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construct

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Multilingual childhood conference Luxembourg  
12.05.2025 – 13.05.2025



**Project:**  
**Early language education & speech and language therapy**

Speakers:

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# Development of an interprofessional municipal network in language education for children with multilingualism at the interface between speech therapy and childhood education

## Multilingual Childhood Conference Luxembourg

*Anja Siemens, Nina Theis, Prof. Dr. Bianka Wachtlin, Prof. Dr. Tim Rohrman*  
13. Mai 2025



# Development of an **interprofessional municipal network** in language education for children with **multilingualism** at the interface between **speech therapy** and **childhood education**

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*Anja Siemens, Nina Theis, Prof. Dr. Bianka Wachtlin, Prof. Dr. Tim Rohrman*  
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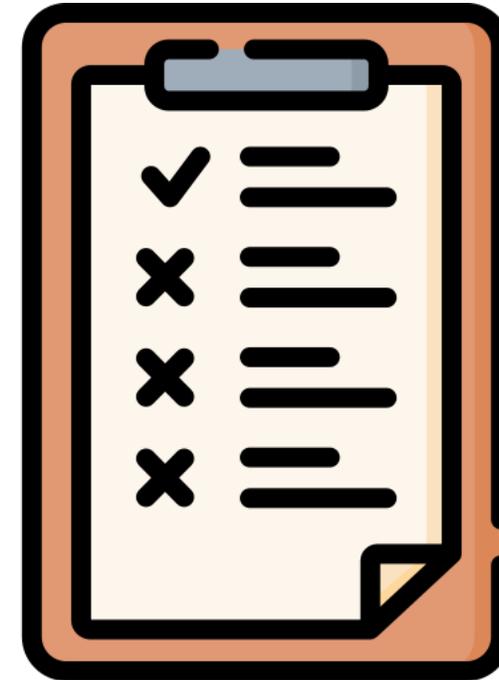




# Agenda

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- Context & background
- Research problem & objectives
- Research methods
- Initial findings
- Interim Overview
- Next steps & further perspectives





## Context

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- 94% of five-year-olds attend ECE centres (Bildungsbericht, 2024)
- 43.1% of all children under the age of five in Germany had a migration background (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2023)
- The need of speech and language therapy increased between 2020 and 2023 (AOK, 2023)
- The language level of the children must be determined by the beginning of the last year of preschool at the latest in Lower Saxony (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2019)
- There is no interprofessional assessment for multilingual children and their speech and language development (Lüke, 2020; Scharff-Rethfeldt, 2023)





## Background

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- Dealing with issues and delays in language development (LD) in the context of multilingualism presents a significant challenge for migration societies (Gogolin & Duarte, 2018)
- School entry examinations in Lower Saxony: 40.5% of children with a migration background showed noticeable findings in LD in 2022 (NLGA, 2024)
- In particular, multilingual children with language issues are often referred to speech therapy late by pediatricians (Wiefferink et al., 2020)
- Because speech therapy often cannot take place in the daycare setting, multilingual children are especially at risk of being over- or underserved during the transition from daycare to elementary school (Wylie et al., 2013)





# Research problem

Early detection, language education, and speech therapy are central tasks for educational and speech therapy institutions.

Two different systems in Germany



Education system:  
Language education



Healthcare system:  
Speech and language therapy (SLT)



## Research problem

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- Collaboration between educational and healthcare system has long been discussed in an interdisciplinary manner (Ehlert & Borgetto, 2013)



**However, the differing structures of the education and healthcare systems currently hinder collaboration and thus a comprehensive support for children with special needs.**



## Main research questions

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How can **language development** trajectories of multilingual children be **assessed and documented** in the daycare setting?

