can you explain for me what you have drawn?
             +gaze at Annie's drawing

02 Annie     Min pappa.
             My father.

03 Teacher   Har du ritad din pappa:? Och vad  gör din pappa här?
             Have you drawn you da:d? And what is your dad doing here?

04 Annie     Inget. Han bara [lämnar mig.
             Nothing. He is just dropping me off.
```

```
05 henri                          [#turns head toward Annie
   fig                             #fig.4.1
```
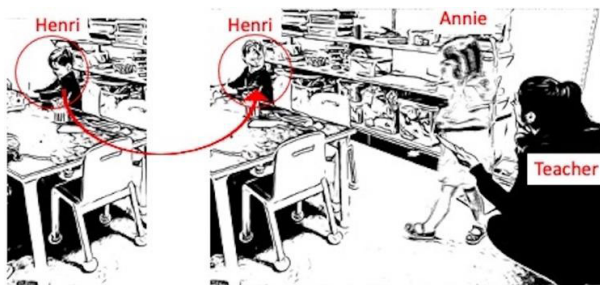

fig.4.1

```
06 Teacher    Men vet du vad Annie, ska vi skriva ditt namn på
              But you know what Annie, should we write your name on the

07            backsidan så att jag vet denna från dig?
              back side so that I know this one is from you?

08 Annie      Ja.
              Yes.

09 Henri      +E:hm-
              +moving to the teacher

10 Yvonne     #+Kan du hjälpa mig snälla?
                Can you help    me  please?
              #+gaze at the teacher
   fig        #fig.4.2
```
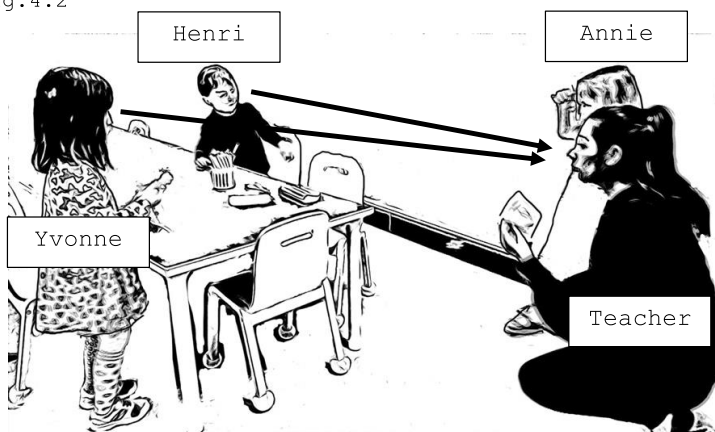

fig.4.2

```
 11 Teacher    Mhm. Jag ska hjälpa alla sen. (Jag vill bara-) Annie kan du skriva-
               Mhm. I will help everyone later. (I just want-) Annie can you write-

((continues with spelling Annie's name, several lines omitted))

 17 Teacher    +Kan du säga e: ?
               +gaze at Annie.

 18 Annie      E.
```

```
19 Teacher     +Kan du säga e: Henri?
               +head turn to Henri

20 Henri       +E.
               +standing next to the teacher, eye gaze to the teacher

21 Teacher     E. [+Kan Yvonne säga e:
                  [+head turn to Yvonne

22 Henri          [+Mi:n-
                    My:-
                   +eye gaze to the floor

23 Yvonne      E.

24 Teacher     E::.
               E::.

25 Henri       +E:hm- [Min-
                E:hm- [My-
               +gaze to the teacher

26 Teacher           [Bra:. #Hej Lars!
                     [Goo:d. Hi Lars!
                            #+gaze to Lars
   fig                      #fig.4.3
```
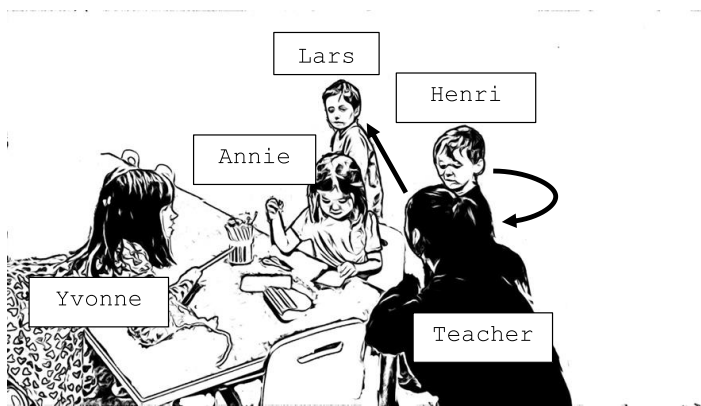

fig.4.3

