

Language Management and Language Ideologies
in Parents' Bottom-Up Initiatives in Germany

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List of Abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLA	Critical Language Awareness
ESU	Erstsprachenunterricht
FLP	Family Language Policy
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HL	Heritage Language
HSU	Herkunftssprachenunterricht
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz
LMF	Language Management Framework
LMP	Language Management Process
MSU	Muttersprachenunterricht

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Abstract in English

This dissertation examines three bottom-up Initiatives founded by Polish-speaking migrants in Germany to support heritage language maintenance and development. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, the study analyses their practices within the Language Management Framework, extending it with concepts of community resilience, adaptability, and transformability. The analysis traces how language strategies develop at the classroom, community, and institutional levels. The study highlights the intertwinement between adaptive strategies adjusted to the expectations of relevant actors, and transformative strategies that address underlying language beliefs and introduce innovation. The research introduces a transferable model of bottom-up language management that maps mismatches related to language and stakeholder expectations and distinguishes between adaptive and transformative responses.

Findings point to the critical role of language beliefs, particularly regarding the approaches used by educators in HL classroom, the importance of aligning goals among diverse actors, particularly among educators and parents, and the potential of horizontal networks. While acknowledging the considerable emotional labour already invested by Initiatives, the study offers recommendations for sustaining and scaling their efforts. By integrating sociolinguistics approach and theories and community resilience thinking, the dissertation contributes both to academic understanding of HL education and to practical strategies for strengthening community-driven language maintenance in superdiverse contexts.

Key words: heritage language, community, language management, language policy, translanguaging, resilience

Abstract in German

Diese Dissertation untersucht drei Bottom-up-Initiativen, die von polnischsprachigen Migrant*innen in Deutschland gegründet wurden, um die Pflege und Weiterentwicklung des Polnischen als Herkunftssprache zu unterstützen. Auf Grundlage ethnografischer Feldforschung analysiert die Studie ihre Praktiken im Rahmen des Language Management Framework und erweitert diesen um Konzepte der Resilienz der Gemeinschaften, Adaptivität und Transformationsfähigkeit. Die Analyse legt nahe, wie Sprachstrategien auf Unterrichts-, Familien-, Gemeinschafts- sowie auf institutioneller Ebene entstehen.

Die Arbeit entwickelt ein übertragbares Modell eines Bottom-up-Sprachmanagements. Dies setzt bei Fehlanpassungen zwischen Erwartungen verschiedener Akteure an, unterscheidet zwischen adaptiven Reaktionen, die Aktivitäten innerhalb bestehender Rahmenbedingungen aufrechterhalten, und transformativen Reaktionen, die die zugrundeliegenden Sprachüberzeugungen ansprechen. Es betont zudem die Bedeutung von Reflexion und Monitoring. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Sprachüberzeugungen den Herkunftssprachenunterricht, die Einbindung von Familien und die Beziehungen zu Institutionen prägen. Sie verweisen auch auf die Bedeutung abgestimmter Ziele zwischen Lehrkräften, Eltern und Institutionen sowie auf das Potenzial horizontaler Netzwerke. Durch die Verbindung soziolinguistischer Ansätze mit dem Community-Resilience-Denken leistet die Studie einen Beitrag zur Forschung und zu praktischen Strategien gemeinschaftsgetragener Sprachpflege.

Schlüsselwörter: Herkunftssprache, Community, Sprachmanagement, Sprachpolitik, Translanguaging, Resilienz

Zusammenfassung

Ziel und Problemstellung

Diese Studie begleitet drei Bottom-up-gemeinnützige Basisorganisationen, die in Hessen und Baden-Württemberg (Deutschland) tätig sind und Kurse in Polnisch als Herkunftssprache (HS) für Kinder anbieten. Ziel der Studie ist es zu ermitteln, wie diese gemeinnützige Basisorganisationen – im Folgenden „Initiativen“ genannt – Sprachen managen, wie die Sprachstrategien entstanden sind und welche Wirkung sie zum Zeitpunkt der Untersuchung zeigen. Die Studie rückt die Perspektive der Gemeinschaft in der Forschung zur Sprachpolitik in den Vordergrund und untersucht die Handlungsmöglichkeiten zur Politikgestaltung dieser Initiativen. Sie liefert Antworten zu vier Forschungsfragen (FF):

FF 1. Wie nutzen die Bottom-up-Initiativen das Sprachmanagement in ihrer alltäglichen Arbeit? Insbesondere: Wie setzen Lehrkräfte im Rahmen das Sprachmanagement im Herkunftssprachenunterricht (ferner: HSU) um?

FF 2. Welche Strategien werden von den Bottom-up-Initiativen verfolgt, um das Sprachmanagement innerhalb der polnischen Familien zu beeinflussen?

FF 3. Wie beeinflussen die Bottom-up-Initiativen (oder wie versuchen sie es) die Sprachpolitik der Bundesländer in Bezug auf HSU?

FF 4. Welche sprachbezogenen Überzeugungen/Ideologien liegen den Sprachmanagement-Strategien von Bottom-up-Initiativen zugrunde?

Die Forschungsfragen werden aus der Perspektive des Language Management Framework (ferner: LMF; Nekvapil, 2006, S. 95) betrachtet, verbunden mit analytischen Instrumenten aus der Sprachpolitikforschung (Spolsky, 2009) sowie aus Studien zur Resilienz der Gemeinschaften (Folke et al., 2010). Die Ergebnisse sind für Sprachpädagog:innen, Aktivist:innen, politische Entscheidungsträger:innen und wissenschaftliche Zielgruppen relevant. Die Studie leistet einen Beitrag zur Soziolinguistik – insbesondere zu LMF und Sprachpolitik – sowie zur interdisziplinären Arbeit über Migration, sozialen Zusammenhalt und Resilienz der Gemeinschaften. Insgesamt zielt sie darauf ab, das Verständnis für Perspektive der Gemeinschaft auf Sprachpolitik zu vertiefen und die Schnittstelle von Resilienz der Gemeinschaften und Soziolinguistik zu ergründen. Zugleich möchte sie als Ressource für alle dienen, die an der Gestaltung inklusiver und responsiver Sprachpolitiken beteiligt sind.

Kontext und Fälle

Die in dieser Studie untersuchten Initiativen sind gemeinnützige Basisorganisationen, die von polnischen Einwanderinnen und Einwanderern sowie ihren Familien in Deutschland gegründet wurden und als eingetragene Vereine (e. V.) arbeiten. Sie dienen als Treffpunkte für Familien, in denen Polnisch gesprochen wird. Ihr Hauptschwerpunkt liegt auf Kursangeboten für Kinder und Jugendliche, wobei Bedingungen und Angebote je nach Initiative variieren können. Zwar ist die Pflege der polnischen Sprache bei Kindern und Jugendlichen ein zentrales Bestreben, doch die in den Satzungen formulierten Zielsetzungen unterscheiden sich teilweise und einige betonen stärker die Aspekte der mehrsprachigen Erziehung. Diese unterschiedlichen Ausrichtungen spiegeln sich auch in den offiziellen Bezeichnungen wider: Manche Vereine fokussieren sich auf Kulturförderung, andere auf die Förderung der Zweisprachigkeit.

Der Deutsch-Polnische Verein „Die Brücke“ e. V. wurde 1999 in Darmstadt gegründet. Primäres Ziel war und ist es, Polnischunterricht anzubieten und die polnischen kulturellen Traditionen zu pflegen. Das Angebot richtet sich an die polnischsprachige Gemeinschaft. Zu Beginn wurden Kurse für verschiedene Altersgruppen angeboten; zum Zeitpunkt der Erhebung gab es zwei Kurse für Kinder im Kindergartenalter, ältere Kinder durften gelegentlich teilnehmen. Die Kurse legten den Schwerpunkt auf künstlerische und bewegungsorientierte Aktivitäten auf Polnisch. „Die Brücke“ schätzt den Einsatz der Eltern und organisiert gemeinsam mit ihnen darüber hinaus weitere Veranstaltungen für Kinder. Die Initiative ist gut mit anderen polnischen Diaspora-Organisationen vernetzt.

„Wawel“, offiziell der Verein für polnische Kultur und Bildung e. V., wurde 2008 gegründet und widmet sich der Förderung und Bewahrung der polnischen Sprache und Kultur in der Rhein-Neckar-Region. Die Initiative bietet Kurse für Kinder und Jugendliche in Heidelberg, Mannheim und Eppelheim an. Der Unterricht findet überwiegend in Präsenzform statt; während der Pandemie wurden einzelne Angebote online durchgeführt. Im Schuljahr 2022/23 bot der Verein 15 Präsenzkurse an verschiedenen Lernorten an – darunter an öffentlichen Schulen, privaten Sprachschulen und Gemeinschaftszentren – ergänzt um weitere Online-Kurse. Die Angebote richten sich an unter 18-Jährige, für die Polnisch eine HS ist. Wawel pflegt enge Beziehungen zu lokalen Schulbehörden und bietet häufig HS-Angebote in Kooperation mit öffentlichen Schulen.

Im Jahr 2008 wurde in Frankfurt am Main (Hessen) die Deutsch-Polnische Elterninitiative zur Förderung der Zweisprachigkeit e. V., informell „Krasnale“ („Zwerge“), gegründet. Ursprünglich als Spielgruppe für polnischsprachige Kinder und Familien gedacht, entwickelte sich die Initiative rasch zu

einer Samstagsschule mit Kursangeboten für das entsprechende Alter oder das Sprachniveau. Während der COVID-19-Pandemie 2020 wurden die Präsenzkurse ausgesetzt; drei Kurse liefen bis 2021 online weiter. Ergänzend zur Samstagsschule gab es unter der Woche Spielgruppen für Vorschulkinder. 2016 eröffnete die Initiative den ersten polnisch-deutschen bilingualen Kindergarten in Westdeutschland und 2022 eine Kinderkrippe. Die Haupttätigkeit der Initiative beschränkt sich derzeit auf diesen Einrichtungen. Die Samstagskurse wurden eingestellt. Diese Studie konzentriert sich auf die Samstagsschule; Aktivitäten in Kindergarten und Krippe liegen außerhalb des Forschungsbereichs. Bis Anfang 2020 wurden sieben Kurse angeboten: eine für die Vorschule (für 5-Jährige), Kurse für die Jahrgangsstufen 1 bis 5 sowie eine Gruppe für Jugendliche (ca. 15-Jährige). Zu den Zielen der Initiative zählen die Förderung der polnisch-deutschen Zweisprachigkeit, die Entwicklung einer interkulturellen Identität sowie die Unterstützung von Familien bei der zweisprachigen Erziehung ihrer Kinder.

Theoretischer Rahmen

In dieser Studie sind zwei Konzepte von besonderer Bedeutung: Herkunftssprachen und Community. HS werden aus der Perspektive ihrer Sprecher:innen mit einem breiten Verständnis operationalisiert: Als HS-Sprecher:innen gelten diejenigen, die eine starke familiäre oder gemeinschaftliche Verbindung zu ihrer HS haben – in dieser Studie Polnisch – und über irgendein Kompetenzniveau im Polnischen verfügen, einschließlich der Fälle, in denen die Verbindung zur Sprache bloß durch einen institutionalisierten Sprachunterricht aufrechterhalten wird. Während man in der Soziolinguistik den Begriff „Community“ üblicherweise im Sinne einer Sprachgemeinschaft verwendet, wird er in dieser Studie stärker auf gesellschaftliche und praktische Dimensionen bezogen. Dadurch lassen sich soziolinguistische Theorien mit dem Rahmenwerk der Resilienz der Gemeinschaften verbinden. Der Begriff bedeutet hier daher eine Community of Practice – also eine praxisbezogene Gruppe (Gemeinschaft) von Menschen mit gemeinsamen Zielen, für deren Erreichung sie sich einsetzen.

Die Bemühungen solcher Communities of Practice, die Sprachsituation zu beeinflussen, werden mithilfe von Instrumenten aus der Sprachpolitik und dem LMF untersucht, die im Laufe der Jahre von zahlreichen Forschenden in der Soziolinguistik ausführlich diskutiert und rekonzeptualisiert wurden. Ergänzend zu diesen in der Soziolinguistik gängigen Rahmen integriere ich einen Begriff aus der Forschung zu sozial-ökologischen Systemen, nämlich das Konzept der Resilienz bzw. Resilienz der Gemeinschaften (Folke, 2010), und passe es an den soziolinguistischen Rahmen an.

LMF wurde als innovativer Ansatz der Sprachplanung eingeführt, der die Natur sprachlicher Prozesse als Strategien statt als statische „Pläne“ rekonzeptualisierte (Spolsky, 2012, S. 4). Das Rahmenwerk untersucht das Sprachmanagement als einen dynamischen Prozess und berücksichtigt dessen kommunikative und soziokulturelle Implikationen, einschließlich sozioökonomischer Faktoren (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012). Obwohl das LMF die Grundlage meiner Analyse bildet, kann die umfangreiche Forschungsliteratur zum Language Policy Model von Spolsky nicht außer Acht gelassen werden – insbesondere die von Elana Shohamy (2006) ausgearbeiteten Konzepte offener und verdeckter Sprachpolitik sowie geheimer Mechanismen.

Die Initiativen agieren an der Schnittstelle der formellen und informellen Sprachpolitik, wobei die erstere die von Behörden offiziell anerkannt ist. Shohamy konzeptualisiert diese Unterscheidung als offene (overt) und verdeckte (covert) Sprachpolitik. Die offene Sprachpolitik besteht aus expliziten, formalrechtlichen und kodifizierten Regelungen (Shohamy, 2006, S. 50). Demgegenüber umfasst verdeckte Sprachpolitik implizite, informelle, unausgesprochene tatsächliche, an der Basis arbeitende und nicht sichtbare Praktiken (Shohamy, 2006, S. 50). Shohamy argumentiert, dass ein tiefgründiges Verständnis von Sprachpolitik über offizielle Verlautbarungen hinaus gehen und verdeckte sowie implizite Mechanismen einschließen sollte, die – ebenso wie geheime Mechanismen – Sprachpraktiken und -überzeugungen maßgeblich prägen. Diese impliziten Mechanismen sind stille, hintergründige Instrumente, die neutral erscheinen, tatsächlich aber bestimmte Sprachideologien befördern. Sie helfen beim Festlegen, was als „normal“ und „legitim“ gilt, sodass einigen Sprachen Status zugesprochen wird, während andere an den Rand gedrängt werden. Der Begriff der Norm ist hier äußerst relevant als ein zentrales Konstrukt im LMF, besonders innerhalb des Language Management Process (LMP). Durch die Kombination von LMF und Spolskys Language Policy Model zielt diese Studie darauf ab, eine nuancierte Analyse des Zusammenspiels von offener und verdeckter Sprachpolitik zu liefern und die impliziten Kräfte, die die Sprachstrategien gemeinschaftsbasierter Initiativen formen, ans Licht zu bringen.

Der LMP beschreibt, wie Menschen mit Sprachproblemen in vier Phasen umgehen. Zunächst kommt es zur Wahrnehmung (noticing), bei der ein sprachlich auffälliger oder problematischer Fall erkannt wird (z. B. ein Begriff, der die Lernenden verwirrt). Es folgt die Einschätzung (evaluation), ob das Thema als hilfreich oder hinderlich, angemessen oder unangemessen zu beurteilen ist. Die dritte Phase ist das Design (design), in der eine Veränderung geplant wird – eine überarbeitete Unterrichtspraktik, eine Leitlinie oder ein Material. Schließlich folgt die Umsetzung (implementation) mit der Realisierung der geplanten Änderung.

Diese Studie konzentriert sich auf die 1. Phase. In ihrer ursprünglichen Fassung galt sie als das Wahrnehmen einer Normabweichung. Man ging davon aus, es gäbe einen einheitlichen, geteilten Standard für das übergreifend korrekte oder normale Sprachverhalten in allen sprachlichen Situationen und Gruppen. Kimura (2014) schlägt eine präzisere Fassung vor und geht eher von Erwartungen statt einer einzigen Norm aus. Unterschiedliche Akteur:innen – Lehrkräfte, Eltern, Lernende, Community-Organisator:innen und Behördenvertreter:innen – haben unterschiedliche Erwartungen, die durch Rollen, Ressourcen und Autorität geprägt sind. Aufgrund dieser Sichtweise behandle ich die 1. Phase als Fehlanpassung von Erwartungen an die Sprache(n). In der Praxis bedeutet das, zu fragen, welche Erwartungen bestehen, woher sie stammen (amtliche Regeln, Prüfregime, Curricula, öffentliche Beschilderung, Gewohnheiten und Überzeugungen) und wessen Erwartungen letztlich bestimmen, was als normal empfunden wird. Indem der Fokus auf nicht fehlangepasste Erwartungen gelegt wird – und nicht auf Verstöße gegen einen einzigen Maßstab, rückt die Analyse verdeckte Mechanismen und tief verankerte Überzeugungen in den Vordergrund und erklärt, warum die Bottom-up-Initiativen bestimmte Strategien wählen oder mitunter daran scheitern, über Wahrnehmung und Bewertung hinaus zu gehen.

Um Angebote bereitstellen zu können, sind an den Initiativen zahlreiche Akteur:innen beteiligt, doch ihre Erwartungen stehen öfters nicht im Einklang. Diese Fehlanpassungen treiben das Handeln der Initiativen an und stellen ihre geprägten Sprachüberzeugungen bloß – jene Diskurse und verdeckte Mechanismen, die bestimmen, was als normal gilt. Mithilfe des LMF und der Erkenntnisse der Language-Policy-Forschung untersucht die Studie, wie Initiativen mit unterschiedlichen Interessenvertretern arbeiten: welche Phänomene sie als Sprachprobleme einstufen, wie sie diese bewerten und welche Gegenmaßnahmen sie erarbeiten, während sie sich fragen, ob diese Maßnahmen realistisch sind. Ziel ist es nicht, fertige Lösungen zu finden, sondern die sich daraus ergebenden Strategien zu verstehen. Schließlich wird die Umsetzung dieser durch Macht und Ressourcen eingeschränkt – erforderliche Anpassungen können vorgeschlagen werden und bleiben doch außer Reichweite.

Widersprüchliche Erwartungen auf verschiedenen Ebenen der Sprachpolitik lassen die verdeckten Mechanismen widerspiegeln. Auf Makro- und Mesoebene zeigt sich klar eine unterschiedliche Sicht staatlicher Institutionen und der polnischsprachiger Gemeinschaften auf die HS-Bildung. Staatliche Akteure stellen die HS-Bildung häufig als Privatsache von Migrant:innen-Communities dar statt als öffentliche Verantwortung. Demgegenüber plädieren polnischsprachige Communities für eine

stärkere formale Anerkennung, im Einklang mit bilateralen Abkommen zu polnischen und deutschen Sprachrechten. Innerhalb dieser Communities treten weitere Erwartungskonflikte zwischen unterschiedlichen Akteur:innen (etwa Eltern und Lehrkräften) auf. Zur Analyse der Bemühungen der Initiativen in der Kommunikation mit Institutionen oder anderen Initiativen greift die Studie auf Forschung zu Sprachaktivismus und Advocacy (de Korne, 2021) sowie auf Konzepte der Superdiversität und des Transnationalismus zurück, um die Aktivitäten der Initiativen im gesellschaftlichen Kontext zu verorten.

Da Initiativen auch versuchen, das Sprachmanagement in Familien zu beeinflussen, stützt sich die Analyse zudem auf die Forschung zur Familienpolitik. Die Analyse bestätigt insbesondere die Verflechtung des Privaten und Politischen. Auch wenn die Familiensprachpolitik als eher privater Bereich zu scheinen mag, entsteht sie nicht im Leerraum; die gesellschaftliche Wahrnehmung von Sprachen wirkt auf sie ein (Purkarthofer et al., 2022). In der Analyse zeigt sich beispielsweise, dass Eltern häufig keine klar definierten Ziele für die HS-Bildung ihrer Kinder haben. Manche betrachten die Anmeldung zum Unterricht als ausreichend, ohne das Pflegen des Polnischen zu Hause aufrechtzuerhalten. Lehrkräfte wiederum äußern Frustration über die begrenzte elterliche Beteiligung, was ihre Fähigkeiten einschränkt, nachhaltige Lernfortschritte zu erzielen. Das Auseinandergehen von Erwartungen erfordert Strategien, die sowohl elterliche Anliegen ansprechen als auch potenzielle Probleme daraus abmildern.

Selbst auf der Mikroebene der Unterrichtsinteraktionen prägen unausgesprochene Erwartungen die Praktiken des Sprachmanagements. Um Sprachpraktiken und die impliziten Vorstellungen zu erfassen, stützt sich die Analyse auf einen Translanguaging-Klassenrahmen (García et al., 2017), der die Handlungsfähigkeit der Schüler:innen bei der Sprachnutzung in den Blick nimmt und untersucht, wie Lehrkräfte darauf im Unterricht oder im Unterrichtsdesign eingehen. So existiert etwa die unausgesprochene Erwartung, der Unterricht werde die Struktur eines Erstsprachenunterrichts widerspiegeln und eine einheitliche Polnischkompetenz der Lernenden voraussetzen. Wie zuvor erwähnt, variieren jedoch die Sprachpraktiken von Familie zu Familie erheblich, was diese Annahmen problematisch macht. Gleichwohl bleiben solche Erwartungen oft nicht angesprochen oder man wird damit nicht konfrontiert.

Die Initiativen sind über Jahre hinweg aktiv und müssen sich neuen Herausforderungen stellen, während sie gleichzeitig ihre laufenden Aktivitäten aufrechterhalten und darauf reagieren. Kurz gesagt: Um über Jahrzehnte hinweg handlungsfähig zu bleiben und neuen Herausforderungen

standzuhalten, müssen die Initiativen und die um sie herum entstehenden Communities belastbar sein. Aus diesem Grund werden die Handlungen der Initiativen mit Instrumenten aus der Forschung zu sozial-ökologischen Systemen sowie aus der humanitären Hilfe und den Entwicklungsstudien analysiert, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die Arten von Reaktionen, die Communities auf auftretende Herausforderungen und sich wandelnde Rahmenbedingungen zeigen.

Die Resilienz der Gemeinschaften bezeichnet ihre Fähigkeit, Störungen und Unsicherheiten zu überstehen, daraus zu lernen und gemeinsam darauf zu reagieren. Es geht nicht nur darum, sich nach plötzlichen Schocks schnell zu erholen, sondern auch, mit fortlaufenden, alltäglichen Belastungen umzugehen. Resilienz ist relational und kontextabhängig – sie wächst durch soziale Netzwerke, Führung, Selbstorganisation und eine geteilte positive Grundhaltung, sowie durch den Dialog mit anderen Akteur:innen, um den Zugang zu Ressourcen zu erhalten. In Migrationskontexten sind Bottom-up-Initiativen zur HS sowohl Produkte dieser begünstigenden Bedingungen als auch Orte, an denen sie aktiv kultiviert werden – sie schaffen sichere Räume für Sprachnutzung, verhandeln mit Institutionen und sichern die Entwicklung der Herkunftssprache trotz anhaltender struktureller Einschränkungen.

Adaptivität ist die Fähigkeit, schrittweise und strategische Anpassungen vorzunehmen, sodass die Community innerhalb bestehender Vereinbarungen funktionsfähig bleibt. Sie umfasst Lernen, das Überarbeiten von Praktiken und langfristige Responsivität. Transformationsfähigkeit ist die Fähigkeit, über Vereinbarungen hinauszugehen, die den Bedürfnissen der Community nicht mehr dienen. Sie beinhaltet das Schaffen neuer sozialer Strukturen und Arbeitsweisen – ermöglicht durch Empowerment, Lernen und Experimentieren – sowie die Auseinandersetzung mit weiteren soziopolitischen Systemen, um Ressourcen zu sichern und Entscheidungen zu beeinflussen. Im Sprachmanagement stellt sich die praktische Frage, ob Initiativen darauf abzielen, sich an vorherrschende Erwartungen und Politiken anzupassen oder zu deren Veränderung beizutragen. In der Realität tun die Communities oft beides.

Methodik

Zur Beantwortung der Forschungsfragen verwendet die Studie ethnografische Methoden. Diese umfassen Sekundärforschung, teilnehmende Beobachtung, semi-strukturierte Interviews mit Organisator:innen, Lehrkräften und Eltern sowie zwei kurze Fragebögen, die sich jeweils an Lehrkräfte bzw. Eltern richten. All das wurde um eine Dokumentenanalyse von politischen Richtlinien und

sonstigen Materialien (z. B. Broschüren) ergänzt. Die Feldforschung umfasst den Zeitraum vom Ende 2019 bis März 2023.

Die Sekundärforschung stützt sich auf Analysen dieser Richtlinien sowie Dokumenten der Initiativen. Die Interviews mit Schlüsselinformant:innen waren teilweise strukturiert und fanden sowohl online als auch in Präsenz statt. Ich interviewte vierzehn Personen, die innerhalb der untersuchten Initiativen unterschiedliche Funktionen innehatten. Die Teilnehmenden wurden mittels Zielstichproben rekrutiert und durch begrenzten Schneeballeffekt ergänzt. Ziel war es, die zentralen Figuren abzudecken, die an der Arbeit der Initiativen an verschiedenen Ebenen beteiligt sind (Vorstandsmitglieder, Lehrkräfte und Eltern), sowie womöglich relevante Kooperationspartner:innen einzubeziehen. Alle Teilnehmenden wurden über Zweck der Datenerhebung, Speicherung und über das Recht zum Widerruf ihrer Teilnahme Einwilligung informiert. Sie wurden darüber aufgeklärt, dass sämtliche Daten anonymisiert werden und keine personenbezogenen identifizierbaren Informationen in der Dissertation erscheinen.

Im Rahmen der teilnehmenden Beobachtung zwischen April 2022 und März 2023 wurden 39 Unterrichtsstunden hospitiert, die von zwei Bottom-up-Initiativen organisiert wurden: „Die Brücke“ in Darmstadt und „Wawel“ in Heidelberg. Zusätzlich wurde ein zweistündiger Online-Workshop für Lehrkräfte verfolgt, der von einer der Pädagog:innen der Initiative „Krasnale“ durchgeführt wurde. Im Verlauf dieser Beobachtungen hielt ich regelmäßigen Kontakt zu rund dreißig Personen, darunter Lehrkräften, Eltern und Schüler:innen. Die Einwilligung zur Unterrichtsbeobachtung wurde sowohl von Lehrkräften als auch von Eltern eingeholt, die meiner Anwesenheit im Klassenraum zustimmten und den Zweck der Datenerhebung verstanden. Sie wurden ebenfalls über die Datenanonymisierung informiert.

Alle im Verlauf der Forschung erhobenen Daten wurden anonymisiert und sowohl lokal als auch auf MAXQDA – dem primären Analysewerkzeug – unter anonymisierten Dateinamen gespeichert. Der Anonymisierungsschlüssel und die Kodierdateien werden getrennt an einem passwortgeschützten Ort verwahrt. Interviews, teilnehmende Beobachtungen und offene Umfrageantworten wurden als separate MAXQDA-Projekte geführt, jeweils mit einem eigenen Categoriesystem. Ich war die einzige kodierende Person. Zur Reduktion des Single-Coder-Bias führte ich Code-Recode-Prüfungen an einer Teilmenge der Transkripte im Intervall von zwei Wochen bzw. einem Monat durch und präzisierte die Code-Definitionen, wobei Grenzfälle in einem separaten Codebook dokumentiert wurden. Für jedes

Projekt wurde ein Codebook geführt und regelmäßig aktualisiert. Vermerkt wurden u. a. Entscheidungen zur Zusammenführung von Codes sowie Fälle erheblicher Code-Überlappung.

Das Projekt folgte der in Deutschland geltenden DSGVO. Die Erhebungsmethoden wurden als geringes Risiko eingestuft. Mit dem erhobenen Material sollten die Aktivitäten der Initiativen auf den Makro-, Meso- und Mikroebenen des Sprachmanagements abgebildet werden. In der Praxis traten dabei auch die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen diesen zutage.

Kapitel 4: Von sprachpolitischen Regelungen auf der Makroebene zur Praxis auf der Mesoebene

Dieses Kapitel erörtert die Erwartungen der Akteur:innen in Bezug auf die HS-Bildung und die von ihnen wahrgenommenen Fehlanpassungen. Die auf der Meso- und Makroebene angewandten Strategien zeigen anschließend, wie diese Fehlanpassungen bewertet wurden, welche Maßnahmen entworfen und wie viele davon umgesetzt wurden. Die Strategien umfassen sowohl das adaptive Sprachmanagement, also Ansätze, die sich an die bestehende sprachpolitische Landschaft anpassen, als auch ein Beispiel des transformierenden Sprachmanagements, bei dem Sprachüberzeugungen adressiert werden und zu einer qualitativen Veränderung dieser Landschaft führen.

Die Diskussion gliedert sich in drei thematische Abschnitte. Erstens wird die allgemeine sprachpolitische Situation skizziert, in der die Initiativen in Anlehnung an die EU-Politik agieren – ausgehend von EU-Politik über den deutschen Kontext bis hin zu einer Analyse der Sprachpolitik in Deutschland in Bezug auf Polnisch als HS. Anschließend wird der deutsche Ansatz den Ansichten des polnischen Staates in Bezug hinsichtlich dessen gegenübergestellt. Zusammenfassend gilt: Zwar wird die Förderung des Polnischen in Deutschland durch den bilateralen Vertrag zwischen den beiden Ländern gewährleistet, doch die Tatsache, dass Polnisch hier als Sprache einer Migrant:innen-Community gilt, führt zur Marginalisierung des Polnisch-Unterrichts.

Nachdem die sprachpolitische Landschaft umrissen wurde, zeigt der zweite Abschnitt, wie Bottom-up-Initiativen mit dieser umgegangen sind. Einblick in die Kampagne „Polnisch in Hessen“, an der die Initiative aktiv beteiligt waren, zeigt, wie sie zwischen Institutionen vermitteln, horizontale Verbindungen zu anderen Organisationen der polnischen Diaspora aufbauen und Schlussfolgerungen darüber ziehen, wie sich die Situation von Polnisch als HS im Bildungsbereich am besten verbessern lässt. In der Folge hat das Bundesland Hessen mehrere Kurse in Polnisch als HS eingerichtet. Gleichwohl wurde die Überwachung der Situation von Polnisch als HS im Bildungssystem an die

Community verlegt, was die Auffassung verstärkt, dass Herkunftssprachen der Migrant:innen primär eine Angelegenheit der Community seien.

Das Kapitel untersucht außerdem die adaptiven Maßnahmen der Initiativen – die Zusammenarbeit mit Schulbehörden, um Unterrichtsangebote zu sichern, sowie den Aufbau horizontaler Verbindungen zu anderen gemeinschaftsbasierten Organisationen. Diese Verbindungen werden aus zwei Blickwinkeln analysiert: erstens über die polnische Diaspora, derer Netzwerke polnischer Initiativen eine wertvolle Ressource darstellen; und zweitens aus der Perspektive städtischer Mehrsprachigkeit, also über Verbindungen zu Initiativen anderer Communities. In diesem Fall sind die horizontalen Verbindungen vorhanden und die Initiativen erkennen ihr Potenzial, doch all das wird nicht ausgeschöpft.

Der abschließende Abschnitt fasst die Dynamiken zwischen Akteuren der Makro- und Mesoebene zusammen. Es wird gezeigt, wie Bottom-up-Initiativen diese Konstellationen deuten, und erläutert, wie die Erwartungen und Überzeugungen ihrem Handeln zugrundeliegen. Letztlich werden – gestützt auf ihre Aktivitäten und Beziehungen – die Strategien der Bottom-up-Initiativen dargelegt: Sie passen sich überwiegend an, nutzen bestehende Wege und nehmen Justierungen innerhalb vorhandener Rahmen vor. Die Kampagne „Polnisch in Hessen“ zeigt jedoch, dass in der Community transformatives Potenzial vorhanden ist. Wenn mehrere Akteure zusammenkommen und ihre Überzeugungen offen artikulieren, dass Polnisch eine wertvolle Sprache zum Unterrichten ist, kann sich die Bereitstellung von HS-Angeboten tatsächlich verändern.

Kapitel 5: Bottom-up-Initiativen im familiären Sprachmanagement

Polnischsprachige Familien bilden sowohl die primäre Zielgruppe als auch die Grundlage gemeinschaftsgetragener Aktivitäten. Das Kapitel zeichnet die Interaktionen zwischen Familien und Initiativen als Sprachmanagement in der Praxis nach: Was Eltern erwarten, was Initiativen anbieten und wie Entscheidungen zwischen Zuhause und organisierten Angeboten zirkulieren. Es zeigt auf, wo Fehlanpassungen entstehen, welche Optionen erwogen und welche Reaktionen umgesetzt werden. Mithilfe der Unterscheidung adaptiv–transformativ markiert die Analyse, wann bestehende Vereinbarungen feinjustiert und wann die Überzeugungen neu definiert oder Verantwortlichkeiten umverteilt werden. Die Darstellung stützt sich auf Fragebögen, Interviews und Feldnotizen.

Die Analyse beginnt zu Hause, dem ersten Ort der HS-Pflege, wo Ideale auf Alltagsbelastungen treffen: begrenzte Zeit, unregelmäßiger Input, emotionale Arbeit und die Anziehungskraft der

Mehrheitssprache. Sie verfolgt, wie Eltern HS verstehen, was sie erreichen wollen und wo Spannungen in den alltäglichen Routinensichtbar werden. Die Initiativen reagieren auf die Ermüdung der Familien bei mehrsprachiger Erziehung und bestärken sie darin, dass die Pflege und Weiterentwicklung der HS lohnend ist. Zugleich zeigt die Analyse, dass elterliche Erwartungen an HS-Bildung häufig locker definiert sind und sich vor allem auf die Bereitstellung zusätzlichen Sprachinputs konzentrieren – meist ohne klar formuliertes langfristiges Ziel. Daher versuchen die Initiativen, ihre Unterstützung über den Unterricht hinaus zu erweitern, indem sie die Eltern für mehrsprachige Erziehung sensibilisieren – entweder durch Informationsmaterial, Einbindung in Hausaufgaben oder Workshops für Eltern. In diesen Workshops erklären die Initiativen zunächst, was Mehrsprachigkeit ist, und präsentieren anschließend implizite Strategien, die im Alltag angewandt werden können, um den polnischen Input zu Hause zu erhöhen.

Ein weiterer Ansatz, das Management innerhalb der Familien zu beeinflussen, besteht darin, Interaktionen der Peers in der HS zu ermöglichen. Zwar dienen diese der Erhöhung des Sprachinputs und einer ansprechenden Gestaltung des HS-Lernens, doch wirkt diese Strategie eher implizit als intendiert. Sie wird in offizieller Kommunikation – etwa auf Websites oder in Satzungen – nicht explizit genannt, und im laufenden Unterricht erscheint Peer-Interaktion eher als natürlicher Nebeneffekt denn als formal strukturierte oder eng begleitete Strategie.

Obwohl das primäre Ziel der Initiativen stets die Unterstützung und Weitergabe der polnischen Sprache war, zeigt die Analyse, dass Eltern diese informellen und später formalisierten Treffen nicht nur als Bildungsgelegenheiten, sondern auch als Begegnungs- und Austauschräume nutzen. Über diese Strategie wird jedoch nicht systematisch reflektiert und sie bleibt eher ein Nebenprodukt des HS-Angebots. Elternengagement ließe sich allerdings nutzen – erstens im Unterricht oder bei außerschulischen Aktivitäten, indem Eltern aktive Teilnehmende des HS-Kurses werden; zweitens durch die Mobilisierung von Eltern, damit sie sich auf Mesoebene in Schulen einbringen. Die Interviewten stellten fest, dass eine entsprechende Wissensweitergabe fehle.

Die von den Initiativen verfolgten Strategien zur Beeinflussung des Sprachmanagements in Familien scheinen also durch eine gewisse Trägheit gekennzeichnet zu sein. Die Initiativen haben Unterricht und zusätzlichen Input aufgebaut, die anfangs transformativ wirkten; mittlerweile laufen diese Strategien jedoch im Autopiloten und werden selten überprüft, sodass ihr Einfluss auf familiäre Praktiken begrenzt bleibt. Es braucht inklusive, reflektierte Unterstützung – etwa die Einbindung nicht polnischsprachiger Eltern, gezielte Peer-Aktivitäten und leichte Aufsicht, um Hilfe an die tatsächlichen

Familienbedürfnisse anzupassen. Derzeit ist die Arbeit überwiegend adaptiv und läuft Gefahr, die Vorstellung zu verfestigen, dass Migrant:innenfamilien allein verantwortlich seien. Es gibt wenig Bemühungen, familiäre Anstrengungen mit übergeordneter Politik zu verknüpfen oder institutionelle Unterstützung einzufordern. Kleine, machbare Schritte – klarere Kommunikation, warum Elternengagement zählt, Vermittlung des Wissens, wie man sich für eigene Sache einsetzen kann, und die Brücken zur Makroebene zu schlagen – könnten unter den bestehenden Bedingungen spürbare Verbesserungen bewirken.

Kapitel 6: Hybridität des Herkunftssprachenunterrichts

Entscheidungen auf Makro- und Mesoebene – durch staatliche und kommunale Behörden sowie Schulverwaltungen, zusammen mit den Alltagspraktiken der Familien und den impliziten wie expliziten Erwartungen der Akteur:innen, prägen, was im Klassenzimmer möglich ist. Die Effekte sind sowohl extern – in der Organisation und Ressourcenausstattung – als auch intern – in den Methoden und Strategien, die Lehrkräfte innerhalb der Initiativen anwenden. Dieses Kapitel geht der zentralen Frage nach: Wie werden Sprachen im HS-Unterricht gemanagt?

HS-Bildung ist auf mehreren Ebenen durch Hybridität gekennzeichnet. Erstens wird die Informalität der außerschulischen Umgebung durch Aufgaben und Materialien in Richtung Formalität gezogen. Zweitens nimmt sie methodisch eine Position zwischen Erstsprachenunterricht und Fremdsprachendidaktik ein und verbindet mehrsprachigkeitsorientierte (plurilinguale) Ansätze mit traditionellem Unterricht, der von historischen Prägungen beeinflusst ist. In der Praxis gilt: Selbst wenn Probleme wahrgenommen werden und gemeinschaftliche Innovationen existieren, fällt das Angebot häufig auf vertraute, adaptive Methoden zurück.

Das Kapitel beginnt mit den logistischen Aspekten der Bereitstellung von HS-Kursen. Bevor eine Sprache unterrichtet werden kann, muss eine materielle Infrastruktur aufgebaut werden: Räume müssen gefunden und gebucht, Zugänge ausgehandelt, Zeitpläne an das Familienleben angepasst, Lehrkräfte gewonnen und gehalten sowie Materialien beschafft oder erstellt werden. Nichts davon ist unmittelbar linguistisch – und doch bestimmt alles, was pädagogisch machbar ist. In einem Kontext, in dem die Verantwortung für die Pflege der HS stillschweigend an Familien und Community delegiert wird, stellen die Initiativen die zentrale Grundausstattung bereit – Räume, Zeitfenster, Personal, Materialien – und die Diskontinuität eines einzigen dieser Elemente stellt ein Risiko dar, das Organisator:innen fortlaufend abfedern müssen.

Der zweite Aspekt ist pädagogisch und wird auf zwei Ebenen betrachtet: der Interaktionen im Unterricht und der breiteren Diskurse, die die Entscheidungen der Lehrkräfte prägen. Lehrkräfte arbeiten häufig im HS-Unterricht mit heterogenen Lerngruppen. Daher wenden sie flexible Strategien des Sprachmanagements an. Obwohl Lehrkräfte mit dem gelegentlichen Deutschsprechen der Lernenden rechnen, behandeln sie Deutsch meist als inoffizielle Unterstützungssprache und integrieren sie nicht in die Kursgestaltung. Alters- und Niveauunterschiede erschweren die Materialauswahl. Ferner lässt das Fehlen klarer Leitlinien – angesichts eines locker gerahmten Curriculums und weit gefasster Ziele – die Lehrkräfte ohne feste Stützpunkte. In diesem Umfeld initiieren oft die Lernenden das Sprachmanagement, indem sie die Klassenregeln aushandeln; die Lehrkräfte reagieren ad hoc. Trotz der sichtbaren Sprachbewusstheit der Lernenden fokussiert der Unterricht meist auf Polnisch-Immersion, wobei andere sprachliche Ressourcen der Lernenden nur selten systematisch einbezogen werden. Vor diesem Hintergrund stechen die von einer Lehrkraft, Cecylia, entwickelten Unterrichtseinheiten hervor – sie verkörpern ein Rahmenwerk der Translanguaging Klassen, das die Sprachressourcen der Lernenden gezielt nutzt. Ihr Design anerkennt die Nutzung des Deutschen im HS-Unterricht und trägt unterschiedlichen Kompetenzniveaus Rechnung.

Der Fall Cecylia zeigt, dass in der Community ein wertvolles Know-how vorhanden ist, um die Herausforderungen der HS-Lehrkräften anzugehen. Zugleich macht er deutlich, dass es einer vertieften Reflexion über Überzeugungen und historische Prägungen der Lehrkräfte bedarf. Eine verbreitete Annahme lautet, der HS-Unterricht solle dem Erstsprachenunterricht ähneln. Wandelnde demografische Bedingungen legen jedoch nahe, dass fremdsprachenorientierte Ansätze für viele Lernende vorteilhafter wären. Einige Lehrkräfte erkennen dies und passen ihren Unterricht entsprechend an; viele andere stützen sich weiterhin auf erstsprachliche Modelle. Diese Tendenz geht auf historische Praktiken im HS-Unterricht seit den 1960er- und 1970er-Jahren zurück, als häufig davon ausgegangen wurde, dass Schüler:innen und ihre Familien in ihr Herkunftsland zurückkehren würden. Bemerkenswert ist, dass zwar die Methodik oft an diesem älteren Modell festhält, Lehrkräfte jedoch zunehmend über Inhalte reflektieren und sich damit auseinandersetzen, um die mehrsprachige Lebenswirklichkeit der Lernenden besser abzubilden.

Diese Erkenntnisse zeigen letztlich, dass die von den Initiativen eingesetzten Strategien und Prozesse des Sprachmanagements überwiegend adaptiv sind – geprägt von unmittelbaren Bedarfen und begrenzten Ressourcen – zugleich jedoch ein transformatives Potenzial besitzen. Anpassungen wie die Einbeziehung informeller deutschsprachiger Stützstrukturen, kontextsensible Materialauswahl oder

die selektive Nutzung fremdsprachenorientierter Unterrichtstechniken weisen nicht nur auf Flexibilität, sondern auch auf Innovationsfähigkeit hin. In einigen Fällen gehen diese Strategien über reine Anpassung hinaus und schlagen neue pädagogische Normen vor, die in kritischer Sprachbewusstheit und transnationalen Erfahrungen verankert sind. Zu den Sprachüberzeugungen, die im beobachteten und rekonstruierten LMP sichtbar werden, zählen ein Erstsprachen-Default für den HS-Unterricht sowie die Annahme, dass Literalität zunächst in der Mehrheitssprache entwickelt werden sollte. Diese Überzeugungen verengen das Methoden- und Ressourcenrepertoire der Lehrkräfte. Werden sie explizit adressiert, wird transformative Veränderung plausibel.

Schlussfolgerung

Das Schlusskapitel führt diese Verflechtungen zusammen, indem es die auf den Mikro-, Meso- und Makroebenen beobachteten Strategien kartiert und zentrale Bereiche hervorhebt, in denen Adaptivität in potenzielle Transformation übergeht. Zugleich erweitert es das erwartungsbasierte LMF, indem es Adaptivität und Übertragbarkeit als zentrale analytische Dimensionen einführt. Damit wird anerkannt, dass sich nicht alle Strategien des Sprachmanagements reinlich den bestehenden LMF-Kategorien zuordnen lassen. Manche sind nicht nur reaktive Antworten auf wahrgenommene „sprachbezogene Probleme“, sondern proaktive Bemühungen um eine Neudefinierung der HS-Bildung. Vor diesem Hintergrund fasst das Kapitel die Antworten auf die Forschungsfragen zusammen.

Theoretisch rahmt die Studie die erste Phase des LMF als Fehlanpassung von Erwartungen zwischen Akteuren und nutzt eine Resilienzperspektive, um Reaktionen entlang eines Spektrums von adaptiv bis transformativ zu verorten. Empirisch bündelt sie Evidenz aus drei gemeinschaftsbasierten Initiativen in Deutschland, um Sprachmanagement über Ebenen hinweg (Unterricht, Community und Familie sowie Institutionen) zu verfolgen und die Interaktionen zwischen diesen aufzuzeigen. Aus dieser Analyse entwickelt die Studie ein übertragbares Modell, das sichtbar macht, wie Communities die Sprache in der Praxis managen und auf die Herausforderungen und die sich aus den Erwartungen ergebenden Chancen reagieren. Zudem kann es von Initiativen für Diagnose und Monitoring genutzt werden. Aufbauend auf dem Modell formuliert der letzte Teil des Kapitels Lehren und skizziert Implikationen für Initiativen und Entscheidungsträger:innen, die mehr lokale, community-orientierte Sprachpolitiken anstreben. Abschließend werden Empfehlungen gegeben, um gemeinschaftsgetragene Maßnahmen zu unterstützen und zu stärken.

Das Modell drückt erstens die Fehlanpassung der Erwartungen explizit aus: Was geschieht aktuell im Sprachgebrauch und was wünscht sich die Community stattdessen? Dazu gehört eine Ausarbeitung

der Erwartungslandschaft – wer die Akteur:innen sind (Familien, Lehrkräfte, Leitungen der Initiativen, Schulen, kommunale Verantwortliche), was erwartet wird und welche Überzeugungen dahinter stehen. Das ist wichtig, weil dieselbe „Problemlage“ für unterschiedliche Personen unterschiedlich ausfallen kann und manche Erwartungen unterschiedliche Gewichtung haben.

Ist die Fehlanpassung klar, kann eine Reaktion gestaltet und umgesetzt werden. Die Gestaltung bedeutet zu entscheiden, was getan werden könnte, für wen und mit welchen Ressourcen. Umsetzung bedeutet, es zu tun – wer führt, wer unterstützt und in welchem Zeitrahmen.

Die letzte Phase ist Aufsicht und Reflexion. Sie umfasst die Prüfung, ob die Reaktion die Fehlanpassungen tatsächlich verringert hat, welche unbeabsichtigten Effekte aufgetreten sind und ob sich Erwartungen oder Rahmenbedingungen verschoben haben. Leichtgewichtige, regelmäßige Rückmeldungen – kurze Rücksprachen mit Eltern, Lehrkräftereflexionen nach einem Halbjahr, kurze Befragungen – reichen aus, um zu lernen und nachzusteuern. Ohne diesen Schritt neigen auch gute Ideen dazu, im Autopiloten zu laufen und an Wirkung zu verlieren.

Innerhalb dieses dreistufigen Modells fallen Reaktionen typischerweise in zwei Modi: adaptiv und transformativ. Adaptives Sprachmanagement geht die Fehlanpassungen innerhalb des bestehenden Rahmens an. Das Ziel ist, Erwartungen im Status quo zu erfüllen. Zugrunde liegende Überzeugungen (z. B. „HS-Pflege ist Aufgabe der Familie“) werden zur Kenntnis genommen, aber nicht infrage gestellt. Adaptives Management erfordert üblicherweise weniger Akteur:innen – eine einzelne Lehrkraft kann adaptive Anpassungen vornehmen. Veränderungen erfolgen eher schrittweise und zeigen schneller Wirkung, doch der übergeordnete Rahmen bleibt unverändert.

Transformierendes Sprachmanagement verändert den bestehenden Rahmen. Es legt Überzeugungen offen und ändert, wie sie die Erwartungen und Rollen prägen. Dies erfordert oft neue Partnerschaften. Im transformativen Modus besteht das Ziel darin, Erwartungen umzudenken – etwa von „Familien tragen die volle Last“ zu „Schulen und Kommunen teilen Verantwortung“. Meist braucht es die Beteiligung weiterer Akteur:innen – Eltern, Schulen, kommunaler Verwaltung. Dadurch entstehen neue Vereinbarungen – z. B. formale Anerkennung von HS oder Kursformate, die die heterogenen Kompetenzniveaus der Schüler:innen einbeziehen. Hier wird explizit an Überzeugungen und Diskursen gearbeitet.

Die Ergänzung adaptiver und transformativer Achsen zum LMF hilft, die im Abschnitt formulierten Forschungsfragen zu beantworten:

Erstens: Im HS-Unterricht ist das alltägliche Management überwiegend adaptiv. Schüler:innen steuern den Umgang mit Sprache häufig selbst; Deutsch fungiert als stille Unterstützungsressource, wird aber selten offen anerkannt; fremdsprachenorientierte Methoden werden nicht durchgängig genutzt. Lehrkräfte nehmen Fehlanpassungen wahr und zeigen Offenheit für mehrsprachige Strategien. Die praktische Schlussfolgerung lautet: Nützliche Unterrichtspraktiken existieren und könnten geteilt und skaliert werden, wenn Lehrkräfte mehr Gelegenheiten zum Austausch und zur Reflexion über die HS-Didaktik hätten.

Zweitens: In der Arbeit mit Familien führt frühe Mobilisierung zu Kursangeboten, zusätzlichem Input und wertvollen Peer-Netzwerken für Kinder – das stärkt die Gemeinschaftsresilienz. Viele Maßnahmen laufen jedoch von alleine, werden selten überprüft, Netzwerke werden nicht systematisch genutzt, und Elternbeteiligung ist nicht in langfristige Planungen eingebettet. Workshops entstehen, um akute Bedarfe zu bedienen, doch es fehlt eine klare Strategie, Erfolge vom Klassenraum auf die Familienroutinen zu übertragen oder Eltern dauerhaft einzubinden.

Drittens: Als Fürsprecher:innen fungieren die Initiativen als Brücken zwischen den Gemeinschaften und Institutionen, doch die Ergebnisse variieren je nach Bundesland, und die Ressourcen sind knapp. Häufig arbeiten sie nach oben (mit Behörden) stärker als zur Seite (mit Peer-Gruppen), und ihre Stimmen können in breiteren Debatten an den Rand geraten. Deutsche Behörden erkennen HS häufig prinzipiell an, überlassen die Verantwortung jedoch den Communities – institutionelle Unterstützung bleibt dadurch begrenzt.