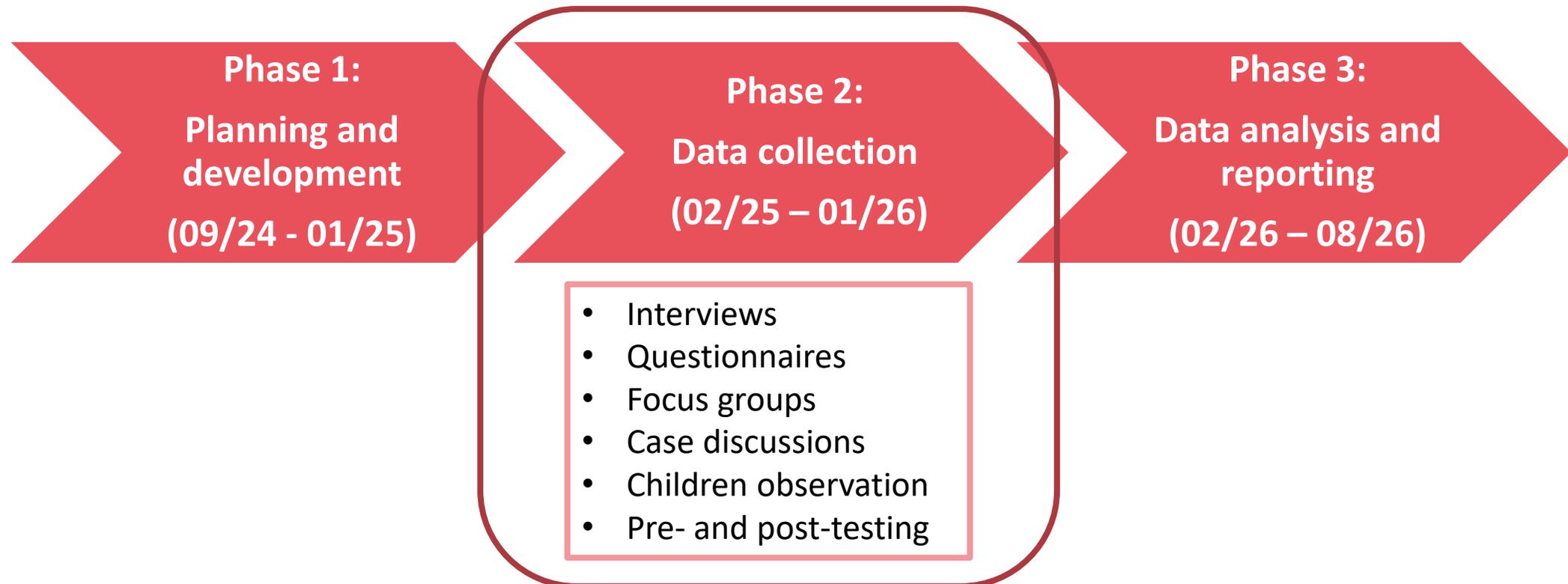


What support areas and **action recommendations** can be derived for **interprofessional collaborations** in the context of multilingualism and language education?



## Sample:

- 4 day care centres in the region of Hildesheim & Braunschweig (South of Lower Saxony)
- Ca. 30 multilingual children (3-5 years)
- participatory research design





