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FÜR ANGEWANDTE WISSENSCHAFT UND KUNST

Hildesheim/Holzminden/Göttingen

University of Applied Sciences and Arts

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get involved maintain

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draft

experience help

support

think act

manage

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communicate

promote

learn shape

establish supervise

verify

design invent

evolve

expand conserve

explore

construct

recognize

change lead

restore think ahead

give reasons

Multilingual childhood conference Luxembourg
12.05.2025 – 13.05.2025



Faculty of
Social Work and Health

Hildesheim

Project: Early language education & speech and language therapy

Speakers:

Anja Siemens *(Speech & Language Therapist (M.Sc.); Research Associate HAWK Hildesheim)*

Nina Theis *(Speech & Language Therapist (M.Sc.); Research Associate HAWK Hildesheim)*

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 Rohrmann
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**

Multilingual Childhood Conference Luxembourg

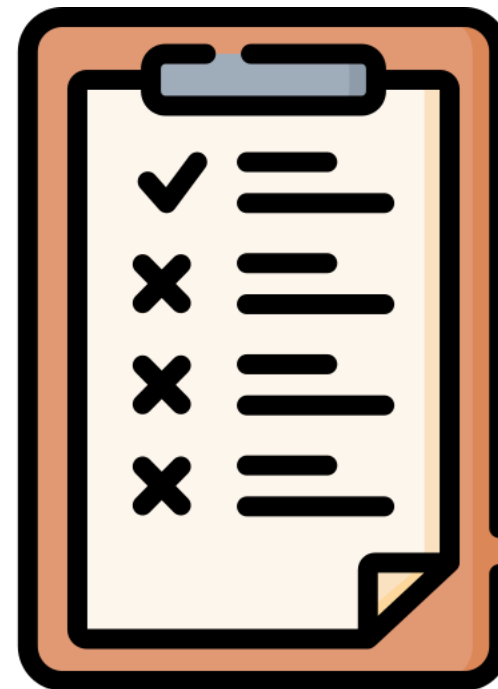
Anja Siemens, Nina Theis, Prof. Dr. Bianka Wachtlin, Prof. Dr. Tim Rohrmann
13. Mai 2025





Agenda

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





Context

- 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

- 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

- 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

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



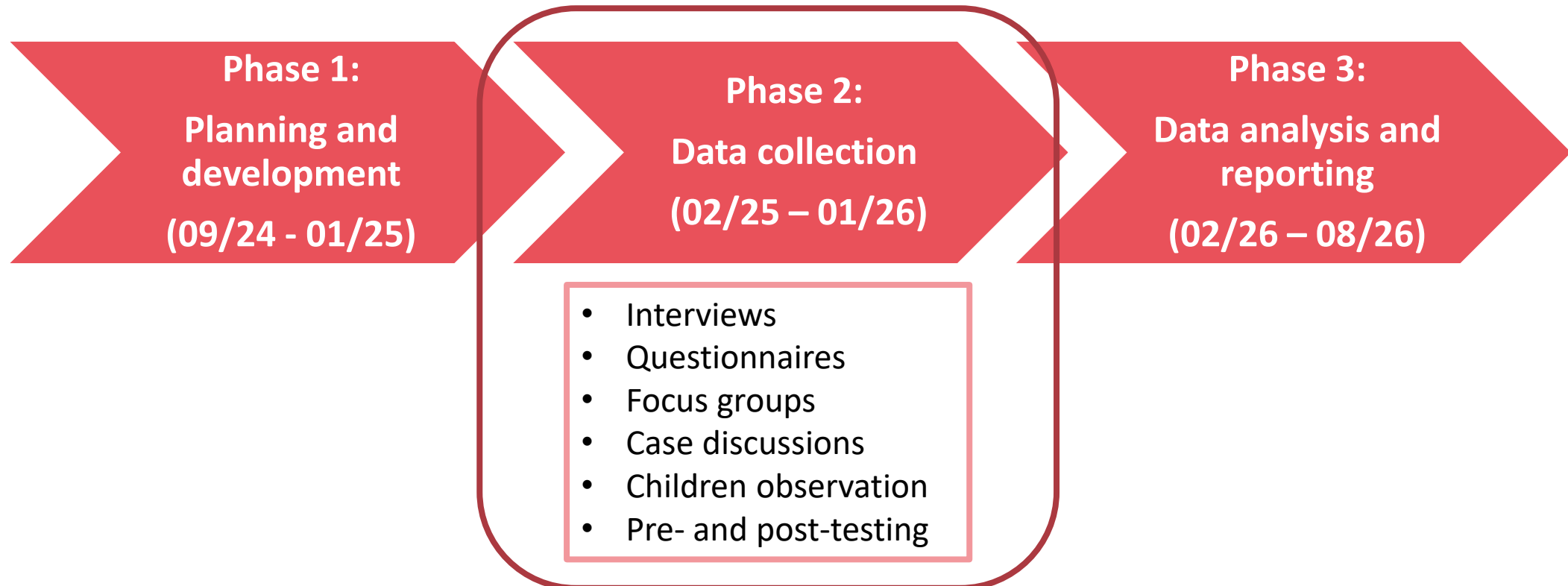
What support areas and **action recommendations** can be derived for **interprofessional collaborations** in the context of multilingualism and language education?