Viertens: der Monolinguale Bias und die Marginalisierung migrantischer Herkunftssprachen sind zugrunde liegende Überzeugungen. Das zeigt sich, wenn HS als Privatsache der Community behandelt wird, Eltern der Mehrheitssprache zu wenig eingebunden werden und die Unterrichtspraktiken den Erstsprachen Unterricht aus Polen spiegeln. Gleichzeitig kontern Initiativen die Marginalisierung, indem sie affektive Argumente (Zugehörigkeit, familiäre Bindungen) und nutzungsorientierte sowie europäische Argumente heranziehen, die Polnisch als kulturelles Kapital im Sinne von Rahmenwerken wie dem Gemeinsamen Europäischen Referenzrahmen positionieren – Schritte, die HS-Bildung sichtbarer und wertgeschätzter machen.

Auf Grundlage der Analyse formuliert die Studie praxisnahe Empfehlungen für Initiativen, Lehrkräfte, Eltern und Institutionen.

- Für Initiativen: sich auf die Akteur:innen und ihre Erwartungen zu konzentrieren; stärkere Partnerschaften mit Eltern aufzubauen; Peer-to-Peer-Räume für Familien zu schaffen; Lehrkräfte beim Austausch von Materialien und Erfahrungen unterstützen. Kontakte zu anderen Communities im Blick zu pflegen – sie können die Stimme gegenüber den Behörden verstärken – und einfache Routinen für Aufsicht und Reflexion zu etablieren (z. B. kurze Befragungen oder eine jährliche Community-Versammlung).
- Für HS-Lehrkräfte: sich zu vernetzen, Mehrsprachigkeit bewusst zu planen, Methoden der Fremdsprachendidaktik einzubeziehen, mit Eltern über Ziele zu sprechen und Hausaufgaben zu nutzen, um gezielte Interaktion zu Hause anzuregen.
- Für Eltern: als Mitgestaltende agieren – kleine Rollen über das Bringen/Abholen hinaus zu übernehmen, realistische Ziele passend zu den eigenen Routinen zu setzen, im Austausch mit Lehrkräften zu bleiben, sich mit anderen Familien verzunetzen, um Polnisch-Nutzungsgelegenheiten zu schaffen, und kurze, regelmäßige Rückmeldungen zu geben.
- Für Institutionen: Vernetzung unter den Initiativen zu ermöglichen, finanzielle und inhaltliche Unterstützung zu sichern, Initiativen als zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement zu anerkennen und die Verantwortung für Überwachung und Sichtbarmachung der HS-Angebote zu teilen, damit Eltern wissen, was verfügbar ist.

Diese Empfehlungen stellen kein Handbuch dar, sondern eine Orientierung, die Communities unterschiedlichen Kontexten anpassen können. Resilienz des von der Gemeinschaft gesteuerten Sprachmanagements besteht – wie die Ergebnisse zeigen – nicht nur im Bewältigen von Herausforderungen, sondern auch im proaktiven Sichtbarmachen der Erwartungen der beteiligten Akteur:innen, was nachhaltige Veränderung ermöglichen kann. Indem die Managementschritte benannt, Aufgaben klargestellt und die Prozesse offen kommuniziert werden, können die Initiativen und die sie tragende Community ihre Aktivitäten mit neuer Klarheit ausrichten – das stärkt das alltägliche Management der HS-Angebote und die langfristigen Perspektiven sprachlicher Vielfalt.

1. Introduction

This dissertation examines three parent-led, community-based Initiatives that sustain Polish as a heritage language in Germany. Although these efforts are visible, mismatched expectations among communities, schools, and authorities often limit what can be achieved. With ethnographic fieldwork and interviews as the empirical base and the Language Management Framework as the analytic lens, extended with concepts from community resilience, I analyse how language is managed at classroom, community, and institutional levels. The study proposes a transferable model that distinguishes adaptive from transformative strategies and identifies openings for change. The thesis contributes to sociolinguistics and offers actionable guidance for community-driven heritage-language education.

1.1 Empirical Context

This study follows three community-based organisations operating in Germany that offer courses in Polish as a heritage language. The organisations operate in Hesse and in Baden-Württemberg, and their scope and provision differ. In Frankfurt am Main, the parent initiative Krasnale has operated a Saturday school and runs a kindergarten and nursery. In Darmstadt, the association Die Brücke provides classes mainly for preschool-age children. In the Rhein-Neckar region, mainly in Heidelberg and Mannheim, the association Wawel offers a range of on-site and online courses for children and youth. What these organisations share is their emergence as a community-based response to the need to support the maintenance and development of Polish – they provide classes for children and offer support to parents in these efforts. Although heritage language classes exist in Germany, provision is uneven and frequently inadequate, with regional policy frameworks differing across federal states. At the time of fieldwork, the community-based organisations – Krasnale, Die Brücke, and Wawel – filled a gap in the education systems, which marginalise languages spoken by immigrants. Figure 0 illustrates the bottom-up community-based effort to create a space for heritage language learning.

Figure 0. Illustration Reflecting Bottom-Up Effort to Create a Space and Opportunity for Heritage Language Learning



Note. Figure created by Agnieszka Zimna based on the author's idea

1.2 Key Terms

Throughout the dissertation, the capitalised term *Initiatives* refers specifically to these three organisations and signals their status as parent-driven, grassroots entities in the spirit of the German term “Elterninitiative”. The lower-case form *initiatives* is used for comparable community-based organisations more generally. The Initiatives were established by migrants for migrants, in this case by Polish-speaking parents to support other Polish-speaking families in maintaining and developing the language. Together with the parents and children who participate in their activities, they constitute a *community of practice*, that is, a group engaged in a shared endeavour and learning through regular participation and mutual engagement (Meyerhoff & Strycharz, 2013, p. 430). The notion of community is central to the analysis and is elaborated in the analytical framework.

The community mobilised in order to provide classes of Polish as heritage language. The term “heritage language” is commonly used in the context of migration and language maintenance among other terms that have emerged. In this dissertation, the term *heritage language* is operationalised from a speaker-centred perspective. In this view, heritage languages are those typically used at home, and their speakers are to some extent bilingual in both the home language and the majority language; they may also have an affective or relational tie to the language, even when proficiency varies, as discussed by Guadalupe Valdés (2020). For readability, I use the abbreviation HL for “heritage language”, and I return to definitional nuances in the Section 2.1.2.

1.3 Theoretical Orientation

This dissertation examines three Initiatives that grew out of local, everyday acts of noticing and responding to community needs. For this reason, the Language Management Framework (LMF) is adopted as the study's theoretical orientation. In brief, LMF conceptualises activities of language agents directed at language through the Language Management Process (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015). The process begins with Stage 1, noticing a divergence from the norm. Adopting to the community perspective, in this dissertation the first stage is however reframed: rather than noticing a deviation from norm, the process starts with noticing a mismatch of expectations.

To show how the expectations of the Initiatives and of other actors – families, teachers, and authorities – translate into practice, I draw on the distinction between overt and covert language policies; that is, policies that include, on the one hand, visible political frameworks and official texts, and, on the other, tacit routines and decisions that shape language practices. I combine these lenses with community resilience, employing the concepts of adaptive capacity, which adjusts language management to the current situation and prevailing beliefs, and transformative capacity, which brings those beliefs and institutional frameworks to the surface and revises them. On this basis, I develop a model that is detailed in Chapter 7.

1.4 Goals, Objectives and Research Gap

The primary goal of this study is to identify how the Initiatives manage language and what underpins their strategies, and to develop a model of community language management that can guide grassroots language endeavours. The dissertation answers calls to foreground community perspectives in language-policy research (Guardado, 2018, p. 145; García & Menken, 2017, p. 220). It brings the perspective and policy-making capacity of migrant communities to the fore by proposing a transferable, expectation-based extension of the Language Management Framework with adaptive and transformative axes. The Initiatives have a hybrid character: they are legally formalised organisations, yet much of their educational work remains informal and outside the education system. They show what becomes of overt policies in Germany and Poland once they enter practice, and, at the same time, they develop bottom-up strategies that shape language management at both family and authority levels. Accordingly, the research questions address relations with other actors involved in language management, classroom practices, and the beliefs that underpin those relations and strategies:

RQ 1. How do bottom-up initiatives manage the languages in their everyday work? Particularly, what do teachers do when “managing the languages” during HL classes?

RQ 2. What are the bottom-up initiatives’ strategies to impact language management within Polish families?

RQ 3. How do bottom-up initiatives (seek to) influence federal-state language policies concerning heritage language education?

RQ 4. What are the language beliefs underlying the language management strategies by bottom-up initiatives?

Overall, the study aims to advance the understanding of community perspectives on language policy and to explore the intersection of community resilience and sociolinguistics. It also aspires to serve as a resource for those involved in shaping inclusive and responsive language policies.

1.5 Scope of the Study and Assumptions

To address the research questions, the study employs ethnographic methods, including semi-structured interviews with key informants and participant observation. The dataset is primarily qualitative and is supplemented by brief descriptive surveys administered to teachers and parents. Data collection began in January 2020, intensified in early 2021, and concluded in March 2023. Materials include policy documents from local and national authorities, interviews and meetings with board members of the Initiatives, educators, and parents, and observations of classes and events involving teachers, students, and families.

The empirical focus is three Initiatives that offer Polish as a HL in Germany, located in two federal states. Because the Initiatives do not operate in isolation, the analysis also considers the broader policy environment in the European Union and in Germany, as well as approaches of Polish authorities to language maintenance across the Polish diaspora. The study centres on the Polish community and its perspective; it does not examine experiences of other communities or initiatives in Germany or elsewhere in Europe. While the literature indicates areas of overlap, the findings reported here pertain to a specific community in a specific context. The recommendations and the proposed model are intended to be transferable, but transfer will require adaptation to local conditions rather than a one-to-one application.

The analysis proceeds on several working assumptions. First, that participants’ accounts of practice, triangulated across interviews, observation, and documents, provide a sufficiently reliable basis for

interpreting language management. Second, that the Initiatives' stated aims and reported practices are broadly aligned with what is enacted in classrooms and organisational routines. Third, policy texts and guidelines, although incomplete, reflect the institutional logics shaping heritage-language provision. Where the evidence points otherwise, these assumptions are reconsidered in later chapters.

1.6 Expected Contributions

The findings are relevant to language educators, activists, policymakers, and academic audiences. The study contributes to sociolinguistics, especially LMF and language policy, and to interdisciplinary work on migration, social cohesion, and community resilience.

Theoretically, the work reframes Stage 1 of the LMF as expectation-based: the trigger is a mismatch of expectations among stakeholders, which better models bottom-up settings and helps anticipate where friction or change is likely. It also integrates adaptive and transformative pathways from community resilience to distinguish adjustment within existing frames from frame-shifting change. Within this model, language beliefs function as levers that channel movement along these pathways. Practically, the study offers ready-to-use steps that initiatives can apply to diagnose mismatches and select responses, along with low-burden tools that improve feedback loops among organisers, educators, parents, and students without adding administrative load.

In sum, the contributions operate in complementary ways. For academia, the expectation-based extension of LMF formalises a community-centred perspective and links beliefs to mechanisms. For practitioners, it becomes a tool to surface who expects what and why. Likewise, the adaptive and transformative lens bridges resilience thinking with language management for scholars, and for practitioners, this lens serves as a decision aid for judging when to pursue transformative change and when to make feasible adjustments.

1.7 Positionality Statement

Positionality played an important role in shaping both access to participants and the dynamics of data collection. As a Polish woman who migrated to Germany, worked as a Polish language teacher, and volunteered with the bottom-up Initiative Krasnale in Frankfurt during the pandemic, I was often regarded as an insider. This facilitated contact and access to the organisations. Yet, also introduced challenges, such as participants assuming shared knowledge and experiences, which at times required

me to request clarification. My background provided valuable insights into the functioning of such Initiatives, their constraints, and the diversity of perspectives on HL provision. The pandemic further influenced my role and opportunities, disrupting some observation plans while creating new possibilities for studying online classes. These experiences informed both the methodological choices and my interpretation of the data.

1.8 Roadmap

This dissertation unfolds over seven chapters. Chapter 2 lays the conceptual foundations, introducing the key notions of heritage languages and communities of practice. Then, it develops the theoretical framework, bringing the LMF into dialogue with the concept of community resilience. Chapter 3 details the research design, outlining the data collection process and the analytical approach shaped by these frameworks. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the core analysis: Chapter 4 examines language management at the institutional level, Chapter 5 focuses on the community sphere and collaboration with families, and Chapter 6 moves into the classroom, exploring educational practices and broader pedagogical context. The final chapter brings these strands together, introducing the proposed model for community-driven language management, along with recommendations and lessons learned from the study.

2. Analytical Framework

The LMF serves as the primary analytical tool in this study, as it effectively identifies processes and the strategies employed by the Initiatives to regulate language use and respond to expectations across different management levels and among various actors. I complement LMF with perspectives on overt and covert language policy to surface rules, routines, and tacit norms. A key analytical focus is on the Language Management Process, particularly the identification of mismatched expectations among actors and their corresponding responses. These mismatches not only highlight differing expectations but also reveal the underlying language beliefs held by stakeholders, which shapes the ways languages are managed and how their expectations are formed.

The Initiatives' responses to stakeholder expectations can be either adaptive or transformative. In other words, they may aim to adjust to existing language management and beliefs or seek to change them. In this study, the Language Management Process is examined as a way of recognising and managing expectations related to languages through these adaptive and transformative capacities. This framework provides insight into the emergence of community-based, flexible, and often informal language management. Such management develops through the interaction with various stakeholders, recognition of their expectations and beliefs that shape them, as well as responding to those expectations. By applying the LMF in combination with the concepts related to community resilience, namely adaptive and transformative capacities, the study captures the multifaceted nature of bottom-up language management in multilingual settings.

Section 2.1 defines core terms: heritage languages and communities of practice. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 situate LMF within language-policy scholarship and discuss Language Management Process. Sections 2.4–2.6 map the LMF onto the classroom, community and institutional domains, and discuss superdiversity and transnationalism in the context of the initiatives. Section 2.7 presents how the language beliefs and ideologies are analysed and Section 2.8 develops the policy and resilience components. Together, these elements provide the analytical framework that guides the empirical chapters.

2.1. Definitions at Glance

In this dissertation the two concepts are of particular importance, HL and community. HLs are operationalised from the perspective of their speakers with a broad approach that counts as HL speakers those who has a strong family or community connection to their HL – in this study – Polish,

who has any level of competence in Polish, including cases where the link is maintained primarily through formal instruction (see full discussion in 2.1.1).

While in sociolinguistics the term *community* is usually used in relation to speech community, in this study, the community aspect is ascribed more to the societal and practical aspects, which allows to bridge sociolinguistics theories with community resilience framework. Thus, the community is used here in the sense of *community of practice*, that is a group of people with shared goals and mobilise in order to achieve them (see full discussion in 2.1.2).

2.1.1 Immigrants and Their Heritage Languages

The field of language and immigration studies offers numerous terms to describe the languages spoken by immigrants, including “community languages”, “languages of origin”, “immigrant languages” and “home languages” (Laakso, Sarhimaa, Spiliopoulou Åkermark & Toivanen, 2016, p. 13). Among these, this study employs the term HL due to its inclusive nature, capturing a wide spectrum of linguistic contexts, from minority and colonial languages to those brought by immigrants (Seals & Shah, 2018, p. 2). Yet, it is crucial to acknowledge the distinct characteristics these various language groups possess.

For example, autochthonous minority languages, such as Sorbian in Germany or Kashubian in Poland, are rooted in specific territories and have historical presence that sometimes grants them protection under frameworks such as the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages. Nevertheless, research indicates that such protective measures are not always effectively enforced (Laakso et al., 2016). In contrast, immigrant languages rarely benefit from protective policies within their host societies (Yağmur & Extra, 2011), often relying instead on institutional support from their countries of origin, including cultural centres, consulates and embassies. Despite their differences, autochthonous and immigrant languages share a common characteristic: both occupy marginalised positions compared to society's dominant language(s), experiencing disadvantages rooted in power imbalances. These disadvantages manifest visibly through societal attitudes and institutional neglect (Yağmur & Extra, 2011, p. 1188).

As expected, the marginal status of HLs has a substantial impact on the language proficiency of HL speakers (Montrul, 2016, p. 120) as well as on the decisions of families to transmit the language to subsequent generations (Pułaczewska, 2017, p. 166). A common characteristic of HL speakers is that they belong to the second or even third generation of immigrants who have been raised within the

host society (Brehmer & Mehlhorn, 2018, p. 19). As the following quotes show, HLs are primarily acquired within the domestic and familial context, specifically within the private home setting. Jason Rothman (2009, p. 156) defines HLs precisely in these terms, noting they are “spoken at home or otherwise readily available to young children”, and, significantly, are distinct from the society's dominant language. Similarly, Guadelupe Valdes (2000, p. 375) highlights the bilingual nature of HL speakers, describing them as individuals “raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken”, who either speak or understand their HL and are bilingual to some extent in both languages.

Guadelupe Valdes's widely-used definition of HL speakers posits that they are multilingual to some extent, proficient in both the dominant language of the society and a language used at home (Valdes, 2000). However, as Silvina Montrul has noted, HL speakers typically exhibit greater proficiency in the majority language(s) of the society and their proficiency can range from minimal and receptive ability to fluency that is native-like (Montrul, 2016, p.18). Maria Polinsky and Olga Kagan (2007, p. 369) propose a broader definition that emphasises strong cultural connections and family relevance, rather than solely language proficiency. In this study, the majority of HL speakers belong to the second generation and have some language proficiencies in their HL with a couple of participants who acquired language rather through formal instruction to maintain the connection to Poland. To include the latter group too, this study applies the term HL speaker in the broad sense.

HL speakers acquire their languages under a variety of conditions, leading to significant variations in language proficiency. Their language skills are often compared to monolingual speakers in their parents' countries of origin (Montrul, 2016). Against the background of so-called “native speakers”, the language skills of HL speakers are often described as weaker (Seretny & Lipińska, 2016, p. 183). Such comparisons are rooted in the monolingual paradigm, which presumes that the majority of people use only one language and defines “native speakers” based on language proficiency and acquisition history (Cheng et al., 2021). While HL speakers share some characteristics with “native speakers”, such as having acquired the language at an early age (Montrul, 2016, p. 18), this comparison often emphasises the language deficiencies of HL speakers. Such a framing discourages the maintenance and transmission of the HL, as it implies that proficiency will not be comparable to that of speakers in their families' countries of origin. What is crucial for this study, such a perspective neglects the efforts made by speakers and their families to maintain their HL.

Ultimately, language proficiency depends not only on individual and familial factors, but also on societal access to language resources and overt language policies. Such policies, as it will be discussed

further, however, often neglect HLs, for this reason immigrant communities take responsibility for HL maintenance.

2.1.2 Heritage Languages and Communities of Practice

This study treats the concept of community as a key to examine bottom-up, grassroots organisations established by immigrants and their families. The concept is frequently invoked in discussions of multilingualism and HL development. This subsection first reviews the notion of community as used in sociolinguistics and second – examines examples of HL-maintenance communities to identify the main characteristics of the bottom-up Initiatives.

In sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, the term “speech community” was frequently used when focusing on groups of speakers. Across the literature it has been defined in various ways, emphasising shared codes, patterns of interaction, norms, or language ideologies. (Bloomfield, 1933; Gumperz, 1968; Hymes, 1974; Fishman, 1971; Labov, 1972; Morgan, 2014). Following more recent usage, I adopt terms that better capture transnational settings, namely, community of practice (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; García, Zakharia, & Otcu, 2013).

In the context in which the bottom-up Initiatives and the community built around them operate, the term *community of practice* seems to be more suitable. According to Miriam Meyerhoff and Anna Strycharz (2013), a community of practice is defined as a group of persons who come together to engage in a common activity or pursuit. Additionally, the authors propose three distinctive features of a community of practice. First, in order for a community of practice to be effective, the members must actively participate and engage with each other through their shared practices. The second requirement is that the members have a shared goal or purpose that they have negotiated and agreed upon. The last characteristic is members’ shared communicative repertoire which is developed and accumulated through ongoing negotiations within the community (Meyerhoff & Strycharz, 2013, p. 430).

All of these features are inherent to the bottom-up Initiatives. First, families, board members and teachers are mutually engaged in preparing the classes. Second, the main shared objective is to provide a chance for the use of Polish with a focus on adaptability in response to changing circumstances. For example, during the pandemic, courses in Initiatives went online. Third, community members have a shared repertoire of communicative resources that are utilised as necessary to meet the demands of the situation. For instance, teachers primarily use Polish during classes, but they are

able to adjust to the language needs of their students and switch to German even when their knowledge is limited.

In conclusion, the bottom-up Initiatives and the communities built around them can be best described as communities of practice. These communities are characterised by active participation, shared purposes, and a shared linguistic repertoire developed through ongoing negotiations. These characteristics are evident in the efforts of families, board members, and teachers to provide opportunities for the use of Polish, with a focus on adaptability in response to changing circumstances. Through these efforts, the Initiatives strive to foster a sense of community and belonging among parents with a shared interest in teaching Polish to their children. The Initiatives' activities also situate them in a network of language-political actors, such as education authorities, families, and teachers. Relations between these stakeholders as well as language practices within the community, especially during the classes, can be described through the framework of Language Management (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015) and Language Policy (Spolsky, 2009). At the same time, the communities of practice and their potential to adjust or influence the language-political landscape on macro, meso and micro levels can be explored through the lenses of resilience studies. The next section situates the concepts of HL and community within the LMF and develops the analysis with insights from language policy and resilience research.

2.2 Language Management and Language Policy

The efforts made by communities of practice to influence the language situation will be examined utilising tools offered by two frameworks rooted in Language Planning and Policy studies that emerged in the 1960s (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012). These frameworks include the Language Policy and LMF, which, over the years, have been extensively discussed and re-conceptualized by numerous researchers in the field of sociolinguistics. In addition to these two frameworks that are commonly used in sociolinguistics study, I incorporate the concept used in social-ecological system research, namely, the notion of resilience and community resilience (Folke et al., 2010) and adapt it to the sociolinguistic framework.

Both the Language Policy and LMF operationalise the concept of *language management* in a very similar manner. LMF distinguishes between two key processes in language use: (1) the actual production and reception of discourse, encompassing speaking, writing, listening, and reading, and (2) the human activities aimed at facilitating discourse production and reception, which are considered as language management (Nekvapil, 2006, p. 95). In Bernard Spolsky's approach, language

management is defined as an endeavour to influence the language practices and beliefs of other speakers, constituting one of the components of Language Policy, with the other two components being language practices (i.e., how speakers utilise their language resources) and beliefs towards language(s) (Spolsky, 2004, p. 214). While LMF definition is broader, it is evident that its second component (activities aimed at discourses) aligns with Spolsky's definition. Nonetheless, there are differences in terms of the categorisation of management types and the tools employed to describe them.

LMF was introduced as an innovative approach towards language planning, that reconceptualised the nature of the language processes as strategies rather than static "plans" (Spolsky, 2012, p. 4). The framework explores language management as a dynamic process, considering its communicative and socio-cultural implications, including socio-economic factors (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012). LMF distinguishes simple and organised language management. The former relies on individual language users and occurs in real-time communication, while the latter requires a more complicated framework where issues connected to language(s) are discussed (Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003, p. 185). An example of simple language management could be observed in managing interactions within a HL classroom, such as deciding whether or not to paraphrase students' answers using the heritage language or its standard variant. Organised language management manifests itself through both overt and covert means, including official regulations pertaining to language and explicit decisions made by speakers concerning language(s), such as parents choosing to enrol their children in HL classes. Simple and organised types of language management was also adapted by Bernard Spolsky in his book, where the author develops the concept further (Spolsky, 2009). Simple language management relies on individual speakers and involves accommodation to the interaction in order to provide communicative effectiveness, such as for example correcting themselves, repeating or switching to another language (Spolsky, 2009, p. 249). Organised language management goes beyond individuals and their interactions and functions on micro, meso and macro levels. Although the term 'macro', 'meso' and 'micro' may vary in their definitions across contexts usually to distinguish officiality and complexity of a network, there is an agreement that languages can be managed in the wide spectrum of situation ranging from individuals through communities to supranational entities (Spolsky, 2009, p. 13). Both simple and organised language managements are responsive to the broader social context within which communication takes place.

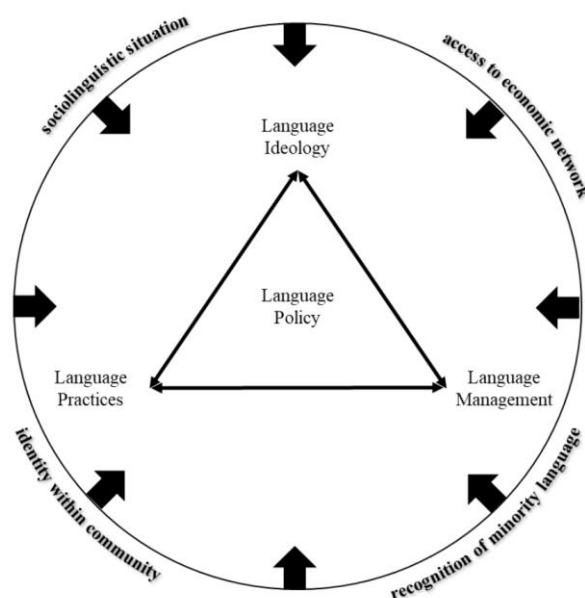
Tamah Sherman (2016) suggests viewing the levels of language management not as complementary but rather as a continuum that captures the complexity of language usage. For instance, what might

initially appear as simple language management can be embedded within a broader socio-economic context. Sherman illustrates this with the example of an immigrant who repairs their utterance after using a non-standard variant. While this self-correction may aim to ensure comprehension, it can also stem from a desire to avoid discrimination, which would be considered as an action influenced by larger social and economic forces (Sherman, 2016, pp. 194-195). Similarly, Lisa Fairbrother and Goro Kimura (2020, pp. 17-18) advocate for understanding the micro- and macro-levels of language management as part of a continuum. They argue that instead of rigidly classifying “behavior toward language” as either macro or micro, it is more accurate to describe it along a spectrum of being “more macro-focused” or “more micro-focused”. Adopting a continuum-based perspective is particularly relevant for this analysis, as language management strategies affect diverse stakeholders and actors in various domains – from classroom interaction to official policies on a national level. These strategies aim to influence both community and family language practices while also shaping policies at the municipal and federal levels. Thus, although the distinction between simple and organised language management is acknowledged in the study of bottom-up Initiatives, it is not used here as an analytical tool. Instead, the study emphasises a continuum across levels, noting that what appears to be a simple classroom interaction may be shaped by organised management and macro-level decisions.

Language management is intricately intertwined with the local and global context. Spolsky's Language Policy Model also addresses four societal-based forces that influence language policy decisions (Spolsky, 2004, pp. 219-221). The first one, sociolinguistic situation, refers to the presence of multiple languages, diversity of their speakers, and the significance of each language within and beyond the studied community. In the context of migration, languages spoken by immigrants can be valued within immigrant communities, however in formal education, they are often overlooked. The second condition relates to identities within communities, whereby the symbolic value attached to a language can influence communities' attempts to impact language management decisions. This is exemplified by the Initiatives ascribing particular values to Polish, such as identity or emotions, which lead them to actively work on recognising the language in education or persuading families to enrol children in classes. The third condition is connected to transformations in a globalised world, where proficiency in certain languages, such as English, grants learners access to economically advantageous networks and opportunities. In terms of language policy, such opportunities influence, for example, what languages are given preference in formal education. Lastly, the fourth condition involves an increased recognition of minority languages and the rights of their speakers to maintain them. These four conditions are interrelated, with global language usage impacting local sociolinguistic situations, and communities' identities and attitudes towards languages being connected to the growing recognition

of minority languages. Figure 1 introduced by Frederik Bissinger, in his work on immigrant-based language maintenance, summarised the Language Policy Model including all four conditions (Bissinger, 2021, p. 36).

Figure 1 *Summarised Representation of Language Policy Model Accompanied by Four Conditions*



Note. Adapted from F. Bissinger (2021), *Family Language Policies and Immigrant Language Maintenance: Lithuanian in Sweden* (Doctoral dissertation, Stockholm University), DiVA. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1585385>

2.3 Why the Language Management Framework Matters for the Bottom-Up Initiatives?

This section turns to the rationale for the application of LMF and Language Policy and the manner in which they will be integrated. While the LMF serves as the foundation for my analysis, the significant body of research utilising Spolsky's Language Policy Model cannot be overlooked, particularly the contributions of Elana Shohamy on language policies and hidden agendas (2006).

The Initiatives operate within a space that intersects formal and informal language policy, where formal policy is the one officially recognised by authorities. Shohamy conceptualises this distinction in terms of overt and covert language policies. According to the author, overt language policy consists of explicit, formalised, de jure, codified, and manifest regulations (Shohamy, 2006, p. 50). In contrast, covert language policy encompasses implicit, informal, unstated, de facto, grassroots, and latent practices (Shohamy, 2006, p. 50). Shohamy argues that a comprehensive understanding of language

policy should extend beyond official declarations to account for covert and implicit mechanisms that significantly shape language practices and beliefs.

Shohamy's notion of *hidden agendas*, as referenced in the title of her book, refers to these covert mechanisms, which often appear neutral but in reality reflect underlying discourses and beliefs about language. These mechanisms, including among others language tests and the presence of languages in public spaces, implicitly establish norms regarding language use and legitimacy (Shohamy, 2006, p. 58). Such mechanisms contribute to defining what is perceived as a norm or standard and expected within a given language policy landscape, highlighting how certain languages gain recognition while others remain marginalised. For instance, the selection of foreign languages taught in schools and the allocation of responsibility for HL maintenance to the immigrant communities are deeply embedded in these covert policy mechanisms.

The concept of *norm* is particularly relevant here, as it is a central construct in the LMF, specifically within the Language Management Process. By incorporating both LMF and Spolsky's Language Policy Model, this study aims to provide a nuanced analysis of the interplay between overt and covert language policies, shedding light on the implicit forces shaping the language strategies of community-based initiatives.

The Language Management Process (henceforth, LMP) was initially developed to capture simple management processes occurring during interactions. However, it has since been adapted to encompass more structured, organised language management as well. The process primarily consists of four stages: (1) noticing language problems or language phenomena, where speakers identify issues related to language; (2) evaluation, in which these issues are assessed as positive or negative; (3) adjustment design, which involves planning modifications to language practices or, on a larger scale, language regulations; and (4) implementation of the proposed adjustments (Nekvapil, 2012, p. 12). This study focuses particularly on the first stage of the process. Originally referred to as "deviation from the norm", this stage conceptualizes the norm as a standard of language usage, whether officially prescribed or socially perceived. Kimura, however, reframes this notion in terms of expectations rather than norms (2014). Building on this perspective, I propose referring to this stage as a "mismatch of expectations regarding language(s)". It is crucial to further examine these expectations, namely, what they entail, how they are constructed, and, to refer to the original terminology of the LMP, what stakeholders consider as a norm in language management. In other words, this analysis seeks to explore the mechanisms that shape perceptions of what is considered as expected and normative, the

hidden agendas embedded within these mechanisms, and the underlying beliefs about language that influence these expectations.

Throughout this analysis, I will refer to expectations rather than norms, as multiple stakeholders participate in language management, and their expectations are not always uniformly established. In some cases, language management is highly situational. The mismatch of expectations among stakeholders ultimately reveals how persons, institutions, and communities perceive what is a norm when it comes to language. In other words, different stakeholders may have varying interpretations of what should be considered normative regarding language policies. For example, it is widely accepted that certain languages should be formally taught as foreign languages, while others, despite being commonly spoken within society, remain outside the official policy framework. This dichotomy reflects hidden ideological priorities that determine which languages are granted legitimacy within institutional settings.

As for the other stages in the LMP – evaluation, design, and implementation – they serve mainly as analytic scaffolding to reconstruct what happened and how decisions were made. They appear throughout the analysis, but receive less emphasis than the first stage, noticing the mismatch. The emphasis on noticing is twofold. First, it initiates the LMP and prompts reflection on the language situation and on stakeholders' expectations. Second, in the context of the Initiatives, the configuration of stakeholders often predetermines who participates and, in turn, shapes design and implementation. In some cases the process stops at noticing and evaluation, with no subsequent strategy to address the issues identified. For these reasons, while evaluation, design, and implementation help trace how particular strategies emerged, they are not the primary focus here. Instead, the analysis foregrounds the triggers, Stage 1 recognition of mismatches, and the strategies that follow, which often combines evaluation, design, and implementation in response.

Conflicting expectations across different levels of language policy reflect the hidden agendas. At the macro and meso level, as explored in Chapter 4, there is a clear divergence between how state institutions and Polish-speaking communities perceive HL education. State institutions often frame HL education as a private matter for immigrant communities rather than a public responsibility. In contrast, Polish-speaking communities advocate for greater formal recognition, aligning with bilateral agreements on Polish and German language rights. Within these communities, further clashes of expectation emerge between different actors, such as parents and educators. As discussed in Chapter 5, parents often lack clearly defined goals for their children's HL education. Some view enrolment in

classes as sufficient, without maintaining Polish language use at home. Educators, on the other hand, express frustration over the limited parental involvement, which hinders their ability to achieve sustained language learning outcomes. The mismatch of expectations necessitates strategies to address both parental concerns and mitigate potential problems arising from this mismatch. Even at the micro level of classroom interactions, tacit expectations shape language management practices, as analysed in Chapter 6. For example, an implicit expectation exists that classes will mirror the structure of first-language instruction, presuming a consistent level of Polish proficiency among students. However, as previously discussed, family language practices vary widely, rendering these assumptions problematic. Despite this, such expectations often remain unaddressed and unchallenged.

As the Initiatives' activities involve multiple stakeholders, the mismatch of expectations – between Initiatives, parents, schools, and state institutions – frequently serves as a driving force behind their actions. However, these expectations also reveal hidden discourses and agendas, or, in other words, underlying beliefs about language. By employing the LMF alongside elements from Language Policy research, this study seeks to examine the processes through which the Initiatives engage with multiple stakeholders and to uncover the underlying beliefs related to language. Rather than seeking ready-made solutions, this study is particularly interested in the strategies employed by the Initiatives. Accordingly, it explores what those stakeholders identify as language issues, how they evaluate these issues, and what methods they propose for resolution while also considering whether such solutions are feasible. It is crucial to acknowledge that the final phase, implementation, may be influenced by power dynamics, depending on the scale of the problem. For instance, speakers may propose suitable adjustments but lack the resources required for implementation.

The analysis using the LMF tool will also reveal what is perceived as normal and neutral within the current language-political situation. A closer examination brings broader societal issues and inequalities to the forefront. While working toward language change and enhancing the status of a language may not lead to a final resolution, communities continue to negotiate policies (de Korne, 2021, p. 211). This is particularly relevant to bottom-up Initiatives, where strategies aim to improve the position of the Polish language, yet varying expectations regarding outcomes persist, often due to limited resources or differing beliefs about language. Instead of pursuing fixed and definitive solutions, these Initiatives must adapt to the expectations of various stakeholders, particularly parents, while also operating within constraints imposed by policymakers.

The LMF and Language Policy Model offer tools to untangle the complex network of language-political actors and the expectations among which the bottom-up Initiatives have to operate and help respond to the research questions introduced in Section 1.4. Each research question presented in this study corresponds to a specific sociolinguistic domain, in line with Joshua Fishman's concept of domains as social spaces defined by participants and location (Fishman, 1972, p. 441). RQ1 delves into the education domain, where language management involves teachers' preparation and organisation of classes, as well as interactions between teachers and students. RQ2 addresses the family domain, exploring the relationships between the Initiatives and families. This includes examining the expectations of both educators and parents concerning language attitudes and practices within the family context. RQ3 takes on the macro level and focuses on the domain of language activism, where bottom-up initiatives negotiate with authorities and act as mediators between the community and policymakers. Lastly, RQ4 seeks to uncover the discourses and beliefs that underpin language management within each respective domain. Moving forward, the next sections provide a more detailed exploration of the theoretical approaches applied to each research question.

2.4 Language Education Policies: Top-Down and Bottom-Up

The activities of the bottom-up Initiatives are primarily centered around HL education, which can be classified as informal, due to the fact that official education policies do not directly apply to the Initiatives' operations. Nevertheless, these Initiatives function within a framework shaped by formal policies and, within the classroom setting, both students and teachers actively engage in language management, developing strategies to navigate linguistic challenges. Throughout this study, I will examine how education policies are shaped in practice. Therefore, before proceeding, it is necessary to explore the conceptualisation of language management within educational contexts. While much of the existing literature relies on Spolsky's definition of language policy, this analysis will also incorporate the translanguaging framework as a means of understanding how languages are managed in classroom interactions.

Over the past few decades, researchers have put forward numerous terms and approaches related to language education policies that usually concentrate on the official education system of a state as well as top-down direction of language regulations. In contrast, the bottom-up initiatives which do not form a part of the official educational system but rather emerge in response to its perceived shortcomings, have received relatively less attention in these conceptualised education language policies. However, the official state-level regulations and practices within public schools exert an influence on the functioning of bottom-up initiatives. For this reason it is important to examine the

models that aim to understand the goals of state-level decision-makers and how these goals are interpreted and put into action by lower-level actors, such as teachers.

Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf (2005) introduced a model widely recognised as language-in-education policy that is operationalised through seven dimensions. Firstly, access policy refers to the accessibility of languages offered by education authorities. Secondly, personnel policy is related to teachers' training. Thirdly, curriculum policy addresses the goal of the teaching. Fourthly, methodology and materials policy deals with the instructional methods and materials used. Fifthly, resourcing policy addresses the financial side of education. Sixthly, community policy is concerned with the involvement of stakeholders in the policy-making process. Finally, evaluation policies encompass the assessment of language skills as well as measurement of an language-in-education overall impact (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005, p. 1014). While the model is influential and highlights areas worthy of further research, the authors view language-in-education policy as a top-down approach, dictated by policy makers and subsequently reinforced in schools.

Already mentioned Elana Shohamy's perspective on language education policies closely aligns with the ideas presented by Kaplan and Baldauf, with the recognition that covert policies may also arise as a consequence of overt, official ones. Shohamy views Language Education Policy as primarily operating in a top-down manner, wherein language regulations are imposed by state-level authorities and subsequently propagated by lower-level actors such as schools and teachers, thereby reinforcing certain ideologies (Shohamy, 2006, p. 76). The reinforcement of these policies involves various mechanisms, including the interpretation and implementation of regulations by teachers, as well as the design and application of curricula, materials, and language tests, all of which can be considered extensions of the overt language policies. As teachers apply these tools, they contribute to the creation of de facto, covert language policies.

Language Education Policy is characterised by a multifaceted network of participants, ranging from state-level policymakers and authorities responsible for language testing and curriculum development to teachers, students, and their families (Spolsky, 2017, p. 10). In this context, Spolsky employs the term "educational language management" in alignment with Neustupny's concept, highlighting the existence of both organised management that involves more complex networks and simple management performed by educators and learners. This broad scope facilitates an analysis of the interplay among diverse actors involved in language management across various levels, including within classrooms, schools, and at the state-level. However, the intricate relationships among these

actors pose challenges for both top-down and bottom-up approaches in comprehending the beliefs and practices underpinning language education (Spolsky, 2017).

The limitations of both top-down and bottom-up approaches have been acknowledged by Ofelia García and Kate Menken. Consequently, they opt to apply the term “language education policies” in its plural form, as it better captures the dynamic nature of language management within an educational context. The authors primarily focus on covert language policies, as defined by Shohamy, and are particularly interested in exploring the involvement of educators, students, and communities in the LMP (Menken & García, 2017, p. 216). Additionally, they highlight the lack of research related to the involvement of communities of practice in negotiating and interpreting macro-level language policies (Menken & García, 2017, p. 219).

The bottom-up Initiatives, originating from communities of practice and supported directly by teachers and families, hold a distinctive position within the language-educational landscape, making them a relevant subject of study concerning the impact of communities of practice on language education policies. Simultaneously, the Polish bottom-up Initiatives operate on a transnational level, because although they are located in Germany, they are also influenced by the educational systems of both countries, as they interact with German institutions, such as school authorities, and Polish officials, such as consulates. For this reason, the dimensions mentioned by Baldauf and Kaplan, along with the mechanisms presented by Shohamy, are also applicable to the activities of bottom-up initiatives as one being the subject of this dissertation, and are extensively debated. These mechanisms and dimensions, however, assume distinct roles. For instance, curricula are rather an informal framework tailored to specific courses and adjusted based on students' needs, without oversight from a controlling body. Language tests, on the other hand, are beyond the direct power of the bottom-up Initiatives, yet these communities mediate with local school authorities the availability of language tests.

The communities' perspective of the traditional dimensions or mechanisms of language education policies highlights nuances of language learning and language maintenance in the immigrant communities. It also facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of a dynamic character of social change related to the perception of language education within the communities and in the broader society. Given that community-based bottom-up initiatives are not constrained by official regulations, they are more effective in adjusting to the communities' needs. Consequently, language management in such initiatives becomes more dynamic and responsive to the social context. In light of this, the

present study adopts the translanguaging perspective to examine language education policies, especially when it comes to classroom context

2.5 Translanguaging Perspective on Language Educational Policies

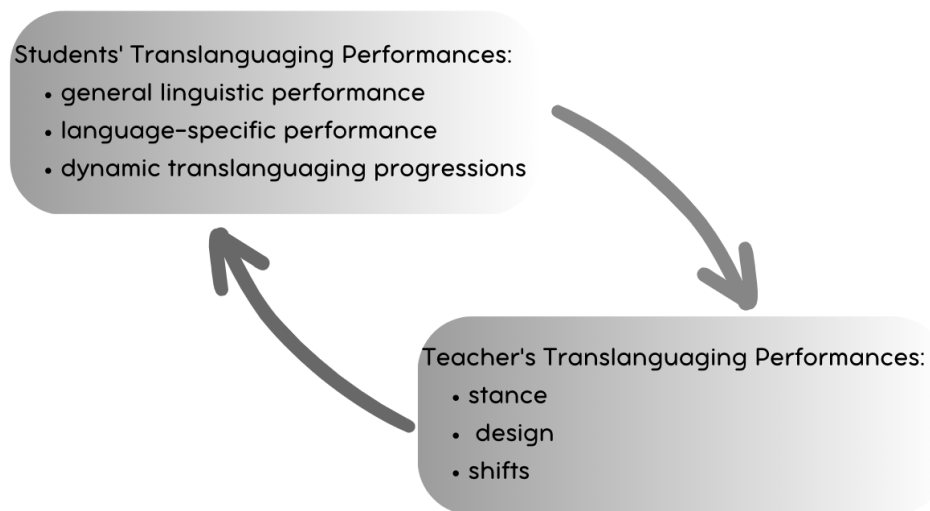
Translanguaging education policies, as pointed out by Ofelia García and Kate Menken, prioritise moving beyond the maintenance or revitalisation of languages as rigid and unchanging systems. Instead, they focus on a development of speakers' agency, allowing them to engage in functional interactions utilising their language repertoires. These policies are community- and speaker-centric, aiming to sustain the diverse language practices within these communities (Menken & García, 2017, p. 219). By highlighting students' agency in the classroom setting, the policies contribute meaningfully to the communities of practice centred around the Initiatives, as they emphasise learners' perspectives.

As Päivi Juvonen and Marie Källkvist highlight, the phenomena described through translanguaging lenses are referred to by various terms, including "multilingual teaching strategies" or "heteroglossic pedagogies" (Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021). Translanguaging draws from multiple approaches that focus on plurilingualism in education and advocate for social justice. It challenges the conventional view of languages as separate entities and emphasises the fluid nature of multilingual practices of speakers, thus, the speaker and their language repertoires take precedence over a perspective imposed by monoglossic or standard language ideologies of a state (García et al. 2017, p. 47).

The term "translanguaging" is broadly used in scholarship to describe various phenomena, ranging from language learning approaches to classroom communication, encompassing communicative practices (García & Menken, 2010). For instance, Joana Duarte employs it as a verb, "translanguage", to illustrate how students fluidly switch between their language resources (Duarte, 2019). On one hand the broadness of that term is convenient because it encompasses several notions: from ideological underpinning to usage of languages. On the other hand, as pointed out by Jim Cummins, it poses challenges in operationalising it since translanguaging can serve both as a theoretical framework and an approach to describe multilingual practices in educational settings (Cummins, 2021, p. 8). In this study, the *translanguaging* is employed to depict a management strategy within the educational context. Specifically, this strategy involves (i) interpersonal interactions among multilingual persons that leverage their diverse language repertoires without adhering to conventional language boundaries, and (ii) classroom interactions that integrate students' multilingual abilities alongside the official language of instruction (Cummins, 2021, p. 8).

Building on this understanding, the analysis of translanguageing in the classroom will draw on the framework developed by Ofelia García, Susanna I. Johnson, and Kate Seltzer (2017), which operationalises translanguageing further as a pedagogical approach. The framework revolves around students' flexible language abilities, resulting from the interaction between two key elements: students' translanguageing performance and the teacher's translanguage pedagogy, as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2 *The Translanguageing Classroom Framework.*



Note. Based on García, O., Ibarra Johnson, S., & Seltzer, K. (2017), *The translanguageing classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*, Caslon. Created by author in Canva.

Students' translanguageing performances consist of three aspects (i) general linguistic performance, which refers to how multilingual individuals utilise their language repertoire to showcase their knowledge and skills; (ii) language-specific performance describes the usage of features ascribed to a certain language, then (iii) dynamic translanguageing progressions, a tool for teacher to get a comprehensive view of students' overall linguistic and language-specific performances' (García et al., 2017, pp. 53-54.) Students' performance is closely linked to the teacher's translanguageing pedagogy, which can be defined through three elements: stance, design and shifts. Stance stands for teacher's attitudes and belief regarding inclusion of students' language repertoires in their pedagogical framework. Design involves curricula, lessons, instruction that include not only practices desired in formal school settings but also those of communities. Lastly, translanguageing shifts encompass the adaptive choices teachers make during instruction, including modifying lesson plans, language use,

and assessments, to empower and facilitate students' expression and participation (García et al., 2017, p. 55-56).

The translinguaging classroom framework was designed for a formal school setting, usually administered by a state (García & Lin, 2017). However, the features of the framework can be easily translated into the bottom-up Initiatives' realities. These Initiatives are the spaces where translinguaging occurs on various levels, as the analysis shows. Firstly, their very existence demonstrates a preference for certain types of multilingualism over others: multilingualism in the language taught at school is deemed more favourable than multilingualism in an immigrant language. As a result, immigrant communities must take language maintenance and development into their own hands, making these initiatives a practical expression of social justice. Secondly, within these classes, the natural co-occurrence of various languages and registers is common. Additionally, such initiatives complement and enrich the translinguaging landscape with community-based perspective and learning setting.

The significance of community involvement in translinguaging is extensively addressed in research. Embracing a community as a valuable source of knowledge forms an integral aspect of the translinguaging stance (García et al., 2017, p. 90). Bilingual community education, as thoroughly outlined by Ofelia García, Bahar Otcu, and Zeena Zaharia, revolves around bottom-up initiatives that promote HLs (García et al., 2013). However, it's important to note that community involvement alone does not automatically classify an initiative as one applying translinguaging. Thus, in bottom-up initiatives, translinguaging pedagogy plays a distinct role compared to state-subsidised official education. While existing research exemplifies planned translinguaging practices in the classroom, in bottom-up initiatives, translinguaging emerges spontaneously and implicitly as an inherent aspect of these classes. However, it is important to note that despite the suspension or challenge of power relations between languages, certain elements of teachers' practices may not align entirely with the principles of translinguaging, for example, adhering to standard language ideologies. Nevertheless, the community-based educational space, tailored to meet the specific needs and expectations of the communities, enhances the perspective of a translanguage education. By analysing practices within such institutions, a more comprehensive understanding of fluid multilingual practices can be developed, where power relations between minority and majority languages are suspended in the classroom.

Translanguaging pedagogy is underpinned by critical language awareness (CLA). Traditionally, language awareness encompasses not only explicit knowledge about language(s) but also a “conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, teaching, and use” (ALA, 2025). The critical aspect of language awareness involves recognising the societal, ideological, and economic relations between languages, policymakers, and language speakers (Beaudrie, 2023, para 2). García asserts that teachers must develop an awareness that embraces plurilingualism and acknowledges the significance of civic engagement, while also being cognisant of the histories of colonial and imperialist oppression that have shaped plurilingualism in society (Garcia, 2017, p. 268). In the context of HL education, Sara Beaudrie claims that CLA is pivotal due to the traditional devaluation of linguistic practices among HL speakers, particularly if they do not align with the standard version of a particular language (Beaudrie, 2023, para 2). CLA aims to dismantle power hierarchies by acknowledging the legitimacy of all language varieties and empowering students to critically engage with dominant language ideologies (Beaudrie & Wilson, 2021). Beaudrie argues that the CLA prioritises students’ linguistic varieties in HL instruction, aiming to foster the maintenance and growth of their language skills in their HL (Beaudrie, 2023, para 10). By placing students’ varieties at the forefront, the CLA enhances their confidence and empowers them to utilise their language effectively within their respective speech communities.

In certain facets of their operations, the bottom-up Initiatives incorporate the CLA, while in others, it is not applied. The very establishment of these initiatives is rooted in CLA, as they emerged in response to the power imbalance regarding languages, particularly the exclusion of certain languages from education. However, the implementation of CLA in classroom settings varies, as indicated by the analysis (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, both language awareness and CLA are employed when interacting with various stakeholders. For example, during workshops organised for parents, the bottom-up Initiatives actively disseminate information about bilingual upbringing and the significance of supporting their children’s languages. By engaging parents in discussions and providing them with essential knowledge, the Initiatives aim to foster a more nuanced understanding of the benefits of multilingualism and HL education. Moreover, language-aware communities are more effective in negotiating with local authorities, such as schools. The frameworks of analysis of the relation with other parties, such as parents and local education authorities, are in detail discussed in the following subsections.