## Current research objectives

**Essential elements for conducting a comprehensive linguistic assessment of multilingual children**



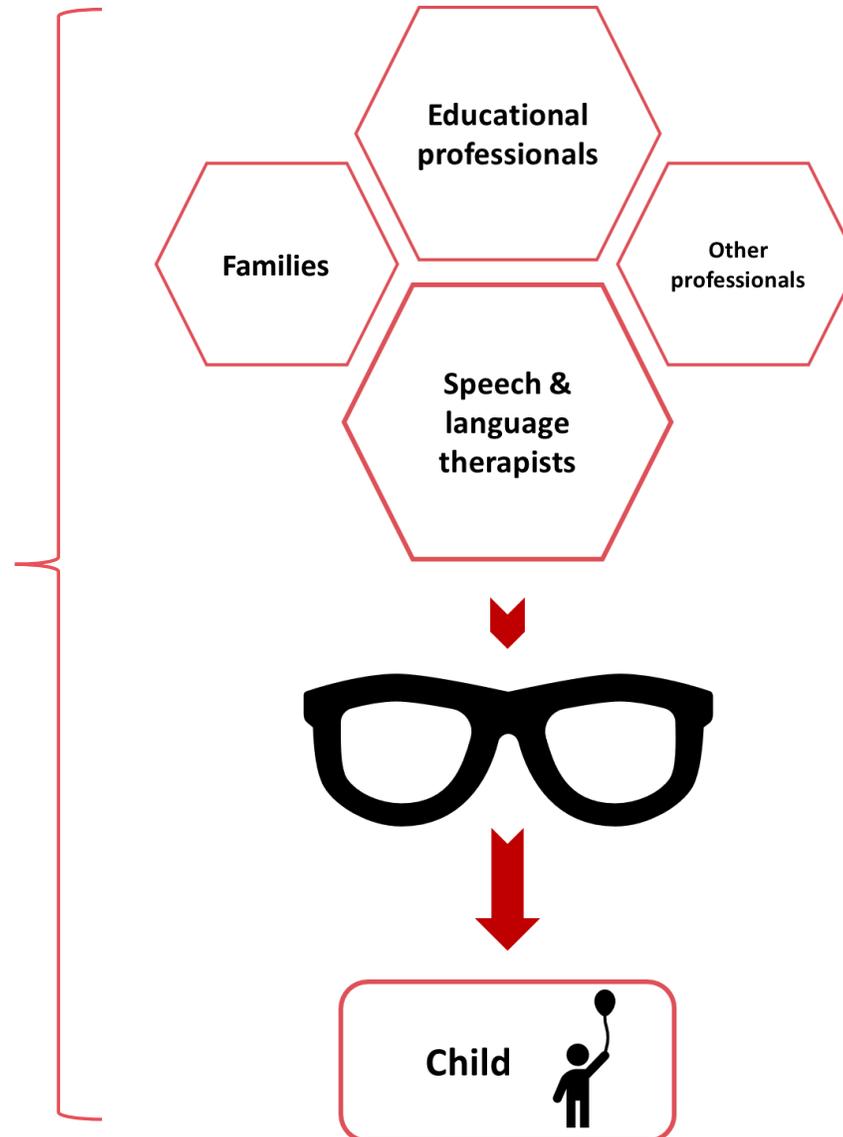
**Current status about multilingualism and interprofessional collaborations in the four ECE institutions**  
→ **Perspectives of ECE headmasters**





# Initial findings

Important Stakeholders for conducting a linguistic assessment for multilingual children





## Initial findings

### Elements of the assessment of child language development status



Families

#### Medical history

Assessment of language exposure and child development

#### Language action analysis

Observation of interactions:  
Professional-child interactions  
Child-child interactions



Educational professionals



SLT's

#### Language skills

Testing of linguistic levels, such as:  
Vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation,  
narrative ability, practice



#### Cognitive abilities

Testing of working memory  
(storage & processing)



SLT's



## Initial findings

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### Perspectives from the 4 headmasters in the ECEC

Today's main topics of interest:

**Challenges encountered in  
dealing with multilingualism  
in ECEC**



**Collaboration between ECEC  
and other professional groups**



# Initial findings

## Key characteristics of the included ECEC

	ECEC 1	ECEC 2	ECEC 3	ECEC 4
 Number of Educators	11	22	18	21
 Number of Children	70	89	70	105
 Proportion of multilingual children	27 %	80 %	80 %	38 %