```
27 Henri       [Min pappa- Min mamma ska- komma och hämta +mi:g idag.
                My- daddy- My mom will- come and pick     +me: up today.
                                                          +brief eye gaze the teacher

28 teacher     [eye gaze at Annie's crafting, then brief eye gaze at Henri

29 Teacher     Din mamma hämtar dig ida:g?
               Your mom picks you up today?

30 Henri       Mhm.

31 henri       [walking away from the teacher
```

```
32 Teacher       [+Vad bra!  Vad kul!
```

```
                 How nice! How cool!
                 [+gaze to Henri
```


fig.4.4

```
33 Teacher       #Kan du säga hej till mamma när hon hämtar dig.=
                  Can you say hi to your mom when she picks you up.=
   fig           #fig.4.4
```

```
34 teacher       =turns gaze to Annie
```

Henri displays his initial interest to the ongoing talk between Annie and the teacher when he turns his head (line 05) as Annie mentions that her father dropped her off at the preschool (line 04). Henri projects a readiness to take the next speaker's position when he stops his crafting and moves closer to the teacher. He then takes the opportunity to talk, yet quickly abandons it (line 09) when that becomes occupied by another child (line 10). Henri restarts his turn, briefly interrupted by the teacher attending to another child (line 26), and delivers his unsolicited informing that turns out to be topically coherent to the previous talk. Namely, Henri recycles Annie's telling about her drawing that *min pappa … bara lämnar mig* 'my dad … just drops me off' (line 02, 04), and uses this utterance as a "substrate" (Goodwin, 1979) for his informing "*min pappa— min mamma ska komma och hämta mig idag* 'my dad— my mom will come and pick me up today' (line 27). In emphasizing certain features (e.g., lengthening the pronoun *mig* 'me', indicating future tense with the auxiliary verb *ska* 'will' and the adverb *idag* 'today'), Henri both builds on the prior talk, and displays his orientation to relevance, newsworthiness, and novelty as essential features for informings. The teacher responds by closely repeating Henri's utterance, confirming her understanding, and then positively assesses Henri's informing with the emphatic *Vad bra! Vad kul!* 'How nice! How cool!' (line 31). He treats the exchange as complete (he moves away from the teacher, line 31), although the teacher advances Henri's informing for educational purposes and models a politeness routine (line 33).

5. Concluding discussion

5.1. Children's interactional skills

The present study examined young children's informings as an interactional practice and a part of their interactional repertoire emerging within the context of bilingual education. The analysis demonstrated how 2—5-year-old children initiated informing sequences to engage teachers in a conversation on a topic of their choice while navigating the highly structured discursive norms of the educational setting. Children's informings were significant, as their conversational initiatives that were not prompted by teachers and were produced by children within a dynamic multiparty interactional context. The analysis emphasizes not only the linguistic features, but also the sociomaterial situatedness of children's interactional competence within the setting of early childhood education. Children's informings served as an interactional practice that allowed children to secure the teacher's attention and recipiency and to engage in collaborative meaning-making in a language (Swedish or English) that was prescribed by the language policy of the bilingual preschool. The study highlights that in the bilingual educational context characterized by one teacher—one language institutional language policy, children's bilingual competences and interactional skills can be seen in practices that require specific language choices beyond code-switching. By issuing informings in the teachers' predefined language, children practiced their interactional skills as contextually-sensitive emergent bilinguals. Namely, they monitored ongoing talk, identified places where their turn-at-talk is possible, designed a conversational contribution as relevant to the selected recipient, all while calibrating these skills in response to the recipient's next turn in a relevant language. Moreover, informings provided children an opportunity to initiate rudimentary narratives that were expanded with teachers' conversational and meaning-making assistance (cf. Burdelski, 2019; Filipi, 2017).

Thus, in the dynamic multiparty setting—which is an essential interactional condition in preschool—child-initiated informings make local conversational norms, including language preference, visible in subsequent interactions. By choosing a language based on the recipient's preferences, as, for example, when Cassie volunteers to talk in Swedish in Excerpt 2 and in English in Excerpt 3, children demonstrate their metalinguistic awareness and language differentiation, both "hallmark" skills in simultaneous bilinguals (Genesee, 2019: 314; also Filipi, 2015). From the ethnomethodological perspective, children employ "language preference" as a "categorization device which makes medium-related activities possible" (Gafaranga, 2001: 1916). That is, children 'talk into being' their bilingual Swedish–English identities vis-à-vis teacher's mono-lingualism and in doing so, embody the preschool's bilingual education and language policies.