2.6 Language Management Within the Community

The operations of the bottom-up Initiatives include interactions and mediation with other actors involved in language management. On a micro and meso- level, the initiatives work with communities

consisting of families, on a meso- and macro level they engage with schools, consulates and local authorities. Naturally, all stakeholders hold expectations concerning the functioning of HL education regarding, for instance, parental responsibilities in language transmission, the facilitation of HL education by local authorities, schools, and consulates, and the overall objectives of HL teaching. These expectations significantly influence the approaches adopted by bottom-up initiatives and the dynamics of classroom and language teaching. Moreover, the influence is reciprocal, as the bottom-up Initiatives also impact language practices within families and contribute to shaping the local language-political landscape. Research Questions 2 and 3 (RQ2 and RQ3) aim to deconstruct the expectations of each concerned party. RQ2 examines the strategies employed by the bottom-up Initiatives to influence language management within Polish-speaking families, viewed through the lens of family language policies, thus revealing the role of families in community-based language management. RQ3, in turn, can be explored through the lens of language activism. It investigates the strategies implemented by the Initiatives to interact and mediate with authorities at the meso- and macro-levels. This exploration sheds light on how these Initiatives engage with and impact local authorities, schools, and consulates in pursuit of their objectives.

2.6.1 Not So Private: Family Language Policy and the Bottom-Up Initiatives

Traditionally, the family has been considered a private domain, leading the field of Family Language Policy (FLP) to primarily focus on policies within families and language input amounts (Purkarthofer et al., 2022, p. 564; King & Fogle, 2017). However, the advancements in the field emphasise that language policies do not occur in isolation, prompting a growing emphasis on understanding how caregivers perceive and interpret language-related efforts, and how these interpretations impact language practices within families. Furthermore, these nuanced understandings also influence family dynamics and shape perceptions of what constitutes a “good” parent, a “good” child, and a “good” family within the language maintenance and development context (King & Fogle, 2017, p. 324). In other words, FLP takes into account the expectations placed on families and the language choices made by family members. Moreover, FLP and families’ expectations are shaped by public discourses and socio-cultural norms influenced by societal language ideologies. Language policies within families are not isolated. They interact with the socio-political, historical, and economic contexts in which families exist (Purkarthofer et al., 2022, p. 564). Thus, Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen widened the Language Policy model to make it suitable for the family context by incorporating macro-level perspectives, including sociolinguistic, sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical backgrounds (2014). These respectively represent the prestige assigned to a language, its link to heritage and identity, its practical utility, and national language policy. At the same time,

these macro-level factors interact with micro-level factors, such as household resources, parents' backgrounds, and the home environment (Curdtt-Christiansen, 2014, p. 37). Such a broadened perspective aligns with the viewpoint of Elizabeth Lanza and Rafael Lomeu Gomes, who propose that the family can be conceptualised as situated along the private-public continuum of language policies (Lanza & Lomeu Gomes, 2020, p. 165).

The entanglement of private and public also emerged in Martin Guardado's study of the discourses regarding HL among Hispanic families in Canada (Guardado, 2018). In his ethnographic research, the author identified several categories concerning families' decisions regarding maintenance and development of HL. Among them are the widely discussed instrumental aspects, which emphasise the practical benefits of multilingualism for children's future success and align with the concept of validation, where language skills are valued and recognised as useful. Additionally, the study highlights the recurring discourse of family cohesion, illustrating how heritage language proficiency strengthens family unity both within the household and in interactions with extended family members. Another significant finding in the author's research relates to diverse conceptual understandings and perspectives on how maintaining the HL contributes to linguistic minorities' sense of self, cultural tradition, ethnic identity, and feelings of obligation or guilt regarding language proficiency or loss. These perspectives and emotions play an important role as a rationale behind a family's decision to enrol children to the classes organised by the Initiatives.

The study conducted by Héctor Álvarez Mella, Charlotte Blattner, and Ana Gómez-Pavón Durán confirms the significance of family cohesion. Based on a survey of Spanish families residing in Germany, the most prominent reason for maintaining the HL was the desire to communicate with close family members and relatives (Álvarez Mella et al., 2023, p. 58). This confirms the family's crucial role as a primary site for socialising in the context of the HL. However, the authors highlight that internal strategies to uphold the HL, such as using the language in interactions or employing home schooling, may not always be feasible due to resource constraints faced by parents. Consequently, families seek external practices, such as engaging with HL-speaking communities or accessing education in the HL (Álvarez Mella et al., 2023, p. 49). In addressing both of these concerns, the bottom-up Initiatives' classes not only offer opportunities for contact with other HL speakers but also provide speakers with additional, often more diverse, input in the HL through education.

While in general, bottom-up initiatives offer numerous opportunities, such as increased language input and a sense of belonging (Guardado, 2018, p. 125), Frederik Bissinger's study on HL-related

practices and policies in Lithuanian-speaking families in Sweden highlights that despite families using external strategies for language preservation, the desired outcomes are not always fully utilised. Parents expect classes to increase input and relevance of the HL as well as provide students with some cultural knowledge, ultimately facilitating their children's connections with other Lithuanian speakers. However, it is observed that these connections often remain limited to the classroom setting, leading to restricted utilisation of the social network of Lithuanian speakers. This indicates that there is room for improvement in bridging the gap between HL education and real-life language use (Bissinger, 2021, p. 307).

Family language practices serve as the foundation for the Initiatives' teachers when developing instructional materials for HL classes. For instance, if families prioritise oral proficiency over written skills, teachers can tailor their materials accordingly to align with family preferences. Moreover, the relationship is reciprocal as the families are also influenced by the bottom-up initiatives, for example, through finding Polish-speaking networks. It is worth noticing that the bottom-up Initiatives depend on the interest of parents who perceive the extra Polish classes as a valuable opportunity for their children. Through workshops and meetings, the bottom-up Initiatives aim to educate parents about multilingualism, leading to increased Polish input and diversity in the language exposure for children attending the classes. Consequently, there exists a multifaceted relationship involving the expectations of the bottom-up Initiatives, teachers, and families. Raising awareness among families regarding multilingualism and language diversity can be considered as language activism, which is discussed in the next section.

2.6.2 Language Activism and Advocacy

Language activism and advocacy are often associated with endangered autochthonous and indigenous languages, focusing on documentation and revitalisation efforts (Combs & Penfield, 2012; Makoni & Criss, 2017). However, language activism, defined as “energetic action focused on language use in order to create, influence, and change existing language policies” (Combs & Penfield, 2012, p. 462), also extends to migratory contexts, where it plays a crucial role in bottom-up language management, as activists with strong ideological commitments strive to influence the status of specific languages. These activists, whether individuals or groups of people, often serve as intermediaries between their community and policymakers. Haley de Korne, in her analysis of indigenous communities promoting the Isthmus Zapotec language in Mexico, offers a more comprehensive definition of language activism. This broader perspective includes “strategic actions by insiders and outsiders, as well as stance-taking in relation to social issues” (de Korne, 2021, p. 11).

From the perspective of LMF and in terms of LMP, activism and advocacy can be seen as an adjustment design to the communities' unmet expectations regarding the language situation. De Korne proposed a more detailed framework categorising strategies for language activism, which can be classified into three fundamental approaches: representing, connecting, and creating. The representing strategy involves expressing ideas through discursive means, utilising language, symbols, or other forms of communication. The connecting strategy aims to establish links between individuals, communities, and spaces. Lastly, the creating strategy involves generating new concepts, ideas, and products. Then, these three fundamental strategies are directed towards goals that can be grouped into five categories. First, strategies may target language-related resources, such as texts, videos, or recordings, which serve as means for conveying language. Second, language activism may focus on events that create opportunities to bring people together. Third, there is an emphasis on spaces and structures, which refer to enduring social environments like schools or cultural centres. Fourth, the focus may be on individuals and identities, considering people's roles as speakers, learners, or educators. Finally, communication practices encompass all forms of reception and production, including visual and written means (de Korne, 2021, p. 19). De Korne's framework, initially designed for indigenous languages, can easily be adapted to the activities of immigrant-based bottom-up initiatives.

The bottom-up Initiatives serve as an intermediary between communities and policymakers, thus they represent communities and their languages. Additionally, these Initiatives foster connections among families who share the common goal of language maintenance. Moreover, they create spaces that facilitate the active use of the language. The Initiatives are actively involved in generating resources, such as tailored language exercises for multilingual students and organising events that promote community cohesion. They also provide a community with a space, where the language can be taught. Through classes, meetings, and workshops, the Initiatives play a role in shaping the identities of children as HL learners and seek to influence communicative practices within the community.

Further operationalisation of language activism proposed by de Korne involves scales revolving around location, timeframe, visibility and mobility, socio-historical orientation, diversity orientation, and participation (de Korne, 2021, p. 20). On the spectrum of locations, activism may occur locally, within a limited scope, or on an international scale, spanning broader geographical contexts. The timeframe of activism activities can vary from gradual and slow-paced to more immediate and rapid interventions. Visibility of activism initiatives may range from low-key, discreet efforts to highly visible, public campaigns. In socio-historical terms, activism can be forward-looking, focusing on future goals,

or retrospective, emphasising historical contexts. The diversity orientation of activism can lean towards embracing multiple dialects or adopt a more purist approach. Lastly, the participation scale encompasses activities that are either open and inclusive or controlled and exclusive in terms of engagement. Similar scales apply to the activities of the bottom-up Initiatives, which are local in their scope, engaging in a combination of long-term learning processes and more expedited one-time events like meetings and workshops. Their mobility within the broader language-political landscape tends to be limited. The bottom-up Initiatives demonstrate rather a forward-looking orientation, anticipating a future impact, which often means that they gradually adjust to the present situation while remaining attentive to the potential future changes and challenges. Their approach to language diversity is mostly adaptive and not strictly confined to one end of the syncretic-purist scale. Finally, activities are oriented towards a specific group of people, so they are rather controlled.

The view presented by de Korne is in agreement with Teresa L. McCarty's characteristic of community-based language planning, wherein communities take initiative in order to affect status, corpus and acquisition planning (McCarty, 2018, p. 23). Both immigrant-based and autochthonous community-based initiatives share the common goal of enhancing the status of their languages. Through language classes, they aim to impact corpus planning by shaping the language's structure and acquisition planning by fostering language learning opportunities. Language activism, as emphasised by Spolsky, plays a crucial role in language management. While there is a clear connection between language management and language activism, de Korne highlights a distinction between language policy and planning, which typically address language-related issues, and language activism, which focuses on meeting the present needs of a community. Minoritised communities face ongoing challenges, and the intersections of language, identity, and education require continuous negotiation across various social contexts, including policy documents, classroom interactions, and family strategies (de Korne, 2021, p. 211). Navigating the expectations of different stakeholders also requires a closer look at communities' transnational relations and the superdiverse contexts in which the Initiatives operate.

2.6.3 Transnationalism, Community and Superdiversity

The Initiatives do not work in a vacuum. Their language-policy room for manoeuvre is set locally by regional frameworks in Germany, yet their work on maintaining Polish also looks outward to parents' and educators' country of origin. This dual frame shapes their networks, connections to institutions and advocacy efforts. In a context of Germany, where migration is a structural feature of society, these migrant-based organisations for migrants help make urban multilingualism visible and exemplify superdiversity. Yet, the Initiatives' transnational ties to the parents' and educators' country of origin

cannot be overlooked as they influence both the teaching approaches and families' motivation to enrol children to HL classes. This subsection introduces the concepts of superdiversity and transnationalism as they relate to the Initiatives' operations and discusses how they inform LMF.

The concept of superdiversity, widely adopted in sociolinguistics, captures the complexity of multilingual realities in contemporary Western Europe. Here, one dominant language often defines the public sphere, while many other languages that are no less vital occupy community-created spaces that reflect the everyday multilingualism of transnational lives (Duarte & Gogolin, 2013, p. 10). The Initiatives are examples of such spaces. They reveal how immigrant communities create and implement language policy from the bottom up, at times adapting to institutional norms, and at other times reshaping them and paving the way for formal recognition of immigrant languages in education.

While the superdiversity approach has its strong supporters, the term has also been subject to critique. Scholars have pointed to its tendency toward sloganisation and overgeneralisation, as well as the assumption that the increase in diversity is a recent phenomenon (Pavlenko, 2018, p. 142). Nonetheless, researchers working at the intersection of sociology, migration, and linguistics under the umbrella of superdiversity have proposed more nuanced ways of examining the linguistic and political landscapes of migration. They explore, for example, how migration shapes language use within specific temporal and spatial contexts (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). As the Initiatives' operations started in late 90s and early 2000s, the temporal context is especially relevant when exploring ways of managing languages.

However, superdiversity can also be criticised for its limited perspective, specifically, its lack of emic insight. The approach often reflects the viewpoint of the host country, highlighting, for instance, how bottom-up initiatives contribute to the visibility of immigrant languages in public life. However, the lived realities of migrant communities are not confined to their local contexts. These communities often maintain strong transnational ties, which are central to their engagement with language. In fact, such connections frequently serve as the very basis for HL maintenance (Purkarthofer et al., 2022, p. 568). HL education, in particular, often operates beyond national borders. Teachers are typically trained in their country of origin (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p. 139), and teaching materials are frequently designed for students enrolled in schools in Poland, where Polish remains the dominant language of instruction. These transnational dimensions call for an additional conceptual lens – that of transnationalism.

Migration sociologist, Magdalena Nowicka, presents transnationalism as a paradigm that recognises and examines connections and interactions extending beyond national borders. It challenges the notion of bounded societies and rigid ethnic categories, instead emphasising the circulation of cultural norms and the creation of new cultural arrangements through ongoing encounters and exchanges (Nowicka, 2019, p. 106). Transnationalism is not limited to the visible outcomes of cultural contact. It also brings into focus the persistent ties and complex, sometimes conflicting, consequences of national socialisation processes (Nowicka, 2020). In light of these perspectives, any analysis of the language policy work carried out by the Initiatives must take into account the fact that they are created by migrants and for migrants. This viewpoint shapes the analytical focus of this dissertation. It also aligns with my own positionality as a researcher who migrated from Poland to Germany and volunteers in one of these organisations. My aim is not to analyse what is done to these Initiatives by external actors such as the state, but rather to understand what these organisations do in relation to languages and the beliefs that underpin their use and maintenance.

To understand the Initiatives' strategies and the beliefs that guide them, the analysis reads language management through both their local anchoring in superdiverse cities and their transnational links. Taken together, superdiversity and transnationalism equip the LMF to map stakeholders and to identify the origins of expectations and beliefs, and the channels of resources and legitimacy. The next section sets out how this study understands language beliefs and ideologies that underpin expectations.

2.7 Language Beliefs and Ideologies

The fourth research questions of this study aim to identify language beliefs that underpinned strategies applied by the bottom-up Initiatives as well as expectations of other actors participating in language management. For instance, although Initiatives' educators are receptive to students' language repertoires in their interactions, the formal design of classes generally reverts to Polish-only, excluding German or other languages from instruction and materials. School authorities, on the one hand, emphasise the value of supporting multilingualism on their website, but in practice, the opportunities for such support are limited, which is further discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. Parents, on the other hand, express the importance of language transmission, but due to communication efficiency, they often switch languages at home. As Julia de Bres points out, interactions of these beliefs and ideologies are a productive ground for exploring intergroup relations (de Bres, 2014, p. 123).

So far, I have used the term *beliefs* to describe the discourses underpinning stakeholder expectations and *hidden agendas*. In my analysis, I will primarily adopt Bernard Spolsky's definition of language beliefs. While broader linguistic research often differentiates between beliefs and ideologies, Spolsky treats these terms as largely interchangeable within his framework. He defines language beliefs as the values, perceptions, and attitudes individuals and communities hold regarding languages and their use (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14). Unlike Language Policy, the LMF does not inherently account for beliefs or ideologies. Instead, researchers employ LMF as a tool to uncover these underlying perspectives through the ways language is managed. This approach has been exemplified in research conducted on multinational companies in Czechia by Tamah Sherman and Jiri Nekvapil (Sherman & Nekvapil, 2013), where the authors incorporated language ideology frameworks developed by Michael Silverstein (Silverstein, 1979) and Paul V. Kroskrity (Kroskrity, 2005).

Language ideologies can be examined from both group and individual perspectives, taking into account their local and historical specificities and their relation with the political interests as well as social roles people hold and the larger societal agendas they are connected to (Gal & Irvine, 2019, p. 2). One of the widely used definitions of language ideology is attributed to Micheal Silverstein (1979), who describes it as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). In other words, language ideologies act as mediators between language and social reality. Paul V. Kroskrity further elaborates on this concept and presents a five-level description. Firstly, language ideologies are shaped within the interests of specific social or cultural groups and influence how languages are perceived and used. Secondly, diverse language ideologies derive from the multiplicity of social differences, such as class or gender. Thirdly, speakers may vary in their awareness and consciousness of these language ideologies. Fourthly, language ideologies serve as a link between social structures and the actual language practices, mediating the connection between speakers' social experiences and their language use. Lastly, ideologies play a critical role in the construction and representation of various identities (Kroskrity, 2005, p. 501-509).

De Bres emphasises that language ideologies represent the interests of a particular social group (De Bres, 2014, p. 120), which echoes Kroskrity's definition of language ideologies as "perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group" (De Bres, 2000, p. 8). Ingrid Piller adds that by representing priorities of a particular group, language ideologies perform social work (Piller, 2015, para 17). As a result, the purpose of language ideologies is not just about language itself but it also has social implications.

In the context of the bottom-up Initiatives, the social and diverse aspects of language beliefs become evident in the co-construction of language policies among different actors at various levels. Each actor may display different beliefs depending on the context, and these beliefs can serve as justifications for their strategies and actions. For instance, the Initiatives may employ emotional discourse to instil a sense of responsibility and guilt in parents for not putting in enough effort to maintain the HL, as support in language development is a primary goal for these initiatives. On the other hand, German school authorities may publicly promote multilingualism in HL as beneficial, but their lack of attention to the organisation of classes for these languages places the responsibility on immigrant communities. The bottom-up Initiatives, through advocacy and mediation, attempt to challenge such an approach, while also emphasising to Polish-speaking families that the primary responsibility for language maintenance lies. As representatives of the community and essentially language activists, the bottom-up Initiatives strategically employ specific beliefs and challenge others. Through their activities, certain beliefs are reproduced and reinforced, while others are actively challenged leading to transformative results. The analysis, however, indicates that in certain aspects, beliefs are clearly identified, while in others remain unexamined.

2.8 Resilience of the Bottom-Up Initiatives

LMF and tools that this and other sociolinguistics frameworks offer can elucidate the questions of what and how bottom-up Initiatives do with languages and how they manage the expectations of various stakeholders and what underpins the expectations. The Initiatives' purpose seems to be clear – to support HL maintenance and development. However, as noted throughout the theoretical chapter, there are societal and individual obstacles caused for example by covert beliefs overt language policies or covert historical constraints. The Initiatives also operate throughout the years and they have to face new challenges while simultaneously sustaining and responding to their ongoing activities. To put it simply, in order to operate and endure new challenges throughout the decades, the Initiatives and communities built around them have to be resilient. For this reason, the actions of the Initiatives are analysed employing tools used in social-ecological systems and humanitarian and development studies, particularly those that are focused on the types of communities' responses to the encountered challenges and shifting circumstances.

2.8.1 Community resilience

The concept of resilience has been widely adopted across the social sciences, particularly within interdisciplinary studies of social-ecological systems. In this context, resilience refers to the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance, adapt, learn, and/or transform in response to complex or uncertain conditions (Folke et al., 2010). This capacity can be examined at various levels of system complexity, including individual, societal, and community resilience.

Community resilience has gained increasing attention as an analytical lens for exploring how communities not only withstand disruptions but also respond proactively to socio-economic, and environmental pressures (Fernando et al., 2023; Kirby et al., 2025). While communities cannot control all external conditions, they can actively build resilience through capacity building, and intentional collective action, especially in response to ongoing change and uncertainty (Berkes & Ross 2012, p. 6). Earlier literature on resilience has focused on responses to acute events such as natural disasters or humanitarian crises, however, more recent studies have expanded the concept to encompass structural and everyday challenges. For instance, in their review of the notion of social resilience in the context of marginalised groups Markus Keck and Patrick Sakdapolrak conceptualise social resilience as a dynamic and ongoing process that responds to uncertainty and change (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 14). These conditions are understood as inherent features of social life, rather than as exceptional events. Such a perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how vulnerable groups, such as migrant communities, manage stress and adversity. The authors argue that resilience is not a fixed trait of individuals or groups, but rather a relational process shaped by specific institutional and social contexts.

Similarly, Felix N. Fernando and colleagues, in their study on urban community resilience in the context of climate crises, view resilience not only as a capacity to respond to immediate risks and emergencies but also as a means of coping with chronic challenges (Fernando et al, 2023, para 5). This perspective is echoed in research by Kimon A. Arvanitis, Matthias Holenstein, and Lucien Schriber (2023), who examined seventy bottom-up initiatives across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland during the COVID-19 pandemic. They highlight a reciprocal relationship between initiatives and resilience, as they point that community resilience enables action by bottom-up initiatives; bottom-up initiatives, in turn, strengthen the resilience of the community (Arvanitis et al., 2023, para 18). Fikret Berkes and Helen Ross advocate an integrated approach to community resilience, identifying key enabling factors such as social networks, leadership, self-organisation, and a shared positive outlook (Berkes & Ross, 2013, p. 14). This aligns with broader conceptualisations of resilience as a relational process, where the

Initiatives have to interact with other actors and engage in dialogue in order to develop and access resources (Barr & Devine-Wright, 2012, p. 528; Magis, 2010, p. 410).

Bottom-up initiatives aimed at HLs maintenance and development can be understood both as outcomes of such enabling conditions and as spaces in which these conditions are actively fostered. In migration contexts, such community-led efforts represent expressions of resilience, formed in response to the challenges migrant families face in supporting multilingual upbringing. Often, these initiatives seek to create safe spaces for language use and to promote the development and maintenance of HLs. Through social networks and the leadership of community representatives engage with stakeholders and adapt to shifting language-political landscapes. While these changes may not constitute acute crises, they do represent persistent structural pressures that require adaptive or transformative strategies. In this sense, community resilience is less about recovering from disaster and more about sustained, creative responses to the limited recognition of migrant languages.

2.8.2 Adaptability and Transformability of the Communities

For a community to be resilient, it must be capable of adapting or transforming in response to change. These capacities, adaptability and transformability, describe how communities engage with uncertainty, each in a distinct way.

Adaptability refers to the ability to make gradual, strategic adjustments that allow a community to continue functioning within existing frameworks and structures while responding to evolving conditions. According to Carl Folke and colleagues, adaptability involves learning from experience, revising strategies, and maintaining development within a relatively stable system. It can be conceptualised as perseverance of the status quo, but also a gradual improvement of practices to remain responsive over time (Folke et al, 2010, p. 2).

Transformability, by contrast, refers to the capacity to shift from existing systems when they no longer meet the community's needs. It involves the creation of new social arrangements (Folke et al, 2010, p. 5). Brian Walker and colleagues point out that transformation becomes necessary when existing structures become unsustainable (Walker et al, 2004, p. 5). Transformation is not simply about surviving change but about reconfiguring systems to allow communities to thrive. Nicolina Kirby argues that this process is enabled by factors such as empowerment, learning, and experimentation (Kirby, 2025, p. 8). It also requires active engagement with broader socio-political structures, including

access to resources, participation in decision-making, and institution-building (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 14).

These two capacities are relevant to LMPs particularly when considering the purpose of management and recognition of what is actually possible: whether the goal is to adapt to prevailing language expectations and current state of language policies or to transform them. This question is particularly significant for community-based bottom-up initiatives. Their emergence often marks a transformative moment, offering new and innovative opportunities for community members to use their HL and transmit them to children.

At the same time, such initiatives can also be seen as adaptive responses. In local contexts where migrant languages receive little institutional support, communities often adopt the strategy of forming independent associations, as has been the case in many immigrant communities (Nordstrom, 2020, p. 293). This study will explore a variety of adaptive strategies employed by three Initiatives, as well as moments of transformation that signal shifts in approaches to HL maintenance and development. Community resilience, in this light, consists of both adaptation to structural constraints and the creative transformation of those constraints into opportunities for developing HL education.

2.9 Overview of Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 builds on expectation-based reading of LMF. In a multi-stakeholder environment, bottom-up Initiatives manage language and actions aimed at HL. From this vantage point, Stage 1 of the LMP is not treated here as a deviation from a single norm but a mismatch of expectations among language-management agents, which brings underlying beliefs into view. The framework is coupled with lenses from language-policy research, namely overt and covert processes to clarify how legitimacy and what is considered “normal” is produced in HL setting. It then distinguishes adaptive responses of the communities, which adjust within existing arrangement from transformative responses, which revisit beliefs and reconfigure practices or structures. Analysis proceeds across institutional, community, and classroom levels, following how expectation mismatches invite particular responses and how those responses travel across levels. Together, these moves turn the framework into a working map for the chapters that follow.

3. Data and Methods: Contexts, Collection, Processing and Analysis

Data collection in this study involved a combination of tools and methods, which I will outline briefly below. Their informative value of the methods varied, as it will become evident in the following analytical chapters. The primary methods were semi-structured interviews and participant observations, which proved most effective in addressing the research questions. These socio- and ethnographic approaches provided rich and context-sensitive insights into language practices, beliefs and management strategies. Additionally, the main tools were informed by a desk-based analysis of relevant policies and published documents. Moreover, two surveys were also conducted. Although their explanatory power was limited, they largely confirmed findings from the interviews and observations, offering supplementary illustrations.

As this study adopts a community-based approach and seeks to investigate types of interactions, relations, and characteristic processes within the bottom-up initiatives and the families associated with them, the chosen methodology aligns with the traits of ethnographic research. The investigation centres around three cases of Polish Initiatives and communities, however, while case studies often focus on an in-depth understanding of a single community, this research is more concerned with comprehending how these communities function and the nature of their activities in a broader sense (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 153).

According to Nicholas Faraclas, Ellen-Petra Kester, and Eric Mijts, community-based research is distinguished by its application of multiple methods and the integration of diverse research backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive approach. This involves combining insights from existing literature with the firsthand experiences of the researched community (Faraclas et al., 2019, p. 11). In line with this approach, the present study employed various qualitative methods to address the research questions. These methods encompassed the analysis of official regulations such as treaties and local policies, examination of website content, review of written materials and artefacts, conducting semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and engaging in participant observations. The data collection spanned from November 2019 to March 2023. Subsequent sections will elaborate in detail on the data collection process and the chosen methodology.

3.1 Desk Research

Official documents such as treaties, state regulations and reports published by authorities outline the framework in which the bottom-up Initiatives operate. These treaties, regulations, and reports not

only shed light on historical and contemporary approaches to HL education and the Polish language but also capture the dynamic changes over time. These documents were analysed in two stages. First, thematic analysis was applied as an exploratory tool to identify recurring themes. In the second stage, critical discourse analysis was used as an interpretative tool to examine how the identified themes were discursively constructed.

The analysis includes documents such as the Treaty on Good Neighborhood and Friendly Cooperation (Polish: *Traktat o dobrym sąsiedztwie i przyjaznej współpracy*) between Poland and Germany from 1991, followed by the Joint Declaration of the Round Table in 2011. Additionally, reports prepared by the Conference of Ministers of Education (ger. Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK for short) on the current status of Polish as an HL class, as well as the regulations regarding classes in federal states of Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, are examined. These documents offer a macro-level perspective that significantly influences the strategies of the bottom-up Initiatives at both the meso- and micro-levels.

Prior to conducting the interviews the content websites of the three Initiatives and texts produced by the members and teachers were analysed. The website content not only contains information regarding courses, but it also allows one to trace the footprints of past activities and explore the texts used to promote them. Employing discourse analysis, one can elucidate the strategies employed by these Initiatives to encourage community participation in their courses and promote bilingualism in child upbringing. For instance, on the website of Die Brücke, the voices of teachers and parents are featured, expressing their perspectives on bilingual education and child development. Meanwhile, Wawel's website showcases photographs of the materials used and prepared during their classes. Similarly, the Initiative Krasnale from Frankfurt includes a set of advice for parents on bilingual upbringing, alongside letters from Polish authorities concerning HL classes.

Furthermore, teachers and board members of the Initiatives from Frankfurt and Darmstadt have contributed articles to the magazine "Polski w Niemczech / Polnisch in Deutschland", which is published by the Federal Union of Polish Language Teachers, another initiative operating at the federal-state level. This magazine features articles authored by both academics and practitioners, focusing on various aspects of learning and teaching Polish. The articles contributed by the board members and teachers discuss topics such as classroom methodologies and the Initiatives' involvement in events. In total, four articles were analysed. Additionally, written and visual materials, including exercises and folders prepared during the courses, as well as folders and brochures provided by respondents, were taken into account. These materials encompass several presentations used for

online classes, three folders created by students during one course, and four brochures. The analysis of these materials served as a basis for formulation of the interviews guideline.

3.2 Case Descriptions

What exactly are the bottom-up Initiatives that are the main subject of this study? They are community-based organisations established by Polish immigrants and their families in Germany, operating as registered associations (German: *eingetragener Verein*). These Initiatives serve as a means of bringing together families where the Polish language is spoken. The primary focus of these Initiatives is to offer classes for children and youth, although the conditions and offerings may vary among them. Additionally, while the primary goal of these Initiatives is to preserve the Polish language among children and youth, the specific objectives outlined in their statutes may differ and place emphasis on various aspects of multilingual upbringing. The different angles are also reflected in the official names, as some organisations are focused on promotion of culture, while others are focused on promotion of bilingualism. Table 7 in Appendix 1 summarises the operations and characteristics of the three Initiatives.

The selection of these three cases requires some clarification. The sampling criteria were both formal and practical. The minimum criteria were that each Initiative had to be an officially registered association and had to offer Polish HL classes. The practical criteria concerned accessibility and feasibility, namely whether it was possible to observe lessons over time and speak with teachers and activists. Desk research was also used to identify cases that offered analytical contrast, particularly in terms of how the Initiatives framed their aims, when they were established, and what orientations towards Polish HL education they represented.

3.2.1 Die Brücke

Deutsch-Polnischer Verein Die Brücke e.V. (English: *German-Polish Association Die Brücke e.V.*), Die Brücke for short, officially founded in 1999 in Darmstadt, is the oldest of the three initiatives. Its name reflects transnational connections across the Polish diaspora. The Initiative is governed by its Board and Initiatives' members pay an annual fee. That is the main source of funding, supplemented by small grants from the public or private sector.

Initially, it offered classes for children of various ages, ranging from kindergarten to teenagers. Following the inclusion of Polish in HL courses in Hesse (see section 4.5.1), the organisation's offerings were reduced, and currently it primarily provides Polish classes for preschool-aged children in two

groups, one for younger children, between 3-4 years old, and one for children older than 5, held once a week during weekdays. Occasionally, older children, such as those in the first grade of German school, also attend these classes. Classes are 90 minutes long and are taught by two teachers. Occasionally, for a younger group parents are present during the classes to support children. The courses offered at Die Brücke do not have a fixed curriculum and focus is on physical and arts-based activities. Classes are held in the child-adapted community centre, two rooms are rented once a week with a storage room available. According to the organisation's website, its primary goal is to provide Polish language classes and foster an understanding of Polish culture and traditions. To this end, the Initiative also hosts events such as celebrations of St. Andrew's Day and the Drowning of Marzanna, a traditional Polish spring rite. Additionally, the organisation aims to support bilingualism within families and collaborates with other Polish organisations, as well as participating in events organised by the city of Darmstadt (Die Brücke e.V., n.d.). The Initiative is characterised by its broad connections with other Polish-diaspora organisations with some members having links to the Ministry of Education.

This study involved classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with two teachers, two board members, and one former board member. All data were anonymised, with interviewees and anyone present during participant observation assigned pseudonyms. Persons participating in interviews were informed about audio-recording, data use and storage, and reminded of their right to raise ethical or GDPR concerns or withdraw consent at any time. For observations, board representatives were notified in advance and consent from the educator and parents/guardians was recorded via phone call. No photographs of children and adults were taken, only classroom spaces and anonymised materials (e.g., worksheets) were photographed.

Across levels, the Initiative moved through cycles of noticing, evaluation, design, and implementation. At the macro-meso interface, it observed that Polish HL classes were absent from the Hessian school system and judged the gap significant given community demand. In response, the Initiative contacted partner networks and implemented the "Polish in Hesse" campaign (see Chapter 4). At the community level, low parental engagement was noticed and evaluated as a key issue related to sustainability. However this observation has not yet yielded a sustained design or implementation (see Chapter 5). Within classrooms, teachers noticed increased spontaneous German use and, treating it as pedagogically useful, designed ad-hoc translanguaging strategies and implemented these adaptations in practice (see Chapter 6).

3.2.2 Wawel

Wawel, officially Verein für polnische Kultur und Bildung e.V. (English: *Association for Polish Culture and Education*), is dedicated to promoting and preserving the Polish language and culture in the Rhein-Neckar region. The organisation's name refers to Wawel Castle, the royal castle in Kraków. Officially established in 2008, the organisation provides classes for children and young people in Heidelberg, Mannheim, and Eppelheim. Wawel is governed by a Board operating within the framework of its registered statutes, with members paying annual dues and modest class fees of around €5. This is the main source of funding for its activities. Wawel's classes are organised bottom-up by language activists, parents, and educators; however, they operate under the patronage of the Polish Consulate (see Chapter 4).

The classes are delivered primarily in person, although some moved online during the pandemic. In the 2022/23 school year, the organisation offered 15 in-person classes at various venues, including public schools, private language schools, and community centres; additional online classes were also available. Classes run Monday to Friday and usually last 90 minutes, with a range of 45–135 minutes. They are intended for children and young people under 18 for whom Polish is a heritage language (HL). Teachers use a variety of materials, from worksheets and hands-on tasks for pre-school children to Polish-as-a-first-language coursebooks, supplemented with teacher-prepared resources. There is no fixed curriculum; tasks and sequencing are designed by teachers for each course. Working without a fixed, central curriculum, teachers design the task sequence for each course. Teachers do not conduct formal assessment of language skills. Students are placed mainly by age, however, when there is a need – classes can be adjusted to take more of a Polish as a foreign language approach. In addition to language classes, Wawel also organises cultural events for children and families, such as St Nicholas Day and St Andrew's Day, and participates in events hosted by the city, including those organised by the Interkulturelles Zentrum in Heidelberg (Wawel e.V., n.d.). Wawel also maintains strong relationships with local school authorities and often delivers HL provision in cooperation with public schools.

Throughout the research I observed one course in person and one course online, and was in contact with two teachers and two Board members. As in the case of Die Brücke, the personal and special-category data collected at Wawel were anonymised, and interviewees and participants in the observed courses were assigned pseudonyms. For participant observation, I obtained permission from the Board, who informed the teachers and parents; this was recorded via email. The Board and teachers were informed about how to raise ethical or GDPR concerns, the purpose of data collection,

data use and storage, and their right to withdraw consent at any time. During classes I photographed classroom items and anonymised worksheets; no children were photographed.

Among the LMPs identified when studying the initiative's activities, two are distinctive. First, the Initiative's team noted local demand for Polish HL classes in parts of the region and then, after evaluating feasibility in the local context and designing possible adjustments with school authorities, implemented the classes in partnership with schools (see Chapter 4). Second, teachers noticed gaps in suitable HL materials and assessed them as a shortcoming. Their response was to design lessons drawing on first-language instruction. The implementation relied on the integration of these materials into everyday teaching (see Chapter 6).

3.2.3 Krasnale

In 2008, parents in Frankfurt am Main (Hesse) founded Deutsch-Polnische Elterninitiative zur Förderung der Zweisprachigkeit e.V. (English: *German-Polish Parents' Initiative for the Promotion of Bilingualism*), informally "Krasnale". The name (English: *Dwarfs*) draws on a fairy-tale motif to signal its child-centred focus. Initially Krasnale operated as a playgroup for Polish-speaking children and families, it soon expanded into a Saturday school offering courses by age and proficiency. During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, classes were suspended and three courses moved online until 2021. Alongside the Saturday school, weekday playgroups were offered for preschool children. In 2016 the initiative opened the first bilingual Polish-German kindergarten in western Germany and, in 2022, a nursery. At present the focus is primarily on the kindergarten and nursery, and Saturday classes are suspended. This study concentrates on the Saturday school; activities in the kindergarten and nursery are beyond its scope.

The Initiative is governed by a Board and holds regular members' meetings. Its primary funding comes from membership fees, supplemented by modest fees for Saturday classes. Classes took place in a local secondary school provided free of charge by the city and shared with other groups on Saturdays. The venue was not well suited to the youngest learners and had no storage, so teachers brought materials and toys each time.

Until early 2020, seven courses were offered: a reception class (for students aged 5); classes for first, second and third, fourth, and fifth graders; a group for older children (approximately 15 years old); and one course in Polish as a foreign language. Each course lasted 90 minutes and was held between 09:00 and 13:00 every Saturday, with seven teachers conducting the classes. Tasks and materials were

mostly teacher-crafted, typically based on texts selected by the instructors. Some groups, however, such as first graders, used coursebooks for Polish. Students did not undergo formal assessment. When teachers noticed that a student struggled, the student could attend Polish-as-a-foreign-language class. The goals of the Initiative include promoting Polish-German bilingualism, fostering the development of an intercultural identity, and supporting families in bilingual upbringing of their children. Additionally, the Initiative aims to organise cultural events where Polish can be spoken, such as visiting museums, as well as conducting workshops for parents on bilingualism. Teachers and board members also provide workshops for other educators (Krasnale, n.d.).

Throughout the research, I interviewed four teachers, two of whom were also board members. Interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study and the interviews, the arrangements for data storage and use, how to raise any ethical or GDPR concerns, and their right to withdraw consent at any time. I confirmed that all personal data, including any special category data, would be anonymised. I also observed an online workshop for teachers led by one of the educators, having obtained prior consent from the organiser.

Interviews and observed workshops at Krasnale made several LMPs apparent. First, facilitators noticed the benefits of peer interaction for HL development, evaluated this as worth pursuing, designed small-group formats that could be adapted during the pandemic, and implemented them in regular provision (see Chapter 5). Second, the team identified parents' limited knowledge of multilingual upbringing, evaluated this as a support need, designed workshops with short simulations, and implemented a programme of parental training (see Chapter 5). Third, in classroom practice teachers noticed students drawing on their full linguistic repertoires, evaluated this as a pedagogic resource, designed tasks to build on those resources, and implemented them as routine practice, which marks a shift toward transformative language management (see Chapter 6).

3.2.4 Supplementary Case

Additionally, for a broader context, this study also includes one initiative from Weil der Stadt in Baden-Württemberg that was not registered. It was an informal group of Polish-speaking families that since 2013 organised meetings in a community centre. Over time, the focus of the initiative shifted to a more educational approach, incorporating elements of literacy instruction. From 2017 to 2020, the organisation held thematic meetings in which families gathered to discuss various topics and converse in Polish. However, the initiative did not reopen after the pandemic. At its peak, the initiative had 23 participating families, with 11 being particularly active. As the initiative did not operate within the

legal framework of a registered organisation, it did not have a statute or official website outlining its goals. However, according to one of the initiators, the main objective of the meetings was to provide children with the opportunity to interact with other Polish-speaking peers and to be exposed to different registers of the Polish language than those used in their homes.

An initiative in Hamburg was contacted to extend the study's coverage. Access, however, remained limited; after several attempts, I secured only one interview without supporting observations or documents. Given the comparative design, Hamburg was excluded and the focus remained on the two federal states.

3.3 Semi Structured Interviews

Between July 2021 and August 2022, I conducted semi-structured interviews with fourteen persons who occupied a range of positions within the Initiatives under study. Semi-structured interview participants were identified through purposive sampling, supplemented by limited snowballing. The aim was to include the key roles engaged in the Initiatives' work across sites (board members, educators, and parents), as well as relevant partners where feasible.

Access and initial contacts drew on my prior involvement with one Initiative and on professional networks described in the positionality statement. Potential participants were recruited by direct invitation via email and telephone. For Krasnale, I made first contact by phone to introduce the study and, where possible, scheduled the interview during that call. For the other cases, I sent an initial email and then followed up by phone to clarify the purpose and arrange a time. In some instances, the interview was scheduled entirely by email. In one case, a participant contacted me after hearing about the study through word of mouth. Not all invitations, however, resulted in interviews. Two of email invitations to board members at Die Brücke and Wawel did not receive a response despite a follow-up attempt and contact with other members of the Initiative. One interview from an initially considered site in Hamburg was excluded. Despite repeated contact attempts, only a single interview was secured at that site, with no supporting observations or documents, so the material was not comparable to the three focal Initiatives. The Hamburg interview transcript is retained in the secure archive but excluded from analysis.

While their organisational roles differed, they shared a common position as key informants, each possessing in-depth knowledge about the Initiatives' formation, structures, activities, course organisation, and teaching content. All participants were Polish women who had migrated to

Germany. Two were 35–40 years old, nine were 41–50, and three were over 50, at the time of the interviews. Length of residence in Germany ranged from four to twenty-four years, and engagement with the organisations from two to twenty-four years.

The duration and depth of the interviews reflected both the availability of the participants and the nature of their organisational involvement. For example, Tekla, who joined the organisation as a teacher two years prior, could offer only limited insight into its historical development. Her account, however, provided a nuanced understanding of current classroom practices and internal dynamics. In contrast, Regina, whose children had attended classes more than fifteen years ago and who remained an active member of the Polish diaspora in her city, provided a longitudinal view of the Initiative's activities and their evolution over time. With two respondents, Wanda and Stefania, I met twice in order to follow up on the issues they tackled. In this way, the interviews captured both retrospective and contemporary perspectives, enriching the overall understanding of the Initiatives' evolution and daily functioning. A summary of the interviews, including anonymised participant details, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Summary of the Key Informants Semi-Structured Interviews*

Pseudonym	Length of the interview	Engagement in the organisation (in years)	Role
Regina	01:41:33	16	board member
Cecylia	01:57:39	9	teacher and regular member
Stefania	01:10:44 and 00:23:00	6	teacher
Wanda	00:51:14 and 00:29:30	13	teacher and board member
Pelagia	00:49:25	6	board member
Kaja	00:39:25	8	teacher and board member
Adela	00:52:31	13	teacher and board member
Dagna	00:36:52	3	teacher
Jadwiga	01:19:20	24	board member
Genowefa	00:38:21	3	teacher

Renata	00:16:06	2	teacher
Waleria	00:38:39	15	teacher and board member
Tekla	00:15:16	1	teacher
Henryka	00:22:12	15	teacher and board member

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, which offers both question-structuring flexibility and allows respondents the space to express their thoughts more freely. Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a roadmap, facilitating the comparison of respondents' answers (Catenaccio & Garzone, 2020). Each interview followed the guideline (see Appendix 2). The interview questions in the guideline revolved around four main areas: the historical origins and past activities of the initiatives, the nature of classes, the relationship with parents, and the interactions with authorities. However, given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, the sequence of questions varied between participants. In some instances, additional questions were introduced to explore a participant's specific role within the organisation and in others, certain questions were omitted. The decision to share the interview guideline stems from my own research process, as consulting guidelines published in other studies proved invaluable when developing my own framework.

While some interviews were held in person, the majority were conducted online due to the pandemic and geographical distances. Various online communication methods were employed, ranging from phone and WhatsApp calls to Zoom meetings. In certain instances, respondents shared folders or materials during the interviews, which were subsequently analysed as artefacts. The interviews were conducted in Polish, recorded with the respondent's consent. All participants were informed of the purpose of the data collection, storage and the fact that their consent to participate in the study could be withdrawn. Participants were informed that all data would be anonymised and that no personally relevant information capable of identifying an individual would appear in the dissertation.

3.4 Participant Observation

This phase of data collection, conducted between April 2022 and March 2023, proved to be particularly fruitful and engaging. I carried out observations of three courses organised by the two bottom-up Initiatives: Die Brücke in Darmstadt and Wawel in Heidelberg. In addition to that, I

participated in an online two-hour workshop for teachers conducted by Wanda in November 2021. Basic information on the participant observations and the courses is summarised in Table 2.

Given the highly interactive nature of language management in classroom settings, and my interest in capturing the dynamics between students, parents, and teachers, video recording might initially have appeared to be the most effective method. However, due to child protection policies, safeguarding requirements, and data protection regulations, participant observation was selected as the primary approach. Consent to observe the classes was obtained from both teachers and parents, who agreed to my presence in the classroom and understood the purpose of the data collection. They were also informed that all data would be anonymised.

My role as an observer varied across contexts and sessions. Initially, I took detailed notes during classes, but when I observed that this sometimes caused discomfort among teachers and parents, I adopted a more discreet approach. In such cases, I used brief jottings during the sessions and developed more comprehensive notes immediately afterwards.

Table 2 *Summary of Participant Observations*

Course - Location	Duration of observation	Participants
Darmstadt	April 2022-February 2023 (nineteen 90-minutes sessions observed)	Teachers: Tekla and Renata, 15 students aged 3-8 and their parents.
Heidelberg	November 2022- February 2023 (ten 90-minutes sessions observed)	Teacher: Malwina, 10 students aged 3-7 (classes were primarily for 5–7-year-olds) and occasionally their parents
Heidelberg - online	November 2022 - March 2023 (ten 45-minutes sessions observed)	Teacher: Waleria and two 14-year old students
Workshop for teachers - online	November 2021 (two hour session)	Teacher: Wanda; up to 10 other participants (online event with fluctuating attendance)

The participant observation in Darmstadt began in April 2022 and concluded in February 2023, including a total of nineteen sessions. My primary focus was on the 90-minute classes, although I also observed the informal gatherings that took place before and after lessons. When I first arrived, there was only one group in operation, a result of families withdrawing from classes during the pandemic. In September 2022, however, the group was divided into two: one comprising younger children aged three to four, and another of older children aged six to eight. Attendance fluctuated over time as new students enrolled and others attended on a trial basis or withdrew. In total, fifteen children took part during the observation period, though the composition of each class varied. From September onwards, the younger group regularly included seven children, while the older group consisted of five. The younger children were typically accompanied by a parent or grandparent who remained present throughout the session.

Figure 3 *The Classroom in the Community Centre in Darmstadt*



Note. Photograph by the author, 2022.

Over the course of these observations, I maintained regular contact with around thirty persons, including teachers, parents, and students. While my role was primarily that of an observer, I occasionally interacted with parents and assisted teachers by preparing materials or helping children with tasks. The classes were held in a community centre that also hosted a variety of extracurricular activities, most of them for children. The organisation had access to two rooms and a small storage closet for teaching materials (see Figure 3).

The observations in Heidelberg unfolded under notably different conditions. I followed two courses, one delivered online and the other conducted in person, each comprising ten sessions. The online

course was held weekly and lasted 45 minutes. It involved two students, both fourteen-year-old girls, working with a teacher. In this setting, my role was exclusively observational, focusing on the interaction patterns and instructional approaches within a virtual learning environment. The in-person course extended over 90 minutes and took place in a private language school (see Figure 02). Attendance averaged around seven children, although this number fluctuated due to occasional withdrawals and the enrolment of new participants. Over the course of the observations, a total of ten children, aged between three and seven, took part in the classes. In an adjacent classroom, another course for older students was conducted, regularly attended by five students. Parents were not present during the sessions, however, I interacted with them during drop-off and pick-up times.

Figure 4 *The Classroom in the Private Language School in Heidelberg*



Note. Photograph by author, 2022.

In this setting, my role shifted from observer to active participant. The teachers frequently asked for my assistance, whether in preparing materials or supporting children as they completed tasks, which positioned me in the role of a teaching assistant. I was also added to the parents' WhatsApp group to receive updates on course-related matters and logistical arrangements. Across both courses, I maintained contact with 21 persons, including teachers and parents, building a broader understanding of the organisational and social context surrounding the classes.

The classes organised by Krasnale in Frankfurt were not included in the observations, as the Initiative had decided to discontinue its additional HL courses and to concentrate instead on kindergarten and nursery provision. However, my prior involvement with Krasnale provided valuable contextual knowledge. From September 2019 until the end of 2021, I worked as an active teacher within the organisation. This experience afforded me access to the exercises and teaching materials developed for the students, as well as a detailed understanding of the general pedagogical approaches and methods employed during the classes.

3.5 Supplementary Methods – Questionnaires

3.5.1 Questionnaire for Teachers of Polish as Heritage Language

In early 2020, I launched an online questionnaire for teachers of Polish as a HL in Germany. Its primary aim was exploratory: to provide contextual background for a discourse analysis of websites, articles, and scholarly literature, and to gain an overview of teachers' practices and expectations regarding HL provision across all German federal states.

To reach teachers, I used several channels. First, I contacted my existing network and asked colleagues from Krasnale to circulate the survey. Second, after mapping initiatives across Germany, I emailed invitations to the initiatives and to teachers' networks. A respondent then shared the survey in a Facebook group for Polish teachers in Germany (a general group, not limited to HL). Finally, I sent invitations to Polish schools operated by consulates in Germany. Responses were collected via Google Forms. The form was open from March 2020 to December 2021; most data were gathered between March and October 2020, with two additional responses in late 2021. The survey was conducted in Polish. Responses came from ten federal states: Hesse (4), Baden-Württemberg (4), Berlin (7), Schleswig-Holstein (1), Lower Saxony (2), Hamburg (1), Rhineland-Palatinate (5), North Rhine–Westphalia (6), Saxony (2), and Thuringia (1).

Respondents were informed that the questionnaire is anonymous. The personal data (age, gender, education) are provided in aggregation below. Because the survey was also disseminated through the Initiatives' networks, there is a possibility that questionnaire respondents and interviewees overlap to some extent. To minimise this risk in overlapping, examples drawn from the questionnaire in this study are taken from federal states other than Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, where the Initiatives operate. The questionnaire combined quantitative and qualitative components: the first part gathered demographic information, and the second focused on four thematic areas: classroom management,

relations with Polish and German authorities, interaction with families, and the perceived value of Polish proficiency in education and the labour market. Appendix 3 provides the Polish and English version of the questionnaire as well as Figure 15 that summarises the quantitative part.