# Initial findings

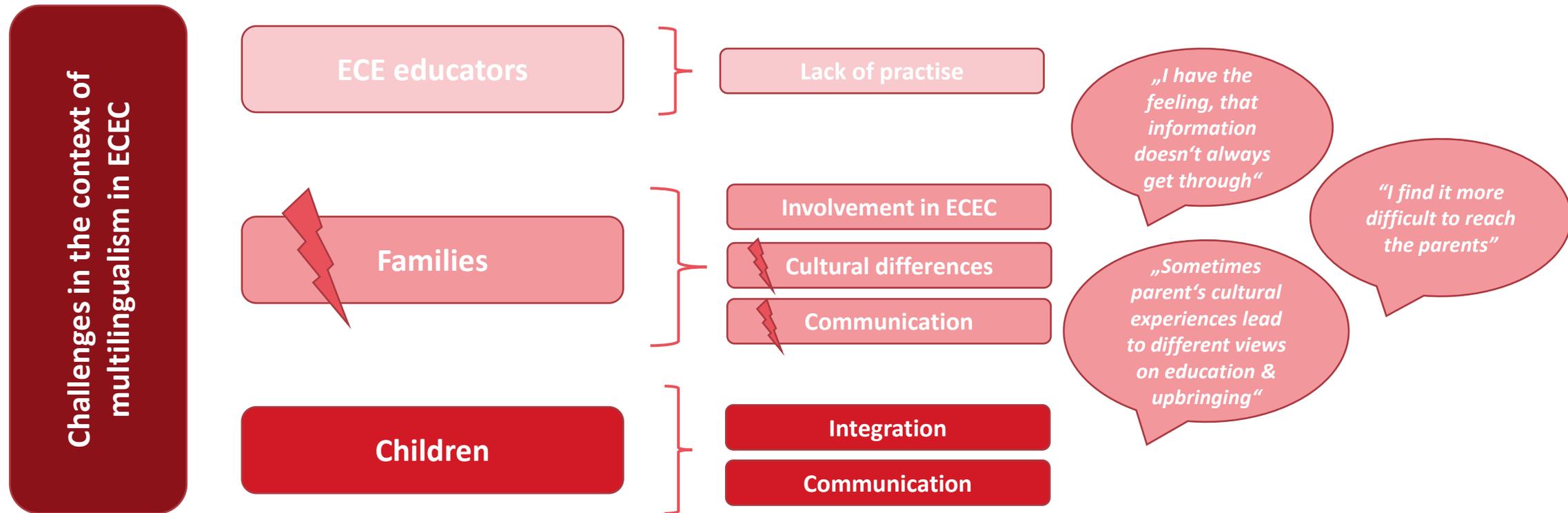
## Languages spoken by children in the included ECEC





# Initial findings

## Challenges encountered in dealing with multilingualism in ECEC



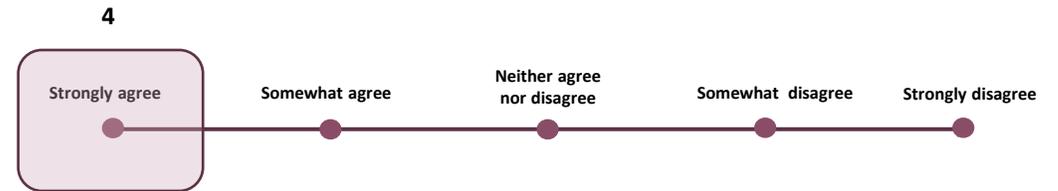


# Initial findings

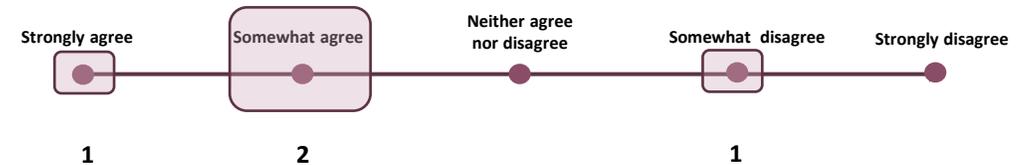
## Perspectives and expectations on interprofessional collaboration



*"I believe that closer exchange with other professions would be valuable."*



*"I have time in my daily routine to engage in closer exchange with other professional groups."*