Methods

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

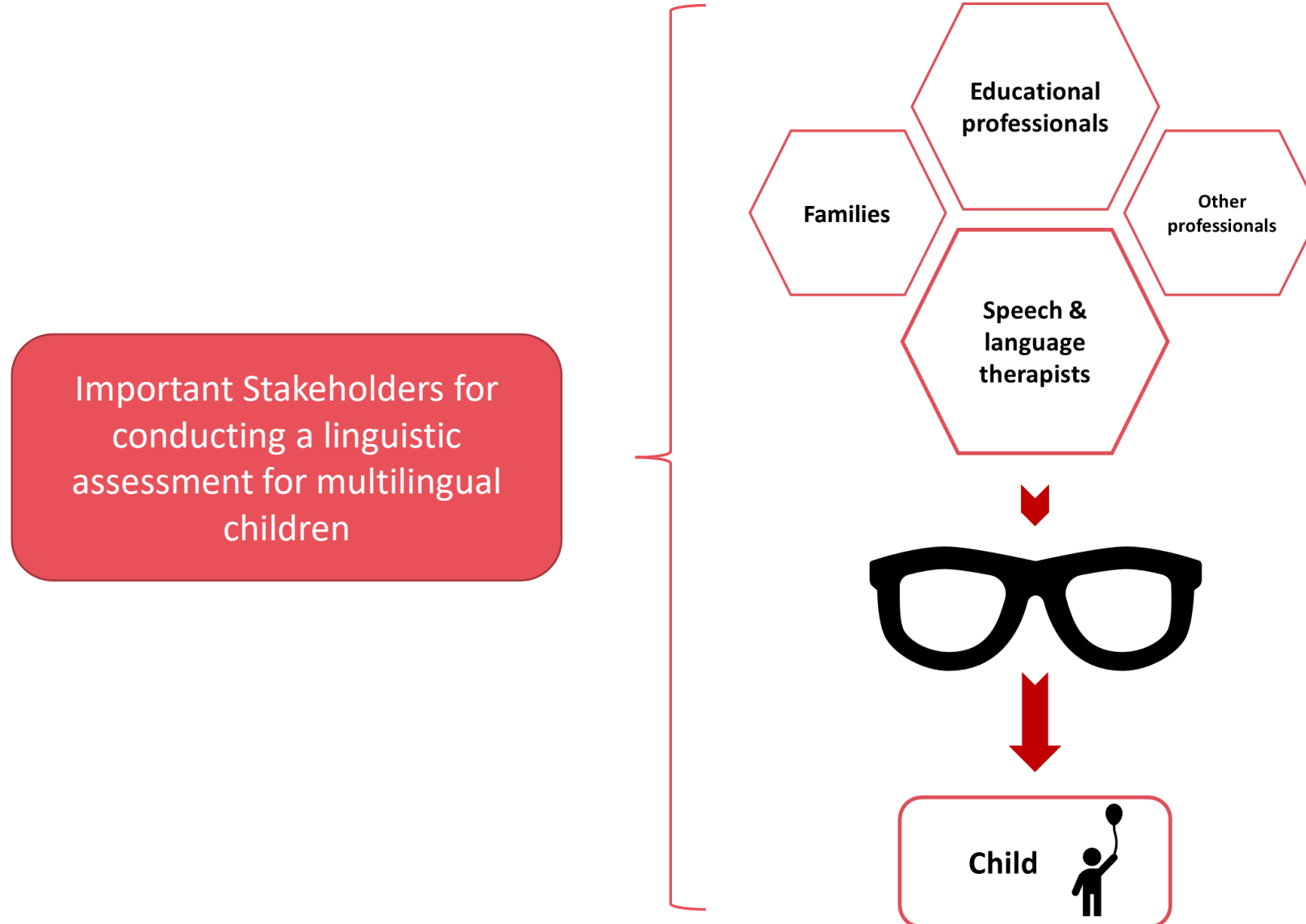


**Current status about multilingualism and interprofessional collaborations in the four ECE institutions
→ Perspectives of ECE headmasters**