Despite efforts to reach a more representative sample, 35 responses were collected. Two were excluded: one duplicate submission and one from a respondent who indicated in an open-ended item that they were not a teacher. In total, 33 responses were included in the analysis. All from persons born in Poland with higher education qualifications (from bachelor's to doctorate), predominantly women and one non-binary person. On average, respondents were 45.5 years old (the range was between born in 1959 and 1988), had lived in Germany for 16 years, and had taught Polish for 9 years. The small sample size, combined with the convergence of Likert scale responses around the mean, rendered the quantitative component unsuitable for inferential analysis. Neither descriptive statistics nor principal component analysis with bootstrapping yielded meaningful results, indicating that the questionnaire design was not well-suited to its intended explanatory purposes. Appendix 3 outlines the questionnaire and summarises the quantitative results.

The open-ended questions, however, proved more fruitful. Twenty-six respondents provided detailed reflections on effective current practices, potential improvements, and key challenges in HL teaching. These responses were annotated and qualitatively analysed using MAXQDA, forming a basis for the further research and methods, particularly semi-structured interviews with educators.

3.5.2 Questionnaire for Parents

In late 2022, I conducted an online questionnaire for parents whose children either currently attended or had previously attended classes organised by the bottom-up Initiatives. The questionnaire, created in Microsoft Forms, was deliberately designed as a qualitative tool, drawing on lessons from the earlier teacher questionnaire. Sampling was purposive and criterion-based, and dissemination occurred via the Initiatives. After informing the Initiatives' boards in person or by email and obtaining their consent, I asked teachers to share the information and link through parents' WhatsApp groups and the Initiatives' newsletters. Teachers and boards were informed that the questionnaire was intended for parents whose children had attended or were still attending activities organised specifically by the Initiatives. The form was active from 12 December 2022 to 2 February 2023. The questionnaire was in Polish. Appendix 4 presents the questionnaire and Figure 16 summarising the responses.

The questions focused on parents' expectations, satisfaction, and aspirations regarding HL classes and multilingual upbringing. A total of 35 responses were received: 19 from Hesse, where Krasnale in Frankfurt and Die Brücke in Darmstadt operate, and 16 from Baden-Württemberg, home to Wawel. All responses were included in the analysis. The majority of respondents were women ($n = 31$) in their forties. In terms of national identification, 18 described themselves as both German and Polish, 16 as exclusively Polish, and one as exclusively German. Most respondents reported having more than two children, often teenagers, which does not fully reflect the current age distribution of students enrolled in the initiatives.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first gathered basic demographic data, including nationality and age, along with self-reported information on familial language practices. The second explored parents' goals and ambitions for their children's language skills. The third addressed expectations of, and satisfaction with, HL provision, while also inviting reflections on the broader role of the Initiatives in multilingual education. Responses to these open-ended questions offered micro-level insights into family language management and parents' perspectives. These insights are later compared with those of teachers and initiative board members. Overall, the qualitative responses provided useful insights into HL provision within these community settings.

It is worth noting, however, that the questionnaire has several limitations. First, purposive sampling limits the ability to generalise the findings beyond the participating communities. Second, because dissemination occurred via the initiatives, it likely favoured more engaged parents. Third, as the questionnaire was available only in Polish, mixed-language households may be under-represented. Finally, responses were self-reported and, in some cases, retrospective, which may affect accuracy.

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

3.6.1 Qualitative Data

All data were anonymised and stored both locally and in MAXQDA, the primary analytical tool, under anonymised filenames. The anonymisation key and coding files are maintained separately in a password-protected location. Interviews, participant observation, and open-ended survey responses were managed as separate MAXQDA projects, each with its own code system. I was the sole coder. To mitigate single-coder bias, I conducted code checks on a subset of transcripts after a two-week or one-month interval and refined code definitions, recording boundary examples in a separate codebook. A codebook was maintained for each project and updated regularly, noting, for example, decisions to

merge codes and instances of substantial code overlap. These materials together form part of the audit trail. The following sections in detail discuss the procedure for interviews, participant observation materials and responses to the questionnaire for teachers.

Interviews' Transcripts

Most of the interviews were orthographically transcribed and subsequently analysed using MAXQDA software. For each excerpt presented in this dissertation, the timestamp and the corresponding position in the transcript are indicated. In cases where interviews were conducted via WhatsApp and later transcribed into a document format without the use of MAXQDA, only the paragraph number is provided. Interviews were transcribed in Polish using standard orthography, punctuation was added to enhance the transcript functionality and fillers were removed where they did not bear on meaning. Repetitions of syllables, false starts, overlaps, and micro-pauses were not marked in the transcription.

The original Polish excerpts used in this study were lightly edited into standard Polish as participants spoke in a conversational style, which naturally included repetitions, pauses, and other features of spoken interaction. These edits were made to ensure clarity and keep the readers' focus on the substantive content. As this dissertation does not focus on spoken language or conversation analysis, preserving such conversational speech patterns was not a methodological priority. English translations were produced with machine assistance (DeepL and ChatGPT) and then reviewed and revised to ensure accuracy, consistency of terminology, and alignment with the intended meaning in context. Editorial conventions follow common qualitative practice. Ellipses in square brackets "[...]" indicate omitted material that is not relevant to the argument. Insertions or clarifications appear in square brackets. Each quotation is followed by an attribution line naming the interviewee and indicating the source location: paragraph number and, where available, the timestamp.

Coding in MAXQDA proceeded in several rounds. A first descriptive round marked content with broad labels such as "personal information", "macro-level and institutional connections", and "relations with parents". Three analytical rounds followed. The first aligned with the classical LMP and applied codes for noticing, evaluation, design, and implementation. The second concentrated on classroom language practices, using more detailed codes such as "teachers as translators", "planned use of another language", and "language awareness in action". The final round implemented the expectation-based reading of the LMF, coding both the expectations held by different actors and the expectations directed toward them. I did not use MAXQDA's memo function systematically, although brief notes were kept alongside the project to track emerging ideas and coding decisions. Instances that did not

align with early interpretations were noted and considered in refining claims, but they were not thematised as a separate category.

Participant Observation Notes

Data from participant observation were carefully logged. Each observed session generated an observation note that recorded place, date, participants, a brief summary of activities, key observations, and fuller descriptive detail. Names were anonymised on the spot with initials or pseudonyms. I took jotted notes during classes to capture actions, exchanges, and verbatim lines as closely as possible. Shortly after each session, I expanded these jottings into narrative fieldnotes, organising the sequence of events and adding contextual detail while preserving the substance of what was said. In total, there are 19 notes from Die Brücke and 20 from Wawel. The notes were written in Polish. Excerpts quoted here are translated into English and each is labelled with the observation's place and date.

Analysis proceeded in several rounds of coding. The first round applied content and descriptive codes, together with LMF-related tags, for example “parents present at classes”, “art exercises”, “venue”, “correction”, and “presence of German”. The second, more analytical round targeted translanguaging pedagogy and in-class practices and beliefs, with codes such as “translation tasks”, “presence of other languages”, “literacy tasks”, “migration context”, and “certification discourse”. The third, interpretative round focused on expectations and adaptive manifestations of language management, including codes such as “teachers’ expectations”, “lack of materials”, and “adjusting materials”.

3.6.2 Questionnaires Data

The questionnaires combined quantitative and qualitative data. For the teachers’ questionnaire, open-ended responses were coded in three rounds: an initial descriptive round marking the level of language management (“family”, “classroom”, “activism”), followed by two analytical rounds, one aligned to the LMP stages and one to expectations, with a subsequent check for consistency. Closed-ended items were cleaned for obvious entry errors (duplications), and missing values were retained as missing rather than imputed.

Data was stored locally and on institutional cloud accounts. Raw exports (in .csv format) and analysis files were kept separate from any sheets containing contact details. Quantitative processing was carried out in R (RStudio interface). Only minimal cleaning was required; datasets were adapted for analysis using standard R packages such as dplyr and tidyr. Heatmaps of parents’ responses reported

in Chapter 5 and Figure 15 in the Appendix 3 were produced with ggplot2. Scripts and outputs were stored and archived so that figures can be regenerated directly from the raw CSV exports.

3.6.3 Other Tools Used

Figures 2, 5 13, 14, and 16 were created using Canva, which provides a variety of free design resources. For the text editing, spell check and punctuation, I used Grammarly, Deep-L, and Chat GPT model 4 and 5. The usage of AI, particularly Grammarly, was done only to do the editorial shifts and occasionally, to improve the clarity of the sentence through switching orders of the parts or cutting sentences short. Deep-L was used to aid translation of the documents. As for generative large language models such as ChatGPT 4 and 5, the usage was limited for technical editing and exploring improvement of the text. The prompts used during the writing process were used to generate alternatives and improve the grammar, for example: “Give a couple examples of transition sentences”, “Check if this sentence is grammatically correct. Do not change the text”, “How to best structure and argument and improve the flow. Give recommendations”. Responses to those prompts were meticulously and critically reviewed and adjusted to this dissertation. Having stated that, I would like to emphasise that none of the AI models were used to brainstorm the ideas and develop theoretical framework, review the literature, analyse the data and finally, to write the text. I am the sole author of this dissertation and the tools were used to assist and improve the readers’ experience.

3.7 Data Protection, Safeguarding and Ethical Considerations

The project followed the GDPR as implemented in Germany. The lawful basis for processing personal data was consent under Article 6(1)(a) GDPR. No special-category data were intentionally collected; where interviewees volunteered such information, processing rested on explicit consent under Article 9(2)(a). Participants received an information sheet and consent form based on the Gutenberg Graduate School of the Humanities and Social Sciences templates (Articles 6 and 13 of GDPR), adapted to this study with the project title, my contact details for feedback or withdrawal, and the contact for the Data Protection Officer in Rheinland-Palatinate. Consent covered participation, audio recording, and the use of anonymised quotations. Participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time without consequences.

All participants were informed that the recordings, transcripts and observation summary note will not be shared further. The study followed minimisation of the collection of personal data. Primary risks concerned indirect identification of participants and unauthorised access to data; both were mitigated

through pseudonymisation, data minimisation, and encrypted storage. Due to identifiability risks in small communities, raw datasets will not be shared publicly. De-identified excerpts and aggregate tables are provided in the thesis and, where appropriate, in appendices. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and survey datasets (containing personal data) will be stored on secured drives for ten years after publication and then deleted or irreversibly anonymised.

The data-collection methods were assessed as minimal-risk. The study looked at everyday educational practice rather than sensitive topics, and the data collection methods did not invite intimate disclosures. Participation was voluntary. People could skip questions, pause, or withdraw. In classrooms, I kept observation as unobtrusive as possible and adjusted my note-taking if discomfort was visible. Interviews were scheduled around participants' availability. Fieldwork involved sessions where children were present. In line with safeguarding, no photographs or audio recordings of children were taken, and children were not interviewed. Parental consent and organisational permission covered observation of sessions. If safeguarding concerns had arisen, they would have been reported to the relevant organisational lead under local policy. None were encountered. All photographs in this dissertation were taken by the author, depict only classrooms and teaching resources and other items shared by teachers, are copyright the author, and the originals are stored locally on secure, encrypted media.

3.8 Data Collection Summary

The collected material was intended to capture the Initiatives' activities across macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of language management. In practice, the data also revealed the interconnections between these levels. For instance, classroom interactions observed at the micro-level often reflected broader policy frameworks. The role of each data source will be evident in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 4, which examines the macro-level, draws primarily on the analysis of written materials, supported by the data from the interviews. Chapter 5, which explores relationships between initiatives and the families connected to them, relies on questionnaire responses, and interviews with particularly active parents who are or have been board members, as well as participant observation. Chapter 6, which focuses on educational practices in HL contexts, is based largely on participant observation, complemented by interviews with teachers.

4. From Macro Level Language Policies to Meso Level Practice

This chapter discusses stakeholders' expectations regarding HL education and the mismatches they notice. The strategies applied by stakeholders at the meso and macro levels then show how these mismatches were evaluated, what responses were designed, and what was implemented. The strategies include both adaptive language management – i.e., strategies that adjust to the existing language-political landscape – and an example of transformative language management, where beliefs about language are addressed and result in a new quality of that landscape.

The discussion here comprises three thematic sections. Firstly, it delineates the general language-political situation in connection to EU policy, progressing from EU policy, through the German context, and culminating in an analysis of the language policy in Germany concerning Polish as HL. Subsequently, the German approach is juxtaposed with the approach of Polish state authorities towards the Polish language abroad (subsections 4.1 – 4.4). Having established the language-political landscape, the second section of the chapter illustrates how bottom-up initiatives have navigated this context. Drawing insights from the campaign “Polish in Hesse”, a comprehensive list of stakeholders is formulated, and subsequent sections detail the relationships with each stakeholder (subsections 4.5 – 4.6). The concluding section summarises the dynamics between macro- and meso-level stakeholders, addressing how bottom-up initiatives have construed these situations and elucidating the expectations and beliefs that underpin their actions. Finally, grounded in their activities and relationships, the strategies of the bottom-up initiatives are expounded upon (subsections 4.7 – 4.10).

4.1 Heritage Languages in Education: Overt Policies

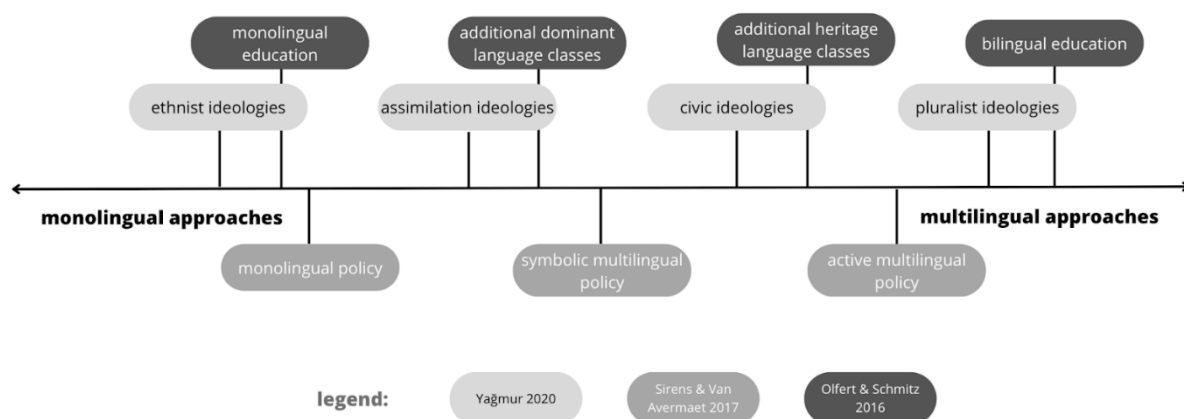
A substantial body of research, particularly in the field of urban multilingualism, documents the diverse ways in which HLs are incorporated into education systems worldwide (Caliendo et al., 2020, p. 4). However, the variety of approaches and contexts makes it difficult to generalise about the forms of HL inclusion in education (Yağmur, 2020). The terminology used to describe HL provision reflects this diversity: such courses may be labelled as first language instruction (Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2017, p. 489), community language teaching, or home language instruction (Yağmur, 2020, p. 432).

The official inclusion of HL instruction in European language policy can be traced back to the Directive 77/486 on the education of the children of migrant workers, issued in 1977 by the European Community (Council of the European Communities). This directive, which was typical of its time,

focused on ensuring the maintenance of HL in case of re-emigration, as similar regulations emerged in countries such as Germany (Woerfel, Küppers & Schroeder, 2020, p. 208). While HLs of immigrants have also been mentioned in other European documents related to strategies for promoting multilingualism, they have often been marginalised in comparison to autochthonous minority languages and the languages of host countries. For example, in the 2005 European Commission document *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, the learning of heritage languages is mentioned in brackets alongside the learning of autochthonous minority languages and the acquisition of the host country's language (European Commission, 2005, p. 5). In 2008, the European Union released a document titled *Multilingualism: An Asset for Europe and a Shared Commitment* which acknowledged the linguistic diversity brought about by immigrant languages in Europe. However, the document also emphasised the importance of immigrants acquiring proficiency in the host country's language as a priority (European Commission, 2008, p. 7). Such approaches are in agreement with what Laakso and colleagues noted, that there is a prevalent perspective in European discourses where governments, on one hand, attempt to align education plans with the multilingual education requirements of Europe, while on the other, language-political discourses tend to focus primarily on the national language, particularly in relation to the integration of immigrants (Laakso et al., 2016, p. 8).

The monolingual bias also still dominates in European national education systems, although quite a few researchers have highlighted the increasing efforts to incorporate multilingualism in education summarised in Figure 5. Currently, a variety of approaches can be observed, ranging from fully monolingual to more multilingual-inclusive, as presented below.

Figure 5 *Approaches Towards Languages in Education on a Mono–Multilingual Scale*



Note. Figure created in Canva by author.

For example, Kutlay Yağmur distinguishes four clusters of state ideologies (see Figure 5). These include pluralist and civic ideologies which prioritise mastering a mainstream language of a society, while placing HLs in a secondary position. In contrast, assimilation and ideologies require minorities to abandon their HL and “fully comply with the norms and values of the mainstream society” (Yağmur, 2020, p. 432). Similar categories of language policies for HL speakers in Western European education systems were observed by Sven Sirens and Piet Van Avermaet (2017). They identified three approaches: an ‘active multilingual policy’, characterised by the provision of ‘legal measures and facilities’ for education in heritage languages in formal schooling; a “symbolic multilingual policy” in which there are state regulations for heritage language education but they are not effectively implemented; and finally – a monolingual approach in which the need for HL education is ignored by state authorities (Sirens & Van Avermaet, 2017, p. 496).

The classification proposed by Helena Olfert and Anke Schmitz (2017) pertains to the distinction between monolingual and multilingual approaches to education, specifically in regards to the integration of HL speakers and their languages in formal education settings. As illustrated in Figure 5, the first approach involves a monolingual policy where HLs of immigrants are not recognized or utilised. The second approach acknowledges the language repertoires of immigrant students, but only in the context of limited proficiency in the host country language. In this approach, HL speakers attend regular monolingual classes in a dominant language while also receiving additional language instruction in the host country language. It is only in the third and fourth approaches that the HLs of immigrant students are taken into consideration. In the third approach, education authorities provide additional HL classes, while the fourth approach involves a more bilingual approach, in which one subject is offered in the student's HL as a medium of instruction (Olfert & Schmitz, 2017, p. 8).

As shown in Figure 5, educational approaches towards HL are far from uniform. Nevertheless, most education systems in Europe are situated towards the monolingual end of the spectrum. According to the most recent Eurydice Report on integrating students from immigrant backgrounds, only 13 out of 41 European education systems analysed have formal regulations concerning HLs (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p. 136). The report identifies three main rationales for including HLs in formal education: first, to facilitate the acquisition of the language of instruction; second, to support the maintenance of HL and culture; and third, to promote plurilingualism (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019, p. 137). Even when such regulations exist, HLs often occupy a marginal position within education systems (Gross et al., 2021, p. 3). Germany, the context for this

study, is one of the 13 states that include HLs in their education system. However, because education policy is determined at the federal state level, provision varies considerably, and a range of approaches to HL teaching is adopted.

4.2 Heritage Language Speakers and Heritage Language Education in Germany

Germany, with over 30% of its population identified as having an immigration background and 18% of the population speaking predominantly languages other than German at home (Statistisches Bundesamt [Destatis], 2024), can be considered as a de facto multilingual state. However, the country's language policy does not reflect this reality and instead adheres to a laissez-faire approach (Adler & Beyer, 2018, p. 226). The focus of the policy is on German Standard language and its varieties, as well as on autochthonous languages like Frisian and Sorbian (Adler & Beyer, 2018). Regulations targeting languages of people with immigrant background mainly focus on teaching German to migrants and lack a comprehensive policy for the HLs of migrants. This is a result of the decision made by the KMK, in 1971, which has entrusted the responsibility of regulating HL classes to individual federal states (Mehlhorn, 2017, p. 46). This leads to variations in language policies and practices among them. The classes can be offered as extracurricular subjects in some federal states under various labels such as Herkunftssprachenunterricht (HSU, English: *heritage language classes*), Erstsprachenunterricht (ESU, English: *first language classes*), or Muttersprachenunterricht (MSU, English: *mother-tongue classes*).

In the 1970s, HL classes were primarily viewed as a means of re-emigration, providing language instruction for the descendants of guest workers to reconnect with the language of their parent's homeland. As the migration patterns evolved, many families settled permanently, and subsequent generations grew up leading transnational lives in Germany. In this context, the purpose of HL instruction had to be reconsidered. Rather than preparing for return migration, HLs began to be viewed as intercultural resources that should be developed alongside German language skills (Woerfel et al, 2020, p. 208). Of course, this shift did not occur itself – but it was driven by the actions and persistence of immigrant communities, who asserted the value of their languages (see Rinke & Flores, 2021 who presented the process based on the Portuguese as HL education in Germany).

Despite the shift, HL policies and provisions have been adapted unevenly across Germany's federal states, reflecting differing orientations towards multilingualism. North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, has offered HL classes since the 1970s (Reich, 2017, p. 84), Hamburg incorporates certain HLs into its foreign language curriculum (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung,

2022), while Thuringia introduced HL courses only in 2021 (Kindersprachbrücke Jena e.V., 2021). This diversity of approaches illustrates the complex relationship between migrant communities, multilingualism, and language policy in Germany.

Even with federal regulations in place, there are significant disparities in the number of languages offered and their status across different states. For example, in the school year 2021/2022, education authorities in North Rhine-Westphalia offered 29 languages (Ministerium für Schule und Bildung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, n.d.), while in Hesse, only 13 languages were offered (Staatliche Schulämter in Hessen, n.d.). Furthermore, there are also differences in terms of funding and accessibility for heritage language learners within federal states. In Hesse, for instance, Polish language classes are financed by the state, but Croatian language classes are partially funded by the Croatian government (Staatliche Schulämter in Hessen, n.d.). Additionally, the status of major immigrant languages such as Turkish or Russian varies between states, some, for instance Hamburg, offer them as foreign languages (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung, 2022), others, such as Rhineland-Palatinate, offer them as extracurricular activities (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur Rheinland-Pfalz, 2012). As a result, the educational opportunities and resources for HL learners vary greatly depending on the state.

It is noteworthy that despite variations in the models of HL inclusion across federal states in Germany in terms of financing, status, and accessibility, official online statements, curricula, and regulations consistently cite similar rationales for HL inclusion. Specifically, it is acknowledged that learning HLs can facilitate the acquisition of the dominant language and improve integration, as articulated in the regulations of the state of Baden-Württemberg (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2017). Furthermore, education authorities recognise that HL classes are instrumental in facilitating foreign language learning and developing language awareness, as highlighted in curricula for teachers in the states of Rhineland-Palatinate (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur Rheinland-Pfalz, 2012, p. 9) and Hamburg (Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung 2022, p. 8). Policy documents from Saarland recognise that HL classes can develop intercultural competences (Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur des Saarlandes, n.d.). Moreover, some education authorities also reference the linkage between the culture of a country of origin and the identity development, as well as the economic value of developing language skills in HLs as per the statements from Berlin (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie, n.d.) and Saxony (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, n.d.). In sum, it is apparent that education

authorities acknowledge the societal and individual potentials of HLs based on the official statements made.

HLs in education have been receiving increasing attention in Germany in recent years (Mehlhorn, 2017). However, it does not necessarily indicate that the current state of HL classes is satisfactory. The approaches towards language policies related to HLs are continually evolving and as a result, the status of HLs in education must be regularly monitored and evaluated. The following subchapter examines this process through the example of Polish in Germany, illustrating how HL policies are implemented in practice.

4.3 Polish as a Heritage Language in German Education System

On the one hand, Polish has been an official EU language since Poland's accession in 2004. On the other hand, this formal recognition has not necessarily translated into greater prestige or institutional support in countries with substantial Polish migration. Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, including Poles, have often faced discrimination and negative stereotyping. Aloysxa Tudor describes this as migratism – the attribution of migrant status to certain groups and the subsequent discrimination they experience (Tudor, 2022, para 2). As a result, Polish, as a language associated with migration, has frequently been perceived as lacking prestige (Pułaczewska, 2017, p. 44). This lower status is reflected in the gap between official regulations and practice.

The Polish language education in Germany is related to various political and historical factors. As two neighbouring states, Poland and Germany have a lengthy and complex history of cross-border contact and migration. However, the first significant migration flow dates back to the 19th century where many Poles settled in the Ruhr area (Brehmer & Mehlhorn, 2020, p. 393), thus, the Polish language marked its presence in Germany. According to Microcensus from 2024, Polish is the fourth most commonly spoken immigrant language in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt [Destatis], 2024). However, despite its long presence and number of speakers, the language policy towards Polish was initiated only in 1991 when Poland and Germany signed the Treaty on Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation.

Contrary to the usual treatment of immigrant languages, Polish has some legal protection because the Treaty ensures the protection of German and Polish language in each country (Traktat..., 1992). The regulations of the Treaty were specified twenty years later, in 2011 in a follow-up document, a Joint Declaration of the Round Table. Both sides declare to support and promote the languages, culture,

and history. Although the declarations regarding the languages are vague, the main outcome is that both sides are obliged to monitor the situation of each language on its territory (Joint Declaration of the Round Table, 2011). However, from the German side, there are several challenges in accurately reporting on the situation of Polish. First, as mentioned above, the education system is federal-based, meaning that each federal state has different educational solutions regarding Polish. The second challenge is the complexity of the learning landscape: there are numerous formal and informal ways to learn Polish making it difficult to accurately track the numbers of students and courses.

These problems are reflected in the reports prepared by the KMK. Every couple of years KMK publishes a report which summarises the information about Polish classes in each federal state which mainly mentions places where students have an opportunity to learn Polish as a foreign or heritage language and the statistics regarding the number of students who learn Polish. The information in the reports, however, raises many questions (Mehlhorn, 2017). One example of the report's limitations is the lack of statistical coverage of the situation in each federal state, which prevents a complete understanding of the data – usually only eight states provide KMK with information (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2020, p. 29). Also, the statistics do not include students who learn the language outside formal education. Besides, the report covers only the situation in formal education organisations, thus excluding information about Polish classes organised by parents' initiatives and the Polish Catholic Mission (Polish: *Polska Misja Katolicka*, German: *Polnische Katholische Mission*).

Additionally, the last part of the latest report from 2021, a part called *Hinweise und Vorschläge zur weiteren Förderung des Polnischunterrichts* (English: *Advice and suggestions for the further promotion of Polish courses*), presents the same suggestions for the promotion of Polish classes as the report from 2012 and 2017 (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2020, pp. 53-54). The text gives the impression that this part is copy-pasted without taking into account the changes across the years. For instance, in the last chapter, the report concludes that the situation of Polish has not improved, which is contradictory to the previous parts of the report, that states there are more learning opportunities. Overall, the report gives a very general impression about the situation of the Polish language in Germany. However, one cannot rely on all the data included there.

A closer understanding of the situation of Polish as HL emerges when policies are examined at the level of federal states. In this dissertation, particular attention is given to two western states, Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, which serve as the setting for the three bottom-up Initiatives that form the focus of this study (see Section 3.2).

In Baden-Württemberg, the responsibility for Polish language education lies primarily with the Polish consulate and with bottom-up initiatives. Polish families may enrol their children in classes provided by the consulate in Remseck am Neckar or in those offered by organisations such as Wawel e.V. German schools in Baden-Württemberg make classrooms available for these classes and facilitate their organisation, yet the responsibility for establishing and overseeing them remains with parents and grassroots initiatives. Attendance in these classes can be formally acknowledged on a school certificate as an additional note (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2017).

In Hesse, the provision of Polish HL classes is more varied. As in Baden-Württemberg, consular schools (such as in Eschborn) and community initiatives offer courses. What distinguishes Hesse, however, is the involvement of the Hessian Ministry of Education, which has offered Polish HL classes in multiple cities since 2015. During the 2021/2022 school year, 34 groups operated across 23 cities (Staatliche Schulämter in Hessen, n.d.). As in Baden-Württemberg, attendance and achievement in these courses can be recorded on a school certificate, with the level of attainment noted as either “success” or “great success” (Staatliche Schulämter in Hessen, n.d.). In addition, students in Hesse may learn Polish as a foreign language and take a matriculation examination in the subject, although to date only one school in Frankfurt am Main has provided this option (Neue Gymnasiale Oberstufe, n.d.). Despite the relatively broad provision, the requirement of at least ten students to open an HL group poses an ongoing challenge for the community.

The differing policy approaches across regions shape the roles played by grassroots initiatives. In Baden-Württemberg, such initiatives work to fill the gaps left by official language policy. In Hesse, they concentrate on building community connections and on advocating for an expansion of Polish language provision, as well as networking with other Polish organisations. In some cases, local activities and networking have led to the formation of trans-local or even state-wide language activist organisations. These bodies contribute both to community-building and to the promotion of greater access to HL courses.

4.4 Language Policies and Transnational Relations in Practice

Every anniversary of the Treaty from 1991 brings to light the imbalance between the situation of Polish in Germany and German in Poland: while almost two million students in Poland learn German (Service of the Republic of Poland, 2022), in Germany there is no exact number of Polish learners, but it is

certainly significantly smaller (KMK, 2020, pp. 29-30). The 30th anniversary in 2021, not surprisingly, also sparked conversation on this issue. Polish authorities and diplomats, for instance consuls, have suggested solutions such as recognising Polish as a minority language to address the imbalance (Lemańczyk, 2021). However, it was the actions of the ruling party in Poland at that time that provoked debate among both German and Polish authorities, as well as Polish grassroots initiatives in Germany. Here, we finally can dive deeper into how the documents discussed above translate into practice.

In February 2022, the Polish Minister of Education issued an ordinance reducing the number of classes for the German minority in Poland (Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, 2022). The ordinance was preceded by discussions related to the Treaty from 1991, namely they focused on the claim that Germany has failed to adhere to its responsibilities as outlined in the 1991 Treaty, specifically in regards to the provision of financial support for instruction in Polish as a native language (Radio Opole, 2022). Typically, national and ethnic minorities in Poland are entitled to three hours of classes per week (Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and on the Regional Languages, 2005), but the German minority, under the new ordinance, is only entitled to one hour (Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science, 2022). This ordinance was not consulted with representatives of the German minority in Poland or any Polish organisations representing Poles in Germany.

The decision naturally sparked outrage among the German minority in Poland (Urban, 2022), however, reactions from Polish organisations in Germany were mixed. Some organisations whose history dates back to the early 20th century and have more Catholic orientation welcomed the decision and expressed their support in an open letter (Kowalski, 2022). Others, who advocate for Polish education in Germany, for example Polish Federal Network for Participation and Social Affairs (German: *Polnischen Sozialrates das Polnische Bundesnetzwerk Partizipation*), and have a more European focus, expressed their dissatisfaction and opposed the open discrimination against the German minority in Poland (Polnischen Sozialrates das Polnische Bundesnetzwerk Partizipation, 2022). There was a clear distinction between organisations that prioritise Polish traditions and those that were established after Poland's accession to the EU, with a focus on education and European integration.

The ordinance from the Polish Minister of Education sheds light on several crucial issues. Firstly, it emphasises that policies about immigrant languages are not just internal language-political matters but can stretch beyond national boundaries. The Polish government's actions targeting the German minority were a response to what they saw as a lack of appropriate measures by the German government. Secondly, the reciprocity in German-Polish relations generated varied reactions from

Polish organisations, ranging from support to condemnation. This diversity highlights the lack of unified perspectives among these organisations, which have different historical origins and agendas. For instance, Rodło, established in the early 20th century, differs significantly from other organisations established in the 21st century (Nowosielski, 2016, pp. 73-78). Thirdly, the ordinance illustrates the problems that can arise from top-down policies, such as the exclusion of minorities and communities, resulting in outcomes that are not tailored to their needs. Furthermore, by not consulting with these groups, the ordinance failed to recognize the efforts of Polish organisations actively mediating with German authorities. This omission is unfortunate as many organisations have engaged in negotiations, gaining a nuanced understanding of the needs and priorities of their communities. This concern was explicitly raised during a debate organised by the German Institute of Poland in Darmstadt (German: *Deutsches-Polen Institut*), where a representative from the organisation Part of Europe emphasised the importance of recognizing and incorporating insights gained through these negotiations.

The online debate “Plaything between Germany and Poland? Polish diaspora in Germany and the German Minority in Poland” (German: *Spielball zwischen Deutschland und Polen? Die Polonia in Deutschland und die deutsche Minderheit in Polen*), featured representatives from the Polish and German governments, the German minority in Poland, and the Polish community in Germany. Representatives of both minorities emphasised that any decision by Poland that discriminates openly should involve the affected communities and minorities. The representative of the Polish government argued that Poland has invested over 5 billion euros in German language education, considering German as the second-largest foreign language in Poland in terms of student enrolment. In contrast, the representative of the German authorities contended that the education system is decentralised, making it challenging to provide precise numbers for Polish language classes. For further information, they recommended consulting the KMK report, although its reliability was questioned (as mentioned in 4.3). Overall, the debate revealed key features of the Polish-German relationship: Germany seemingly overlooking the Polish community, Poland responding reciprocally based on longstanding grievances. Additionally, unintentionally, the debate reflected power imbalances between languages. Despite being open to the audience, the debate was conducted solely in German, excluding Polish speakers unfamiliar with the language from active participation.

After the debate — and presumably after negotiation and mediation at the highest level — in 2022, the Federal Government decided to allocate funding for the promotion of Polish and supported the establishment of the Competence and Coordination Centre for Polish (Kompetenz- und Koordinationszentrum Polnisch, KoKoPol) (Auswärtiges Amt, 2022). The tasks of KoKoPol include,

among others, promoting Polish as a heritage language across Germany, supporting teachers, and providing financial support to initiatives (KoKoPol, n.d.). The emergence of KoKoPol was met with mixed feelings among educators and activists, as was expressed on various occasions during the fieldwork. Of course, additional funding and promotion are beneficial, as is having an umbrella organisation that can serve as a platform for exchange. At the same time, its emergence was also perceived by some as yet another example of top-down policy that did not sufficiently build on already existing structures. During data collection, the impact of KoKoPol's emergence was not yet visible in the everyday operations of the Initiatives, and some teachers were not aware that it had been established.

The debate and the interventions related to the HL classes implicitly raise the question of who bears responsibility for HL education. Should it fall to the country where an immigrant minority resides, to the country of origin, or to the community itself? In practice, these responsibilities are seldom fixed. From the LMF perspective, both the discussion and the broader situation reveal the expectations of different actors: communities seek involvement in matters that directly concern them, Polish authorities expect German institutions to assume responsibility, and German institutions, in turn, delegated this responsibility to the institution not embedded in existing structures and with a limited impact on the grassroots HL initiatives. Consequently, the community must organise and secure HL courses.

This context highlights how dynamic the language policy landscape can be. This shifts demand resilience from the Initiatives and requires them not only to adapt quickly to changing circumstances but also to maintain continuous monitoring and reacting to the changes. The following subchapters explore the community-based involvement of the Initiatives at institutional level of language management, focusing on how they navigate state and school authority's expectations while exercising agency to adapt, influence, and, at times, transform the position of Polish as a HL.

4.5 Connecting Communities and Institutions

The official policies and institutional measures, whether from Polish or German authorities, set the framework within which the Initiatives must operate. As the following examples illustrate, adapting to these frameworks is far from straightforward, and transforming them is even more challenging, though not beyond reach. The LMPs discussed here demonstrate a spectrum of adaptive and transformative strategies that Initiatives have employed to strengthen the position of Polish as a HL in the federal states. Among these, the "Polish in Hesse" campaign stands out as a grassroots effort that, often operating behind the scenes, succeeded in significantly reshaping the language's situation.

4.5.1 Campaign “Polish in Hesse”

“The key was to identify the decision-making centre”, as Regina, a language activist in her mid-50s, pointed out when discussing the “Polish in Hesse” campaign (Interview with Regina, pos. 151/229, 1:01:30-1:02:30). As a mother who raised her children bilingually, Regina actively participated in one of the Initiatives, dedicating herself to creating more opportunities for learning Polish within the school system, similar to the neighbouring federal state, North Rhine-Westphalia. However, the initial stages, around 2014, were unpromising.

Regina explained, “We knew about the Treaty, but no one expected a headmaster of some school to be aware of the Polish-German Treaty” (Interview with Regina, pos. 151/229, 1:01:30-1:02:30). Her use of the plural pronoun indicated a community effort behind addressing the issue and initiating action. At this juncture, various community-based initiatives operated in Hesse in response to community needs. According to Regina, this was additional evidence of the community's self-organisation:

Zrozumieliśmy, że właśnie ten stopień zorganizowania środowiska, to, że nie wszędzie są jakieś polskie organizacje, przy których mogłaby się przecież odbywać taka nauka i że tych rodziców jest wiele i bardzo rozproszonych. Więc zrozumieliśmy, że tak naprawdę, żeby na terenie Hesji zapewnić taką naukę w szerszym wymiarze, można tylko właśnie korzystając z tej infrastruktury szkolne.	We understood that it was precisely this degree of organisation of the community, the fact that there are not Polish organisations everywhere where such courses could take place, and that there are many parents and they are very scattered. So we understood that, in fact, in order to provide such courses on a wider scale in Hesse, the only option was to use the school infrastructure.
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Example 4.1 Interview with Regina, pos. 167/229, 01:06:30–01:08:00.

The incorporation of Polish classes into the Hessian school system, according to Regina, represents a logical progression. However, when the community attempted to engage with school authorities, they were informed that such decisions could only be made at a higher administrative level. Subsequently, the community endeavoured to establish communication with the Ministry of Education in the federal state. Unfortunately, their efforts proved futile, as they received an uninformative letter from the Ministry six months later (Interview with Regina, pos. 155/229, 01:03:00-01:03:30). Realising the need for support, the community sought assistance from another Polish initiative based in North Rhine-

Westphalia, the Federal Association of Polish Language Teachers. This association equipped them with insights on approaching the issue, namely the necessity of involving a representative from Polish authorities.

The community has utilised the resources they have – first as citizens using the education system, they address the ministry, then, when that strategy was not effective, they utilise other resources - their network and finally, the official institutions. As Regina mentions:

Konsulat nam był potrzebny, żeby rozpocząć w ogóle dyskusję [...]. Natomiast sam minister nigdy by nie zaprosił samych rodziców. Przedstawiciele konsulatu byli dla nas ważni, bo oni tylko mieli pewną siłę nacisku, że ktoś nam poświęci czas.	We needed the consulate to initiate discussions with the ministry. [...] A minister himself would never invite parents. The consulate representatives were crucial to us, as they possessed a certain leverage to ensure someone would dedicate time to us
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Example 4.2 Interview with Regina, pos. 155/229, 01:04:40–01:06:30.

As a result of these discussions, Hessian authorities stipulated the necessity for evidence that there were indeed as many interested families as the Polish community asserted. In response, activists, with support from Polish authorities, initiated the Polish In Hesse campaign. They began collecting forms from families, declaring their intention to enrol their children in HL classes. Activists gathered 1,200 forms, submitted them to the ministry, and only then did the Ministry announce the commencement of classes, initially with 15 groups. The HL classes are still provided with varying numbers – some classes emerged in one place and closed down in others.

The campaign illustrates community-driven, transformative language management. The community noticed a mismatch in expectations regarding the provision of HL courses – the community expected German authorities to provide them, whereas the authorities expected the community to assume responsibility. This was evaluated as problematic – the belief that HL provision is a private matter and that schools do not assume responsibility was challenged, and a response demonstrating resilience in practice was designed and implemented. The community drew on resources such as community networks and shared organisational capacity, both recognised as indicators of resilience and community agency (Kirby et al., 2025). The Polish in Hesse campaign reveals an ironic situation in which, despite the community initiating and driving the effort, local education authorities did not respond until Polish authorities became involved. The community was required to substantiate the actual need, drawing on assistance from the Consulate to do so. German state authorities regarded

HL classes as a community matter, expecting the community to manage them, whereas the community expected the classes to be facilitated by school authorities, in line with the Treaty's provision that each country should support the other's language.

When these expectations were not met, the communication turned to alternative resources and other actors, including community networks and institutional support from the country of origin, eventually obtaining clarification from the ministry on the procedures required. They then mobilised local families interested in Polish classes, raising awareness of the campaign's aims. In doing so, they operated simultaneously at institutional and community levels. While the consulate lent its support and the ministry information on what is actually needed in order to open classes, the management and coordination of the process rested entirely with the community. Through this cooperation, they were able to transform the existing arrangements and establish a new system for HL provision in Hesse.

The new framework has been established, and the community now faces the task of adapting to it through ongoing monitoring and by raising parents' awareness of the possibility of enrolling their children in HL classes. As Regina explains:

Wszystko to tak naprawdę niestety jest nadal na barkach rodziców, tylko że została ta ścieżka wydeptana. Jest pewien... są dobre praktyki, jak o takie grupy wnioskować i są, no jest sporo doświadczenia. To znaczy rodzice się wymieniają pod tym kątem informacjami, namawiają się nawzajem i dzięki temu się wspierają.

All of this unfortunately still rests on the shoulders of the parents, albeit with a paved path. There are good practices on how to apply for such groups, and there is a wealth of experience. Parents exchange information under this initiative, persuading and supporting each other.

Example 4.3 Interview with Regina, pos. 174/229, 01:13:00–01:14:00.

Regina's words illustrate that even after the campaign's success, the work of sustaining HL provision remains embedded within the community, relying on established pathways and mutual support. The LMP that took place in order to initiate the campaign and then the HL classes have, in turn, deepened networks and strengthened the community, as the process required mediation with both Polish and German authorities as well as internal discussions within the community. Specifically, it involved convincing parents to enrol their children and highlighting the benefits of learning Polish. In an article published in a journal for Polish teachers in Germany, the author, Agnieszka Siemasz-Kałuża, emphasised that "Many parents are still hesitant or indifferent and fail to comprehend why sending

their child to Polish lessons is necessary if Polish is already spoken at home” (Siemasz-Katuża, 2017, p. 106). Due to the facultative status of Polish, the interest and willingness of parents to enrol their children are crucial. Therefore, the promotion of Polish as HL classes must continue.

The Polish in Hesse campaign has changed the status of Polish and, in turn, opened discussion about next steps. It shows the development of both horizontal and vertical connections with state authorities and other initiatives. The campaign also surfaced beliefs about HL provision: it presented Polish as a language worthy of inclusion in the education system and worth mobilising for. Yet monitoring evidence, together with Regina’s remarks in Example 4.3, indicates that for German authorities HL provision still falls under a community matter.

Although the action took place in only one federal state, the community’s expertise can be applied more broadly and shared with other initiatives. Through the campaign, vertical links between German and Polish authorities have been established, alongside horizontal links with other Polish initiatives. How these links operate in practice, how they are utilised, and what expectations the Initiatives attach to this network are questions explored in the following section.

4.5.2 Relation With Polish Institutions

The relationship with Polish institutions is usually limited to consulates which orchestrate events for the Polish diaspora and oversee competitions such as the Polish Language Olympiad in Germany, in which students of bottom-up initiatives can take part in. The relationship with Polish institutions varies due to the distinct situations of the Polish language across the federal states. In Hesse, for instance, beyond the Polish In Hesse campaign, the consulate’s role is predominantly confined to offering financial support, often in the form of some teaching materials (based on the observation in Krasnale). Conversely, in Baden-Württemberg, the consulate plays a more pivotal role – namely, it is mandated to facilitate the organisation of classes in accordance with federal regulations (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2017).

In the case of the Initiative where Waleria, a Polish language teacher in Baden-Württemberg, the consulate plays a role of a symbolic patrons rather than active partners and it is the Initiative who takes responsibility of organising and monitoring the classes. Waleria explains:

Te zajęcia miały być organizowane pod patronatem konsulatu, czyli właściwie no	These classes were meant to be organised under the patronage of the consulate, which in fact
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powinny być w pełni organizowane przez Konsulat Generalny danego kraju. My musimy zgłosić po prostu zapotrzebowanie, że jest grupa dzieci pochodzenia polskiego, chcą się uczyć języka polskiego, musimy mieć zgodę konsulatu, stąd też zwróciłam się do konsulatu generalnego w Monachium, otrzymałam taką zgodę i takie wsparcie, rozpoczęliśmy pracę (...) Działamy trochę jak taka hybryda, to znaczy konsulat musi być naszym partnerem, kiedy zwracamy się do lokalnych władz o wypożyczenie sali.

means they should be fully organised by the General Consulate of the given country. We simply have to report that there is a group of children of Polish origin who want to learn Polish, and we must have the Consulate's permission. That is why I approached the Consulate General in Munich, I received such permission and support, and I began our work. [...] We operate somewhat like a hybrid, meaning that the Consulate must be our partner when we approach the local authorities to request the use of a classroom.

Example 4.4 Interview with Waleria, pos. 24/83, 00:05:00–00:06:00.

The responsibility for organising the classes once again rests primarily with the community, with institutional actors providing support that remains constrained in scope.

4.5.3 School Authorities

To illustrate the effort of establishing the HL course in schools in Baden-Württemberg, let's start with a step-by-step guide, presented by Henryka (Interview with Henryka, pos. 10/31) who is responsible for negotiation with school administration on behalf of the initiative.

First, it is essential to determine whether there will be enough children, requiring collection of information across the community. Second, an email introducing the Initiative is sent to the school administration. Third, Henryka, who represents the Initiative, usually receives an invitation to a meeting with school administration. Fourth, during the meeting, she asks about possibilities to organise the HL course there and school requirements. Typically, this involves logistical details, such as completing classes by 4 pm when the school building closes. Sometimes, she needs to negotiate, especially when classes involve students from different schools, requiring time for them to arrive. Addressing concerns with cleaning staff may also be needed, ensuring that the room where HL classes are held, can be cleaned after the class is completed. Occasionally, compromises may be required, as some schools treat HL classes as interest clubs (German: *Arbeitsgemeinschaften*) and there is a policy that such clubs should be free, while the Initiative is funded by parents' contributions. In such cases,

Henryka has to explore alternative locations. Once the school agrees and details are finalised, an application, signed by Polish authorities, is submitted to the school through the consulate. As a result, the school administration agrees to provide rooms free of charge. These steps do not include the dissemination of information about HL courses and advertising the course within the community. Such a process takes time and logistical effort of the Initiative as well as the community – parents, who enrol their children, and teachers, who are in the frontline when it comes to the communication with schools, usually regarding logistic issues.

In Hesse, on the other hand, while HL classes are provided and financed by the state, challenges exist, especially regarding informing parents about the possibility of creating such groups in schools. This appears to be a more widespread issue, as it is mentioned as one of the biggest challenges reported by teachers in open-ended questionnaire responses:

“Brak informacji w szkołach o możliwości brania udziału w zajęciach.”	“Lack of information in schools about the possibility of taking part in the classes.”
“Przekaz informacji – często sekretariaty nie informują rodziców o możliwości pobieraniu nauki języka polskiego w ramach HSU.”	“Information provision – school offices often do not inform parents about the possibility of learning Polish within HL classes”
“Brak informacji dla rodziców, jakie są oferty w okolicy i jaka jest oferta Landu w szkołach.”	“Lack of information for parents about what is available locally and what provision is offered by the federal state in schools.”

Example 4.5 Selected answers to the open-ended question “What are the problems related to teaching Polish as HL in Germany?”

Educators who took part in the survey identified key challenges in working with school authorities, echoing the experiences of members of the bottom-up Initiatives. While integrating HL classes into schools is seen as a positive step, there is room for improvement, particularly in how information is shared. Teachers also pointed to limited engagement from German school authorities and called for stronger support. Even when classes are set up, ongoing monitoring is needed to ensure they can continue in future years. A perfect illustration of this issue is the situation observed in Darmstadt:

After a long absence from Polish lessons, Ada came to class, brought by her grandmother. The teacher asked what had happened that made them come. The grandmother explained that Ada was supposed

to attend Polish classes organised by the school, but for several weeks they had been waiting for the school to take action. Since nothing happened, the parents decided that she should instead come to the classes organized by the Initiative.

Field Note 4.1 Darmstadt, 03.11.2022.

In Ada's case, the LMP is straightforward – there is a clear mismatch between the parents' expectations about enrolment and the school's expectation regarding the number of students required to open the class. The parents then design and implement a response by enrolling Ada in the Initiative's course.

Even if the classes can be organised by the school, the Initiative's courses are still a required alternative, as they provide more continuity and stability. The situation mentioned by Ada's grandmother, namely the fact that the school needs more time, is actually not uncommon, given the operational constraints. In Hesse, for example, at least ten students of similar age are required to start a course. This number is often hard to find within one school, which means students may need to travel to a neighbouring school after their regular lessons to attend the class. The task to ensure HL provision is difficult for one person alone, which confirms the value of intra-community connection. In practice, even when schools provide classes, networks built through the bottom-up Initiatives often step in to help organise them. These networks not only make coordination easier but also help the Polish community to assert its rights. They are also an important resource for monitoring provision effectively.

However, the ongoing need for monitoring and advocacy requires considerable effort. Remarkably, these community activities often remain within national groups, such as the Polish-speaking community, even though other immigrant community-based organisations pursue similar goals. The bottom-up Initiatives also benefit from structures already established by these initiatives. The following paragraphs examine collaboration with other grassroots initiatives representing immigrant communities in Hesse and Baden-Württemberg.