# Initial findings

## Status of interprofessional collaboration

Health care system



Educational system

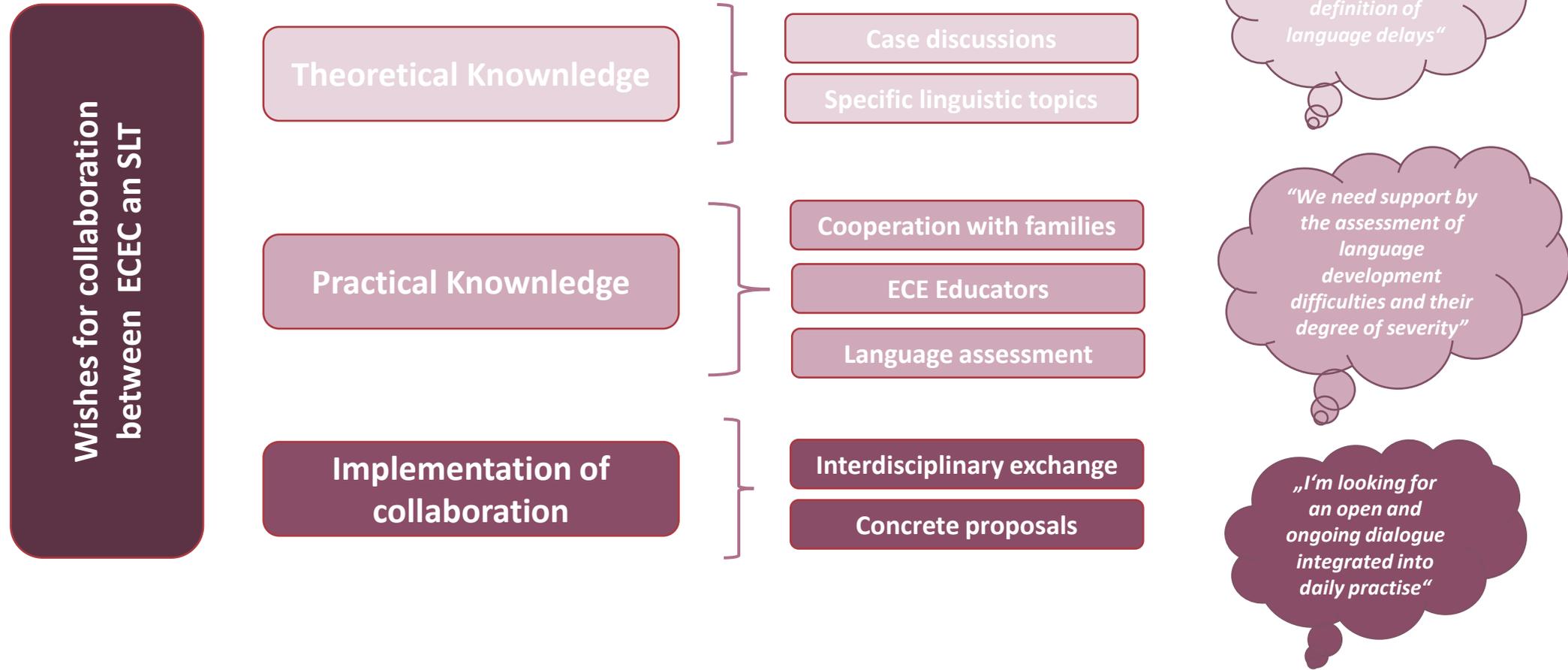


	ECEC 1	ECEC 2	ECEC 3	ECEC 4
Speech & language therapists (SLT)	✗	✓	✗	✗
Psychologists	✗	✗	✗	✓
Early Intervention Specialists	✓	✗	✓	✓
Occupational therapists	✗	✗	✗	✗
Physiotherapists	✗	✗	✗	✗
Pediatrician	✗	✗	✗	✗
Musicians / Artists	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sports Facilitators	✗	✓	✓	✓
Teachers (school)	✓	✓	✓	✗
Others (e.g. public health office, language counselling centers)	✓	✓	✓	✓



# Initial findings

## Wishes for interprofessional collaboration with SLT's







## Next steps



### Children:

- Pre- & post-testing (pilot testing of the diagnostic elements)
- Analysis of multilingual language development trajectories
- Analysis of potential support areas

### Parents:

- Case history interviews
- Analysis of language proficiency in the first language
- Analysis of potential barriers to multilingualism

### ECE Educators:

- Pilot testing of interprofessional collaboration
- Case discussions, further questionnaires, interviews, focus groups

Development of a **catalogue of recommendations** for **interprofessional collaboration** in ECEC setting in the context of promoting multilingual children





Looking forward, a **structured cooperation** between the **education and health systems** should be sought to **increase equality of opportunity** in the field of early language education and language development in Germany.

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# Thank you

HAWK Hildesheim  
Faculty of Social Work and Health



<https://www.hawk.de/en/research/research-projects/early-language-education-speech-and-language-therapy>