Initial findings





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

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

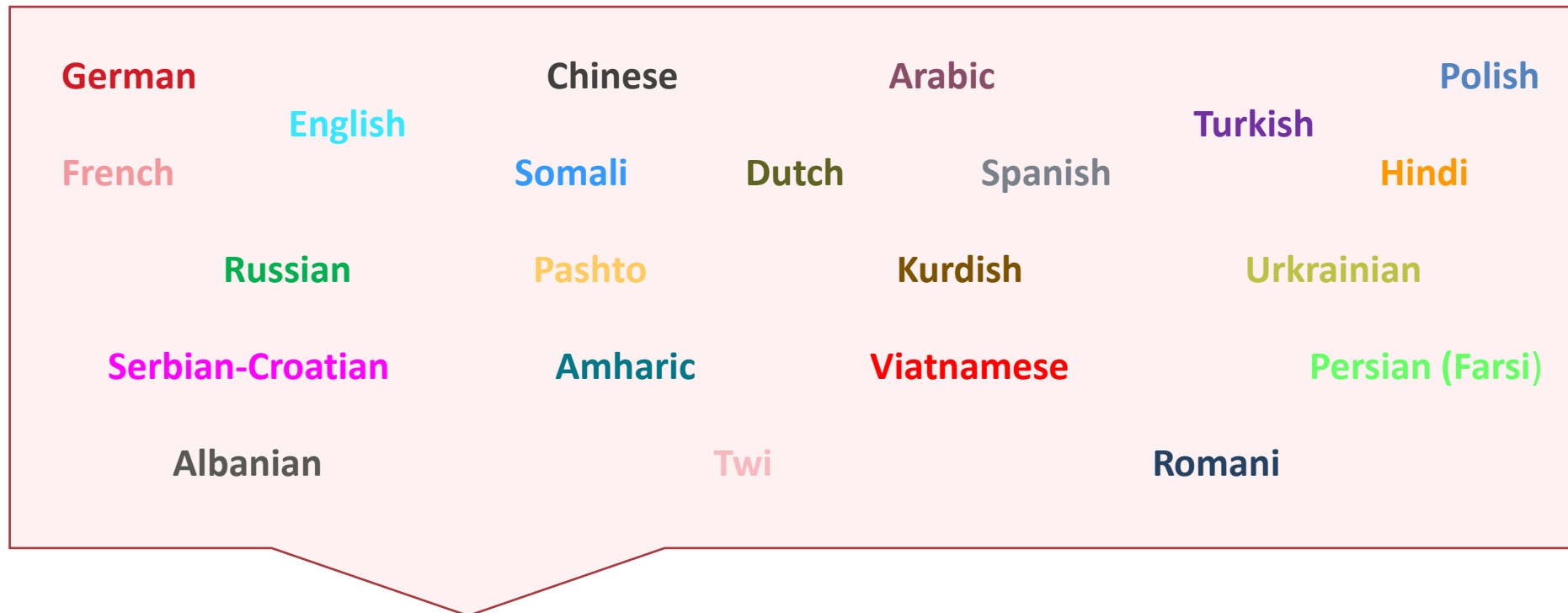
Key characteristics of the included ECEC