4.6 Horizontal Links: Connecting with Other Grassroots Initiatives

Independently of one another, Wanda – who initiated one of the Initiatives in her city (see Example 4.6) – and Jadwiga noticed that many organisations offered language classes for other migrant communities, but there was no equivalent for Poles (Jadwiga, pos. 48/101, 00:40:00–00:49:00). At different times and in different contexts, each took steps to address this absence. They designed and

implemented the response. Jadwiga, together with a group of friends, established the association. Wanda, together with another Polish-speaking mother, approached the local centre where playgroups were held to ask about the process for starting a Polish-language playgroup, as she herself describes:

Oni mi powiedzieli, że niczego więcej nie potrzebują poza 10 dzieci i jak zbiorę i przyjdę, to oni oni nas tam wpuszczą, mogą prowadzić takie zajęcia. Założyliśmy taką grupę i bardzo szybko zebraliśmy bardzo dużo matek chętnych. Same zrobiłyśmy ulotki i po prostu to się już rozeszło pocztą pantoflową. Prowadziłyśmy jedną, a potem dwie grupy, a potem, potem się okazało, że tutaj niedaleko mieszka też ktoś prowadzi jakąś grupę tylko taką jakby, nie wiem, na czarno, że tak powiem, te osoby też do nas, u nas się pojawiły, a potem pojawia się jedna mama, która powiedziała, że jej zdaniem powinniśmy założyć stowarzyszenie, które założy przedszkole polsko-niemieckie.	They told me that they did not need anything more than 10 children, and that if I gathered them and came back, they would let us in and I could run such classes. We set up a group and very quickly gathered a large number of interested mothers. We made the leaflets ourselves, and the information spread simply by word of mouth. We ran one group, then two, and later it turned out that someone living nearby was also running a group, only, as it were, unofficially, so to speak. Those people also came to us. Then one mother appeared who said that in her opinion we should set up an association that would establish a Polish-German kindergarten.
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Example 4.6 Interview with Wanda, pos. 4/203 , 00:01:30–00:05:30.

The person mentioned by Wanda, who facilitated the other informal group, was Adela, who coordinated meetings for Polish-speaking children alongside her friend. Her friend placed an advertisement in a local church, which then led to the rapid expansion of the group, making private apartments unsuitable for such gatherings. In the search for more appropriate space, they encountered Wanda and her group.

Waleria, who works as a teacher in a German school, observed a considerable number of Polish-speaking students at her school. This prompted her to consider introducing HL classes in Polish. Through connecting with other immigrant communities, they acquired the necessary information and knowledge to initiate such classes:

I najpierw dowiadaliśmy się od rodziców tureckich, od rodziców włoskich, jak oni organizowali zajęcia i okazało się, że jest taka	And first we found out from the Turkish parents, from the Italian parents, how they organised the classes and it turned out that it was possible, we
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możliwość, musimy zgłosić po prostu	just have to declare that there is a group of
zapotrzebowanie, że jest grupa dzieci	children of Polish origin, they want to learn
pochodzenia polskiego, chcą się uczyć języka	Polish, we have to have the permission of the
polskiego, musimy mieć zgodę konsulatu.	consulate.

Example 4.7 Interview with Waleria, pos. 29/83, 00:12:30–00:14:00.

Here, the LMP addresses the community's expectation for a community-based outlet for Polish speakers, and the design and implementation rest on utilising the pathways those communities have already created. However, collaborations with other community-based organisations representing different immigrant groups are not that frequent. For example, beside the initial collaboration necessary for establishing the Initiative, Waleria states that her group actively participated in the events organised in an intercultural centre managed by municipal authorities. Through these activities, the centre facilitated connections with other organisations involved in HL education. However, contacts are confined to the involvement in multicultural events, such as the Summer Day, which provided opportunities for various bottom-up initiatives to showcase their cultural practices related to summer (Interview with Waleria, pos. 32/83, 00:13:00–00:15:00). Nevertheless, Waleria did not delve into the specifics of these interactions.

In her city, Cecylia, a teacher engaged both in a German school and one of the bottom-up Initiatives, highlighted two instances of collaboration among various bottom-up initiatives. Initially, the collaboration was initiated by a Czech organisation that sought cooperation with Polish and Hungarian counterparts. The primary motivation behind this collaboration was the challenge of finding affordable rental spaces in the city. Bottom-up initiatives often operate with limited financial resources, and the need for classes and meetings involves transporting teaching materials and accessories. Frequently, rented spaces lack storage for such materials (Interview with Cecylia, pos. 144/173, 01:19:00 – 01:23:00).

Given these constraints, the Czech organisation sought to join forces with other initiatives to approach city authorities for affordable premises. However, talks proved difficult, with the consistent response that no suitable space was available. The organisation eventually relocated to a cheaper site outside the city, which weakened its ties with other initiatives. This effort, however, laid the groundwork for future connections. Some time later, the Foreigners' Advisory Council (German *Ausländerbeirat*) contacted Cecylia, using details she had provided earlier, and invited her to a meeting with representatives from other, similar organisations representing different communities and languages,

among others Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese. The discussion revealed common challenges, aligning with the suggestions of Marjorie Mayo and colleagues (Mayo et al., 2009, p. 40), who recommend that a city should provide a platform that can subsequently ensure social cohesion. As Cecylia recalls:

W zasadzie dokładnie, dokładnie wszystkie to stowarzyszenia, mówiąc o swoich bolączkach, powiedziały dokładnie to samo: nie mamy pomieszczeń i jako stowarzyszenie nie jesteśmy w stanie ich w ogóle opłacać w tym mieście. I to jest moment, kiedy miasto faktycznie zaczęło się zastanawiać, jak wyjść naprzeciw zapotrzebowaniom tych stowarzyszeń.	In fact, all of these associations, when talking about their problems, said exactly the same thing: we don't have space and as associations we are not able to pay for them at all in this city. And this is the moment when the city actually started to think about how to meet the demands of these associations.
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Example 4.8 Interview with Cecylia, pos. 133/173, 01:27:00–01:29:00.

As a result, the bottom-up Initiative where Cecylia worked benefited from complimentary rooms in one of the schools in the city. In that location, several organisations conducted their HL courses. However, due to the pandemic, bottom-up initiatives were no longer permitted to use the space, leading to the suspension of the organisation where Cecylia worked.

Networking between the bottom-up Initiatives and other communities revealed two key insights. First, other initiatives often have procedural knowledge and organisational structures that can be adapted to suit different community needs. Such cooperation can serve as a foundation for newly forming organisations. Second, these initiatives share common challenges, particularly the shortage of physical space. When acting collectively, they can exert greater influence in negotiations with city authorities. However, as Cecylia's example shows, such efforts do not always succeed, and in this case the discussion among grassroots initiatives was ultimately coordinated by the city.

Wanda also recognised the potential value of inter-organisational cooperation, citing a Berlin-based initiative that supports all community-based advocacy efforts related to HL, not only those concerning Polish. She noted some attempts to establish similar cooperation in her own city but pointed to a lack of sustained networking, which she attributed to the distinct circumstances of each language community. When asked about Dachverband zur Förderung von Mehrsprachigkeit in frühkindlicher Bildung und Erziehung e.V. (English: *Umbrella Organisation for the Promotion of Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education and Care*) which brings together several bottom-up initiatives, including the

bilingual kindergarten where she works, she expressed scepticism and noted the difficulties of committing to yet another initiative:

Teraz mam wrażenie, że to upada. Ja mogłabym długo się zastanawiać, dlaczego tak się dzieje, że na przykład to nie są w stanie na zebraniu zebrać kworum, więc ja mogę tylko ze swojej strony powiedzieć też jesteśmy w tym stowarzyszeniu, ale ja nie mam czasu pojechać na zebranie. I myślę, że większość przedszkoli i takich tych placówek teraz opiekuńczo-wychowawczych znajduje się w tak tragicznej sytuacji, że po prostu nikt nie ma siły się już angażować.	Now I have the impression that it is falling apart. I could wonder for a long time why it's happening that, for example, they're not able to gather a quorum at a meeting, so I can only say from my side that we're also in this association, but I don't have time to go to a meeting. And I think that the majority of kindergartens and similar institutions are now in such a dire situation that simply no one has the strength to get involved anymore.
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Example 4.9 Second interview with Wanda, pos. 16/77, 00:05:30–00:07:30.

The umbrella-organisation was set up to promote multilingualism from an early age and lobbying for small kindergartens and their providers. Due to the pandemic, the providers of educational care centres found themselves in a difficult situation.

While the needs and objectives of immigrant-based initiatives are comparable, Polish initiatives seldom engage in collaboration, aligning with findings in research on other community-based initiatives. Valley Lytra's study on the activities of community-based Greek schools in Switzerland, for instance, revealed that the community tended to be inward-looking, with limited contact with other immigrant communities and the broader Swiss society, primarily confined to institutional settings (Lytra, 2014, p. 566). However, the cause of this tendency is not further expounded upon.

The reasons for limited contacts can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the distinctive circumstances of each immigrant community vary in terms of organisational level or the number of people involved. Secondly, the associated costs of activism should not be overlooked, as expressed by Wanda in Example 4.9. Networking and coordinating work are time-consuming and demand resources often exceed the Initiatives' capacities. Therefore, when municipal institutions act as facilitators in networking, as seen in instances mentioned by Waleria and Cecylia, initiatives can effectively share their experiences. Crucially, the key determinant for successful cooperation is city authorities willing to listen to the needs of the initiatives.

While pre-existing examples of language-related initiatives and informal support, as in Waleria's case, are essential for inspiring the establishment of the Initiatives, examples of the formation of horizontal links between other grassroots organisations representing different communities are infrequent and rather occasional. Interestingly, scientific academic literature suggests that this tendency to not create horizontal links is the norm. In the aforementioned book on community-based initiatives in New York (García et al., 2013), contributors predominantly focus on initiatives representing a single nationality or language, and the connections mentioned are typically vertical, involving micro-level (families) and macro-level (state or local institutions). Although sharing knowledge proves beneficial, as highlighted by Raymonde Sneddon in his article on Albanian initiatives collaborating with other communities (Sneddon, 2014).

4.7 Becoming Part of Urban Multilingualism

Although connections between the Polish-speaking community and other immigrant groups are rare, members of the Initiatives recognise the potential value of such networking and situate their work within the broader context of urban multilingualism. While the term itself was not explicitly invoked during interviews, it surfaced implicitly in participants' reflections. What emerges, however, is a perception of urban multilingualism that mirrors the absence of inter-community links: it is understood less as an interconnected linguistic ecosystem and more as the coexistence of separate languages in parallel.

For many involved in the Initiatives, the subject of multilingualism carries a sense of overfamiliarity, even fatigue. As Wanda remarks:

No to wiadomo, że to jest temat taki nośny, ale jakby już trochę oklepany w takim dużym mieście, no tutaj się nikt już nie zastanawia nad tym nad wielojęzycznością, jak 70% dzieci ma imigranckie pochodzenie.	You know, it's a big topic, but in a big city like this, it's a bit of an old cliché: nobody wonders whether multilingualism is here anymore, because 70% of the children have an immigrant background.
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Example 4.10 Interview with Wanda, pos. 18/77, 00:08:30–00:09:30.

While multilingualism is a well-known term for the Initiatives and it is perceived as something valuable by the school authorities (see subsection 4.2 of this chapter), such positive perceptions appear to be directed more towards the abstract concept of multilingualism rather than specific languages, at least within the federal states of Hesse and Baden-Württemberg. In Hesse, only Polish and Arabic receive

funding from authorities, while other languages are primarily sponsored by consulates or embassies (Staatliche Schulämter in Hessen, n.d.). In Baden-Württemberg, all HL classes require the patronage of consulates or other authorities. Thus, although multilingualism is appreciated and recognized in a general sense, specific languages face different levels of support. Consequently, even if classes were successfully introduced in schools as a result of the Polish In Hesse campaign, ongoing community vigilance is necessary to monitor the situation.

Moreover, the tendency of German school authorities to disregard the languages spoken at home and to assign responsibility for their maintenance to communities or other states reflects the monolingual paradigm rooted in the “one nation–one language” ideology. In this framework, multilingualism may be symbolically celebrated, but its practical expression – it is largely invisible, sustained by immigrant communities, often led by women. Institutional discourses subtly position minority language education as problematic, framing it as a potential threat to social cohesion, as competition between languages, or as a private concern rather than a public responsibility (Liddicoat, 2020, p. 343). Despite the nuanced perspectives on language development and education expressed by members of the bottom-up Initiatives and their communities, German institutions remain relatively inflexible. As Adela summarised:

Przecież tak naprawdę we [name of the city] mało kto nie jest dwujęzyczny. Prawie nie ma takich ludzi, to jest prawie niemożliwością, większość z nas jest dwu albo wielojęzyczna i mimo wszystko nic się nie zmieniło właśnie w strukturze zajęć, w podejściu tego jak nauczamy języków, takie troszkę smutne.	After all, hardly anyone in [name of the city] is not bilingual. There are almost no such people, it's almost impossible, most of us are bilingual or multilingual and yet nothing has changed in the structure of classes, in the approach of how we teach languages, it's a bit sad.
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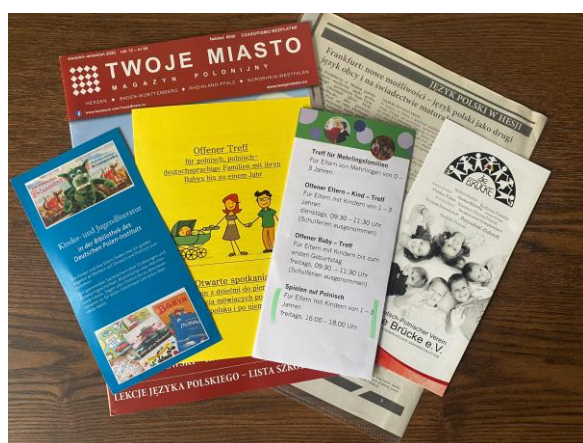
Example 4.11 Interview with Adela, pos. 151/206, 00:33:30–00:35:00.

There is a mismatch between German only symbolic support of HL as well as its symbolic perception of HLs as a potential asset and the fact that communities acknowledge their languages as a social capital and want to act on it. The Polish bottom-up Initiatives exemplify this discrepancy, as they observed and experienced a shift in attitudes towards the Polish language among Polish immigrants, which is discussed in the next subsection.

4.8 Pączkowanie

Regina, during our interview, brought several flyers and magazines that showcase the diverse activities undertaken by the Polish community in the region where she resides (see Figure 6). Firstly, there is a flyer promoting Polish books for children and teenagers available at the library of the German-Polish Institute in Darmstadt. Secondly, there are flyers with information about meetings for Polish-speaking families with babies under one year and aged one to three, as well as leaflets about Die Brücke (in the foreground, from left to right). In the background, on the right, there is a leaflet with details of Polish as an HL class available in Hesse. Finally, on the left, there is a magazine titled “Twoje miasto” (English: *Your City*), covering four federal states.

Figure 6 Flyers and Magazines Showcasing Polish Community Activities in Hesse



Note. Photograph by author, 2022.

Regina opened it to the page containing information about Polish classes in Hessen, Baden-Württemberg, and Rhineland-Palatinate. She pointed out that there is also information on what to do if there is no offer in their city or town: interested parents should gather and apply to the school authority. Subsequently, she presented flyers explaining that, following the establishment of Die Brücke, more and more opportunities emerged. Regina referred to this growth as “budding” (Polish: *pączkowanie*) – a term that perfectly captures the emergence of new initiatives and opportunities for Polish-speaking families (Interview with Regina, pos. 67/229, 00:23:30–00:24:00).

Interviewees spoke of a growing willingness among parents to transmit Polish to their children, which can be considered as a noticeable shift in attitudes towards language maintenance. Several reflected on how this contrasted with earlier patterns, often drawing comparisons with the previous immigration movements, especially from the Silesia region. As Waleria recalled:

Wcześniejsze pokolenia... miałam takie wrażenie... troszkę się wstydzili tego, że, no mówią po polsku, jeżeli to były na przykład rodzinny ze Śląska. Wyglądało to troszeczkę inaczej.	Earlier generations... I had this impression... they were a bit ashamed of the fact that, well, they spoke Polish, if they were, for example, families from Silesia. It was a bit different.
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Example 4.12 Interview with Waleria, pos. 46/83 , 00:18:30–00:19:30.

Unlike in the past, where assimilation was a primary goal for immigrants, Polish community more and more recognise the value of language maintenance. This change in perspective was influenced not only by the political shifts of the 1990s but also by the proactive efforts of individuals, groups, and community-based initiatives.

The community's mobilisation facilitates outreach to others, fostering connections between various activities. For instance, Jadwiga's Initiative invited Wanda and Stefania to lead workshops for parents (Interview with Jadwiga, pos. 40/101, 00:37:00–00:38:00). In Cecylia's initiative, meetings were organised with Polish-speaking youth from a Gymnasium, where teenagers read books in Polish to children (Interview with Cecylia, pos. 57/173, 00:21:00–00:22:00). Wanda consistently conducts workshops for parents and teachers, promoting active community engagement (based on participant observation of such workshops in November 2021). Stefania, through one such event, established contact with the initiators of the Frankfurt Initiative, which led to fruitful cooperation (Interview with Stefania, pos. 15/206, 00:14:50–00:15:35). Previously, she had been involved with another organisation operating at the federal state level, dedicated to Polish language teachers in Germany. This organisation, Bundesvereinigung der Polnischlehrkräfte (English: *National Association of Polish Teachers*), was founded in 2007 with the goal of providing training for teachers on how to teach Polish as a foreign language.

The National Association, founded in 2007 after grassroots workshops revealed significant interest among educators, has since become a key hub for Polish language education. It offers training on teaching Polish as a foreign language, publishes the magazine *Polski w Niemczech/Polnisch in Deutschland* (English: *Polish in Germany*) with contributions from German and Polish scholars, and maintains a website that serves as a repository of teaching materials. More than a professional body, it fosters a sense of community among educators, enabling the exchange of ideas and experiences (Interview with Stefania, pos. 12/173, 00:03:30–00:07:00).

Over time, the network of communities and initiatives has grown denser, enabling activists to move beyond local concerns related to language policies. Several have begun to see wider collaboration as a “natural continuation” of their work, as Regina describes it, with the shared aim of ensuring the long-term future of Polish heritage language education:

Tak naprawdę chodziło o logiczne prowadzenie myślenia dalej: skoro w 16 landach jest 16 różnych sytuacji i jednocześnie występuje właśnie efekt demotywacji, na zasadzie: co ja mogę zrobić jak u mnie jest źle, a tak naprawdę nie było nigdy takiego współdziałania, które pociągnęłoby wszystkich razem za sobą. A można na przykład po pierwsze wymienić dobre praktyki, wyjaśnić sobie nawzajem, dlaczego u nas można było to uzyskać na przykład i czy na pewno u was też nie można tego uzyskać.

Actually it was about a certain logical thinking further: since there are 16 different situations in 16 federal states and at the same time, sometimes there's a demotivation effect, for example: what can I do when things are bad in my area, and there's never really been the kind of cooperation that pulls everyone together. But one can, for example, exchange good practices, explain to each other why we were able to do something in our area and whether you would be certainly able to do something in yours.

Example 4.13 Interview with Regina, pos. 189/229, 01:19:00–01:20:00.

In sum, to address the noticed mismatch of expectations between Polish-speaking communities and ministries of education across the federal states, the Federal Conference of Polish Working Committees was formed in December 2019. Implementation of this response relies on advocacy and negotiation with German authorities to expand the provision of Polish-language classes. To facilitate these efforts, the Conference appointed a representative in each federal state to liaise directly with local education authorities. As Regina notes below, the organisation also marks International Mother Language Day each year by sending an official letter to the KMK, highlighting ongoing issues in Polish language provision and proposing possible solutions.

Jeszcze roku 2020, to jeszcze było właśnie przed pandemią, po raz pierwszy napisaliśmy taki list. Informowaliśmy KMK, że takie grono powstało, i że w naszym gronie jest jakby przedstawiciel każdego landu, z którym można by podjąć rozmowy, albo o stworzeniu, albo o rozszerzeniu, albo o ulepszaniu oferty nauczania

It was still in 2020, just before the pandemic, when we wrote such a letter for the first time. We informed KMK that this group had been formed and that within it we had a representative from each federal state with whom discussions could be held about either creating, expanding, or improving the provision

języka polskiego w danym landzie na tym poziomie szkolnictwa państwowego. Chodziło o to gromadzenie wiedzy, chodziło o to skupienie naprawdę takich ludzi, którzy sprawdzili się w działaniu i wiedzą, jakie są możliwości i jakie ograniczenia.	of Polish language teaching in that state's public school system. It was about gathering knowledge and bringing together people who had already proven themselves in action and who knew what the possibilities were, as well as the limitations.
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Example 4.13 Interview with Regina, pos. 189/229, 01:19:00–01:20:00.

The mobilisation of communities and the establishment of new initiatives enable direct communication on a macro-level with the KMK, addressing the status of the Polish language. This also involves presenting the community's expectations regarding Polish classes, as the next subchapter discusses.

4.9 What Status Should Polish Have in Education?

Polish HL classes in Germany, whether organised by public schools or community initiatives, currently hold an extracurricular status. In Hesse, such a situation resulted in two contrasting visions for the future of HL education: maintaining the status quo or moving towards greater formalisation as mentioned by Regina in Example 4.13. The Polish in Hesse campaign was part of a broader acquisition and status planning effort to integrate HL classes into the curriculum. Cecylia saw the potential in such an approach, recalling that when Polish was once offered as a foreign language in a local Gymnasium, students could take the matriculation exam, a formal recognition of their skills, rather than receiving only a participation slip (Interview with Cecylia, pos. 164/173, 01:53:00–01:54:00).

Wanda, in turn, favours keeping HL classes flexible and outside the formal grading system. She argues that their current format, similar to after-school clubs, suits the mixed-age groups and varied language backgrounds of students. She warns that formal assessment could create unrealistic grading criteria and overlook the realities of bilingual families:

HSU działają jak kółka zainteresowań. Taki mają status. I to jest kwestia oczywiście organizacji i prestiżu, ale ja na przykład osobiście z tym nie mam problemu. Ja nie mam takiej presji i potrzeby, żeby to było wpisywane na świadectwo normalnie i były oceny. Dlatego, że	HL classes operate like an after-school activity. This is their status. And it's a question of organisation and prestige, of course, but I, for one, personally don't have a problem with that. I don't have such pressure and need for it to be written on the certificate normally and there are
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te osoby [...] nie zdają sobie sprawy, co to znaczy ocena ucznia, kryteria ocen, liczenie do świadectwa znajomości polskiego z rodziny dziecka, z rodziny mieszanej a rodziny polskiej, jak te dzieci mają być ocenione? Więc ta formuła zajęć dodatkowych nie jest zła moim zdaniem. Jest proporcjonalna do tego, co co jak jest to od strony strukturalnej ujęte: cztery roczniki razem albo osiem roczników razem i jak to ma być ocenione?	grades. Because these people [...] they don't realise what it means to grade a student, the criteria for grades, to include the knowledge of Polish in the school certificate of a child from a mixed family versus a Polish family, how are these children supposed to be graded? So this formula of these extra classes is not bad in my opinion. It's proportional to how it's structurally framed: four year groups together or eight year groups together and how is this to be assessed?
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Example 4.14 Second interview with Wanda, pos. 32/77, 00:11:30–00:12:30.

In her view, responsibility for HL education should remain primarily within the Polish-speaking community, with formal recognition achieved through optional language tests and certificates rather than integration into the core curriculum.

These divergent positions indicate a clear mismatch of expectations about Polish as a HL classes within the community, and the responses designed by Regina and Wanda reflect a broader debate in HL policy: whether to press for institutional responsibility and standardisation, or to preserve community-led, adaptable models that respond to local contexts, family circumstances, and varying student proficiency. Wanda positions herself firmly on the latter side, advocating a less formal, more flexible approach that accommodates diverse proficiencies – in other words, maintaining the status quo. In doing so, she implies that responsibility for monitoring and administering HL classes should remain within the Polish-speaking community, noting that organisational constraints make it difficult to sustain a formal curriculum for mixed-age, mixed-proficiency groups. For her, formalisation should come not through integration into the school curriculum, but through language testing and certification.

Wanda's view reflects a belief that certification provides a tangible reward for students and a way to formalise learning without disrupting the flexible, extracurricular structure of HL classes. Her emphasis on testing connects with Shohamy's (2006) observation that language testing is a powerful policy instrument, elevating the status of a language and reframing it as a skill and asset. While proficiency in dominant and foreign languages is routinely documented through school certificates and state

examinations, home languages often go unrecorded, leaving students' abilities invisible in official contexts.

Later in the interview, Wanda suggested that certification could also strengthen the teaching process by setting clear learning goals (Second interview with Wanda, pos. 70/77, 00:26:50–00:27:20). Yet here, research warns of challenges. Tests designed specifically for HL learners are rare, and assessment of their proficiency remains underexamined (Son, 2020, p. 423). Curricula for Polish as HL vary widely, which is discussed in depth in Chapter 6. They are often internal and informal sets of topics, which hinders the process of even creating standard, let alone general, tests. Wanda, however, argues for the use of official tests sanctioned by authorities, such as telc language tests or the matriculation exam, even though these are designed for foreign language learners.

Young-A Son summarises the academic debate: while giving HL learners foreign language tests may be inappropriate given their distinct language development, standardised tests come with established guidelines that cover accuracy, function, and content, making them adaptable to both groups. If the aim is to assess communicative ability rather than compare learners to native speakers, separate assessment criteria may be unnecessary (Son, 2020, p. 427).

The debate over certification also intersects with broader beliefs about HL education. Regina looks outward, expecting local authorities to take responsibility for HL provision and integrate Polish into the formal curriculum. By contrast, Wanda directs her expectations inward, towards the community and its resources that would maintain the current extracurricular format. However, as she points out, an access to the tests and official certification would work best as a form of recognition. These contrasting expectations shape the strategies activists pursue in language management, particularly related to advocacy efforts on an institutional level: Regina opts for upscaling, while Wanda's approach is to adapt to the current institutional framework that gives more flexibility in meeting communities' needs related to language education.

4.10 Managing Expectations: Back to Macro and Meso Levels Connection

The language-political environment in which the Initiatives operate is complex, requiring both flexibility and adaptability. Within this environment, their work reflects the three strategic functions of language advocacy identified by de Korne: representing the community's needs, connecting different actors and institutions, and creating new opportunities and frameworks for HL education (see Section 2.6.2). Through formal communication with Polish authorities, regional education

institutions and school administration, the Initiatives represent the Polish-speaking community in the public sphere. By bringing together parents, teachers, schools, and peer organisations, they connect communities that would otherwise operate in isolation to those institutions. Through provision of HL courses and teaching resources, they also create tangible structures, and in the case of Hesse, a framework for Polish within the school system.

The strategies applied by the Initiatives unfold within a policy environment shaped by a set of implicit and explicit expectations. German school authorities, although formally bound by the bilateral Treaty, operate on the expectation that teaching HL is primarily a community responsibility. This includes an assumption that communities will take the lead in promoting HL classes, monitoring their provision, and ensuring their continuity. Institutional actors expect that community requests will be presented to them clearly and in a unified voice, rather than anticipating or proactively addressing needs. Such expectations are rooted in broader societal attitudes that position migrant languages as marginal, and therefore not warranting full institutional recognition or support. As a result, the Initiatives are compelled not only to sustain HL classes but also to actively promote them, recruit participants, and safeguard their continuity.

Such dynamics are underpinned by a persistent monolingual bias. It is evident both in official frameworks and in perceptions of multilingualism that confine languages to national boundaries. In fact both German authorities as well as the Initiatives reinforce it. While societal multilingualism is seen by Initiatives as a commonly known phenomenon, it is viewed separately, as coexistence of several language units in a specific place. Such a perception limits focus on developing horizontal connections between communities. As a result, most efforts are directed towards institutional actors rather than inter-community cooperation.

Within this context, the Initiatives employ a set of pragmatic language management strategies: (i) leveraging pre-existing structures established by other immigrant communities; (ii) engaging in networking and community outreach; (iii) advocating for language-related rights; (iv) negotiating with relevant stakeholders; and (v) implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms related to HL provision and community needs. These strategies serve not only to improve the position of Polish as a HL in Germany but also to strengthen community resilience, adaptability and capacity for transformation. Without consistent monitoring, adaptation would be less effective and without mobilising community networks, often anchored in close personal ties, transformative change would be unlikely.

These strategies operate in both outward and inward directions. Mediation and advocacy address external stakeholders, while networking, outreach, and monitoring focus on the internal community of practice involving teachers, families and students. In doing so, the bottom-up Initiatives engage in covert language policy work that indirectly shapes overt educational policies, influencing both language beliefs and language status. This strategic interplay between inward and outward action sets the stage for the next chapter, which examines community outreach, specifically examining strategies directed at Polish-speaking families.

4.11 Influencing Macro-Level Heritage Language Policies

Language management aimed at influencing HL policy rests on the Initiatives acting as intermediaries between communities and institutions. Most change is pursued through existing pathways developed by other community organisations which can be considered as adaptive language management. Occasionally, actors try to create new routes to alter policy arrangements, as in the Polish in Hesse campaign, which is an instance of transformative language management. However, a mismatch remains: monitoring of HL provision is carried out by activists from the Initiatives rather than by authorities, reflecting a belief within German school administrations that immigrant languages are a community matter. This is widely recognised, but responses differ across communities and are not implemented consistently.

Thus, the overall pattern is mainly adaptive, with transformation emerging only when Initiatives attempt to change the underlying belief about responsibility or to open new institutional routes. Looking ahead, the burden of monitoring needs open discussion, along with coordinated responses across communities and a clearer case for shared responsibility with authorities. Under those conditions, transformative change becomes more plausible.

It is important to note that the evidence and interpretation are drawn from Polish-led Initiatives in Germany and a specific policy situation, with most detail from two federal states. LMPs are reconstructed from available documentation and interviews with activists, and many episodes occurred in the past. Access skewed towards three particularly active organisations and visible moments of advocacy. As a result, back-room discussions and instances where no overt action occurred (for example, unanswered requests to the authorities) are harder to capture. Policies and practices also vary across federal states and may shift over time. These bounds mean that claims about

mechanisms and expectations are strongest in the cases analysed, while generalisation to other language communities or regions requires additional evidence.

5. Bottom-Up Initiatives in Family Language Management

The chapter traces family–Initiative interactions as language management in practice: what parents expect, what Initiatives offer, and how decisions travel between home and organised provision. It identifies where mismatches arise, what options are considered, and which responses are implemented. Using the adaptive–transformative distinction, the analysis marks when actions fine-tune existing arrangements and when they reframe beliefs or redistribute responsibilities. The account draws on questionnaires, interviews, and field notes.

This analysis begins at home, the first site of HL maintenance, where ideals meet everyday pressures: limited time, uneven input, emotional labour, and the pull of the majority language. Subsections 5.1 to 5.4 trace how parents understand HL, what they hope to achieve, and where strains surface in daily routines.

The second part turns to what the Initiatives do in response (section 5.5 and 5.6). It looks at awareness-raising attempts, and peer contexts and community building, asking when these moves amount to deliberate strategy and when they operate as incidental by-products that continue initial momentum. Particular attention is given to what is left unexplored: linking family practices to meso-level action and cultivating language-political awareness within the family.

The chapter closes with practical recommendations that make Initiatives' work more intentional: clearer communication, evaluation of families' views on proposed activities, and support the development of both parental confidence and children's opportunities to use the HL. The aim is to strengthen resilience first within families and, through them, across the wider community.

5.1 From Family Mobilisation to Maintenance

As the Initiatives want to ensure the continuity of their activities, they need to engage not only with institutions but, most crucially, with families. In the context of the Initiatives, families constitute both the primary target group and the very foundation of community-driven action. These organisations originally emerged as grassroots responses to parental needs, offering peer support and guidance for multilingual upbringing. Having now operated for almost two decades at the time of this research, the relationship between parents and the Initiatives has evolved. What began as organically formed community spaces has gradually developed into a more specialist and structured approach to HL education.

As a consequence, the Initiatives are the one to identify the struggles and challenges faced by families and help develop strategies to address them. Although they possess considerable expertise, they must also adapt their approaches to align with parental expectations, persuading parents not only to enrol their children in classes but also to ensure their continuous participation. Yet, as the analysis will show, the Initiatives rarely employ systematic strategies to influence language management within families. Their influence is often concentrated in the initial momentum surrounding the establishment of classes, particularly through the provision of additional language input and different language quality. The ongoing continuation of these classes is regarded as a sufficient strategy in itself. This approach, however, is rarely a subject of critical review. Moreover, while the Initiatives are aware of challenges such as limited parental engagement, they often refrain from addressing them directly.

From the parental perspective, expectations regarding HL education tend to be loosely defined, centring primarily on the provision of additional language input, usually without a clearly articulated long-term aim. Due to this, the Initiatives attempt to extend their support beyond the classroom by raising parental awareness of multilingual upbringing and by facilitating opportunities for peer interaction in the HL. While peer interaction serves the core aim of enhancing language input and making HL learning engaging, the awareness-raising activities address language management on both the micro level, within the family, and the meso level, within the wider community.

The accounts of both parents and Initiatives suggest that, while family language policy has traditionally been seen as a private domain, it is increasingly shaped by language management and beliefs on macro- and meso-levels. The analysis draws on a range of data sources, including interviews with Initiative members and teachers, a parental questionnaire, and participant observations of HL classes.

5.2 It Should Be About Giving Wings, Not Clipping Them: Parents Struggles

Unlike many public institutions, the Initiatives offer multilingual families something fundamentally different: an understanding of the emotional weight that language maintenance carries for families. This deeper sensitivity emerged clearly during my interview with Pelagia, a mother actively engaged in one of the Initiatives. As she reflected on her children's experiences in the HL classes, she described how, after attending, they felt as though "someone gave them wings". This vivid image captured the encouragement and confidence the classes instilled, helping the children overcome their initial hesitations about using the HL (Interview with Pelagia, pos. 64/99, 00:24:00–00:25:00). Yet, as Pelagia poignantly noted later in our conversation, these newly found "wings" are fragile. It takes little to "clip

them”, and children can quickly lose their willingness to speak the HL if not supported consistently (pos. 94/99, 00:49:00–00:49:30). She contrasted this supporting environment with the approach of German public schools, which, in her view, remain largely indifferent to the efforts of students and parents striving to maintain and develop their HL. As she explained:

Nie przeszkadzają ale też nie jakoś nie za bardzo uskrzydłają te dzieci, żeby, nie wiem, pochwalić te dzieci, że fajnie, że czy coś robisz, fajnie, że rodzice się postarali, że cię wywożą, czy coś takiego. Bo często się jednak wiąże przecież tym, że trzeba [dziecko] gdzieś dowieźć, trzeba gdzieś się zabrać, zawieźć i jest trochę to logistycznie... po prostu trzeba to zorganizować.	They don't bother them, but they also don't really inspire these children to, I don't know, praise them for doing something cool, or praise their parents for making an effort to take them somewhere or something like that. Because often it involves having to take [the child] somewhere, you have to go somewhere, drive them there, and it's a bit logistically... you just have to organise it.
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Example 5.1 Interview with Pelagia, pos. 84/99, 00:39:50–00:40:45.

Pelagia’s reflections on encouragement and discouragement reveal a deeper need for recognition to acknowledge the family’s efforts to maintain and develop the HL. The lack of appreciation from broader society adds to the general perception of HL maintenance as a private matter confined within the family sphere. In LMP terms, Pelagia noticed a mismatch between her expectation that the family’s efforts would be recognised and the indifference of school authorities and the wider public. For this reason, the emergence of the Initiatives can be understood as a response to this gap and a way for parents to seek confirmation that their efforts are meaningful, where host society institutions had largely failed to provide such support.

Beyond offering language support, the Initiatives also provide an outlet for parents to share the emotional struggles associated with multilingual upbringing. Research on multilingualism within families consistently highlights the profound emotional dimensions of family language practices and shows that language management significantly affects the emotional well-being of family members. In her synthesis of research findings, Annick De Houwer notes that parents may experience feelings of distress and embarrassment when their children are unable or unwilling to communicate in their shared language. Similarly, children raised in bilingual environments often face emotional challenges related to language use (De Houwer, 2020, p. 63). Language maintenance has therefore been characterised as a form of emotional labour which was brilliantly exemplified in Toshie Okita’s seminal

work “Invisible Work” (2002) portraying the efforts of Japanese mothers raising bilingual children as an often unrecognised and demanding endeavor.

The emotional distress associated with language maintenance within families is well-documented and, according to De Houwer, often stems from the acculturation stress experienced by parents, particularly those who are first-generation immigrants (De Houwer, 2020, p. 75). However, as De Houwer’s indicates, several factors can mitigate these difficulties. She identifies key elements that contribute to mothers’ overall satisfaction with their family language situation: (1) having children who speak the home language, (2) consistently speaking the home language to their children regardless of external circumstances, (3) enrolling children in schools where the home language is used as a medium of instruction (either exclusively or alongside the societal language), (4) having a spouse proficient in the home language, and (5) maintaining a robust social network of home language speakers (De Houwer, 2020, p. 71). Additionally, both parents’ language proficiency and the presence of a supportive community are important contributors to emotional well-being. In this context, the bottom-up Initiatives play a critical role by providing not only enhanced language input but also by fostering social networks and a sense of community identification.

The Initiatives demonstrate a clear awareness of the emotional struggles faced by both parents and children. Dagna, a Polish language teacher and the mother of a bilingual child, highlighted these challenges during our interview. She noted that children often feel fatigued, and that encouraging them to participate in Polish classes requires considerable emotional investment from both teachers and parents, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

One po prostu były zmęczone, one nie miały ochoty, ani nie miały siły i nie były zainteresowane nauką. Przez tę formę gry i zabawy można było je jakoś zmotywować. Ale szczerze powiedziawszy, nie nie mogę powiedzieć, że były zainteresowane, to było raczej, że: “Jezus znowu Polski” i były kłótnie też na korytarzu z rodzicami i płacz.	They were simply tired, they didn't feel like it, they didn't have the energy, and they weren't interested in learning. Through this form of play and fun, it was possible to motivate them somehow. But to be honest, I can't say they were interested, it was more like, “Oh no, Polish again”, and there were arguments with their parents in the corridor and crying.
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Example 5.2 Interview with Dagna, pos. 50/77, 00:18:00–00:18:30.

Acknowledging these difficulties, the bottom-up Initiatives strive to reassure families that pursuing HL maintenance is the right decision. At the same time, they encourage parents not to abandon their

efforts by appealing directly to their emotions. Indeed, the Initiatives often leverage families' emotional struggles to motivate parents to enrol their children in HL classes and to reinforce the perceived importance of maintaining the HL.

5.3 Parents' Emotions and Heritage Language Maintenance

Encouraging families to engage with and continue utilising the classes offered by the Initiatives largely relies on their parents' source of motivation: their emotional connection to both their family in Poland and the HL itself. This emotional link serves a dual purpose: first, it reinforces the importance of active engagement in language transmission, and second, it emphasises the value of the support provided by the Initiatives.

For example, on the website of *Die Brücke*, the Initiative operating in Darmstadt, visitors can access a downloadable PDF titled *Parents' Voices*. This document compiles positive accounts and reviews from parents about the language courses offered. It includes their reflections on the quality of the classes, their reasons for enrolling their children, as well as their broader motivations for maintaining Polish. For instance, one mother wrote:

Nie wyobrażam sobie nawet jednego dnia bez rozmowy z dziećmi w moim języku ojczystym. Jak czuliby się moi rodzice, gdyby nie mogli dogadać się z własnymi wnukami? Jak czułyby się moje dzieci, gdyby odwiedzając Polskę nie potrafiły powiedzieć ani słowa? Jak czułabym się jak, gdyby dzieci w wieku dorosłym zapytały się: "Mamo, dlaczego nie nauczyłaś nas mówić po polsku"?	I can't imagine even one day without speaking to my children in my native language. How would my parents feel if they couldn't communicate with their own grandchildren? How would my children feel if they visited Poland and couldn't say a single word? And how would I feel if, as adults, my children asked me: "Mom, why didn't you teach us to speak Polish"?
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Example 5.3 Excerpt from the Voices of Parents published on Die Brücke website.

The author of the review not only shares her motivation for enrolling her children – specifically, the desire for them to communicate with her Polish family and in Poland – but also highlights the emotional aspect involved. By posing questions about the feelings of her parents, children, and herself, she emphasises that language maintenance in her case significantly impacts the well-being of her family. The presented review echoes the method employed by Stefania during a workshop for parents.

Stefania, an experienced Polish language teacher who teaches both at one of the Initiatives and at a German university, frequently conducts workshops for teachers and parents. During one such workshop for parents, she used essays written by her university students, some of them being HL speakers. She had assigned them the task of writing an essay on “Polish language in my life”, with one of the guiding questions being “what would you tell parents who are raising their children bilingually?”. Stefania then shared the students’ responses with the parents who enrolled their children to the courses offered by one of the Initiatives, as she describes in Example 5.4:

Zadałam studentom pracę “Język polski w moim życiu” i były różne tam pytania, na przykład: co powiedziałbyś rodzicom dzieci dwujęzycznych? W czasie warsztatów powiedziałam rodzicom, że teraz przemówią ich dzieci z przyszłości. I wśród prac studentów były tam takie słowa jak “Nie bójcie się mówić po polsku”, “nie bójcie się o mój niemiecki”, “Nawet jeżeli teraz nie odpowiadam po polsku to proszę mów do mnie dalej po polsku, bo przynajmniej będzie mi łatwiej później, bo będę rozumieć”, po prostu. To było niesamowite, bo rodzice byli poruszeni.	I assigned my students a task titled “The Polish Language in My Life”, which included various questions, such as: “What would you say to the parents of bilingual children?”. During the workshops, I told the parents that now their children from the future would speak. Among the students' work, there were words like, “Don't be afraid to speak Polish”, “Don't worry about my German”, and “Even if I don't respond in Polish now, please keep speaking to me in Polish, because it will at least make it easier for me later, as I will understand”. It was incredible because the parents were deeply moved.
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Example 5.4 Interview with Stefania, pos. 110/206, 00:39:30–00:40:30.

Stefania clearly addressed parents’ emotions and concerns, particularly their anxiety about proficiency in the majority language and their confusion surrounding multilingualism.

The accounts of the mother who enrolled her child in Die Brücke and Stefania’s workshop methods share a common objective: to persuade and reassure parents that maintaining Polish is the right decision. Reassuring parents about HL maintenance and affirming their beliefs regarding it, or influencing them positively, is crucial, as “parents’ language beliefs inevitably play a critical role in designing their home language strategies” (Schwartz, 2020, p. 200). Both Stefania and the mother addressed common issues related to multilingual upbringing. Firstly, through the words of her students, Stefania expressed common parental concerns, such as anxiety about raising children bilingually and confusion stemming from familial or societal expectations. Secondly, sustaining contact

with family members living in the country of origin is one of the most common motivations for language maintenance. This is confirmed in the questionnaire for parents: when asked about their goal for enrolment, a majority (21 out of 35 respondents) stated that their goal was for their children to be able to communicate with family in Poland. For illustration, the responses are displayed in Example 5.5:

1. Porozumiewanie się z rodziną w Polsce	Communication with family in Poland
2. Komunikacja z rodziną w Polsce, a także możliwość wyboru dalszej nauki/zawodu w Polsce	Communication with family in Poland, as well as the possibility of pursuing further education or a career in Poland.
4. Kontakt z rodziną, dostęp do nośników kultury w języku polskim, perspektywa studiów w Polsce, poczucie bycia Polakami	Contact with family, access to cultural resources in the Polish language, the prospect of studying in Poland, and a sense of being Polish.

Example 5.5 Excerpts of Parents Responses to the Questionnaire

The Initiatives acknowledge that families face significant challenges and that raising children multilingually is a demanding task. At the same time, they emphasise that families remain the primary agents of HL maintenance. In the case of leveraging emotions around HL, the Initiatives address the mismatch parents themselves notice – HL maintenance is demanding, yet receives little recognition in wider society. The response the Initiatives design and implement relies on reinforcing the affective dimension of HL maintenance.

Drawing on their experience, the Initiatives seek to balance their own educational objectives with the expectations of parents by structuring their approaches to multilingual upbringing in ways that both ease the burden on families and enhance the effectiveness of teachers' support. In doing so, they aim to create a framework that makes language maintenance more manageable for parents while enabling educators to work towards realistic goals.

5.4 Expectations and Realities in Family Language Management

The Initiatives emphasise that family language policies form the foundation of their actions. However, they clearly recognise the need to raise awareness regarding the role of the family and the scope of support that the Initiatives can actually provide. The Initiatives present their services as a form of

support, aiming to ensure that parents fully understand this, as demonstrated in a situation observed during one of the classes at the Darmstadt-based Initiative.

In Darmstadt, during one of the classes in winter, a new student, Anna, with her mother participated in the class, to see whether it's suitable for them. Anna's mother explains to Anna some of the tasks in German. She speaks to her in Polish, and then translates her utterance in German. During the break, another mother asks Anna's mother what language they usually speak at home. Anna's mother said that mainly in German, because her husband is German. She said that Anna understands several words in Polish. Sometimes, when the mother speaks with her sister on the phone, Anna understands a little, but today, during the class, she had a hard time. Renata, a teacher, adds that it is necessary for them to work a lot at home. Anna's mother responds that she's aware of it.

Field Note 5.1 from Darmstadt, 02.02.2023.

The Field Note also gives an insight to the language policies at home, that the parents rarely speak the language as it's simply not a main language of communication and treat Initiatives' classes as an outlet where children can use and immerse themselves in Polish. Teachers, in contrast, see the role of these classes as supplementary and seek to manage parental expectations. This perspective is clearly articulated by Regina, who explains:

Gdy ktoś przychodził po raz pierwszy na lekcje, to podstawowym przekazem, który otrzymywał było: to nie my nauczymy dziecko polskiego. To znaczy lekcje polskiego w stowarzyszeniu, które odbywają się raz w tygodniu to jest tylko wsparcie, które uwiarygadnia to, co rodzice robią z dzieckiem na co dzień.	When someone attended the lessons for the first time, the primary message they received was: we are not the ones who will teach your child Polish. The Polish lessons at the initiative, which take place once a week, are merely a support to reinforce what the parents are doing with the child on a daily basis.
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Example 5.6 Interview with Regina, pos. 97/229, 00:44:00–00:45:00.

Tekla, when speaking about one student who is less active during the classes, added with a dose of resignation that:

Rozmawiałam z mamą Neli i mama po prostu powiedziała, że ona nie rozmawia z nią po polsku, więc tutaj godzina lekcji polskiego, gdzie te, gdzie te zajęcia są jeszcze prowadzone w	I spoke with Nela's mother, and she simply said that she doesn't speak Polish with her child. In this context, a one-hour Polish lesson, conducted amidst organisational chaos, makes it
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takim chaosie organizacyjnym, to jest po prostu niemożliwe, żeby wyciągnąć jakiś mądry, dobry i trwały.	impossible to achieve any meaningful, positive, and lasting results.
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Example 5.6 Interview with Tekla, pos. 34/55.

Tekla expects measurable, lasting effects for children who attend, and she is not alone in her frustration. The teachers' survey converges on a shared view that parent–teacher expectations are misaligned, as the questionnaire excerpts show:

Rodzice są przekonani, że wystarczy znajomość języka dnia codziennego, nauka pisania i czytania nie odgrywa żadnej roli, rodzice nie wychowują dzieci dwujęzycznie, przysyłają je na lekcje bez jakiegokolwiek znajomości języka polskiego.	Parents believe that everyday language skills are sufficient, and that learning to read and write is irrelevant. They do not raise their children bilingually and send them to lessons without any knowledge of Polish.
Dzieci są zmęczone, rodzice używają w domu socjolektu, wielu z nich nie zdaje sobie sprawy z tego, jak wychowywać dwujęzycznie.	The children are tired, and the parents use sociolects at home. Many of them are unaware of how to raise their children bilingually.
Brak zaangażowania i wytrwałości wśród rodziców oraz demotywująca postawa otoczenia (niewiele szkół oferuje język polski jako obcy).	There is a lack of commitment and perseverance among parents, along with a demotivating environment (few schools offer Polish as a foreign language).
Zbyt mała mobilizacja rodziców	There is too little mobilisation among parents.

Example 5.7 Selected quotes from the questionnaire for teachers.

It is inevitable that mismatches between parental expectations and the Initiatives' approaches will continue to arise. Data gathered from parents who completed the questionnaire reveal that, although many caregivers report using the HL at home, German remains the dominant language of communication within the family. The children participating in the classes grow up in multilingual environments, but their language proficiency varies considerably. These variations often stem from parental attitudes towards language maintenance, as illustrated by the cases of Anna's (Field Note 5.1) and Nela's mothers (Example 5.6), as well as from differences in the quantity and quality of language input available to the children. In light of this diversity, the Initiatives must remain

responsive, tailoring their strategies to accommodate the varying HL proficiency of their students and the challenges these profiles entail.

Recognising that the family is the primary source of language input, the Initiatives place considerable emphasis on raising parental awareness of their central role in their children's language development. Their aim is to create conditions in which this role is strengthened, fostering more sustained and meaningful development of the competences in HL. Yet many parents get involved in the Initiatives and HL courses with expectations that are unstructured and often vague, shaped less by a defined educational trajectories and more by a general hope that "more" language exposure will be beneficial. This pattern is not unique to the Initiatives examined here. Roozbeh Shirazi and Maryam Borjian, in their study of community-based Persian language programmes in New York, describe similar parental attitudes (Shirazi & Borjian, 2013). They note that parents often lack a clearly articulated end goal and instead seek to offer their children "additional avenues of expression, additional connections to their families, additional exposure to cultural diversity, and additional resources to further their intellectual development and academic proficiency" (Shirazi & Borjian, 2013, p. 167). The recurring emphasis on *additionality* is telling. For many multilingual parents, the measure of success is not necessarily mastery in a formal sense but the creation of more opportunities for their children to hear and use the HL, to inhabit it as part of their everyday lives, and to keep open the pathways that link them to the culture of their country of origin.

The broad, and often diffuse, nature of parents' goals is also evident in their questionnaire responses, which will be examined in the next subsection. While such general expectations offer a starting point, they leave room for interpretation. In response, the Initiatives work to provide more targeted support, usually by focusing on specific challenges that emerge through their interactions with families, such as the limited use of Polish in the home. The following sections look more closely at how the Initiatives unpack these needs – what is noted and what is translated into strategic actions that not only seek to align with parental expectations but also to strengthen the overall effectiveness and long-term sustainability of their work.

5.5 Families' Profiles and Families Needs

Participant observation of classes in Darmstadt and Heidelberg reveals how assumptions about language practices at home shape both the organisation of activities and the experiences of families. Teachers and coordinators often use parental nationality as a proxy for estimating children's Polish language proficiency, a practice grounded in the understanding that language input from caregivers is

a strong predictor of children's language development (Ortega, 2020, p. 14). Yet such assumptions can oversimplify the complex realities of language use within families.