Informings provide children with an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in initiating effective and appropriate conversational openings with adults in bilingual contexts. Moreover, in the educational setting, by initiating informings children can participate in roles that extend beyond classroom instructional interactions. In doing so, children practice awareness of other interactional contingencies, such as observing who currently has the floor in speaking, discerning what the current topic of talk is, and orienting to institutional demands on participation: i.e., children's talk should not disrupt an ongoing teacher-led project (e.g., sitting on the assigned spot (Ex. 1), waiting in line (Ex. 2), and dressing (Ex. 3)). Thus, children's interactional initiatives in multiparty settings, along with their simultaneous engagement in manual, embodied tasks, highlight that conversation is not a stationary, fixed activity, but a mobile and dynamic endeavor within the socio-material context.

5.2. Teachers' responses to children's informings

The analysis further highlights the role that teachers play as interlocutors who ratify children's interactional initiatives and/or make use of them for their educational potential. Both teachers and children oriented themselves to the constraints of the setting and drew on the affordances of the multiparty interaction, including access to various constellations of social relationships and participation roles, as well as their different languages (cf. Blum-Kulka and Snow, 2002). When ratifying children's initiatives, teachers regularly recycled and expanded their talk to include co-present children and establish a multiparty participation framework around educational topics and activities. Teachers supported children's informings in various ways: by preventing interruptions from other children and offering sustained eye contact, by acknowledging understanding, assisting in developing the story and by providing linguistic feedback. For example, through the extended clarification practices (e.g., Ex. 1), teachers and children continuously oriented themselves to the relevance of the two languages, and to the task of interacting in an institutionally-prescribed language. Simultaneously, they provided information about the lexical meanings in the relevant languages (e.g., translating words back and forth, Ex. 1, line 07, 30). Teachers' responses (e.g., Ex. 1, Ex. 4), which often involve reformulating children's utterances in the relevant language, can be interpreted as recasts (cf. Tarplee, 2010) that support the development of linguistic and interactional skills in the bilingual setting characterized by one teacher–one language policy.

The analysis presented in this paper also draws attention to how teachers do or do not align with child-initiated actions and how this plays into the institutional concept of participation as children's rights, specifically their capacity to influence the course of interaction with adults and peers. Studies on multiparty family talk have demonstrated that both adults and children have "an orientation to a child's restricted rights" to participation (Butler and Wilkinson, 2013: 49), to which children adapt to by attuning their understanding of the local conversational rules. In early educational settings, the children's participatory rights are often declared rather than attained or demonstrated in practice (e.g., Church and Bateman, 2019). Teachers' engagement with the children's conversational initiatives may contribute to the development of children's interactional skills, their awareness of situational contingencies and topics, and support children's participation in and influence over educational activities. In the bilingual educational context, child-initiated informings may allow children opportunities to practice participation from the position of a competent speaker who is aware of the implied language policy and is capable in sustaining a conversation in the teacher's language.

The analysis demonstrates that children are able to identify interactional spaces and relevant topics where these claims may become ratified; teachers contribute to recipiency and joint engagement through verbal acknowledgements, embodied displays of attention, and incorporation of children's interactional initiatives in institutional conversational routines. By aligning with the child's course of action, teachers sustain an inclusive learning environment where children may influence interactions, thus exercising their right to participation. Child-initiated informings, therefore, may become ground for participation as a co-operative action, allowing children to enter a conversation with an adult from the position of an equal.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

Appendix. Transcription key

Transcription conventions are adapted from Sacks et al. (1974) and Mondada (2018).

:	prolonged sound
<u>word</u>	emphasis
[ ]	demarcates overlapping utterances
(.)	micropause, i.e. shorter than (0.5)
(1.2)	pause length in seconds
x	inaudible word
(word)	unclear word
=	latching between utterances
(h)	laughter token
?	rising intonation
.	falling terminal intonation
Swedish	utterance in Swedish
English	translation into English, in a separate line
emil	participant's non-verbal actions
#fig	temporal placement of figures in the transcript
+	actions co-occurring with talk
->*	the end of a non-verbal action

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