		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

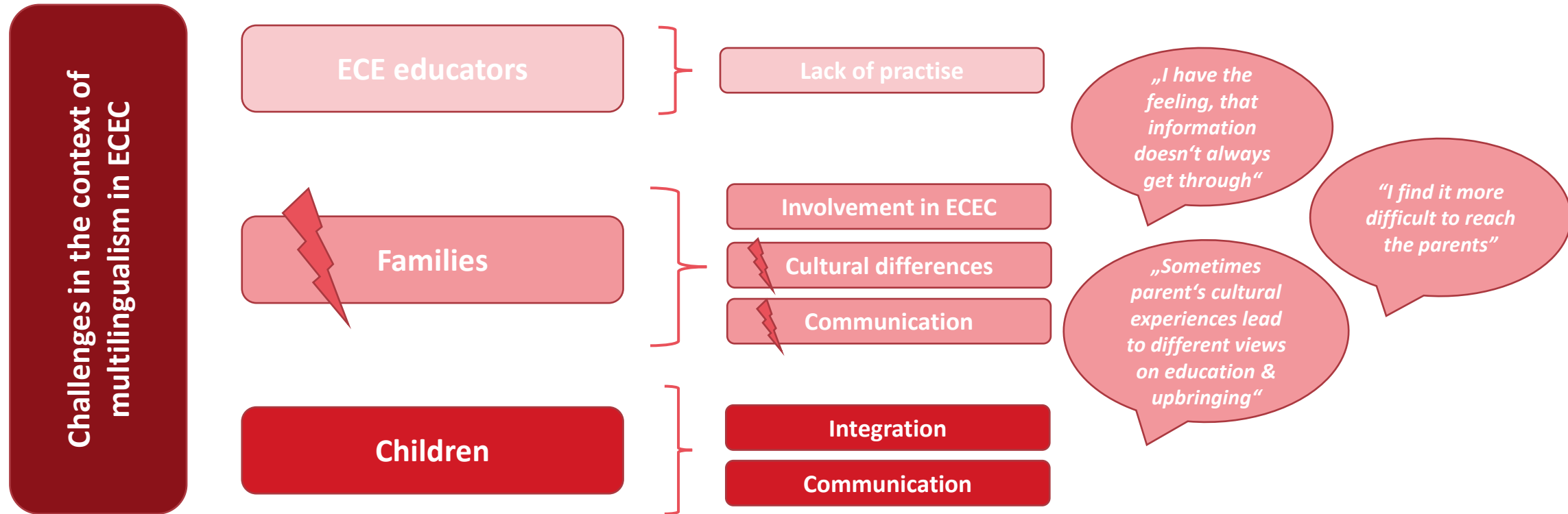
Languages spoken by children in the included ECEC





Initial findings

Challenges encountered in dealing with multilingualism in ECEC



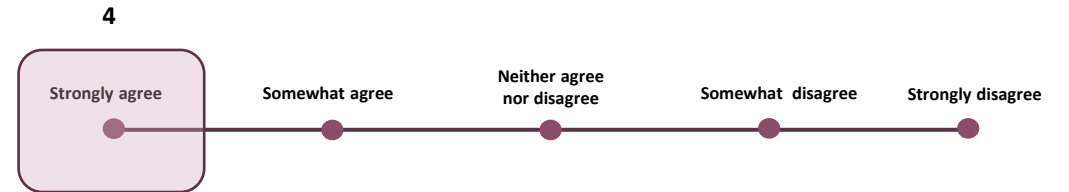


Initial findings

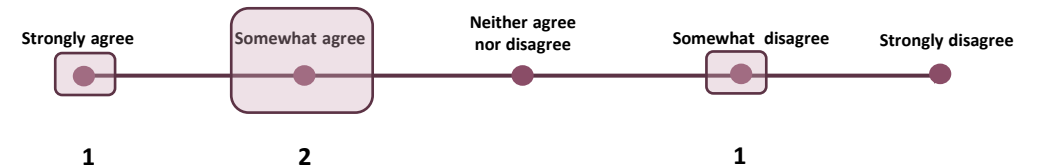
Perspectives and expectations on interprofessional collaboration