During my observation in Heidelberg, Malwina, the teacher, introduced a group of children by noting which came from Polish families and which had mixed heritage, implying differing levels of language exposure. She then asked the children directly whether they spoke Polish at home (Participant observation, Heidelberg, 08.11.2022). Field notes, however, show that non-Polish speaking parents play an important role in children's attendance. In Darmstadt, for instance, Albert joined partway through the school year. His father, who did not speak Polish, still attended the classes and offered emotional reassurance during difficult moments. Such an example illustrates that parental support extends beyond language input (Participant observation, Darmstadt, 23.02.2023).

These observations highlight that while family language practices matter, emotional presence and engagement cannot be overlooked. Informal interactions among parents further reveal underlying beliefs and ideologies about language learning. In one exchange (Field Note 5.2), two German-speaking fathers waiting to collect their children discussed the challenges of learning Polish:

One of them asks in German if the crayons belong to his child. Then he asks, "Sprechen Sie Polnisch...?" (Do you speak Polish?). The other laughs and replies that he doesn't, saying, "Es ist schwer zu lernen" (It's hard to learn). He then comments that their wives have learned German and speak it every day. Field Note 5.2 Darmstadt, 09.06.2022.

The brief yet telling exchange in Field Note 5.2 reveals the uneven dynamics of language acquisition in multilingual families. This imbalance is well documented in Toshi Okita's work on the "invisible" linguistic labour undertaken by immigrant parents, in case of her research, Japanese mothers bringing up their children in the UK, to maintain HLs (Okita, 2002). In families like the one described, even when the parent who primarily uses the dominant societal language supports HL learning in principle, their limited ability to engage with it can unintentionally shift a greater share of the responsibility onto the other parent. The father's comment, "It's hard to learn", subtly reinforces existing language hierarchies, implying that learning Polish is less important or less urgent. Such attitudes matter: when one parent distances themselves from the HL, children may internalise this stance, shaping how they value the language and influencing their motivation to use and maintain it.

These observations on one hand challenge simplistic notions of language support within families. They show that assumptions based on nationality or linguistic ability can obscure the many forms of parental engagement in HL courses, as well as the nuanced realities of multilingual family life. On the other hand, however, they confirm that there is an imbalance when it comes to language learning and active participation in language transmission. For Initiatives' educators and activists, acknowledging the complexity of parental forms of engagement in HL development is essential for meeting the needs of all families.

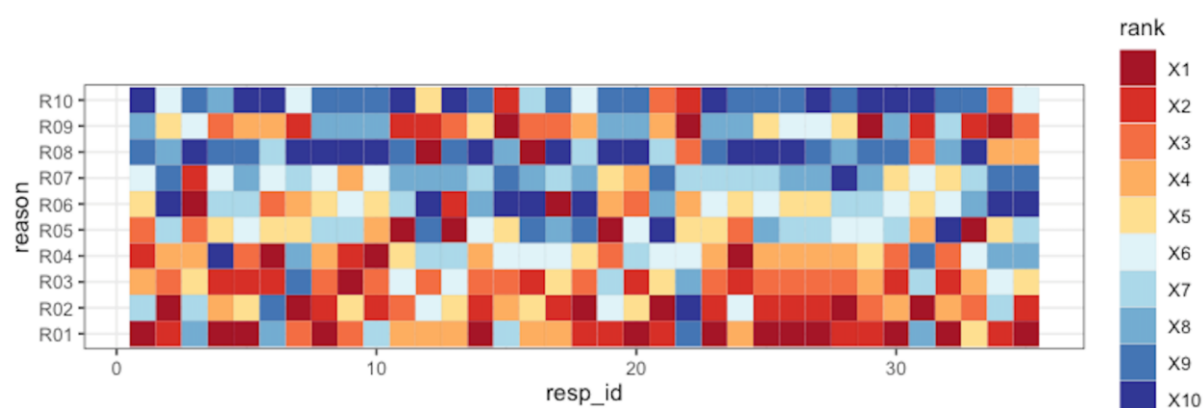
The questionnaire data complements these ethnographic insights, providing a broader, if general, view of language practices within families. Although the number of respondents was limited, certain patterns can be observed. Of the 35 participants, the vast majority ($n = 31$) reported Polish as their first language, and most named it as their preferred language for communicating with their children. However, the majority reported using both Polish and German at home. Eight respondents identified German as the main language of communication, five said that Polish dominates, and others mentioned mixed languages, such as Polish with Ukrainian or German with English. When asked about their children's preferred language, the majority named German ($n = 19$), followed by eight who mentioned both languages equally, five who named Polish, and a few who reported other combinations, such as Polish, German, and Ukrainian.

While the questionnaire relied on self-reports and included only a small number of questions on family language practices, it nonetheless reflects a familiar trend in multilingual families: parents often use the HL at home, while children gravitate towards the dominant societal language (Tamošiūnaitė, 2008; Bissinger, 2021). This pattern confirms the need for additional HL input, such as that provided through community-based classes.

Despite the diversity of language arrangements, one common thread runs through the Polish families who enrol their children in HL classes in Germany: the intention to increase their children's exposure to Polish. However, the motivations behind this goal vary in scope and emphasis. To better understand these differences, a questionnaire was designed using insights drawn from the Initiatives' websites, interviews with key informants, and observations of HL classes. Parents were asked to rank a list of potential reasons for enrolment from most to least important. To reduce ordering bias, the options were presented in a different sequence each time, and parents could rearrange them freely. An open-ended option allowed them to include any additional reasons not covered by the predefined list. The

results, summarised in Heatmap 1 and Table 3, illustrate the key motivations driving enrolment and reveal the varied priorities that underpin the shared aim of HL maintenance.

Heatmap 1 *Results of Parent's Ranking*



Note. “resp id” stands for respondent’s id number. The x-axis represents individual respondents, while the y-axis lists the reasons for enrolment. The colour of each square indicates the ranking position: deeper shades of red signify higher rankings, while deeper shades of blue indicate lower rankings.

Table 3 *Lists of Reasons Parents Had to Rank in the Questionnaire*

R01	I wanted my children to speak Polish better.
R02	I wanted my children to understand Polish better.
R03	I wanted my children to read in Polish better.
R04	I wanted my children to write in Polish better.
R05	I wanted my children to develop language awareness and multicultural competence
R06	I wanted my children to learn more about Polish culture (for example, literature, art, traditions).
R07	I wanted my children to learn more about Polish history.
R08	I wanted to get tips on how to raise children multilingually.
R09	I wanted my children to have contact with Polish-speaking peers.
R10	I wanted to meet other parents who immigrated to Germany and raise their children here.

Note. “R” stands for “reason”.

A total of 35 participants completed the questionnaire. The plot clearly shows that reasons related to language skills received the highest priority. Other reasons, however, displayed a more mixed pattern, with both high and low scores. For instance, reason 8, concerning tips on multilingualism, was often

placed near the bottom of the ranking, yet it also received some high scores. Similarly, reason 10, which addressed the community aspect of the classes, produced a wide range of responses.

The ranking of reasons offers a useful proxy for understanding parents' priorities. It reflects the generally broad nature of their goals, which often focus on providing additional HL input, particularly in speaking and listening, as many children attend these classes at a pre-primary age when reading and writing are not yet part of their formal education. This pattern also suggests that parents share a similar assumption to teachers – that the development of literacy skills should primarily occur in German schools, with HL classes playing a supplementary role. Interestingly, while the Initiatives themselves identify parental confusion about multilingual upbringing and the need for community as important aspects, parents did not tend to rank “tips on multilingualism” as a relevant reason for enrolment. This confirms that parents' views on the role of the Initiatives largely align with the Initiatives' primary purpose: the provision of HL input. Activities aimed directly at parents (reason 10) appear to be regarded as a secondary benefit rather than a main reason. The following subsection examines in greater depth the strategies employed to address parents' needs and the ways in which these strategies aim to meet parental expectations.

5.6 Strategies Applied, Outcomes Unchecked

When it comes to family language management, the gap between aspiration and reality is well documented. Many parents express a strong wish to pass on their HL to their children, yet translating this intention into everyday practice proves far from simple. Research shows that they often face a familiar set of obstacles: limited resources, children's resistance, emotional fatigue, or a gradual preference for the dominant societal language because it makes communication more efficient (Brooksbank, 2022).

The Initiatives understand these difficulties and the complex ways families attempt to navigate them. One teacher from the Frankfurt Initiative, Ewa Źródlewska-Banachowicz, has even developed a typology of parental attitudes, based on years of teaching experience and observation. Writing in “Polski w Niemczech/Polnisch in Deutschland”, she describes a clear gap between the theory of bilingual child-rearing and its practical application (Źródlewska-Banachowicz, 2014, p. 95). Her classification identifies four approaches. The largest group are the “believers but non-practitioners”: parents who value bilingualism yet struggle to actively maintain it at home. The second group, the sceptics, remain hesitant about using Polish exclusively. The “investors” view Polish as a skill that will yield long-term benefits, while the “educators” are those who deliberately and consistently embed

bilingual practices in daily routines. Źródlewska-Banachowicz's classification indirectly points that the latter model is regarded by the Initiatives as ideal as it includes proactive, intentional language management within the family.

The author's remarks confirm that for majority parents, the aim is to provide additional language input, as discussed by Roozbeh Shirazi and Maryam Borjian (2013), rather than proactively integrating Polish into daily life. While parents may see HL learning as an *additional* benefit, the Initiatives strive to move beyond this notion by offering more targeted strategies. They focus on diversifying language input and, crucially, linking language use to emotional contexts that resonate with children.

Based on the Initiatives actions, three general strategies can be identified. The first is parent-centric, aiming to raise awareness among parents through workshops and the provision of information. The second is student-centric and focused on offering children meaningful contexts in which to use Polish. The third strategy is the creation of a "safe space" to foster a sense of belonging, which is an approach that largely targets parents themselves. These strategies are a direct response to the challenges the Initiatives have observed among families. Raising parental awareness aims to align family practices more closely with the Initiatives' goals, promoting more effective and consistent language transmission. Interestingly, despite the Initiatives' efforts to frame HL maintenance as a public rather than purely private matter as discussed in Chapter 4, there appears to be little direct effort to raise parents' awareness about this political dimension. The following subsection explores in greater depth the strategies the Initiatives employ to influence language management within families.

5.6.1 Raising Awareness Among Parents

Raising awareness and providing parental education on multilingualism are valuable and necessary. Yet, as this chapter shows, implementation often falls short. The Initiatives recognise the need but struggle to design scalable approaches that address the diverse situations of the families they serve. The examples in this subsection point to the need for both introductory information sessions for those seeking general directions and basic orientation as well as more advanced workshops tailored to specific communication situations and interactions. Despite this identified demand, such workshops and meetings remain peripheral to the Initiatives' core activities and are treated as supplementary. Even so, Examples 5.8 and 5.9 suggest that awareness-raising and practical support do make a difference. When asked whether parents understand the demands and complexities of raising children multilingually, educators and active members generally agreed that while parents value multilingualism in principle, its day-to-day enactment is often burdensome. As Henryka remarks:

Myślę, że dużo ludzi wie, co to jest wielojęzyczność, ale nie wiedzą jak do tego podejść. Może tak. To są mamy, które na przykład pierwszy raz urodziły dziecko i oczywiście, że chcą go wychować w dwujęzyczności, prawda, chciały ten język odziedziczony pielęgnować i tak dalej, ale na przykład mają męża obcokrajowca i mówią w domu w języku, powiedzmy, niemieckim. I tu jest bardzo ciężko, bo no tak często jest to kobieta, która musi się, że tak powiem, podzielić jakoś, do dziecka mówić w jednym języku, żeby była konsekwentna, prawda, a do męża w innym.	I think a lot of people know what multilingualism is, but they don't know how to approach it. Maybe so. These are mothers who, for example, have had their first child and of course want to raise them to be bilingual, right? They want to nurture the language they inherited and so on, but for example, they have a foreign husband and speak, say, German at home. And this is very difficult, because it is often the woman who has to, so to speak, divide herself somehow, speaking one language to the child in order to be consistent, right, and another to her husband.
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Example 5.8 Interview with Henryka, paragraph 30/31.

Adela, one of the teachers and a member of the Initiative, acknowledges the need to support parents who have doubts about how to raise their children multilingually:

Ja bym sobie życzyła, żeby rodzice mieli od początku możliwość, aby się dowiedzieć na czym polega tak naprawdę dwujęzyczność. I żeby wiedzieliby, o co chodzi w tym wszystkim, od początku mogliby obrać tą drogę dla siebie. Myślę, że wtedy byłoby im łatwiej.	I would wish for parents to have the opportunity from the beginning to understand what bilingualism truly entails. They should know what it's all about, so they can choose this path for themselves from the start. I think it would make things easier for them then.
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Example 5.9 Interview with Adela, pos. 179/206, 00:40:20--00:41:00.

Noticing a gap between theory and how families manage languages in practice, and judging it problematic, the Initiatives designed the kind of support Adela described in the form of awareness-raising activities. The implementation runs through various means: publishing information on their websites, maintaining regular communication with parents before, after, and during classes, and organising workshops on multilingual resources and multilingual upbringing. As Waleria explained, they also offered sessions for very young children, at pre-kindergarten age, in which parents were encouraged to participate. In these sessions, the primary emphasis was on parental education:

Już nie pamiętam w którym roku, ale	I don't remember the exact year, but we
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organizowaliśmy takie cykl szkoleń, czyli przy spotkaniach dla rodziców był wykład na temat więc dwujęzyczności, następnie przez pewien okres czasu jedna z koleżanek organizowała zajęcia takie pedagogiczne. To były zajęcia dla dzieci poniżej trzeciego roku życia, w którym uczestniczyły również mamy... no najczęściej to były mamy. I właściwie to była bardziej pedagogizacja tych rodziców niż zajęcia dla maluchów.

organised a series of workshops. During these meetings for parents, there was a lecture on bilingualism. Then, for a certain period, one of my colleagues organised educational activities. These activities were for children under three years old, and mothers participated as well – usually, it was the mothers. In fact, it was more about educating the parents than providing activities for the little ones.

Example 5.10 Interview with Waleria, 48/83, 00:19:45–00:21:00.

In this case, the pedagogical value of the classes extended beyond the children, addressing a perceived need to inform parents about early bilingual development. Awareness-raising was also embedded in classroom practices, as Cecylia described in Example 5.11 Through homework assignments, she encouraged parents to expand and vary language input at home. One task, in particular, prompted parents to reflect on their own expectations. At their request, a traditional Polish book was selected for reading. However, as Cecylia recounted, the exercise quickly highlighted the gap between parental memory and children's linguistic reality:

A propos również oczekiwań i wiedzy rodziców, często rodzice nie zdają sobie sprawy z tego, że od ich własnej szkoły dzieli ich trzydzieści, czterdzieści, więc bardzo często na początku spotykałam się z właściwie to z takim życzeniem rodziców, że świetnie dzieci już czytają po polsku, może by przeczytały taką lekturę z Polski. I mówiąc o lekturze z Polski, rodzice podawali tytuły, które ja też znałam właśnie z mojego dzieciństwa. I faktycznie zdarzyło się raz w historii stowarzyszenia, że z jedną grupą czytałam lekturę bardzo tradycyjną, nie pamiętam, co to było, w każdym razie, którą rodzice znali i chcieli, żeby ją przeczytać. I jednym

Regarding parents' expectations and knowledge, they often don't realise that it's been thirty or forty years since their own schooling. At the beginning, I often encountered parents who wished their children, who were already reading well in Polish, could read books from Poland. Parents would suggest titles they remembered from their own childhood. Once, in the Initiative's history, I read a very traditional book with a group. I don't remember the title, but it was one the parents knew and wanted to be read. One of the homework assignments was to read the first chapter with their child. This was quite eye-opening, because the word "rdest"

z zadań domowych było: przeczytaj pierwszy rozdział z dzieckiem. I to było bardzo takie uzdrawiające, ponieważ słowo “rdest” pojawiło się już od razu w pierwszym zdaniu i od razu pierwszym zdaniu pojawiły się pytania dzieci, co to w ogóle jest “rdest”. Już nie mówiąc o tym, że straszne słowo do wymówienia, to jeszcze oczywiście pojawiły się problemy słownikowe, bo to starsza książka i język już nie jest współczesny. Więc bardzo szybko doświadczenie wspólnego czytania lektury z dzieckiem, spowodowało rewizję własnych oczekiwań

(knotgrass) appeared in the first sentence. The children immediately asked what “rdest” was. Besides being a difficult word to pronounce, it also caused vocabulary issues, as it’s an older book with outdated language. The shared reading experience quickly led parents to revise their own expectations.

Example 5.11 Interview with Cecylia, pos. 119/173, 01:08:00–01:09:00.

In Example 5.11 the process is relatively easy to reconstruct: there was a mismatch of expectations between the teacher and parents over literature selection and reading tasks. The teacher evaluated the parents’ expectations as difficult to fulfil and anticipated problems. Nevertheless, she designed and implemented adjustments that tested the parents’ suggested literature, which in turn led to a recalibration of the parents’ expectations. In this case, as well as in the case described by Waleria (Example 5.10), such forms of informal education help parents realise the complexities of HL acquisition and bring to light issues that can be addressed through more targeted interventions, such as parent workshops. Although no such workshops took place during my fieldwork, Stefania vividly recounted one that she and Wanda had led, designed to focus directly on language practices at home:

Naszym celem było przekonanie rodziców, że dzieci muszą być jak najbardziej zanurzone w języku, że trzeba im czytać, że mogą oglądać telewizję po polsku, że dobrze, żeby słuchały audiobooków przed snem, że trzeba dużo gadać w domu, nie tylko z dzieckiem. Na przykład dziecko przyszło i powiedziało, że miało Stress na Sport bo nie miałem mojego Trainingsbeutel, a mama powinna powiedzieć do taty, wiesz, Pawełek dzisiaj zdenerwował się na WF-ie, bo

Our goal was to convince parents that children need to be fully immersed in the language, that they should be read to, that they can watch television in Polish, that it’s good for them to listen to audiobooks before bedtime, that they need to talk a lot at home, not only with their children. For example, if a child comes home and says, “I had Stress in Sport class because I didn’t have my Trainingbeutel”, the mom should say to the dad, “You know, Paweł got upset in PE today

nie miał worka z ubraniami na zmianę. Żeby mama dziesięć razy powtórzyła na WF-ie najlepiej, żeby dziecko zapamiętało. Od dziecka nie można wymagać, żeby samo Od dziecka nie można wymagać, żeby samo wymyśliło, że "na WF-ie", skoro samo o tym się nie mówi w domu, to skąd ma wiedzieć, jeżeli mama i tata tego nie powiedzieli. Więc potem jeszcze wieczorem najlepiej powiedzieć do dziecka "słuchaj następnym razem przygotowuje się ubrania na WF".	because he didn't have a change of clothes". The mom should repeat it ten times, ideally, so the child remembers. You can't expect a child to come up with the idea of "for PE" on their own if it's not talked about at home, so how are they supposed to know if their mum and dad haven't said anything about it? So, it's best to remind the child in the evening, "Listen, next time, make sure you prepare your clothes for PE".
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Example 5.12 Second interview with Stefania, pos. 46/50, 00:19:15–00:20:20.

Stefania initially discussed language immersion and emphasised the importance of consistency and employing implicit language management strategies. These strategies include paraphrasing phrases in the target language and repeating them, aligning with what Mila Schwartz, based on Elizabeth Lanza's analysis of parents' reactions to code-switching, has termed the "repetition strategy", one of the five discourse strategies identified by parents (Lanza, 1997; Schwartz, 2020, p. 198). The repetition strategy is categorised as a bilingual approach that acknowledges the language preferences of the child and avoids imposing a specific language, contrasting with strategies like the minimal grasp strategy, where a parent indicates a lack of understanding in a language, or the expressed guess strategy, where parents ask in the target language and accept "yes" or "no" answers.

The example Stefania provided illustrated a crucial point that parents do not always realise: for children, communication with their parents is often their main source of language input. Without parents modelling how to express some concepts in Polish, as Stefania argued, children simply have no way of knowing the equivalent expressions. The workshop she led not only focused on basics and practical advice about language acquisition and communication techniques, but also highlighted the emotional side of multilingual upbringing. Through role-playing exercises, parents experienced the distress a child might feel when pressured to speak in HL, helping them better understand and empathise with their children's struggles:

Poprosiliśmy wybrane osoby, aby wyszły na środek i zagrałyśmy w kalambury. Presja była	We asked selected persons to come to the centre and played charades. The pressure was
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duża, bo tam było około 40 osób. Graliśmy w kalambury i kazałyśmy rodzicom coś pokazywać ciałem, często im się nie udawało dobrze czegoś pokazać i byli zestresowani. I po kilku rundach im powiedziałyśmy, że tak czują się dzieci, kiedy nie potrafią czegoś wyrazić. Powiedziałam, że jeśli by wcześniej mieli więcej praktyki czy więcej przykładów, jak coś pokazać, to by było im łatwiej. Więc wytworzyłyśmy sytuację, że oni się poczuli tak samo.	high because there were about 40 people there. We played charades and asked the parents to express something with their bodies; often, they struggled to convey something well and felt stressed. After a few rounds, we told them that's how children feel when they can't express something. I said that if they had more practice or more examples beforehand on how to show something, it would be easier for them. So, we created a situation where they felt the same way as their children.
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Example 5.13 Interview with Stefania, Pos. 46/50, 00:20:45–00:22:00.

The Initiatives notice a mismatch between parents' expectations of children and their language practices, evaluate it as requiring adjustment, and design and implement awareness-raising workshops to address it. This LMP can be considered as transformative as the workshops aim first, to shift parental beliefs about multilingualism from a source of strain to a manageable resource; and second, such meetings create a new quality in practice – parents who previously lacked strategies now have concrete, workable ones. Stefania and Wanda recommended the use of implicit language management strategies, such as paraphrasing and repetition, as an effective way to immerse children in the HL without applying overt pressure.

The overarching goal of Stefania's and Wanda's workshops was to raise parents' awareness about the critical role of family language input and, as a consequence, to encourage greater use of the HL at home. As Cecylia further explains, some sessions were specifically dedicated to addressing parents' concerns and introducing them to resources that could support language maintenance, including books and audiobooks (Interview with Cecylia, pos. 141/173 01:38:00–01:39:00). Cecylia pointed out that raising awareness about multilingualism served another important purpose, namely, helping parents develop realistic expectations about what is achievable:

Spotkania z rodzicami na temat dwujęzyczności, spotkania na temat różnych kompetencji, na temat tego jak mówić w domu z dzieckiem w drugim języku, jak realistycznie oczekiwać,	Meetings with parents about bilingualism, various competencies, how to speak with the child at home in the second language, and how to realistically assess expectations regarding the
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realistycznie oceniać oczekiwania odnośnie do child's Polish language skills when other
języka polskiego mojego dziecka, kiedy w domu languages are spoken at home, are very
mówi się jednocześnie jednym, albo jeszcze w important.
dwóch innych językach, są bardzo ważne.

Example 5.14 Interview with Cecylia, pos. 167/173, 01:55:30–01:56:30.

The workshops align Annick De Houwer's notion of harmonious bilingualism, defined as a family context in which bilingualism does not generate language-related difficulties and is experienced as broadly positive or neutral (De Houwer, 2020, p. 63). The core aim is to recalibrate parental expectations so that they are realistic and aligned with children's actual HL development trajectories. When expectations and outcomes match, families report less strain and more sustainable practices, in contrast – when they diverge, frustration tends to rise. The workshops therefore seek to build awareness and equip parents to create conditions that support harmonious bilingualism at home.

Raising awareness through workshops and meetings where theoretical knowledge as well as simulations and resources are presented serves several purposes. First, it is to equip parents with knowledge and strategies so that they can ensure more effective language management and by proxy, more language input. Second, by presenting the child-centric approach and implicit language management strategies in everyday communication they put emotional child well-being in the first place. Interestingly, the methods presented at the workshops focus on implicit language management and there are no explicit methods mentioned. The goal is to naturally and organically immerse a child in language through books or other media and most importantly, through communication with parents. Although not stated in the interviews, but mostly observed, the explicit methods seem to be reserved to the classroom.

The division between implicit and explicit methods is underpinned by the beliefs related to the language socialisation, namely the fact HL students' socialisation into language should resemble the one of the students in monolingual families. Although the Initiatives observe the parental struggle, the ideal model is to reflect the practices that are in monolingual families, so that the HL classes could ideally mirror the classes of Polish as first-language, which will be elaborated in Chapter 6. Of course, both the Initiatives and parents know that it is almost impossible to achieve it due to the context, yet the recommendation suggests aiming for such an approach.

Interestingly, the Initiatives did not mention other strategies frequently discussed in the literature, such as the OPOL approach. Instead, they appear to prioritise immersion and parental effort to create a Polish-speaking environment. The workshops, in particular, are clearly designed with Polish-speaking parents in mind, primarily addressing the question of how to maximise HL input. While this focus is undoubtedly important, the data, both from the questionnaire and participant observation, indicate that many families participating in the Initiatives are multilingual, with both Polish- and German-speaking parents engaged in their children's upbringing. Despite this, the workshops and communication strategies mainly target Polish-speaking parents, implicitly framing language maintenance as the sole responsibility of the immigrant parent. This approach risks limiting the scalability of multilingual family practices and overlooks the meaningful role that German-speaking (or other-language-speaking) parents could play in supporting multilingual development. Given that many families operate within multilingual environments, it would be beneficial for the Initiatives to broaden their engagement strategies to include all family members, not just those who already speak Polish.

A further issue is the effectiveness of these awareness-raising efforts. The parent questionnaire points to modest engagement. Of 35 respondents, 23 said they had received advice on multilingual upbringing. Most of these ($n = 15$) cited both the Initiatives and other sources, while eight cited only external sources. Twelve reported receiving no advice at all. Few described putting guidance into practice, mentioning steps such as consistently speaking Polish at home and reading in Polish. Interest in future workshops was also limited, with only eleven parents expressing willingness to attend. The sample is small and not representative, but the fact that roughly a third respondent reported no advice, and that few opted in to workshops, suggests the Initiatives should reassess whether websites, newsletters and sessions are reaching the intended audience and, crucially, converting awareness into sustained practice. A similar challenge emerges with another strategy, encouraging peer interaction in Polish, which the next section examines in detail.

5.6.2 Provision of Additional Context and Peers Interaction

Wanda recounted an episode from a workshop she facilitated, where mothers expressed worries about their children's hesitancy to speak. When asked how she addressed these concerns, she responded as follows:

No są różne pytania, jak jak organizować sobie
właśnie życie w takiej na przykład dwujęzycznej

There are various questions, like how to organise
life in a bilingual family, how to encourage a child

rodzinie, jak zachęcać dziecko do mówienia, jak motywować. Są pytania o tak naprawdę o to, jak to jest że dziecko rozumie, a nie mówi. To jest też takie nowe spojrzenie teraz, że bierna znajomość jest też znajomością języka, prawda; o to jak wspierać to wychowanie dwujęzyczne, głównie jak motywować takie rzeczy. Najczęściej chodzi o tę motywację. [...]I nie mam zbyt dobrych wiadomości, ponieważ uważam, że bardzo dużą rolę odgrywa grupa rówieśnicza. Dlatego to, co było w inicjatywie, było takie cenne i tak naprawdę wzorcowe.	to speak, and how to motivate them. There are questions about why a child understands but doesn't speak. There's a new perspective now that passive knowledge is also language proficiency. It's about supporting bilingual upbringing, mainly focusing on motivation. [...] Unfortunately, I don't have very good news because I believe peer groups play a significant role. That's why the initiative was so valuable and truly exemplary.
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Example 5.15 Interview with Wanda, pos. 42/77, 00:14:45 - 00:16:15.

Wanda asserts that fostering peer groups can effectively contribute to language maintenance efforts. While her assertions find support in existing research, it's important to note the limited extent of studies specifically addressing the impact of peer groups on HL maintenance (Dünkel et al., 2024). Nevertheless, research has demonstrated that increased language input, both within and outside the family context, positively influences language proficiency, usage, and maintenance (Hollebeke et al., 2020). In essence, language classes serve as a mechanism for increasing exposure, and the presence of a peer group can serve as a valuable motivational factor. Yet, this strategy appears to be more implicit than intentional. It is not explicitly mentioned in official communications, such as websites or organisational charters, and during ongoing classes, peer interaction seems more like a natural side effect rather than a formally structured or closely monitored strategy.

In the trajectory of second-generation experiences, as children mature, the peer group becomes increasingly influential, often leading them to gravitate towards the majority language – in this case, German (Giguere & Hoff, 2020). However, it is important to recognize that the classes offered by initiatives typically target children in kindergarten or primary school. There is also a prevailing notion that as children age, it becomes more challenging to encourage their participation in language classes (Bissinger, 2021, p. 314). Despite the common assumption that early exposure guarantees language maintenance into adulthood, research does not confirm it. What emerges as influential is the consistent exposure to and utilisation of the HL across various contexts, both within and beyond the family sphere (Dünkel et al., 2024).

The Polish speaking peer group can be beneficial when it comes to HL maintenance as evidenced by research conducted by Nora Dünkel and colleagues. Their findings indicate a positive correlation between the presence of high-skilled HL speakers within a student's peer network and higher reading proficiency. Interestingly, students who interacted with both high-skilled HL speakers and majority language speakers in their social circles demonstrated even greater reading proficiency scores (Dünkel et al., 2024, p. 140). This confirms the significance of an environment that embraces diverse language practices and avoids imposing monolingual ideologies. Such an environment is likely to empower HL students to fully leverage the potential of their bilingualism, including the ability to transfer language skills across different linguistic domains (Cummins, 2017; Dünkel et al., 2024)

The maintenance of a peer group was a key factor prompting the transition to online classes during the pandemic. All of the initiatives implemented online learning options, with varying approaches. In Frankfurt, classes were initially offered exclusively to children in Year 4 and above, but unfortunately, they were later suspended and have not yet resumed. In Darmstadt, one teacher opted to conduct online classes, although participation varied among students. Meanwhile, the Wawel initiative in Baden-Württemberg also introduced online classes for several groups, even after in-person sessions resumed. Although not explicitly outlined in the organisations' statutes, the establishment of a supportive peer network remains an important objective.

However, it is important to temper optimism with realism. Frederik Bissinger's study on language management within Lithuanian-speaking families in Sweden points out a common challenge: in peer groups, the dominant language often prevails, even during HL classes (Bissinger, 2021, p. 312). This phenomenon is also observed in the HL classes facilitated by the Initiatives. Nevertheless, both teachers and students employ various strategies to maintain Polish language input, which will be detailed in the forthcoming section on language management in the classroom.

How does this strategy relate to language management within families? Beyond simply offering additional opportunities for Polish language use, the provision of peer interactions positively influences both the quantity and quality of HL input. However, this strategy is not explicitly framed as part of the Initiatives' formal objectives. Rather, it operates more as a side effect of offering language classes. Stable peer groups can sustain attendance as children grow older, when language attrition often increases, and they can keep children open to using the HL. Yet, beyond offering a shared space, few sessions include activities that deliberately cultivate peer bonds. Many classes, especially at

preschool and primary level, include playful elements, but peer interactions are rarely planned, facilitated, or followed up. The classroom remains primarily instructional rather than a space where building relationships and informal communication in the HL is an explicit goal.

As a result, while the initial problem, the lack of a Polish-speaking peer environment, was recognised and addressed, the solution has not been systematically developed or monitored. It continues largely by inertia, rather than through strategic planning. This is particularly unfortunate, given that the Initiatives have successfully organised broader community-building activities aimed at families as a whole. That capacity suggests clear potential to design targeted peer-group engagement that would strengthen HL maintenance and development through social interaction. Framed in this way, peer engagement could shift from an incidental benefit to an adaptive strategy with transformative potential and contribute to community resilience by reinforcing the ties that sustain HL use beyond the classroom.

5.6.3 Bringing Community Together

Although the primary aim of the Initiatives has always been the support and transmission of the Polish language, a closer look at their evolution reveals a more layered function. Parents have come to use these informal and later formalised meetings not only as educational opportunities but as spaces for connection. They offer a chance to meet others who share similar backgrounds and challenges, to forge new relationships, and to build resilience in the face of the often demanding task of raising multilingual children. While the survey data shows that few parents explicitly prioritise the community-building aspect, there's an unspoken expectation that such a safe, supportive environment will be provided. Yet, as the examples below show, this community-building tends to serve inward-looking, supportive purposes rather than extending into broader meso- or macro-level social engagement, as discussed in the theoretical chapter.

Before and after HL classes the atmosphere often resembles an informal gathering in which parents chat with teachers and mingle with other families. These talks are usually focused on exchanging practical information about upcoming community events and class logistics, but they occasionally also bring up shared concerns about language development. In Darmstadt on 5 May 2022, for instance, I observed two mothers discussing a three-year-old's pronunciation. One worried that, because of language contact, her daughter produced the Polish /r/ as [ʁ] or [ʀ] and “speaks with an accent”. The other reassured her that children continue to develop well into early childhood, implicitly invoking a concept of critical-period for language acquisition and suggesting there was still time to practise a

more typical Polish articulation. The exchange revisits a wider set of expectations: that ideally, children should speak HL without the imprint of German, at least at the phonetic level, and that time and practice might realign outcomes with that ideal.

A week later in the same site, on 12 May 2022, a new three-year-old pupil, Karol, visited with his Polish grandmother to see whether the class would suit him. She encouraged him to speak in Polish, switching between Polish and German to prompt a response, but Karol remained silent, likely unsettled by the unfamiliar environment and needing time to adjust. After a few attempts she conceded quietly to another parent that “he will not say anything”. The parent then replied: “let him hear and get used to the language, do not worry too much”. Later that day I talked with that parent. She admitted that physical and manual activities are the only solution for HL classes and that “children will not learn everything miraculously”. This view positions hands-on, enjoyable tasks as the real motivation that keeps children coming and gives them reasons to use Polish. Taken together, these observations show parents calibrating ambitions in situ, and some of them recognise that classes alone are insufficient, and placing value on engagement and embodied activity as pathways to confidence, participation, and gradual HL use.

By offering a space for both students and parents to share their concerns and seek support, the classes inherently foster community-building. This aspect was consistently observed and acknowledged by teachers across various initiatives. Dagna, for instance, mentioned that the classes in her Initiative often provided an opportunity for people to come together and connect with others:

Moje wrażenie było takie, że ci rodzice, nie zależało im na jakimś wysokim poziomie, zależało i po prostu na takim kontakcie. To jest raczej takie miejsce spotkań, żeby mówiły po polsku, tak bardziej na zasadzie zabawy, kontaktu dla tych mam, żeby pójść razem do kościoła, takie tam rzeczy.	My impression was that these parents were not focused on achieving a high level of proficiency. They were more interested in creating a place for interaction. It was more about having a space where they could speak Polish, mainly in a fun and social context. It gave the mothers an opportunity to connect, go to church together, and do similar activities.
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Example 5.16 Interview with Dagna, pos. 66/77, 00:29:30–00:30:00.

This observation resonates with Kaja’s own experiences leading an informal group that gathered in a community centre within one of the Baden-Württemberg towns. The excerpt from her interview

highlights that while community-building wasn't the primary objective of the meetings, it nevertheless emerged as a main aspect for certain parents:

Rodzice mieli świadomość, że fajnie się spotkać, też bardzo chętnie spotykali, bo my to tak robiliśmy, że była jakaś godzina, dwie godziny zajęć, w zależności od wieku dzieci. Na początku to była godzinka, potem przychodzili ci rodzice i po prostu piliśmy kawę, rozmawialiśmy dzieci się bawili, a my wymienialiśmy się doświadczeniami, co się wydarzyło w ciągu tygodnia i tak dalej, także to było takie bardziej spotkania nieformalne też dla rodziców. Niektórzy nie znali niemieckiego, mieli różne problemy rozmawialiśmy między sobą na ten temat.	Parents understood that it was nice to meet up, and they were eager to do so. We organised an hour or two of activities, depending on the children's age. At first, it was just an hour. Then the parents would come, and we would drink coffee, talk, and the children would play. We exchanged experiences about what had happened during the week and so on. These gatherings were also informal meetings for the parents. Some didn't know German and had various problems, and we discussed these topics among ourselves.
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Interview 5.17 Interview with Kaja, pos. 30/79 , 00:28:00-00:29:30.

The connections and networks forged within the classes resonate with what Martin Guardado termed “safe houses” (Guardado, 2018, p. 137). This concept originates from Mary Louise Pratt's work (1991) in the field of art and has been repurposed within communities striving to preserve their language. Guardado applied this concept within the context of Spanish-speaking families in Canada, where many established social spaces and networks fostered the development of bonds and mutual support. This notion can be extrapolated to the context of the bottom-up Initiatives. Ultimately, the relationships that were formed due to the Initiatives’ activities aim to aid children in language development and provide families with a support system.

The Initiatives can build on their role as safe and welcoming spaces, not only for community events but also for targeted language development activities, as exemplified by Cecylia's work. In her approach, reading became a central pedagogical tool. Drawing inspiration from the Polish campaign “Cała Polska czyta dzieciom” (English: *All of Poland Reads to Children*), she adapted it to the diasporic context under the title “Cała Polska czyta dzieciom, Polonia też” (English: *All of Poland Reads to Children, Polish Diaspora Too*). The campaign aimed not only to promote reading but also to actively involve parents in the educational process. As she explained, the events were structured to engage parents as readers and co-organisers:

I jednym z celów było faktycznie jakby włączenie rodziców do pracy z grupą, stąd na przykład wykorzystanie też potencjału tkwiącego w rodzicach, i stąd na przykład właśnie tą imprezę Cała Polska Czyta Dzieciom Polonia Też adresowana na początku zdecydowanie w kierunku rodziców, którzy musieli się przygotować, również do czytania na głos, więc dla nich bo to nawet pewnego rodzaju stres i wyzwanie i współorganizować ze mną imprezy.	One of the goals was to involve parents in working with the group, utilising the potential within the parents. This is why we organised events like 'All of Poland Reads to Children, Polish Diaspora Too', which was initially aimed at parents. They had to prepare for reading aloud, which was a challenge and a source of stress for them. They also co-organised the events with me.
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Example 5.18 Interview with Cecylia, pos. 69/173, 00:26:30–00:27:30

By promoting reading, the Initiatives aim to enrich the quality of language input through the use of varied language registers within the home environment. This form of engagement not only highlights potential challenges in language use but also increases parental awareness of the nature and quality of Polish input provided to their children. Moreover, such events create valuable opportunities for parents to connect, exchange experiences, and articulate their concerns. Despite these benefits, such initiatives remain relatively rare. This is regrettable, as the community could be more deliberately treated as a resource, as it was during the formative stages of the Initiatives. Actively involving parents as collaborators, rather than positioning them as recipients of services, could strengthen the bond between families and educators. Such a shift in relationship would be particularly relevant to the challenges explored in the following subsection.

5.6.4 The Missing Strategy: Linking Micro and Meso Levels

The bottom-up Initiatives focus on maintaining peer groups and, by extension, fostering a community of parents. This strategy is crucial for sustaining and expanding their offer. However, as noted by Regina and Wanda (see Examples 5.19 and 5.20), there is currently a shortage of new, active parents and teachers willing to continue the work initiated by these grassroots efforts. Regina, when asked about the future direction responded:

Także w zasadzie ja nie jestem pesymistyczna, ale nie jestem też jakoś strasznie optymistyczna. Na pewno nie ma takiej dynamiki, dlatego że też nie widzę ani dopływu, ani grupy silnie	I'm not pessimistic, but I'm also not overly optimistic. There isn't much momentum because I don't see a strong influx of interested teachers or parents who would revitalise everything
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zainteresowanych nauczycieli, zainteresowanych rodziców, którzy by jakby na nowo to wszystko ożywili. Na razie to wszystko jeszcze tej chwili odbywa się siłami tych rodziców, którzy byli o tym najbardziej przekonani w latach 2000., ale dzieje się wystarczająco dużo.	anew. Currently, it's still being driven by those parents who were most convinced about it in the 2000s, but enough is happening at the moment.
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Example 5.19 Interview with Regina, pos. 224/229, 01:32:00–01:33:00

Regina's view is echoed in Wanda's words, as she feels that a new generation needs to take over due to her own fatigue. During one of the workshops she conducted, she noticed new mothers attending and recognised herself in them. However, there is not enough momentum within this new community. Nevertheless, if someone were willing to take over, established structures and practices are in place to support them:

Na jednym spotkaniu na temat dwujęzyczności pojawili się zupełnie nowi ludzie, ja ich nie znam. Więc jest jakiś taki ferment młodych matek głównie Polek, trochę takich jak jak byłam po prostu te 15 lat temu. Ja to czuję po prostu trzeba zmiany generacji. [...] Zaletą dzisiejszych czasów jest to, że jeżeli by ktoś przyszedł i powiedział chcę prowadzić grupy, chcę działać, to struktury są. Jak ja to zaczynałam to te struktury dopiero się tworzyły, myśmy dopiero wytworzyli wytworzyli te struktury. Natomiast dzisiaj, by ktoś przyszedł i powiedział: chcę robić to i to, mój wkład jest taki mój pomysł, wiesz, to wszystko jest, dajemy struktury. Ale nie ma zainteresowania. Nie ma osób takich zaangażowanych jakby 15-17 lat temu.	At one meeting about bilingualism, completely new people showed up – people I didn't know. So, there is a kind of ferment among young mothers, mostly Polish, similar to how I was 15 years ago. I feel it's just a generational shift that's needed. [...] The advantage of today's times is that if someone came and said they wanted to lead groups and get involved, the structures are already in place. When I started, we were just creating those structures. But now, if someone came with their contribution and ideas, we have everything ready to support them. However, there is no interest. There aren't people as engaged as they were 15-17 years ago.
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Example 5.20 Second interview with Wanda, pos. 22-24/77, 00:10:05–00:11:30

In the interview, I also asked Wanda if the availability of solutions such as HL classes in schools might be contributing to the lack of new initiatives. Wanda responded that when she talked to the mothers, they criticised these HL classes in public schools:

HSU jest bardzo krytykowane. Na jednych warsztatach spotkałam się z osobami, których dzieci chodziły do szkoły sobotniej i ze względu na to, że zawiesiliśmy te zajęcia, pozapisywali dzieci na HSU i są niezadowoleni. Jest za dużo dzieci z różnych roczników.

HSU [HL classes in German schools] has been criticised a lot. At one workshop I met people whose children went to Saturday school and because we suspended those classes they enrolled their children at HSU and they are unhappy. There are too many children from different year groups.

Example 5.21 Second interview with Wanda, pos. 26/77, 00:10:40–00:11:30

Although parents recognise the problems, there is little movement or initiative to address them. The reasons for this can only be speculative. However, Genowefa, a mother and a teacher in one the Initiatives mentioned that, in general, parents tend to seek out supporting materials on their own:

Myślę, że jeżeli ktoś jest zainteresowany tematem nauki języka polskiego, to naprawdę w dzisiejszych czasach ta oferta jest dosyć szeroka. Na przykład moja córka uczy się w [nazwa szkoły], to jest szkoła online, ona uczy się języka polskiego, nauczania wczesnoszkolnego poprzez zajęcia internetowe. I dostajemy materiały i po prostu, przerabiamy z nią to wszystko i dlatego jestem zdania jest zainteresowany tym tematem i szuka w tym kierunku informacji. Ja na przykład o tym, o tej szkole dowiedziałam się od innych mam ze stowarzyszenia.

I think that if someone is interested in learning Polish, the options available today are quite extensive. For example, my daughter is studying at [school name], an online school where she learns Polish through early childhood education classes conducted over the internet. We receive materials and go through everything with her. That's why I believe that if someone is interested and looks for information in this area, they will find it. For instance, I learned about this school from other mothers in the Initiative.

Example 5.22 Interview with Genowefa, pos. 70/80, 00:33:30–00:34:30

New options now let parents seek help on their own – for instance, online classes – yet the community still matters. As Genowefa noted, she found those resources through other mothers at the classes, not by searching alone. Activists notice a gap between what Initiatives hope for and how far parents

engage, but find it hard to locate the cause and address it. A quiet counterpattern here is that the process stalls after noticing and evaluation, with neither adaptive adjustment nor transformative reframing carried forward.

A reason for that is the underlying belief that HL maintenance is a private matter. Although Initiatives have experience mediating with authorities, they have not always made it explicit to parents that “private” language work also has a civic and political dimension. There is also a practical issue of continuity. Initiatives lack a clear exit or handover plan, so stability is not fully secured. In practice, activists seem to expect younger parents to step forward. What follows is simple: communicate openly about the need for new involvement, explain why civic participation underpins the operations of the Initiatives. Given the fragility of handover and the framing of HL work as private rather than civic, we turn to the question of whether families’ expectations are being fulfilled – and, in line with RQ2, how the Initiatives seek to influence language management within families to meet those expectations.

5.7 Are Families’ Expectations Met?

With the strategies outlined, the next question is whether families’ expectations are being met. Heatmap 1 summarises how parents prioritised their reasons for enrolment. To probe alignment with these priorities, the questionnaire for parents also included a satisfaction ranking, where parents indicated their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with various aspects of the initiative activities. These satisfaction levels can reveal whether the strategies implemented by the Initiatives are effective and relevant to parents. Heatmap 2 illustrates the distribution of satisfaction levels.

Heatmap 2 *Distribution of Satisfaction Levels Across Respondents*

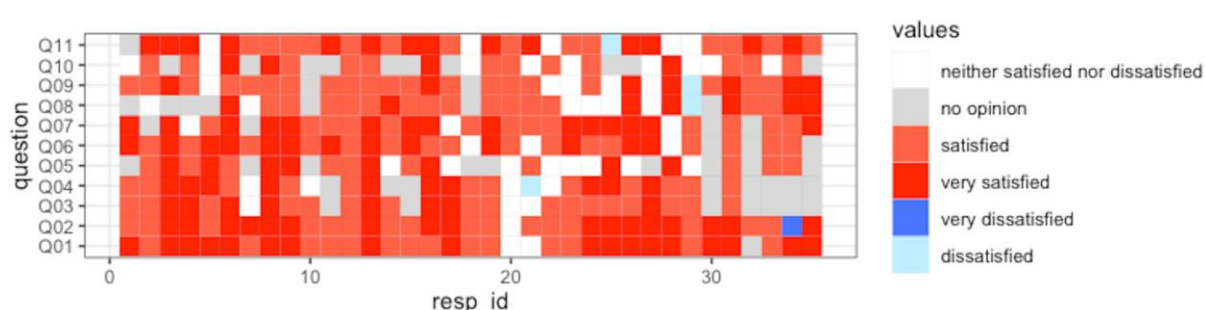


Table 4 *Questions for Parents to Rank*

Q01	Developing comprehension skills in Polish.
Q02	Developing speaking skills in Polish.

Q03	Developing reading skills in Polish.
Q04	Developing writing skills in Polish.
Q05	Developing language awareness (for example, translating from one language to another).
Q06	Learning about Polish culture (for example, literature and traditions).
Q07	Learning about Polish history.
Q08	Contact with other parents who immigrated and are raising their children in Germany.
Q09	My children's contact with Polish-speaking peers.
Q10	Counselling regarding multilingual upbringing.
Q11	Organisation of special events for families (for example holidays).

This task in the questionnaire was divided into two segments. The initial part focused on evaluating the educational aspects of the classes, including speaking, comprehension, writing, reading, plurilingual competence, and knowledge about culture and history. Subsequently, the second part addressed supplementary aspects, including creating an environment where students can interact with Polish-speaking peers, facilitating contact with other parents, providing information on multilingualism, and organising events such as St. Andrew's Day or the First Day of Spring.

As depicted in the Heatmap, parents generally express satisfaction, with few exceptions. What should receive attention are the questions receiving neutral or 'no opinion' answers, aside from Q03 and Q04 as they pertain to reading and writing, which are skills not typically practiced during a child's kindergarten years. However Q05, Q08 and Q10 refers to the strategies involved by the Initiatives, namely to raise awareness and to provide space for the community and networking. Q05, which addresses language awareness among children, received many neutral and "no opinion" responses, suggesting that this aspect did not receive much consideration from parents or was not explicitly offered by the Initiatives. This observation may also apply to Q10, which concerns counselling on multilingualism. Interestingly, the community aspect, Q08, also received many neutral answers despite teachers' emphasis on it, aligning with its low ranking as a reason for enrolment.

The results, particularly the questions that received neutral and "no opinion" responses, can bring Initiatives' attention to the certain activities and indicate what parents value and are interested in. Although teachers and members of the Initiatives reported that parents enjoyed workshops and found the community aspect relevant, the parents themselves focused on different aspects. To further investigate these results, it might be useful to introduce a feedback mechanism after organised events,

meetings and courses. This would provide the Initiatives with valuable information on parents' interests and priorities.

5.8 Influencing Family Language Policies and Next Steps

The strategies adopted by the Initiatives in influencing language management within families appear to operate with a certain momentum. That is, these strategies, such as the creation of classes and provision of additional language input, once established tend to operate without regular review or adaptation. Although these steps were transformative when they first emerged, particularly in offering a safe space and extra language input, currently, the Initiatives have limited means of extending their influence on the families. There is also little evidence of systematic reflection on whether these strategies remain effective over time or address the evolving language dynamics within families. Importantly, these strategies often overlook the broader context, such as the unequal distribution of language-related labour, particularly the disproportionate responsibility placed on minority-language-speaking parents, often mothers.

While the need for greater parental awareness and engagement is widely acknowledged, current approaches rarely challenge underlying assumptions or provide targeted support. For instance, workshops that critically explore the role of language labour within families and actively include non-Polish-speaking parents would be a valuable addition. The Initiatives have the potential to provide more reflective and inclusive spaces for parents, particularly in supporting equitable language practices at home. Other observed strategies, such as promoting peer interactions and community-building among children, are undoubtedly beneficial. However, these outcomes often emerge as incidental rather than intentional. While fruitful, the strategies are not systematically integrated into the Initiatives' planning or evaluation processes. As a result, their potential and opportunities are missed.

Crucially, the Initiatives are well-positioned to shape and moderate parents' expectations around language learning. As discussed in subsection 5.4, these expectations are often vague, yet the Initiatives currently offer limited tools to influence actual language practices within families. Additionally, while the lack of parental involvement in taking over or sustaining the Initiatives is noted as a concern, there is little discussion about why this matters beyond the immediate community. There is a missed opportunity to articulate how family-level engagement connects to broader social or political processes. In their current form, the Initiatives remain confined to the micro level, with no

clear strategy for transferring knowledge or advocacy efforts to the macro level, such as engagement with state institutions or policy discussions.

Ultimately, the strategies employed by the Initiatives are mostly adaptive, as they operate within, and inadvertently reinforce, a dominant discourse that places full responsibility for HL transmission on immigrant communities. There is a noticeable absence of efforts to challenge this framework or explore possibilities for scaling up. Engaging majority-language-speaking parents, advocating for institutional support, or initiating broader political dialogue could reposition the Initiatives as not only community-driven but also socially transformative.

One might then ask: can small, non-governmental Initiatives with limited power and resources be expected to do more? The answer is complex. These organisations, much like the families they serve, are doing their best within a system that rarely supports them. Maintaining existing activities is already a challenge – let alone reviewing, moderating, or scaling them. The expectations placed upon them are often disproportionate to their capacity. Yet, within these limitations, there remain opportunities, small but significant changes listed below that could amplify their impact and strengthen resilience among multilingual families. Some of these are modest in scope and not necessarily resource-intensive, though they do involve risk and a willingness to experiment.

First, families and the broader community can be treated not just as beneficiaries but as a core resource. Explicit communication about why their engagement matters can be a meaningful tool. Families should not only be invited to participate but shown how their involvement shapes the language-political landscape. For instance, as detailed in section 4.5.1, the “Polish in Hesse” campaign illustrates how coordinated parental efforts can influence educational policy. Families in Baden-Württemberg could draw from this example, while new families in Hesse could benefit from the experiences and strategies of those who paved the way. This kind of knowledge transfer does not require large-scale changes. It could begin with simple steps: distributing information via websites or before classes, during those informal gatherings, that outline pathways for civic and educational engagement.

Second, implementing light-touch monitoring and evaluation practices could generate valuable insights into family language practices. Short questionnaires or informal conversations before or after classes could ask simple but telling questions: Have you recently planned at home an activity involving Polish? How do you support Polish at home? This data could inform course design, helping to tailor

workshops and classes to families' actual needs, while also signalling to parents that their everyday language choices serve as a meaningful foundation for shaping the curriculum.

Third, the content of family workshops could be broadened. As acknowledged by the Initiatives themselves, these workshops are an important space for raising awareness about multilingualism and addressing the emotional pressures that come with language transmission. Expanding the scope to include majority-language-speaking parents, in this case such as German-speaking partners, could make these spaces more inclusive and challenge the underlying idea that HL maintenance is solely the responsibility of the minority language-speaking parent.

Finally, on a more strategic level, families can be intentionally involved as active contributors to fostering peer-to-peer interactions. While these interactions are currently a valuable by-product of the classes, they could become a more deliberate and impactful component of the Initiatives' approach if supported by targeted parental engagement. Parents, who already express appreciation for the socialisation opportunities these classes provide, could be encouraged to take a more active role in organising or supporting extracurricular activities. In doing so, they would help sustain and expand opportunities for children to use the HL in natural, social settings beyond the classroom. At the same time, these initiatives could create new spaces for parents themselves to connect and in turn, strengthen the community.

It is worth noting, however, that these lessons are drawn from an analysis with limits. The family-level sample is small and leans towards especially active parents and Initiative members, so quieter or less involved families are likely under-represented. Children were not interviewed by design, as the focus was on observing them in classroom interaction. LMPs are reconstructed from interviews rather than observed directly, so the sequences refer to past events.

In sum, while the Initiatives operate within significant constraints, they also possess untapped potential. By reframing families' role as partners and not just recipients of language support, and by embedding more inclusive, and participatory practices into their work, they can push gently but purposefully against the structural limitations they face. It may not be revolutionary change but it could be transformative.

6. Hybridity of Heritage Language Classes

Decisions at the macro and meso levels by state and local authorities and school administrations, together with families' everyday practices and actors' tacit and explicit expectations, shape what is possible in the classroom. The effects are both external, in organisation and resourcing, and internal, in the methods and strategies teachers adopt in the Initiatives. This chapter addresses the central question: How are languages managed in the HL classroom? It begins with teachers and learners noticing, in the moment, mismatches in language use and in the demands of materials and tasks, and typically designing and implementing ad hoc responses. It then widens the lens to curricula and pedagogical approaches that rest on historical legacies of teaching HL as a first language.

Across the LMPs observed and reconstructed, adaptive processes that leave prevailing approaches intact and sustain the status quo appear alongside transformative ones, where beliefs about multilingualism and the aims of HL pedagogy are tested against practice. The latter offers innovations such as recognising students' repertoires in course design and building them into tasks, yet they are rarely sustained. The chapter further explores how discourses on language learning, language prestige, national identity, and migration influence covert policies in HL classrooms, shaping both challenges and opportunities in language teaching.

The chapter shows HL education is characterised by hybridity on several levels. First, the informality of the extracurricular setting is drawn towards formalisation through tasks and materials. Second, methodologically, it occupies a position between first-language instruction and foreign-language didactics and blends plurilingual approaches with traditional instruction shaped by historical legacies. In practice, even when problems are noticed and community innovations exist, provision often reverts to familiar, adaptive methods. Ultimately, the chapter discusses how HL classrooms serve as sites of both community resilience and pedagogical experimentation, offering insights that are increasingly relevant to mainstream education systems adapting to language diversity.

6.1 The Logistics of Heritage Language Education

Before language can be taught, a material infrastructure has to be assembled. Earlier accounts by Cecylia and Henryka in Chapter 4 (Sections 4.5.3 and 4.6) confirm that material and organisational support, especially securing suitable space, is crucial to the Initiatives' work. Much of what makes HL classes possible happens out of sight: locating rooms, discussing the access, coordinating times, recruiting teachers, and sourcing materials. These tasks are not directly related to language, yet they

demand sustained resilience from organisers and educators. In a setting where HL maintenance is largely delegated to families and community, the Initiatives provide core elements, such as space, time slots, staffing and materials. Securing these resources requires ongoing effort, and the risk of their discontinuity represents a risk that must be carefully mitigated. Shaped by macro- and meso-level conditions, these challenges still have to be solved locally, as the Initiatives translate logistical issues and challenges into workable timetables, staffed classrooms, and resources that allow HL learning to take place.

6.1.1 Securing Space and Timeslots

One of the most persistent obstacles is the availability of appropriate space. As local institutions rarely prioritise HL education, Initiatives must accept what is offered, often spaces that are only marginally suitable for young learners. For example, in Darmstadt, Die Brücke benefits from municipal support and conducts its classes in a repurposed school building used as a community centre. The Initiative is granted two rooms weekly, along with a storage cupboard, which is trivial but an important arrangement that alleviates logistical burdens for teachers. In contrast, Wawel operates across multiple cities, utilising any available space, from private language schools to online platforms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Wawel transitioned some of its classes online and has continued offering this format due to its flexibility. In turn, for Die Brücke, online instruction was only a temporary solution. In Frankfurt, the Initiative used to hold weekend classes in a secondary school building provided by the city, but these were suspended during the pandemic and have not resumed, partly due to staffing shortages and a strategic focus on early childhood education.

The suitability of physical spaces has a direct impact on what classes look like. When classrooms are not tailored to young children, as observed in Wawel and Krasnale, teachers must spend additional time adapting the space and assisting students with furniture that is too large. In contrast, in Darmstadt, where the classroom is appropriately equipped, the teacher can dedicate more time to instructional tasks. Time slots present another challenge. Since HL classes are extracurricular, they must be scheduled around regular school hours, typically in the late afternoon or on weekends. This timing poses difficulties regardless of when classes are held: children are often tired and less focused after a full school day or during weekend sessions. While both suitable, adjusted space as well as timeslots may seem as minor issues, they were frequently mentioned by both teachers and parents and often used as a rationale for simplifying programs or limiting literacy-based activities.

6.1.2 Staffing and Teaching Materials

Shortages of qualified teaching staff are a widespread issue in HL education. While in all of the observed classes, teachers had prior pedagogical experience in Poland, often as Polish language teachers, some had entirely different professional backgrounds, for instance, one teacher at die Brücke was a mathematics teacher and started teaching HL only after moving to Germany. Most of the teachers develop the teaching methods during their work with children on a trial and error method. Opportunities for professional development in HL teaching are limited and usually take the form of one-day workshops or occasional online training.

Once space and timeslots are secured and the Initiative finds someone to conduct the classes, the classes can begin and a teacher arrives heavily burdened, with teaching aids, papers, and other materials in hand. Karina Schnedl and Magdalena Telus aptly describe HL teachers as “*człowiek orkiestra*” (English: *a one-person orchestra*), reflecting the multiple roles they have to perform simultaneously (Schnedl & Telus, 2018, p. 117). In addition to lesson planning and delivery, they are required to adapt spontaneously to the varying language abilities of students, which is considered as one of the main challenges in HL pedagogy (Olfert & Schmitz, 2016). In order to adjust, the teachers bring differentiated materials, which are also a persistent concern. Although resources have gradually become more accessible, materials must be adapted to accommodate the heterogeneous language abilities within each group.

Students are typically grouped by age rather than by proficiency level, though age gaps within groups sometimes exceed two years. Nonetheless, significant variation in language skills rooted in familial and sociolinguistic factors discussed in earlier chapters requires teachers to customise and differentiate existing materials creatively.

From the perspective of the LMF, the issues discussed here represent noticed challenges, over which Initiatives have limited direct control. They cannot be solved by the Initiatives alone, and no design adjustments have yet been proposed to address the challenge. As a result, provision defaults to adaptive responses that demand continual strategising by educators and organisers. One possible avenue lies in increased transparency and collaboration with families. If parents were more aware of the logistical constraints behind HL classes, they might get involved in advocacy efforts on a local level. Given the limited human resources, Initiatives might consider involving parents more directly, as discussed in Section 5.6, whether by organising reading sessions, supporting events, or facilitating

informal learning opportunities. Such engagement could not only relieve some of the burden on teachers but also strengthen the community aspect of HL education.

On a level of organising the classes, the Initiatives could signal the need for a professional development to the country of origin authorities, or try to create such opportunities themselves. However, the latter is a more complex issue that requires more reflection on the changes of HL education over the time, who are the main recipients of the classes, and what are their language skills. Both the need for such reflection and the changing demographics of HL classes are perhaps best illustrated through practice itself by closely observing classroom dynamics, teaching methods, and the strategies employed to manage multilingual space.

6.2 Heritage Language Classroom Through the Lens of Translanguaging Pedagogy

The discussion of classroom dynamics draws mostly on the participant observation of the courses. In Darmstadt, I followed a group of about ten children taught by Renata and Tekla. In Heidelberg, I observed an in-person class for five- to seven-year-olds led by Malwina and an online course taught by Waleria for two teenagers, and I briefly met an older in-person group taught by another instructor. My role was not limited to observation. At Krasnale I also worked in the classroom as a teacher and co-teacher before activities were suspended, which provided operational insight into how the Initiative functioned.

Across these sites the classes were inherently multilingual. Children, parents, and teachers co-constructed day-to-day language practices while switching between Polish, German, and other languages. The Translanguaging Classroom Framework offers a valuable lens for analysing the language management strategies employed by both students and teachers in the classroom. Through these strategies, students' translanguaging practices become visible, while teachers' responses and management approaches reveal how they work through and adjust to multilingual interactions. These strategies are not static – rather, they evolve continually through classroom interactions, as teachers respond to the linguistic realities they observe and anticipate. While some management decisions are thoughtfully planned in advance during course design, many emerge spontaneously in response to the dynamics of the moment. In this analysis, I adopt the term pedagogical approach as defined by Irina Makarova and colleagues (Makarova et al. 2023, p. 75), which, to put it simply, means a set of teaching methods grounded in theory and linked to clear principles – in the case of this dissertation, translanguaging pedagogy.

When examining classroom policies, it is crucial to consider not only the strategies at play but also the broader set of expectations shared by families and Initiatives. As previously noted, parents and their children often approach HL classes with rather unstructured expectations, beyond the hope that their children will receive additional exposure to Polish. The responsibility to provide structure, and meaningful input thus rests largely with the Initiatives themselves. The classroom dynamics, teacher-student interactions, and decision-making processes involved in language management are shaped by language beliefs and hidden agendas – underlying forces rooted in the historical trajectory of HL education and the complex web of expectations that accompany it. In the following analysis, these classroom dynamics are examined by drawing together insights from both the Translanguaging Framework and the LMF, offering a deeper look at how multilingual classroom realities are managed in practice.

6.2.1 Flexible Practices in Heritage Language Classroom

The main expectation placed upon HL classes is to increase the quantity and quality of language input, situating it in a structured educational setting. At the same time, teachers remain acutely aware of the minority status of Polish in the children's broader sociolinguistic environment, and thus, they fully expect instances of language mixing. Unsurprisingly, this leads teachers to adopt flexible, adaptive management within the classroom: while teachers consistently speak Polish, students are allowed to draw on German to complete tasks or clarify meaning when necessary. This approach is well illustrated in interviews with teachers. For instance, Stefania describes how she allows students to explain tasks to one another in German if this helps them complete the activity successfully:

Czasem dzieciom zabraknie słów i odpowiedzą po niemiecku, albo mówią „nie wiem, jak to powiedzieć”, to wtedy odpowiadamy „to powiedz to po niemiecku”. Dziecko wtedy mówi po niemiecku i. Prosimy, żeby inne dziecko przetłumaczyło albo same tłumaczymy. Nie ma jakiegoś rygoru, dla dzieci jest jasne, że to lekcje polskiego i rozmawiają po polsku. Chociaż na przerwie rozmawiają ze sobą po niemiecku. I nigdy nie ustalałyśmy z innymi nauczycielkami, co robimy w takiej sytuacji. Robiłam tak jak inne nauczycielki, stosując trochę żart, na przykład „o	Sometimes children run out of words and answer in German, or they say “I don't know how to say that”, then we reply “then say it in German”. The child then speaks in German or we ask another child to translate or we translate ourselves. There is no rigour, it is clear to the children that this is a Polish lesson and they talk in Polish. Although they talk to each other in German at break time. We never agreed with the other teachers on what to do in such situations. I did as the other teachers did, using a bit of a joke, like “Oh Jesus, come on you speak Polish
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Jezus Maria, weźcie mówicie po polsku, skoro jesteście już w polskiej szkole” albo „ojej, jakiś obcy język słyszę”. A potem dodawałam „A tak z ciekawości, jakbyś to powiedział po polsku”. Więc często tak moderujemy używanie polskiego i niemieckiego. Akceptujemy, że w czasie przerwy rozmawiają ze sobą po niemiecku, ale wysyłamy im sygnały, że wołałybyśmy, żeby mówili po polsku.	since you are already in a Polish school” or “oh dear, some foreign language I hear”. And then I would add “And just out of curiosity, how would you say it in Polish”. So we often moderate the use of Polish and German in this way. We accept that they talk to each other in German during the break, but we send them signals that we would prefer them to speak Polish.
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Example 6.1 Interview with Stefania, pos. 79/206, 00:29:00–00:31:00.

Similarly, Dagna reflects on balancing immersion in Polish with flexibility, acknowledging that sometimes students need to resort to German in order to express complex ideas:

Była zasada, że ja mówię tylko i wyłącznie po polsku i była zasada, że staramy się mówić po polsku. Była też taka zasada, że jak dziecko odpowiadało po niemiecku, to ja to tłumaczyłam temu dziecku jeszcze raz, np. mówiąc „a po polsku powiedzielibyśmy tak”. Ale nawet te dzieci, które mówiły bardzo słabo po polsku, bardzo starały w ogóle mówić i same pytały: a jak to powiedzieć po polsku i podawały słowo po niemiecku i ja to tłumaczyłam. Był i polski, i niemiecki jako taki język wspomagający.	There was a rule that I only spoke Polish and there was a rule that we tried to speak Polish. There was also a rule that if a child answered in German, I would explain it to the child again, for example by saying “and in Polish we would say like this”. But even those children who spoke very little Polish, tried very hard to speak at all and asked themselves: how do you say it in Polish and they would give a word in German and I would translate it. There was Polish and German as a kind of supporting language.
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Example 6.2 Interview with Dagna, pos. 34/77, 00:08:00–00:09:00.

The LMP here is that educators notice a mismatch between expectations of Polish-only use and students’ proficiency profiles, evaluate the constraint, and then design and implement adjustments that accommodate German as it arises in interaction. This expectation is not explicitly voiced by parents. Rather, it originates within the Initiative it is rather assumed than actively reinforced. The expectation of Polish-only stems from the beliefs related to language teaching that are discussed in detail in 6.3.3. As a result of the LMP, the approach implemented by the teachers can be described as immersion with accommodation, which does not enforce absolute linguistic boundaries, but rather

allows students to mobilise their full repertoires when needed. In this sense, HL classes often resemble foreign language classrooms, where strategic use of a shared dominant language (in this case, German) facilitates access to new language content.

This dynamic becomes particularly interesting when viewed through the lens of translanguaging. Much of the translanguaging literature has emerged from contexts where instruction occurs in a dominant majority language, and students are encouraged to draw on minoritised languages as resources to support learning (García & Lin, 2017). In HL education, however, this relationship is reversed: Polish is the preferred instructional language, while German, the dominant societal language, is used by students as a supportive resource when needed. On one hand, translanguaging facilitates knowledge construction by enabling students to draw on their full linguistic resources. On the other – it introduces a power dynamic that cannot be ignored. German's status as the dominant language of schooling and society means that its presence within HL classrooms may at times appear to undermine the goal of Polish language immersion. Yet, given the diverse levels of proficiency among students, some reliance on German is often unavoidable.

How, then, do the Initiatives' teachers manage this tension? The answer is complex. In practice, much of this management is left to the students themselves, with teachers responding ad hoc when German surfaces in the classroom. There is a certain paradox here: while the HL teachers fully anticipate the presence of German, only few of them adopt systematic strategies to address it. Instead, they rely on a set of flexible, informal strategies that have evolved through experience and observation. Teachers are well aware that German will appear, but prefer to address its use pragmatically and situationally rather than through rigid policies.

The reasons behind this approach are layered. Teachers seek to balance students' well-being and active participation with the goal of maximising Polish-language input and recognise that strict language policing might discourage engagement or inhibit learning. At the same time, this approach reflects the historical framing of HL teaching, which has often been shaped by monolingual ideologies and concentrated on standard language. Even with frameworks such as translanguaging and language management, these pressures are not always fully captured. They shape classroom interactions, influence the strategies of both teachers and students, and point to the nuanced – and sometimes contradictory – character of HL pedagogy.

Let us now turn to a more extensive example that illustrates both the logistical and external challenges faced by a teacher, Malwina, as well as the language interactions and management strategies that emerge at the start of a class. The following subsections will unpack these classroom dynamics in greater detail, examining the LMPs at play and the hidden agendas that inform the decisions and strategies observed.

During one class, Malwina, a Polish as HL teacher, brought materials and asked the children what they would like to draw. Jakub, the oldest boy in the group, said he wanted to draw a fox. Malwina then asked Jakub and another girl, Magda, who both knew how to write since they attended school, to write the word “fox” (Polish: lis) on the whiteboard. Magda correctly wrote “lis”, but Jakub wrote “liś”. Instead of using ‘s’, he wrote ‘ś’, which is a Polish letter representing the palatal fricative /ɕ/. Malwina pointed out Jakub's mistake and explained that the correct form should be without the dash.

She then asked Jakub how the word would sound with ‘ś’, to which he unfortunately did not know the answer. Malwina explained that ‘ś’ is pronounced as /ɕ/, and the children repeated the phoneme after her. Following that, Malwina asked Jakub and Magda to write the word “ślimak” (English: snail) on the whiteboard since it contains the letter ‘ś’ representing the phoneme /ɕ/. Jakub correctly wrote “ślimak”, but Magda wrote “schlimag”, using the German orthography - ‘sch’ /ʃ/ instead /ɕ/ of and ‘g’ /g/ instead of ‘k’ /k/. Malwina corrected Magda’s spelling, and Magda wrote “ślimak” correctly on the whiteboard. Then Malwina wanted to show the children that the sound /ɕ/ can be written in another way, not only as ‘ś’ with a dash (‘ś’) but also as ‘si’. She wrote a short version of my name in two ways: “Asia” and “Aśa” /Aɕa/. Malwina asked Jakub and Magda which way was correct. Jakub answered that he didn’t know.

Malwina commented to me, “Right, how would they know?”. She realised that the students weren’t aware of the rule that ‘ś’ is written before consonants and ‘s’ is written before vowels. She started to explain, saying “Before vowels, Selbstlaut...” but she was interrupted by Jakub, who jokingly said, “Please don't speak to me in German because I don't understand anything”. It was meant as a joke since he speaks German very well. Magda, the other student, mentioned in German that her mother speaks to her like that. Malwina laughed and gave up on explaining. She asked me to explain the rule to the children. I asked them to name the Polish vowels they knew. Both Magda and Jakub mentioned all the Polish vowels, and then Magda said she had learnt vowels and schools and she presented the vowels in German sign language. She told me in German that she learned it at school because one of her school friends is deaf. I didn’t have an opportunity to further explain the rule because Malwina asked students to sit down. She wanted to proceed with other tasks.

Field Note 6.1 Heidelberg, 28.02.2023.

The field note reveals a great deal of ad hoc language management, as the teacher responds in real time to students' attempts at completing tasks and to the multiple challenges present in the classroom – some explicitly mentioned by teachers during interviews, others more implicit. First, the mixed composition of the group presents an ongoing challenge: students of varying ages and differing proficiencies share the same space, requiring the teacher to design tasks that can engage both primary school children and those still in kindergarten. Second, the field note points to a reliance on the German school system for the initial stages of literacy development, with HL classes instead of introducing it themselves. Third, the goals of HL instruction remain flexible and largely reactive, shaped more by immediate classroom realities than by clear, systematically articulated objectives. Fourth, much of the classroom management remains similarly ad hoc, reflecting the absence of a structured instructional framework that could guide teaching across such diverse learner profiles. Finally, the observations capture instances of students displaying both language awareness and agency, actively navigating and negotiating their linguistic repertoires to make meaning. Let us now take a closer look at each of these issues, exploring how they unfold in practice.

The Challenge of Mixed Proficiency and Limited Materials

Malwina faces a particularly demanding teaching context. Her group includes both kindergarten and primary school children, requiring her to manage a wide range of developmental stages and language competencies. In practice, this often results in lessons focused on manual and playful activities, such as painting or crafts, which can engage all children regardless of their literacy level. Literacy-based tasks are rare and typically limited to those who have already received formal instruction in German schools.

The materials used in class are largely prepared by the educators. Like many of her colleagues working with younger learners, such as Renata and Tekla, Malwina relies on resources she has selected, and adapted herself. These are typically simple, seasonal, or holiday-themed tasks that prioritise immersion in the Polish language. Vocabulary development may occur incidentally, but the primary aim is to expose children to Polish through experience and interactions during manual tasks. However, while this approach is resourceful, it is largely the result of necessity rather than pedagogical preference.

The topic of suitable materials was one of the most commonly mentioned challenges among teachers, both in interviews as well as in the questionnaire for teachers. It is worth noting, however, that the

problem may lie less in the quantity of available materials, as many of them are increasingly entering the market, and more in the absence of clear pedagogical guidelines for working with mixed-age and mixed-proficiency groups. In other words, while coursebooks often provide a structured sequence of topics and corresponding exercises, which relieve teachers from the burden of designing the entire curriculum themselves, they usually do not include guidelines on how to differentiate tasks and adapt the materials to such diverse groups. Teachers are left to determine on their own how best to manage such diversity.

Structural constraints also play a role. The composition of age-diverse groups often reflects not only practical limitations such as availability of educators or space but also due to Initiatives' adaptation to parents' schedule and convenience. Malwina, for instance, once mentioned that although she would prefer not to include younger siblings in the same class, refusing such requests would likely result in families withdrawing their children entirely (based on participant observation in Heidelberg, 15.11.2022). This suggests that cooperation with parents and the communication related to expectations may be just as crucial as curriculum design.

Faced with such challenges, teachers often fall back on accessible, non-language-focused tasks to ensure that all children can participate. These materials are usually solely in Polish, supporting language immersion while sidestepping the difficulties of accommodating students' wide-ranging literacy skills. However, as illustrated in Malwina's class, this strategy may obscure rather than resolve the underlying issue. For example, during one lesson, she asked the group what they wanted to draw: Children who had not yet acquired literacy skills began their art tasks and were left on their own, while more advanced learners, like Jakub and Magda, were tasked with writing exercises (see Field Note 6.1).

Another confirmation related to lack of appropriate materials is given by Kaja, a teacher from a small informal initiative who participated in the workshops for teachers organised by Krasnale, the Initiative from Frankfurt. She shared a personal example of her 10-year-old daughter, for whom Polish reading materials pose a particular challenge. Although some books are thematically appropriate, their language difficulty makes them inaccessible. However, simpler texts are age-inappropriate, leaving a gap where suitable resources for older children with developing HL skills are lacking (based on participant observation of the workshops held online in November 2021).

This disparity highlights the inadequacy of existing materials to address the varied needs of HL learners. In practice, HL teachers often mitigate this shortfall by developing their own resources, for example, by adapting authentic texts or creating personalised materials to suit their groups. However, the recurring demand for materials is not merely a call for ready-made textbooks, rather – it is a reflection of deeper gaps in didactic guidelines and frameworks tailored to instruction of specific HL. Textbooks designed for native speakers or foreign language learners typically follow established curricula, presenting clearly sequenced topics accompanied by exercises that build towards defined educational objectives. These materials provide teachers with a clear roadmap for introducing content, organising lessons, and monitoring student progress.

In HL education, such structured frameworks are largely absent, leaving teachers responsible for defining learning goals, sequencing topics, and developing appropriate tasks on their own. This issue is widely recognised in HL education beyond the Polish context. For instance, Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher and Anup P. Mahajan in their study of Indian and Pakistani community-based schools identify not only the lack of suitable materials and guidelines, but also the additional burden placed on teachers to develop instructional resources independently (Ghaffar-Kucher & Mahajan, 2012, p. 84). The ongoing demand for materials, then, ultimately reflects a broader call for pedagogical guidance: clarity on what to teach, how to structure courses, and how to adapt instruction to the diverse realities of HL classrooms.

From the perspective of the translanguaging classroom and LMF, the challenge of mixed proficiency is noticed, acknowledged, and unsurprisingly it's assessed as problematic. There is also a mitigation strategy put in place: materials and tasks are adjusted. Yet it is seldom addressed through systematic pedagogical design, so language management remains implicit rather than intentional. Instead of developing differentiated pathways, teachers often sidestep complex, literacy-based work that would require more fine-tuned adjustments. What is missing, however, is a guideline or a set of good practices in HL teaching, such as, a set of texts and tasks that are easily adjustable. The result is reactive, ad hoc classroom management, as reflected in Field Note 6.1. HL educators notice problems with the materials and evaluate them as constraining, but they do not design or implement any guidelines to systematically address them.

This analysis raises two questions: Why are differences in proficiency not addressed more directly, and why has no guideline been developed? On one hand, there are logistical constraints such as limited financial resources, lack of teachers or lack of suitable spaces and in general – marginalisation of HL

education – make it difficult for Initiatives to offer additional groups that are not diverse in terms of age and proficiency. On the other hand, even when teachers acknowledge these challenges, their responses remain largely intuitive and individually crafted, rather than being informed by shared and clearly articulated pedagogical approaches. As a result, language management around adapting materials remains adaptive: problems are noticed and evaluated, but design and implementation do not extend to common guidance. To move towards a transformative response, two shifts are needed: first, explicit reflection on pedagogy and the beliefs that underpin it (including the place of German), leading to agreed principles and frameworks; second, a practical collaboration and exchange platform where teachers co-develop and trial set of tasks or pedagogical guidelines and revise them in light of classroom evidence. In practice, however, the only distinction that tends to receive consistent attention during the HL classes is whether students have already entered primary school, which serves as a proxy of having been introduced to literacy.

Literacy Skills and Reliance on the German School

Observations of the classes confirm that Polish as HL instruction often builds on literacy foundations developed in mainstream education. However, this reliance is rarely made explicit or systematically integrated into the teaching approach. HL classes tend to postpone the introduction of reading and writing activities until students have already developed basic literacy skills in German primary schools.

This strategy can be interpreted as adaptive language management in response to known challenges such as limited instructional time and the diverse composition of learner groups. Initiatives' courses, as many similar HL programmes, operate only once a week and cannot dedicate sufficient time to the full development of literacy skills. Instead, they provide complementary tasks that draw on what students have already learned elsewhere. However, this adaptation is typically informal and not reflected in any structured pedagogical strategy, which highlights a broader issue: the absence of clearly defined frameworks that addresses the specific needs of multilingual learners.

This pattern was evident during my observations, especially in Heidelberg. Only two students, Magda and Jakub, both in the first and second grades of German primary school, were engaged in writing-based tasks. Younger children, many of whom had not yet begun formal schooling, were asked instead to draw or colour. The logic behind this differentiation was not stated, but clearly linked to whether students had received initial literacy instruction in German school. A field note from one of these sessions illustrates this approach:

Malwina brings in worksheets designed to introduce and reinforce the sound and letter “u” /u/. The children who attend preschool colour the pictures on the worksheet, while Jakub and Magda are tasked with finding the letter “u” /u/ on the page. Magda tells me that they also recently covered “u” /u/ in her German school when learning about the diphthong “au” /aʊ/. The next task Malwina gives is to list Polish words that begin with “u” /u/. The children suggest: “ucho” (English: *ear*), uszy /'uʂɨ/ (English: *ears*), ul /ul/ (English: *beehive*). They all draw beehive with ears and mouth to remember the words beginning with “u” [u] Malwina then writes the word pszczoła /'pʂtʂɔwa/ [bee] on the board, explaining it's the creature that lives in a “ul” /ul/. All the children copy the word, even five-year-old Piotr manages to write it down. After the lesson, when I speak with his mother, she mentions that Piotr's older brother is currently learning to read and write, and Piotr tends to copy whatever his brother does.

Field Note 6.2 Heidelberg, 28.02.2023.

This lesson contained elements of scaffolding when introducing a new phoneme and corresponding letter to enable participation across age groups. Yet, the scaffolding relied not on an HL-specific literacy pathway, but on what students had already learned in mainstream education or, in Piotr's case, at home through informal exposure. The decision to exclude formal literacy teaching from HL classes appears grounded in the broader educational approach that children should only learn to read and write once they enter primary school and those skills were introduced in the majority language. Even then, tasks related to reading and writing are rather unplanned and ad hoc.

This default approach was, however, not universal. In Frankfurt, the Krasnale Initiative pursued a more systematic literacy development model. The classes were supported by the Polish coursebooks for introduction to reading and writing and educators put more attention to phonological contrast between Polish and German to foster awareness and mediation skills that would be essential to develop literacy in both languages. Unfortunately, the courses eventually ceased, and this model was not continued elsewhere.

Interestingly, while observations presented in Field Note 6.3 from Darmstadt confirm a general reliance on the German curriculum, there are also contrasting cases. One such example involves Dawid, a student who, in addition to attending Polish HL classes, also participates in a Ukrainian HL programme. As a result, he has already begun learning to read and write in Ukrainian:

Renata tells me she plans to introduce telling time in today's lesson, and informs Tola's and Diana's parents, who are present. Tola's mother explains that full hours are taught in first grade, with more complex phrases coming later, suggesting to do only the basics. Meanwhile, I spoke with Dawid's father about my research. I mention learning that Dawid attends Ukrainian school, which he confirms, saying Dawid goes every Saturday. Dawid, overhearing us, points to some writing on the board (names and a few German words like "Lehrerin") and explains how certain Ukrainian Cyrillic letters correspond to Latin ones. His father adds that Dawid is learning the Ukrainian alphabet, currently focusing on vowels, and explains that Ukrainian initiative starts earlier with literacy than German kindergartens do. When Renata asks if Dawid knows the Polish alphabet, he explains that Dawid hasn't practiced Polish letters yet, to avoid confusing him while he is still learning Ukrainian.

Field note 6.3 Darmstadt, 16.02.2023.

Overall, reliance on mainstream schooling for foundational literacy reflects the supplementary nature of HL classes and subtly reinforces the belief that literacy should be acquired first in the majority language, even when that reliance stems from time and resource constraints. As extracurricular activities held once a week, these classes lack the frequency and duration needed to fully support literacy development independently. Teachers and parents have also noted that introducing more formal, school-like content could meet resistance from students, who may prefer the informal, engaging character of HL learning spaces. As a result, instruction often builds on what learners already know rather than following a dedicated educational trajectory.

Such an approach does not necessarily indicate a shortcoming of the HL courses themselves. Rather, it reflects the broader structural context in which they operate, and demonstrates a certain degree of adaptability on the part of both teachers and organisers. The current model allows for flexibility and responsiveness to the diverse needs of learners. However, it also highlights the absence of clear frameworks that could better support HL education in taking a more proactive and systematic role in students' long-term bilingual development.

The Challenge of Defining Goals in Heritage Language Instruction

In the absence of formal curricula or standardised teaching materials, HL educators construct their own instructional goals based on the challenges they observe in their classrooms. These goals emerge as direct responses to students' language competences and their engagement as well as teachers' perceived value of HL learning. When teachers encounter students' reluctance to engage with Polish, they often prioritise fostering emotional connections and reducing anxiety. Conversely, when students

view Polish as a language of limited practical relevance, teachers attempt to emphasise its instrumental value by introducing more formal literacy skills, certifications, or measurable outcomes. Although these emotional and pragmatic goals may appear distinct, they ultimately reflect different facets of the same challenge: how to sustain learners' engagement in the absence of structured, long-term educational planning.

Teachers like Tekla and Jadwiga focus on students' emotional connection to the HL. Tekla emphasises creating a safe, joyful space where students feel comfortable speaking Polish:

Ogólnym założeniem kursu dla mnie to jest przede wszystkim, żeby dzieci polubiły język polski i żeby chętnie go używały, żeby nie bały się mówić, żeby były otwarte na ten język polski. Żeby zrobić dla nich to, aby to było taką przyjemnością, nie musem tylko dobrą zabawą, a przy okazji żeby tam też czegoś jednak się troszeczkę nauczyły.	The general aim of the course for me is to make children like the Polish language and to make them eager to use it, to make them not be afraid to speak, to make them open to the Polish language. So that it's a pleasure for them, it's not an obligation, it's just a fun experience, and at the same time they learn a bit.
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Example 6.3 Interview with Tekla, pos. 17/55 and pos. 32/55

Similarly, Jadwiga considers continued attendance a key indicator of success, reflecting a priority on maintaining participation because of high dropout rates:

[...] a cel został osiągnięty, jeżeli ktoś przyszedł na następne zajęcia, albo na przykład chodził dwa semestry.	[...] and the goal was achieved if someone came to the next class, or attended two semesters, for example.
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Example 6.4 Interview with Jadwiga, pos. 22/101, 00:12:15–00:12:45.

While these goals are understandable in light of high attrition rates and learners' varying motivation, they represent minimum bar rather than systematically defined educational outcomes. The aim here extends beyond language acquisition and treats emotional engagement as equally vital. However, such a broadly defined objective works here more as a reactive adaptation to the noted challenge than as a proactive plan.

In contrast, teachers such as Wanda and Waleria pursue more outcome-oriented objectives. Waleria's objectives are focused on measurable outcomes and institutional recognition: her goal is to prepare

students to be able to pass language tests and get CEFR-level certification (Interview with Waleria pos. 72/83, 00:31:00-00:32:40). Wanda focuses on building reading skills and reducing students' anxiety around Polish literacy, as Field Note 6.4 based on the observation of teacher's workshop present:

Wanda started her presentation and talked about the goals of her courses. She stated that her primary focus is something that's a bit of a personal passion but also a significant concern – helping these children read independently. She wanted them to experience the satisfaction of having read a text, and to overcome their fear of reading in Polish, as it's also about breaking through a certain anxiety. Field Note 6.4 Online workshops for teachers conducted by Wanda in November 2021.

The goals educators set in HL classrooms are not predefined but rather adapted responsively to the immediate needs and realities they encounter. While some educators prioritise fostering positive emotional connections with the HL to encourage its maintenance, others emphasise language as a practical skill linked to educational aspect and societal recognition through the CEFR-level certification. However, despite differing emphases, both sets of goals are pursued through similar adaptive language management strategies in the classroom: informal and responsive. The adaptability of HL educators to immediate classroom needs is commendable. However, this flexibility is frequently reactive rather than strategic. The absence of clearly articulated objectives limits teachers' ability to engage in systematic reflection, coordinate learning outcomes across levels, or share effective practices with others. Rather than imposing rigid standardisation, developing a flexible framework could preserve teachers' responsiveness while providing clearer objectives and structured guidelines, and as a result – enable HL educators to adapt good practices across diverse contexts.

Teachers' Ad Hoc Management Strategies and Class Goals

The strategies I refer to as ad hoc are characterised by their absence of pre-planned instruction. Instead, they emerge spontaneously as teachers respond to the immediate needs of their students. Teachers anticipate that many of their students will struggle with Polish, whether due to limited exposure or stronger competence in the majority language. Yet despite this awareness, instructional choices often remain improvised rather than systematically designed.

One common strategy is the flexible use of German as a mediating language. In classroom observations (see Field Note 6.1) Malwina attempts to scaffold Jakub's emerging literacy by introducing a phoneme-letter correspondence in Polish. When she realises that the orthographic rule she aims to explain may be unfamiliar to the students, because they are encountering the sound-letter

correspondence in Polish for the first time, she switches to German, using the term *Selbstlaut* (English: *vowel*), drawing on the students' knowledge from the German school system. This moment highlights how translanguaging serves not as a planned instructional approach but as an emergent, situational tool to bridge understanding when Polish terminology falls short.

Another recurring pattern involves delegating translation tasks to students. This is observed in Renata's class, where Maria is tasked with translating instructions for her peer Nela throughout the lesson. Although Renata initially prompted Maria to take on this role, she occasionally needed to remind her when translation lapses:

At the end of the lesson, the teacher suggests a game of animal riddles. The teacher describes an animal and the learners are asked to guess which animal she means. This question makes another student, Maria, translate the instructions and tasks silently to Nela. In fact, at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher asked Maria to help her with translating the instructions for Nela. Sometimes in the course of the class Maria forgets that she is supposed to translate the instructions to Nela and then the teacher reminds her to translate.

Field Note 6.5 Darmstadt, 12.05.2022.

Importantly, this delegation was not a one-off but rather a consistent feature of the HL courses, and it aligns with the strategies described by other teachers such as Stefania and Dagna, who consciously avoid adopting the role of translator themselves (see Examples 6.1 and 6.2). Instead, peer mediation becomes a routine strategy to accommodate learners with lower Polish proficiency. That is particularly visible, when students go back to German language as a compensation strategy. Here is another example from Renata class:

The task is a game of charades. The teacher, Renata, draws something on the board and the pupils have to guess what it is. The next drawing is a bicycle. The teacher asks what it is. Nela raises her hand and says in German *Fahrrad* (English: *bicycle*). The teacher asks: "and in Polish?". Nela answers in Polish that it is a bicycle. The teacher asks Nela to repeat the word for bicycle in Polish and the student repeats.

Field Note 6.6 Darmstadt, 11.11.2022.

The observed approaches in HL classrooms reflect a translanguaging shift: teachers demonstrate a willingness to adjust to students' language needs and are responsive to the sociolinguistic realities of

their learners – in this case, the fact that in educational setting, German is their dominant language (García et al., 2017, pp. 53-54). There is an implicit recognition of the need for a supportive language environment, and teachers are prepared to make real-time shifts between languages when necessary. Such an approach corresponds with the translanguaging stance as well, however, with some limitations. While there is a stance in relation to shifts, what is lacking is a stance related to a translanguaging design. In other words, what is missing is a deliberate, systematic inclusion of multilingual resources and practices in the planning of instruction. While students actively mobilise their full linguistic repertoires, drawing on both Polish and German to make meaning, ensure communication efficiency and negotiate expectations related to the language dynamics in the classroom, these spontaneous translanguaging practices are not mirrored in the pedagogical approaches set by teachers. Students like Jakub and Magda illustrate this well: they engage in spontaneous cross-linguistic comparisons, exhibit metalinguistic awareness, and even reflect on educational language policies, demonstrating an understanding of their bilingual environment. Yet, these capabilities remain underutilised in classroom scaffolding.

This relation reveals a gap between noticing the language-related challenges and addressing them by preparing an adjustment design. Teachers clearly do not expect full immersion in Polish and are aware that their students will utilise their language resources. However, this understanding is not formally acknowledged in the pedagogical preparation. The use of German, while present, is reactive rather than integrated as part of a scaffolded learning strategy. The majority language is not treated as a pedagogical asset but as a fallback mechanism. Thus, while translanguaging occurs and is at times encouraged, the lack of systemic inclusion in curriculum design limits its pedagogical potential. In essence, students' translanguaging practices outpace the teachers' instructional approaches.

Students' Agency and Their Language Awareness

The fieldnotes presented so far reveal that it is often students who actively initiate language management and shape classroom language practices. Rather than being solely shaped by teachers' decisions, the languages' usage is frequently re-configured in real-time by the learners themselves. This is particularly evident in the following example from Heidelberg, where students spontaneously correct each other's language choices, invoking the expected language policy without teacher intervention:

A lesson on St. Nicholas Day. Some children are colouring Santa for themselves. One student, Ula, asks the younger girls in Polish if anyone has a *Spitzer*, which is a German word for sharpener. The younger girl corrects her: “Temperówka” (a sharpener in Polish). One of the students hands Ula the sharpener. Field Note 6.7 Heidelberg 06.12.2022.

In this brief interaction, the student not only provides lexical repair but also subtly reinforces the intended language of communication in the classroom. The correction is initiated by the peer, not the teacher, demonstrating how students take responsibility for maintaining the implicit language norms. A similar pattern appears when students negotiate language choice with the teacher. In another class in Heidelberg:

After initial greetings and singing a song, Magda tells the teacher in German that she has drawn a story about a Polish school. The teacher calls out to the pupils to see Magda’s drawings. The other pupils sit around the teacher’s table. Magda narrates each page in German. The teacher comments in Polish (e.g. “Why are the pupils sad?”).

Field Note 6.8 Heidelberg, 15.11.2022.

Here, Magda initiates the use of German, but the teacher subtly steers the conversation back to Polish without interrupting her narrative. This balanced response allows Magda to express herself while gently reinforcing Polish as the preferred language of instruction.

Students’ agency often prompts teachers to adapt their instruction. Returning to the case of Jakub and Magda’s initial engagement with Polish literacy (Field note 6.1), it becomes evident that their demonstrations of language awareness, such as drawing comparisons between Polish and German, or referring to the teacher’s language choices, shape the rhythm of classroom interaction. For instance, Jakub’s decision to write a letter characteristic of Polish orthography prompted Malwina to introduce the letter “ś”, followed by an explanation of its use. Similarly, Magda spontaneously compared Polish vowels to corresponding signs in German Sign Language. These ad hoc comparisons and reflections on languages indicate that students are well-prepared to engage in language awareness activities. They are capable of participating in tasks that build explicit knowledge about language, encourage cross-linguistic comparisons, and recognise the multilingual environments in which they live. When carefully designed, such tasks can help address some of the challenges discussed earlier, particularly those related to varying language skills and proficiency levels within the same group.

Within the Polish community in Germany, there are concrete examples that demonstrate the potential of this approach. Two classroom experiences facilitated by Cecylia offer valuable insights into how language awareness can be systematically integrated into teaching practice. The following section illustrates two cases of how targeted strategies can translate theoretical frameworks into effective classroom practice.

6.2.2 Students' Resources in Action: Two Cases from Heritage Language Classes

Before discussing the examples, a brief note on Cecylia's approach is necessary. Cecylia is a teacher who has developed an expertise in project-based instruction. She designed and delivered several projects, sharing with me the resulting materials and documentation produced during these courses. These project-based classes were offered as additional activities, complementing the regular HL lessons. At the time of our conversation, Krasnale, the Initiative from Frankfurt, where Cecylia worked, had suspended in-person classes, and she had decided to take a break from HL teaching. As a result, I was unable to observe these projects directly. However, Cecylia provided extensive documentation, including course materials, folders, and printed presentations. These presentations not only outline the objectives and structure of the projects but also include her reflections on the pedagogical rationale behind each of them, as discussed in our interview.

Case 1: Playing Translator

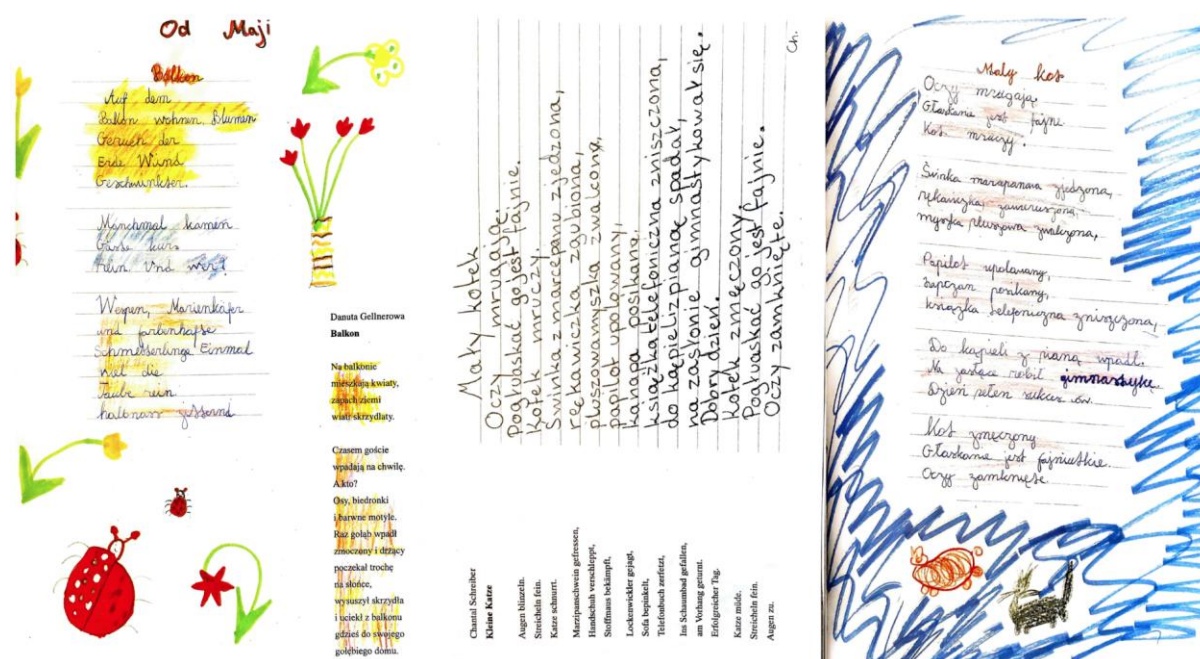
This project aligns closely with all components of a translanguaging pedagogy, particularly in relation to pedagogical design and. It was tailored for younger learners and specifically addresses the variability in students' Polish language proficiency, as well as their use of German during lessons. The central task was relatively straightforward: to translate poems from German into Polish and vice versa. However, the accompanying brochure highlights the thoughtful scaffolding of this task.

[illegible]

Initially, students were asked to identify words they found difficult to translate (Figure 8 middle section titled “Ojej, jak to przetłumaczyć?” (English: *Oh dear, how to translate it*). This was followed by group discussions on potential translations (Figure 7 right section titled “Nasze odkrycia” (English: *Our Findings*), and eventually the presentation of student-generated translations. In some instances, entire poems were translated from Polish into German or vice versa. In others, students opted to illustrate the poem’s meaning through drawings.

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Figure 8 Poems Translated Into German and Polish



Note. Left: German translation of a Polish poem. Middle and right: Polish translation of a German poem. Photograph by the author, 2022.

The task included scaffolding to support students' successful completion and translation of the poems (see Figure 8), regardless of their skill level. A particularly noteworthy element was the incorporation of bidirectional translation activities between German and Polish which further supported the development of students' mediation skills.

In essence, incorporating translation as a form of mediation and drawing strategically on students' language resources represented a deliberate design adjustment to the observed diversity of language skills among students and the routine presence of German in the classroom. The use of scaffolding further ensured meaningful participation for all learners, confirming the inclusive character of the task.

Case 2: Multilingual Posters

The second project conducted by Cecylia tackled a more critical aspect of language awareness, namely it made students note the fact that they live in a multilingual environment. The design of the classes acknowledges not only students' language resources but their multilingual and diverse realities. The focus was not only on HL but on languages spoken in their families and the diversity in their closest surroundings.