"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

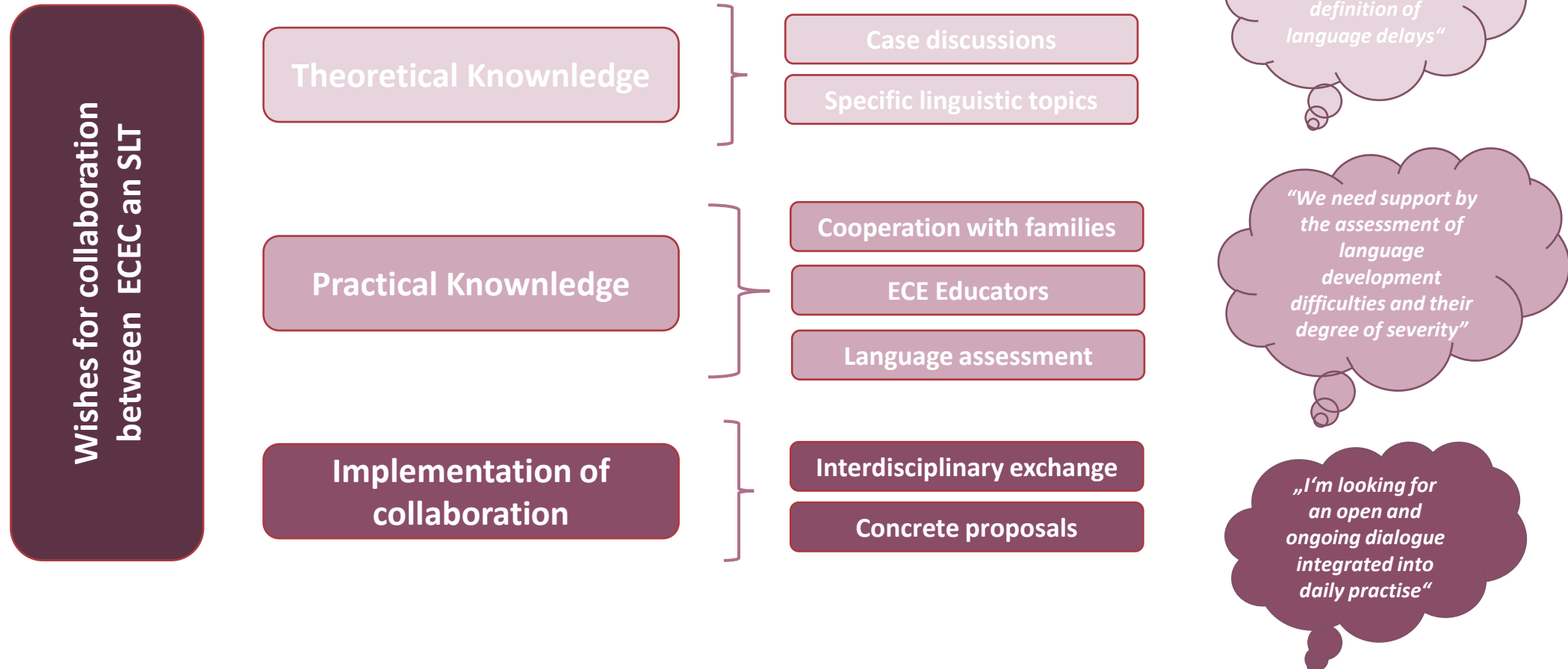


	ECEC 1	ECEC 2	ECEC 3	ECEC 4
Speech & language therapists (SLT)	✗	✓	✗	✗
Psychologists	✗	✗	✗	✓
Early Intervention Specialists	✓	✗	✓	✓
Occupational therapists	✗	✗	✗	✗
Physiotherapists	✗	✗	✗	✗
Pediatrician	✗	✗	✗	✗
Musicians / Artists	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sports Facilitators	✗	✓	✓	✓
Teachers (school)	✓	✓	✓	✗
Others (e.g.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



Initial findings

Wishes for interprofessional collaboration with SLT's





Interim Overview

Essential elements for conducting a comprehensive linguistic assessment of multilingual children



For the assessment of the language competence of multilingual children...

... it's necessary to **include various perspectives** from caregivers and professionals in interprofessional collaboration.

→ to create a complex picture of the child's linguistic environment

→ to reduce over- and under-diagnoses

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



- The **structures of ECECs vary greatly** regarding the **number of multilingual children** & therefore also in **experience of the educational professionals** in dealing with multilingualism (→contrast between urban & rural centers)

- All 4 centers...

... report **difficulties in working with parents**

... express the **wish for increased interprofessional collaboration**



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





Further perspectives



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

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