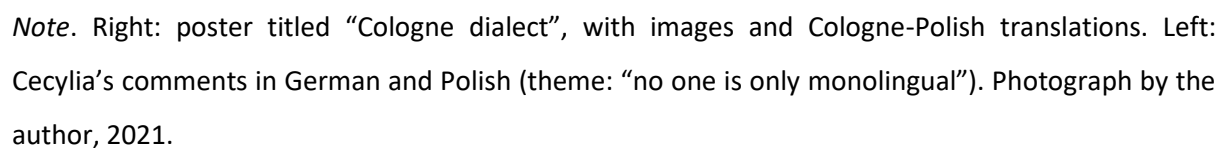
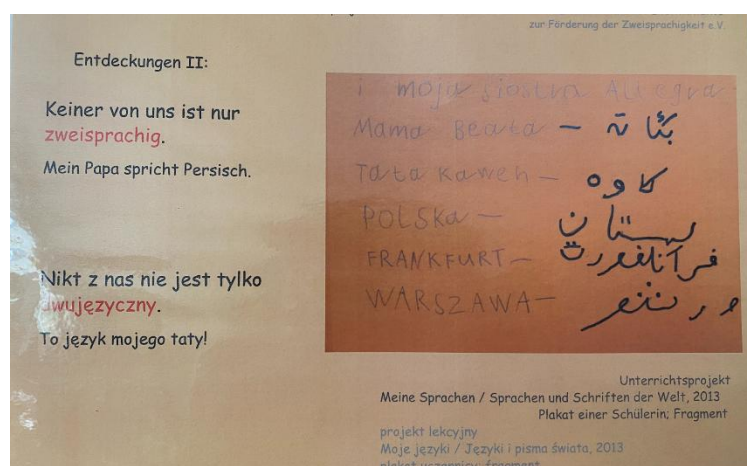
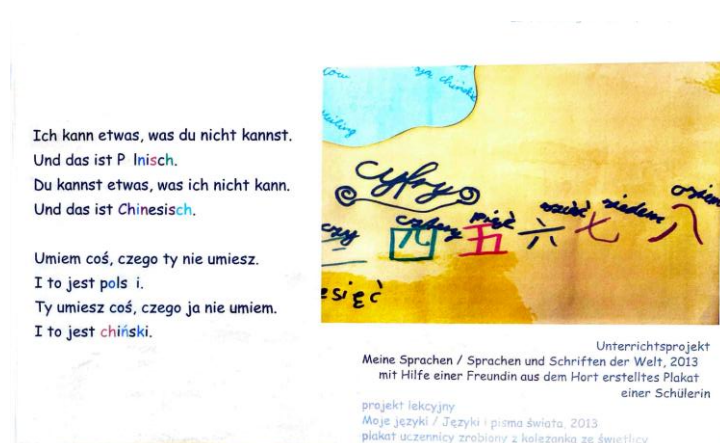
Figure 9 *Presentation of the Cologne Dialect*

Figure 10 *Presenting Polish and Farsi*



Note. Right: poster with Polish-Farsi translations. Left: Cecylia's comments in Polish and German on the findings – that no one is only bilingual. Photograph by the author, 2021.

Figure 11 *Presenting Polish and Mandarin*



Note. Right: Polish-Mandarin translation of numerals. Left: Cecylia's comment highlighting another finding – that one student knows something another does not, and vice versa. Photograph by the author, 2021.

This project embodies elements of CLA. According to Sara Beaudrie and colleagues, CLA in HL teaching involves inclusivity and respect for learners' linguistic varieties while promoting an appreciation of linguistic diversity as a fundamental instructional goal. CLA also seeks to enhance learners' linguistic self-confidence by using their minoritised language as a foundation for language learning. Moreover, it aims to instil awareness of the sociopolitical realities surrounding language use (Beaudrie et al, 2020). While the sociopolitical aspects of CLA were not fully addressed in Cecylia's project, the emphasis on observing and valuing language diversity aligns strongly with the core principles of CLA. Cecylia's projects prioritised recognising and appreciating language variation over addressing power

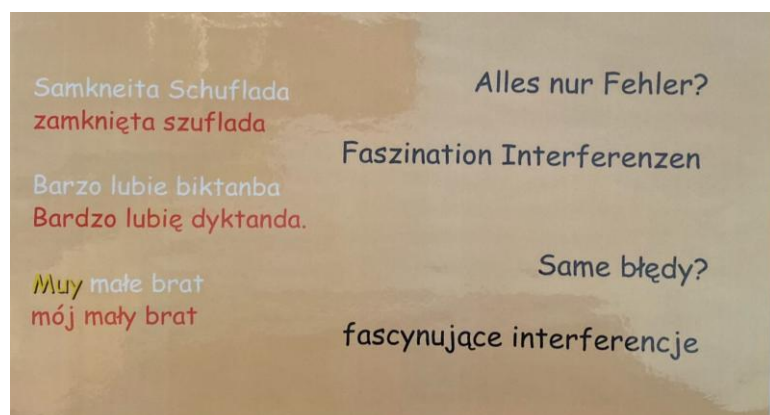
dynamics between languages, yet the foundational element of celebrating diversity was undeniably present.

Cecylia's Stance

What is innovative in Cecylia's approach is the deliberate inclusion of students' other languages within the tasks. Rather than relying solely on Polish immersion out of necessity, she designed the projects to actively foster the skills and knowledge of multilingual students. The structure of these projects allowed students to draw on their full linguistic resources in a purposeful way, moving beyond incidental or ad hoc use of their additional languages. In this way, her approach transforms the typical dynamics of HL classes towards a fully translanguaging model, where the presence of multiple languages is not simply tolerated but actively integrated into the learning process.

Cecylia's approach to teaching and her use of students' language resources is clearly reflected in a presentation she prepared for a conference (see Figure 12). One slide features student-produced phrases written in non-standard Polish on the left side, with the standard Polish equivalents corrected in red underneath. On the right side, Cecylia added her own reflection, written in both German and Polish: "Mistakes only? Fascinating interferences". This comment illustrates her perspective that what might traditionally be considered as language errors actually reveal meaningful cross-linguistic influences – connections that students naturally draw upon as part of their multilingual repertoires. Rather than framing these forms as deficits, Cecylia interprets them as valuable resources that can be built upon in instruction. This orientation clearly reflects a translanguaging stance, where students' full linguistic repertoires are not only recognised but also appreciated, and actively incorporated into the learning process.

Figure 12 Summary of Cecylia's Approach



Note. Photograph by author, 2021.

6.2.3 Adaptive Ad Hoc Management and Transformative Designs

The data presented thus far demonstrates that approaches in the HL classrooms operate through a mix of spontaneous, adaptive strategies with a dose of designed strategies carrying potential to be transformative. On the one hand, translanguaging emerges organically in classroom interactions: students draw on their full linguistic repertoires, and teachers respond flexibly in real time. These practices reflect an adaptive stance that can be considered as characteristic of bottom-up language management within a constrained setting limited by various factors. Teachers recognise challenges, such as varied proficiencies and limited time, and respond with ad hoc adjustments rather than systemic planning.

Within the LMF, these are examples of noticed problems that prompt reactive decisions without progressing toward reflection and structured implementation. This adaptivity is evident in teachers' informal acceptance of students' use of German for clarification or participation. Although this reflects the translanguaging stance (openness to multiple language resources), it often lacks the design and intentionality that would characterise a translanguaging pedagogy. For example, German appears in classroom interactions as a pragmatic solution rather than a scaffolded resource for metalinguistic awareness or language learning. In this way, the translanguaging framework's potential is only partially realised: shifts occur, but the curriculum does not systematically incorporate students' full repertoires into planned tasks.

In contrast, Cecylia's project-based instruction represents a transformative, designed approach. Her methods reflect all three components of translanguaging pedagogy: stance, design, and shifts. Students' diverse language resources are deliberately integrated through task design (e.g., translation exercises, multilingual posters), and classroom activities are scaffolded to accommodate variation in proficiency and modality. In terms of LMF, Cecylia's work exemplifies complete cycles of noting, evaluation, design, implementation, and reflection. Her approach moves beyond managing constraints toward proactive language planning and challenging normative monolingual assumptions often embedded in HL instruction. Table 5, presented below, summarises the difference between ad hoc and designed language management.

Table 5 *Differences Between Ad Hoc and Designed Language Management*

Category	Ad Hoc Classroom Management	Designed Language Management
Inclusion of Additional Languages	Spontaneous, contingent	Structured, scaffolded
Scaffolding	Minimal or improvised	Embedded in instructional design
Student Role in Management	Initiator	Participant in co-designed activities
Educator Role in Management	Reactive participant	Proactive initiator
Translanguaging Stance	Implicit	Explicit and critical
Translanguaging Design	Absent	Present
Translanguaging Shifts	Present	Present

This typology reveals that while many HL classrooms adapt effectively to challenges, their pedagogical approaches remain trapped between improvisation and constraint. They miss a deliberate design for transformative outcomes. One barrier to transformation may lie in community expectations. Teachers frequently express concern that integrating majority language practices into HL classrooms could undermine immersion goals and discourage parents who seek “pure” HL exposure. This fear reflects persistent monolingual beliefs within communities, where HL education is imagined as a space for linguistic preservation rather than negotiation.

In summary, HL classrooms operate along a spectrum of responsiveness: from adaptive flexibility to designed, even transformative planning. Yet, when design is missing, translanguaging remains a reactive tool rather than a transformative strategy. To shift toward more equitable and inclusive HL education, future efforts must move beyond managing constraints toward actively reimagining classroom language management – not just what languages are used, but how, why, and with what long-term intent.

6.3 What Would Help the Initiatives, and Why Implementation Falls Short

The title of this section is intentionally provocative. Of course, in an ideal scenario what would help Initiatives is full recognition of immigrant community languages and their integration into mainstream education. However, the discussion here remains grounded in the current contexts within which the Initiatives operate. While broader systemic changes are worth imagining, this analysis focuses on what is possible within the existing framework, without dismissing the value of more ambitious goals.

Recognising the current resource limitations, there are actually several measures that could significantly support the work of the Initiatives. However, these measures require both a willingness to critically reassess existing management strategies and stronger cooperation between the Initiatives and the wider community. Conducting HL classes inevitably involves dealing with a range of persistent challenges. Yet, many of these challenges can be addressed by tapping into resources and solutions that already exist within the community itself. Doing so, however, demands not only practical adjustments but also a deeper reflection on the pedagogical assumptions and goals that continue to shape HL courses offered by the Initiatives.

The discussion thus far has highlighted how HL classes are characterised by informality and reactive flexibility. Educators repeatedly identify challenges such as limited teaching materials, diverse student proficiency levels, complex student attitudes towards the HL, and competing community expectations. Their responses to these challenges rely heavily on informal, ad hoc strategies. While valuable practices do exist, for instance project-based innovations like Cecylia's, their impact is limited by fragmentation and hesitancy to embrace more transformative, planned approaches. This reluctance stems from multiple interrelated factors: historically entrenched methods of teaching Polish to Polish diaspora, community expectations that often prioritise monolingual approaches, and the underlying power dynamics between Polish and the dominant societal language, which constrain educators' capacity for innovation.

This section opens a broader discussion on teaching approaches in HL education and the underlying beliefs that inform pedagogical choices. Ultimately, the discussion seeks to shed light on the implicit language policies that emerge through everyday decision-making in community-based education. This chapter now turns to examine approaches that could be considered more transformative and critically explores why such innovations remain largely unreplicated. While hidden agendas certainly play a role, these underlying dynamics are, as always, more complex.

6.3.1 Sharing Community Knowledge: Need for Outlets to Exchange Practices

The HL educator community holds a wealth of knowledge and practical experience that has proven vital in addressing the challenges posed by students' varied proficiency levels and educational needs. Over time, teachers have proposed and tested numerous grassroots solutions. Yet, opportunities to systematically share these remain limited.

One key outlet for such professional exchange has been workshops, conferences, and informal meetings for HL teachers. These are usually organised by community-based associations that have only limited institutional support. While valuable, these events occur sporadically. Still, when such gatherings do take place, participation tends to be high which suggests that demand for opportunities to reflect and collaborate is widespread. As Stefania, an experienced HL educator and workshop organiser, remarked:

Moim zdaniem bardzo istotne było, że na organizowanych warsztatach czy konferencjach dla lektorek [języka polskiego jako odziedziczonego] było to, że osoby, które zazwyczaj działają samotnie w różnych miastach, mogą sobie stworzyć taki pokój nauczycielski i po prostu powymieniać się doświadczeniami, wątpliwościami i wiedzą.	In my opinion, a very important aspect of the workshops and conferences [for the teachers of Polish as HL] was that people who usually work alone in different cities could create a kind of staff room, where they could exchange experiences, share doubts, and learn from one another.
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Example 6.4, Interview with Stefania, pos. 12/206, 00:08:00–00:08:30.

Workshops serve multiple purposes: they facilitate networking, introduce new materials, encourage the exchange of classroom strategies, and provide validation for teachers charting uncertain pedagogical terrain. Within the LMF, these workshops can be read as meso-level responses to wider systemic constraints. The organising body noticed that HL teachers largely work in isolation and, given the known limits of HL pedagogy (time, materials, mixed groups), evaluated this as a barrier to consistent practice and improvement. The design was to create structured opportunities to exchange – short workshops where concrete tasks, materials, and doubts could be presented and discussed – and the implementation was the delivery of these sessions and the circulation of shared artefacts for trial in class. It is worth noting that this LMP does not centre on a specific mismatch of expectations between actors; rather, it builds capacity in the absence of such a trigger. As such, it forms a quiet

counterpattern in the data: here the LMP is aimed at coordination and craft knowledge rather than at resolving an explicit expectation gap.

The mismatch is placed higher in the process – due to the belief that HL is a community matter rather than a public responsibility, as discussed in Section 4.5.1., the educators’ community organises the workshops, compensating for the lack of top-down coordination by enabling horizontal exchange of ideas and strengthening peer support networks. For example, Malwina, who works with a highly heterogeneous group in terms of age and language proficiency, participated in an online workshop organised by a Polish NGO focused on education and migration (based on the participant observation in Heidelberg, 28.02.2023).

I reviewed the workshop materials that Malwina shared with me. They included thematic lesson plans organised around seasons and holidays that were pedagogically structured and linguistically focused, for instance, specifying target structures such as accusative forms or comparative adjectives. Unlike many preschool-style worksheets, these activities aimed to develop formal language features. However, they did not explicitly incorporate students’ other language resources. While this may reflect a desire to produce universally applicable materials regardless of learners’ dominant language, it may also indicate the persistence of monolingual assumptions in HL pedagogy – especially given the minority status of Polish in students’ everyday environments.

Teachers frequently self-organise to create their own channels for reflection and exchange. One such example is the professional journal created by HL educators themselves. As noted in Chapter 3, teachers affiliated with the Frankfurt-based initiative Krasnale have used the journal “Polski w Niemczech/Polnisch in Deutschland” to document and share their practices. Cecylia published a detailed account of her project-based instructional approach, while her colleagues, Ewa Źródlewska-Banachowicz and Małgorzata Małolepsza, contributed an article, in which they synthesised their classroom experience into practical teaching recommendations. Their article explicitly connects HL pedagogy with the dual-language socialisation processes characteristic of immigrant children and draws from both first-language and foreign-language methodologies (Małolepsza & Źródlewska-Banachowicz, 2018).

6.3.2 Bridging Between First-Language and Foreign-Language Didactics

The article written by Ewa Źródlewska-Banachowicz and Małgorzata Małolepsza identify and discuss several challenges and provide recommendation that offer the basis for bridging methods known from

both first-language teaching and foreign language learning. The authors argue that HL teachers must acknowledge and build on unique bilingual or multilingual experiences of their students. (Małolepsza & Źródlewska-Banachowicz, 2018, pp. 47-57). Drawing from their professional expertise as well as from existing HL curricula – including those developed by the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate and the European School in Frankfurt – they identify key principles and best practices that can be adapted for HL teaching.

At the heart of the approach lies language awareness, operating on multiple levels. Within the classroom, this means fostering students' metalinguistic awareness and their capacity to mediate across languages. Promoting language awareness among families is equally important. Particular focus should be on parents, who are encouraged to view language acquisition as a process that requires patience and active support. In this way, language awareness extends beyond cognitive skills to include affective and social dimensions, as discussed in Chapter 5.

While the curricular documents emphasise student and familial awareness, the authors also imply that teachers themselves must cultivate language awareness. They recommend integrating elements of students' mainstream schooling, particularly mediation exercises and cross-linguistic comparisons, into HL lessons. Additionally, they endorse a text-centred approach, where literary texts are selected and adapted to suit learners' language competencies. This approach blends the cultural and emotional aspects of literature with the scaffolding strategies more common in foreign language pedagogy. In combining elements from both approaches, the authors argue for a hybrid didactic model. While first-language teaching assumes a proficiency in the language of instruction, HL teaching often requires techniques drawn from foreign language education, including explicit grammar instruction, structured vocabulary development, and language mediation activities.

Further, the authors recommend meetings with parents to support this shift in assumptions related to multilingual upbringing. They also advocate for a broader and more flexible understanding of bilingual development (Małolepsza & Źródlewska-Banachowicz, 2018, p. 52). The article confirms the importance of cooperation between the initiatives and parents and echoes Regina's words (Example 5.6) – that the classes confirm and reinforce what parents do at home. Hence, parental involvement in language development is crucial and is emphasised by the educators. The article written by the teachers addresses noticed gaps in the current approaches to teaching HLs, as the following subsection discusses.

6.3.3 Hybrid Expectations in Heritage Language Classrooms

The hybridity of HL teaching is a defining characteristic that manifests across both macro-level and micro-level language management. On the macro level, HL proficiency is often assessed through foreign language frameworks, such as CEFR levels, as highlighted by Waleria's goal of preparing her students to achieve a B2 certification. On the micro level, however, HL instruction is deeply rooted in the community's perception of Polish as a first language. This duality creates tensions in pedagogical approaches: teachers are expected to rely on students' home-based language knowledge while simultaneously preparing them for external, formal assessments that align with foreign language standards. This contradiction is particularly evident in the teaching practices of Waleria and Tekla, whose methods illustrate the complexities of balancing these competing expectations.

Tekla's Course

Tekla's classes are dedicated to children aged three to five. Students in her group have varying levels of proficiency in Polish. Due to her limited comfort with German, Tekla rarely incorporates it into her teaching. Instead, she adopts a vocabulary-focused approach, designing her lessons around key phrases and their repetition. This method immerses the children in Polish and helps develop some language patterns. However, it assumes a baseline familiarity with the language that not all students may possess. Tekla's approach to HL teaching represents the first-language perspective (based on the observations of classes in Darmstadt, April 2022 - February 2023).

Waleria's Online Course

Waleria's online classes are conducted for two teenagers, Ewa and Zofia, aged 14. They're using a Polish first-language coursebook designed for 12-year-olds. Waleria's focus is on orthography and standard spelling, with limited discussions initiated through open-ended questions derived from the text. While her ultimate goal is to prepare the students for the TELC B2 foreign language test, her instructional framework remains grounded in first-language teaching principles. This dual framework creates a disconnect: although the coursebook and exercises adhere to a first-language logic, the intended outcome is framed within a foreign language context (based on the observations of online classes, November 2022 - March 2023).

In both cases, classroom interaction is largely teacher-dominated, leaving little space for peer communication or student agency. While this approach allows Waleria to efficiently cover a demanding curriculum and enables Tekla to maintain immersion for very young learners, it unintentionally restricts students' opportunities for active language use and peer interactions. Both

teachers aim to immerse students in Polish, and in Waleria's case, to prepare them for a Polish-as-a-foreign-language exam. However, these goals come at the cost of communicative and interactive competence. Although this structure ensures a high level of control over language input and output, it closely mirrors first-language-oriented instruction. Crucially, the limited student participation is not directly acknowledged or addressed. Instead, teacher-managed interaction is treated as the default.

The design of both classes offers little explicit recognition of students' multilingual resources, apart from Waleria's selection of a simplified coursebook designed for younger learners, and Tekla's reliance on keyword repetition. Waleria's continued adherence to native-speaker-oriented pedagogy and Tekla's focus on vocabulary acquisition both assume a basic knowledge of Polish that not all students possess. For instance, Tekla typically assumes her students understand the instructions and only intervenes when comprehension visibly breaks down. Such an assumption reflects a broader orientation toward monolingual, Polish-dominant instruction. Both teachers rely on pedagogical methods drawn from first-language education in Poland, where they were originally trained. Yet neither was formally prepared to work in multilingual settings, which indicates a key gap in teacher training and a misalignment between instructional approaches and student experiences in HL classrooms. In LMP terms, the mismatch is not fully noticed, so no response is designed. This pedagogical approach, however, reflects not only individual teacher preferences but also deeper historical legacies.

6.3.4 Historical Legacies and Shifting Demographics

The persistent reliance on first-language didactics in HL education is not accidental. It is a language management strategy rooted in historical conceptions of migration and return. For example, schools operating under the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (Polish: *Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą*) publish annual textbook and literature lists aligned with the Polish national curriculum that mirrors domestic school practice (The Polish School at the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Cologne, based in Frankfurt, n.d). These materials however do not take into account the multilingual setting in which students grow up. Thematic content and grammatical focus remain largely unchanged, ignoring the fact that students develop their competencies in Polish in a different context. The emphasis on monolingual proficiency, rather than fostering plurilingual competencies, is an artefact of migration patterns and societal expectations of the 1960s and 1970s when the approach towards HL education was focused on maintaining language continuity because families expected to return to Poland (Pułaczewska, 2017, p. 15).

Stefania, who trained in Polish as a Foreign Language didactics in the early 2000s, mentioned this historical orientation as well. When she organised workshops for HL teachers, she noted that their training primarily equipped them for teaching Polish as a first language. Curricula and pedagogical practices were modelled on this paradigm, leaving little room for adaptation to multilingual contexts or integration of foreign language teaching methodologies:

Była właśnie taka luka. Często tego polskiego uczyły osoby, które wyemigrowały w latach 80. i 90. i nie miały szansy nawet dotrzeć do jakichś kursów polskiego jako obcego.	There was a gap like that. Polish was often taught by people who emigrated in the 1980s and 1990s and did not even have the opportunity to attend any courses in Polish as a foreign language.
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Example 6.5 Interview with Stefania, pos. 12/206, 00:07:00–00:07:30.

Such historical inertia continues to shape pedagogical assumptions, even as migration patterns and student demographics evolve. Waleria, reflecting on her teaching experience, observes that most of her current students were born in Germany and come from bilingual or multilingual households:

Z perspektywy lat, kiedy zaczynałam w większości to byli uczniowie, którzy przyjechali z rodzicami jako małe dzieci i dla nich język polski był językiem ojczystym. Teraz takie dzieci to są pojedyncze przypadki, na ponad 100 uczniów większość urodziło się już tutaj w Niemczech. Dla nich zdecydowanie jest to język kraju pochodzenia, jest to i właściwie już język obcy. Stąd też ta świadomość rodziców bardzo się zmieniła. Jest ogromna grupa rodziców, którzy wychowują dzieci od samego początku dwujęzycznie albo są to nawet i rodziny wielojęzyczne.	Looking back, when I started there were mostly pupils who came with their parents as small children and for them Polish was their mother tongue. Now such children are isolated cases, out of more than 100 pupils, most were already born here in Germany. For them, it is definitely the language of the country of origin, it is and in fact already a foreign language. Hence, this awareness of parents has changed a lot. There is a large group of parents who bring their children up bilingually from the very beginning, or even in multilingual families.
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Example 6.6 Interview with Waleria, pos. 46/83, 00:57:30–00:58:30.

She noted a growing tendency among students to perceive Polish less as a HL and more as a foreign language. In response, the Initiative where she teaches has introduced dedicated classes for learners

with very limited proficiency, reflecting a shift toward foreign language instruction. Nevertheless, for the majority of students, instruction continues to follow a first-language-based curriculum.

This orientation is, to some extent, understandable. It aligns with long-standing pedagogical traditions and offers a degree of practical convenience, given the availability of materials designed for first language didactics. Moreover, it resonates with community expectations that Polish should remain the primary classroom language. As Waleria observed, many parents increasingly value efforts to maintain Polish. However, such efforts are often framed through a monolingual lens rather than within a broader understanding of multilingual development. Consequently, teachers frequently prioritise the preservation of Polish over the strategic use of students' entire language resources. As documented in classroom observations, while German often plays an informal, background role in classroom interactions, it remains largely absent from formal instructional practices.

6.3.5 Towards Incorporation of Methods Known from Foreign Language Teaching

As we already saw in the first part of this chapter, the HL classroom is shaped by students' translanguaging performance and teachers' usually reactive adaptive language management. Turning to these adaptive strategies is linked to the pedagogical approaches grounded in first-language-like schooling based on the assumption that Polish is a fully shared resource. But as educators increasingly encounter students whose Polish proficiency is emergent and often passive, this assumption begins to fray. Within this shifting landscape, some teachers have begun to ask a different set of questions. What if the presumption of Polish as a stable first language were suspended, and were instead approached as a language to be taught, not simply maintained? What if, alongside materials, the core principles of foreign language pedagogy were adopted, including scaffolding, metalinguistic awareness, and staged progression? And what if this shift could be more than a workaround – what if it could reshape HL teaching as a site of genuine pedagogical innovation? This section explores how some HL teachers, especially those with training in foreign language didactics or working with lower-proficiency learners – are reconfiguring their classroom strategies.

Such instances are salient in the Initiative Krasnale in Frankfurt and Wawel in Baden-Württemberg have introduced courses specifically for students with limited Polish proficiency, drawing on materials originally designed for teaching Polish as a foreign language. For instance, Waleria, during one of the first of my observations mentioned that she applies foreign-language didactics for one student whose proficiency in Polish is limited (based on participant observation of online classes, 16.11.2022). Similarly, Krasnale offered a separate course designed for young learners of Polish as a foreign

language, where the coursebooks for Polish as foreign language were used. In both cases, the decision to adopt foreign-language-like approaches is driven by students' proficiency in Polish. However, it is worth to note that this decision is driven also by the possibility to organise the classes, namely the availability of the teachers and space is crucial (see Section 6.1). It is also a reminder that the classroom design is a product of what is actually possible, not what is ideal.

A particularly illustrative example comes from Stefania, whose background differs from many HL educators. Trained in Polish as a foreign language, she approached HL teaching with a different lens. Lacking prior experience in HL education, Stefania initially observed existing classes to assess which elements of foreign-language didactics might be transferable to this new context. As she explains:

Patrzyłam na przykład, ile z dydaktyki języka polskiego jako obcego da się zastosować. [...] Na przykład pewne sformułowanie poleceń typu “uzupełnij luki”, “wybierz” czy rozumienie ze słuchu, którego de facto dzieci w szkole mają mało. Żeby potem miały łatwiej, na przykład ucząc się kolejnych języków obcych. Bo myśmy na przykład bardzo wcześnie, zanim dzieci miały to w szkole niemieckiej, wprowadziły części mowy czy czasy.	I looked, for example, at how much of the didactics of Polish as a foreign language could be applied. [...] For example, a certain formulation of instructions such as “fill in the gaps”, “choose” or listening comprehension, which children in school actually have little of. So that it will be easier for them later on, for example when they learn more foreign languages. For example, we introduced parts of speech and tenses very early on, before children had them in German school.
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Example 6.7 Interview with Stefania, pos. 42 and 65/206, 00:17:00–00:17:30; 00:25:30–00:26:00.

Stefania's approach enriches the repertoire of tools and strategies available for HL instruction, echoing the call made by Źródlewska-Banachowicz and Małolepsza to draw from both first language and foreign language pedagogies. In terms of the LMF, her practice exemplifies a meso-level adjustment: drawing on her background in teaching Polish as a foreign language, she identifies elements that can be transferred into the HL context and adapts them to fit the needs of her students. What makes this shift noteworthy is that it moves beyond the conventional model of “immersion in Polish” toward a broader emphasis on language-related competencies including metalinguistic awareness, structured instruction, and strategies that are transferable to the learning of other languages.

This is a case of transformative language management. Educators notice a mismatch between prevailing instructional approaches and students' proficiency, evaluate it as constraining, design a

response, and implement it in lesson time. In Stefania's class, observation led her to combine elements of first-language didactics with methods from foreign-language teaching and to recalibrate tasks as the lesson unfolded. The shift surfaces beliefs about HL education, especially the default of teaching Polish as a first language. Should Polish be taught as a first language when learners' proficiency and experience do not align with that model? For many HL learners, Polish functions as one repertoire among several rather than a single, dominant code. Stefania's approach also challenges the routine reliance on German schools by bringing foreign-language teaching routines into HL provision, so students become familiar with those instructional patterns. From translanguaging pedagogy perspective, Stefania's approach is characterised by the design that address students' resources: While she does not explicitly incorporate German into her classroom tasks, her approach implicitly recognises that students draw on multiple language resources and that the knowledge acquired in one language can be mobilised to support development in another.

Such an approach, namely incorporating more from foreign-language didactics, was proved to be beneficial. A study by Bernhard Brehmer, Dominika Steinbach, and Vladimir Arifulin (2021) on intercomprehension among Polish and Russian HL speakers in Germany revealed that foreign-language instruction can enhance metalinguistic awareness. While HL speakers did not outperform their monolingual peers (who spoke English) in intercomprehension tasks, their knowledge of English, a language taught explicitly as a foreign language, proved advantageous in tasks involving Germanic languages. This finding suggests that structured language instruction, characteristic of foreign-language teaching, can develop transferable skills that benefit HL learners (Brehmer et al., 2021). Similarly, research by Julio Torres and Bianca Cung (2019) highlights differences in linguistic awareness between HL learners and L2 learners. Their study found that L2 learners tend to monitor linguistic features more closely during task-based interactions, whereas HL learners focus on achieving communicative goals. This disparity suggests that HL learners may benefit from instruction that explicitly targets linguistic structures, encouraging greater attention to grammar (Torres & Cung, 2019). Building on this, Olesya Kisselev, Irina Dubinina, and Maria Polinsky advocate for integrating form-focused instruction into HL teaching (2020). They argue that task-based approaches leveraging learners' existing linguistic competencies can be highly effective. However, they emphasise the importance of tasks that encourage metalinguistic awareness, such as comparing HL grammar with the learners' dominant language. According to the researchers, expanding learners' ability to express nuanced meanings through accurate grammar usage fosters deeper engagement with their cultural heritage and bilingual identity (Kisselev et al., 2020).

Ultimately, bridging first-language and foreign-language teaching methods offers a promising avenue for HL education. However, real change requires more than teacher-level adaptation. It necessitates a broader shift in how communities, educators, and institutions conceptualise HL learning – not as a form of language and culture preservation alone, but as an opportunity to cultivate multilingual, metalinguistically aware HL learners. Importantly, this cannot happen in isolation. On the family side, parental expectations need careful calibration to what sustained HL development realistically involves. On the school side, HL provision must be recognised and supported within mainstream structures so that classroom shifts are reinforced rather than isolated. Only then can the informal resilience of HL Initiatives translate into a sustained transformative change.

6.3.6 Reflecting Multilingual Realities: The Content of Heritage Language Classes

While the methods used in HL classrooms often lack systematic reflection, the content of HL instruction reveals greater intentionality. In interviews, workshop materials, and teacher-authored publications, educators express a growing awareness of the multilingual environments in which their students live. These realities, however, are unevenly integrated into classroom practice.

A key example comes from the Initiative from Frankfurt, Krasnale, where workshops and texts authored by the educators have explored how to meaningfully incorporate cultural and language diversity into teaching materials. In the already mentioned article, Ewa Źródlewska-Banachowicz and Małgorzata Małolepsza advocate for a text-centred approach to HL instruction, encouraging educators to build lessons around literary and informational texts. While this mirrors common practices in first-language education – where content is prioritised with assumption that the language is shared by the students – it raises questions about text selection and relevance for HL learners.

This issue was taken up by Wanda in her teacher training sessions, where she proposed a set of criteria for choosing texts: they should be age-appropriate, culturally resonant, support learner autonomy, and crucially, reflect students' multilingual realities. Her approach draws inspiration from Swiss HL teaching guidelines (Riss et al., 2016), which explicitly tie HL education to both linguistic development and cultural identity. However, as Wanda observed, concepts like translanguaging remain largely confined to academic discourse, even though certain HL educational practices already embody aspects of translanguaging pedagogy in practice:

Teraz coraz więcej mówi się o wielojęzyczności, Now there are more and more talks about
mówi się o tym nowym trendzie translingwizmu, multilingualism, there are talks about this new

aby wykorzystać potencjał językowy każdego dziecka. To wydaje mi się, że jest obecne niestety w kręgach akademickich. Ten wątek wraca, bo dydaktycznie nie wiadomo jak to ugryźć. A na pewno nauczyciele tutaj w szkołach tego nie wiedzą. U mojego syna w szkole w całej klasie jest trzech Niemców, a reszta to dzieci imigrantów. Nauczyciele nie są w ogóle kształceni, jak wykorzystać potencjał wielojęzyczności, gdzie po prostu 70% dzieci mówi na co dzień innymi językami.	trend of translanguaging, to harness the linguistic potential of every child. This seems to me to be present, unfortunately, in academic circles. This theme is coming back because didactically it's not clear how to approach it. And certainly teachers here in schools don't know. At my son's school there are three Germans in the whole class and the rest are immigrant children. Teachers are not educated at all on how to use the potential of multilingualism, where simply 70% of the children speak other languages on a daily basis.
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Example 6.8 Interview with Wanda, pos. 90/203, 00:27:00–00:28:00.

The limited uptake of multilingual approaches is rooted in tensions around the goals of HL education. For many HL communities, the primary objective remains language maintenance: preserving Polish as a cultural and familial resource in the face of language shift. From this perspective, multilingualism can be perceived as a secondary issue or even as a threat rather than an asset. By contrast, institutional documents produced in host countries such as the Rhineland-Palatinate HL curriculum or Swiss HL frameworks frame HL education as a means to cultivate multilingual competence and intercultural understanding. As the Rhineland-Palatinate curriculum puts it, HL instruction lays the foundation for multilingual development and contributes significantly to intercultural learning (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur, 2012, p. 5). Yet this vision raises its own contradictions: if HL classes are designed to promote multilingualism, why are they segregated and restricted to children from immigrant backgrounds?

Given that immigration is and will continue to be an integral part of societies, it is crucial to incorporate the lived realities of students with immigrant backgrounds into educational frameworks. HL classes, where languages are actively managed and teachers often implement covert policies, offer valuable examples of how language resources can be utilised, whether through deliberate planning or unplanned inclusion. These practices demonstrate the potential for HL education to serve as a model for linguistic and cultural inclusion in broader educational contexts.

The expectation that immigrant communities and families bear the responsibility for enhancing societal cohesion and developing HL learners' multicultural competencies reflects another issue, well described in the literature: the lack of prestige afforded to immigrant languages (Piller, 2014; Yağmur 2016; Garrido & Codó, 2017). This devaluation is often perpetuated within the HL communities themselves, creating barriers to broader recognition (Olfert & Schmitz, 2016). Addressing these challenges requires the Initiatives that not only elevate the status of immigrant languages but also promote their integration into the education systems, ensuring that these languages are valued as assets rather than marginalised as obstacles.

6.3.7 Between Polishness and Europeanness

The Initiatives attempt to elevate the status of Polish by presenting it as a European language while shifting away from topics that impose a fixed Polish identity on students. However, as one of the primary roles of HL classes is to educate students about the history and culture of their parents' country of origin, this topic frequently sparks discussions among educators, particularly concerning the notion of patriotism and the question of how and what should be taught. Conversations with teachers reveal a degree of scepticism towards emphasising themes tied to Polish patriotism, especially given the fluid and complex identities of their students. Teachers often report that many students do not identify as exclusively Polish or describe their identity as fluid, complicating the integration of traditional patriotic narratives into the curriculum, as teachers discussed during the online workshops conducted by Wanda:

During the discussion on the values presented in the texts, the topic of patriotic literature arises, particularly the portrayal of Poland as the "Fatherland". One teacher shares that, in her experience, many of her students view Germany as their fatherland and do not identify as Polish. Wanda responds by suggesting that in HL classes, it may be more effective to avoid imposing a specific national identity on students. Instead, she mentions the concept of family identity and advocates for connecting lessons to the students' lived realities and mentions the concept of family identity referring to the fact that many students are motivated to learn Polish not out of a sense of national identity but due to familial connections.

Field Note 6.9 Online workshops for teachers conducted by Wanda in November 2021.

In contrast to this scepticism, I observed two classes where the theme of patriotism was addressed in ways closely resembling practices in Polish schools. Both classes were conducted near Polish Independence Day, providing a context for exploring national symbols and historical narratives. In

Malwina's class, the focus was on the Polish emblem, national flag, and anthem, with an emphasis on providing factual information about Poland (Participant observation in Heidelberg, 08.11.2022). Renata, however, incorporated more traditional practices, such as requiring students to learn and recite a poem titled Catechism of a Polish Child (Participant observation in Darmstadt, 03.11.2022). This poem, which portrays Poland as a "fatherland conquered with blood and scars", has been controversial even within Poland due to its reinforcement of nationalistic and martyrological narratives (Sobańda, 2018). One student, who was not fluent in Polish, recited the poem with major assistance from the teacher, likely without fully grasping its meaning. The teacher's decision to include this poem, however, seemed less driven by strong ideological beliefs and more by an adherence to traditional practices typically associated with Polish Independence Day.

These traditional approaches stand in contrast to those advocated by the majority of teachers I interviewed. Most expressed a preference for promoting "European values" such as openness, pluralism, and the cultivation of European citizenship. They tend to approach the issue of Polish patriotism through the lens of mediation, as outlined in the CEFR. Wanda exemplified this approach in the following excerpt from our interview.

Wydaje mi się, że u nas na pewno jest nacisk na dwu- i wielojęzyczność, to znaczy my nie uczymy polskiego w oparciu o pewne wartości narodowe i od początku o tym mówimy, nie bazujemy też na żadnych programach, które, które obowiązują, są bazą na przykład w SPK-ach [...] Tak że my jesteśmy, że tak powiem, przede wszystkim świeccy, nakierowani na na na rodziców dwu- i wielojęzycznych. A propos technik, na przykład to wiesz, że używamy mediacji, czyli właśnie wykorzystujemy dobrą znajomość niemieckiego dzieci i tego się nie robi innej szkołach. To ja po prostu to wiem, że w ogóle metody z zakresu uczenia języka polskiego jako obcego są rzadko stosowane.	It seems to me that in our school there is definitely an emphasis on bilingualism and multilingualism, that is, we don't teach Polish on the basis of certain national values and we talk about it from the beginning, and we don't base ourselves on any programmes that are in place, that are the basis in, for example, SPKs [schools run by consulates] [...] So we are, so to speak, primarily secular, oriented towards bilingual and multilingual parents. Speaking of techniques, for example, you know we use mediation, that is, we just use the children's good knowledge of German and that is not done in other schools. It's just that I know that in general the methods of teaching Polish as a foreign language are rarely used.
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Example 6.9 Interview with Wanda, pos. 100 and 112/203, 00:30:00–00:32:30.

Stefania concurs with Wanda's perspective that approaches emphasising openness, multilingualism, and intercultural competences stem from foreign language didactics. These methods, as Stefania mentions, juxtapose traditional teaching practices with more contemporary approaches rooted in foreign language didactics:

No więc, to jest w nauczaniu języków obcych i dotyczy nauczania języków – chodzi o wykształcenie postawy otwartej, akceptacji, pokazanie różnic między kulturą swoją a obcą, aby ona stała się mniej obca. A dla tych dzieci obie kultury nie są obce już, więc trudno koncentrować się na wartościach, tylko dlatego, że to jest język polski, to mamy wartości patriotyczne przekazywać?	So, it's in foreign language teaching, but it's about language teaching in general – it's about developing an attitude of openness, acceptance, showing the differences between one's own culture and a foreign culture, so that it becomes less foreign. And for these children, both cultures are no longer foreign, so it's difficult to focus on values, just because it's the Polish language, we're supposed to pass on patriotic values?
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Example 6.10 Interview with Stefania, pos. 73/206, 00:28:00–00:29:00.

Educators such as Wanda, Stefania, and others participating in Wanda's workshops aim to cultivate an identity that reflects the realities of living in a multicultural Europe. For them, the instructional content should prioritise European integration and multicultural understanding rather than focusing exclusively on Polish history or identity. However, these approaches are not merely in opposition. Rather – they represent complementary forms of resilience. *Polishness* is frequently associated with traditional markers such as religion, patriotism, and nationalism, which can impose a rigid Polish identity on children. Conversely, *Europeanness* centres on openness, development of mediation skills, and multilingualism, as such principles better reflect the lived experiences of their students, who often navigate transnational and multicultural spaces. Reinforcing these discourses is the implementation of a response to a status gap: the Initiatives notice that Polish is widely framed as an immigrant language with marginal standing, evaluate this as demotivating, and design actions that raise its visibility and legitimacy for both the community and the broader society.

The discourse surrounding Polishness and Europeanness is not solely a contrast between tradition and modernity – underlying both is the issue of language and cultural prestige. Both approaches can be seen as attempts to counter perceptions of Polish as a language of immigrants and, consequently, as having lower prestige, as it's associated with marginalised groups and not perceived as a form of cultural capital. Significantly, the Polish community and the Initiatives are acutely aware of this

dynamic, as one of the respondents to the questionnaire for teachers answered to the question “What could be done better in teaching Polish as a HL in Germany?”:

Pokazać język polski jako atut. Dla Niemców atutem jest znajomość języka francuskiego, angielskiego, ale polski jest postrzegane jako niepotrzebny język.	Show Polish as an asset. For Germans, knowledge of French or English is an asset, but Polish is seen as an unnecessary language.
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Example 6.11. Response to the questionnaire for teachers of Polish as HL in Germany.

By framing Polish within the context of the European Union, educators seek to elevate its status and present it as integral to the identity of a multilingual and intercultural European citizen. This shift represents an effort to align HL education with the demands and aspirations of a globalised, multicultural world. Similarly, emphasising traditions and patriotism can be seen as an attempt to emphasise the significance and value of Polish history, language, and culture. Both aspects are encapsulated in the words of Jadwiga, who represents a more traditional and patriotically oriented approach:

I to odkrywanie właśnie coraz ciekawszych miejsc w Polsce, infrastruktura, która się buduje, gospodarka, o której się mówi, to są rzeczy, które są takimi nośnikami dumy narodowej i takiej też dumy narodowej tych, którzy w Polsce mieszkają, ale mają silne poczucie więzi i przyjemnie jest im się wiązać z czymś, co jest uznane na świecie jako część sukcesu jakiejś nacji. Poza tym myślę świadomość w tej chwili takiej europejskości, która jednak jest ważna dla Polaków, nie wiem może w Europie Zachodniej już to nie jest tak ważne, ale dla Polaków jednak jest ważne, bo europejskość nas też zmobilizowała i nas napędza to podniesienia standardu życia.	And this discovery of more and more interesting places in Poland, the infrastructure that is being built, the economy that is being talked about, these are things that are such carriers of national pride and such national pride for those who live in Poland, but who have a strong sense of connection and it is pleasant for them to be associated with something that is recognised around the world as part of some nation's success. I don't know, maybe it is not so important in Western Europe, but it is important for Poles, because being European also mobilises us and drives us to raise our standard of living.
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Example 6.12 Interview with Jadwiga, pos. 26/101, 00:24:00–00:27:00.

Polish culture and language, along with the perception of Polish as a European language, are presented as incentives for maintaining the language. While the community and the Initiative recognise that Polish may not hold significant economic or cultural power, their messaging often blends discourses of affection and pragmatism. In this context, affection and pragmatism serve as primary motivators, underpinned by values related to patriotism and a sense of belonging to Europe. Affection typically aligns with a more patriotic perspective, while pragmatism, framed as the advantage of multilingualism and being a European citizen, leans toward a European-oriented narrative.

This dual approach also highlights that the Initiative and its surrounding community are primarily focused on promoting Polish language and culture, not necessarily multilingualism and community-based efforts more broadly. They approach the relationship with the host country bilaterally – without cooperation with other community-based initiatives representing different minorities, as described in subsection 4.6. However, this contrasts with German education policy, where immigrant languages – and by extension, immigrant communities – are often categorised as a monolithic “other”. This underlying belief is not always taken into account when promoting classes, but it highlights the importance of horizontal links at the macro- and meso-levels of language policy. In light of this belief, we return to RQ1 to examine how languages are actually managed in the Initiatives’ everyday work, and how beliefs related to HL education surface in concrete classroom interactions such as Field Note 6.1.

6.4 Community-Based Heritage Language Education and What Follows

After exploring various classroom scenarios, interview excerpts, translanguaging frameworks, and curricular content in HL education, we return to the classroom moment described in Field Note 6.1. There, Malwina attempted to introduce literacy skills to Jakub and Magda. Although the exchange lasted less than fifteen minutes, it exposed not only the *de facto* language policies at play, but also the deeper, often implicit, beliefs about language, education, and identity circulating at micro, meso, and macro levels.

This brief moment in the classroom presents the complex interplay between a teacher’s spontaneous classroom management decisions, the community’s expectations to sustain Polish language input, and the integration of the majority language to support diverse student backgrounds. It also reflects broader considerations related to mediation, language awareness, and the power dynamics between languages. Malwina’s seemingly simple choice to ensure that students could write the Polish word for

“fox” exemplifies this complexity. What might seem like a straightforward instructional decision actually reveals the intersection of competing expectations: from the community's desire to preserve HL to the subtle influence of societal attitudes toward HL education and the overarching objectives of HL courses.

Returning to the theoretical lens of this dissertation, we are reminded of Elana Shohamy's assertion that classroom decisions are never isolated but shaped by wider socio-political forces, including communities beliefs and official language-political frameworks. The HL classroom emerges as a site of both overt and covert policy-making, where not only teachers but students and communities actively co-construct language management strategies. In the case of the Polish HL Initiatives, this co-construction is marked by a predominance of adaptive language management strategies. Teachers often respond to challenges, such as varied student proficiency, lack of materials, or community expectations, with improvised and flexible solutions. In some instances, we also observe transformative approaches, such as the integration of translanguaging pedagogy or foreign language didactics. Yet while challenges are clearly identified, structural constraints, ranging from lack of funding and resources, to the pressures of community beliefs related to language education, prevent these practices from evolving into sustained transformations.

At the meso- and macro-levels, HL education is often positioned as a complementary supplement to formal schooling, rather than as an integral component of a national language policy. In this framing, its legitimacy is tied to broader aims like “intercultural competence” or “integration”. But the process of integration remains fundamentally asymmetrical: HL communities are tasked with accommodating mainstream expectations, while host institutions rarely engage in reciprocal adaptation.

The Polish case further complicates this picture. Within the diaspora, HL education is frequently viewed through the prism of Polish-German bilateral relations, whereas the German educational system tends to homogenise all immigrant languages and treat them as marginal and, ultimately, as a community matter. While some educators work to position Polish within a European multilingual framework, using tools such as the CEFR or emphasising mediation skills, these efforts remain largely enclosed within HL networks and are rarely taken up by mainstream institutions.

The chapter's scope has limits. It explains how language management happens rather than how much it changes outcomes. The classroom base is small and not all age groups are represented. While many LMP sequences were visible in the classrooms, others were reconstructed from the interviews and

shared materials, so the ordering of steps is approximate. Observed courses also varied by mode, age mix and resources, which tempers generalisation.

The findings ultimately show that the language management strategies and processes employed by the Initiatives are predominantly adaptive, shaped by immediate needs and limited resources, yet they carry capacity for transformation. These adaptations, such as the inclusion of informal German scaffolding, context-sensitive material selection, or selective use of foreign-language teaching techniques, reveal not only flexibility but also a capacity for innovation. In some cases, these strategies move beyond accommodation to propose new pedagogical norms rooted in CLA and transnational experience. Language beliefs that surface in the observed and reconstructed LMP include a first-language default for HL teaching and the assumption that literacy should be developed first in the majority language. These beliefs narrow teachers' repertoires of methods and resources. When they are addressed explicitly, transformative change becomes plausible.

The final chapter brings these interconnections together by mapping the strategies observed at the micro, meso, and macro levels and highlighting key areas where adaptability transitions into potential transformation. It also extends the expectation-based LMF by introducing adaptability and transformability as key analytical dimensions. In doing so, it recognises that not all language management strategies fit neatly into LMF's existing categories. Some are not merely reactive responses to perceived "issues related to language" but proactive efforts to redesign what HL education can be. Against this backdrop, the chapter summarises responses to the research questions and asks the final one: How can an extended LMF, augmented with adaptability and transferability, be operationalised to design and monitor community-driven HL initiatives?

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter outlines the contributions the study makes on conceptual, empirical, and practical levels. Theoretically, the study reframes the first stage of the LMF as a mismatch of expectations among stakeholders and adopts a resilience lens to situate responses along a spectrum from adaptive to transformative. Empirically, it synthesises evidence from three community-based Initiatives in Germany to trace language management across levels – classroom, community and family, and institutional – and to show how these levels interact. From this analysis, the study develops a transferable model that makes visible not only how communities manage language in practice but also how they respond to the challenges and opportunities that expectations create. In addition, it can be used by Initiatives for diagnosis and monitoring. Building on the model, the final part of the chapter sets out lessons learned and outlines implications for initiatives and policymakers seeking more localised, community-oriented language policies. Finally, it offers recommendations to support and strengthen community-led efforts.

7.1 Towards Resilient Language Management

The community-based LMP, which typically must account for many actors' agendas, begins by identifying a mismatch between current language situation and the community of practice's aims, making explicit whose expectations are at stake and which actors are involved. This "expectation landscape" maps the key stakeholders who influence language policy and practice, together with their beliefs about the current situation.

Within this landscape, design and implementation of management responses fall into two broad modes. Adaptive language management sustains the status quo, addressing practical issues without challenging underlying language beliefs. It operates within a given framework. Transformative management, in contrast, explicitly engages with language beliefs and introduces innovations that shift practice within the community. Sometimes, a mismatch is recognised but no deliberate strategy follows. This, too, can be adaptive. For example, in the current language-political context of Polish as an HL in two federal states, communities bear responsibility for monitoring HL provision, and they continue to do so, although they signal that it is a considerable effort.

As the analysis shows, feedback mechanisms and simple monitoring tools are essential in order to re-evaluate the design, however, this aspect often falls short. Why is revisiting the management strategies important? Monitoring the responses to the noted mismatches and problems makes it

possible to reassess the proposed solutions, see the shortcoming of the strategies, track the changes as well as provide an opportunity to learn from experience.

The model and its steps can be applied as a practical checklist:

Stage 1: Identifying and evaluating the mismatch in expectations

- What is the nature of the mismatch between language practices and community expectations?
- Whose expectations are affected, and who is involved?
- What beliefs underpin these expectations? Are they explicit, or do they need to be uncovered?

Stage 2: Design and implementation

- What should or could be done, and whose expectations does the design address?
- Does it challenge prevailing language beliefs, or propose something new for the community?
- Does the proposed response to the mismatch adapt to the current possibility or does it aim to create a new approach, new something (in other words, is it adaptive or transformative?)
- How will it be implemented? Can the community carry it out alone, or are other stakeholders required?

Stage 3: Reflection and monitoring

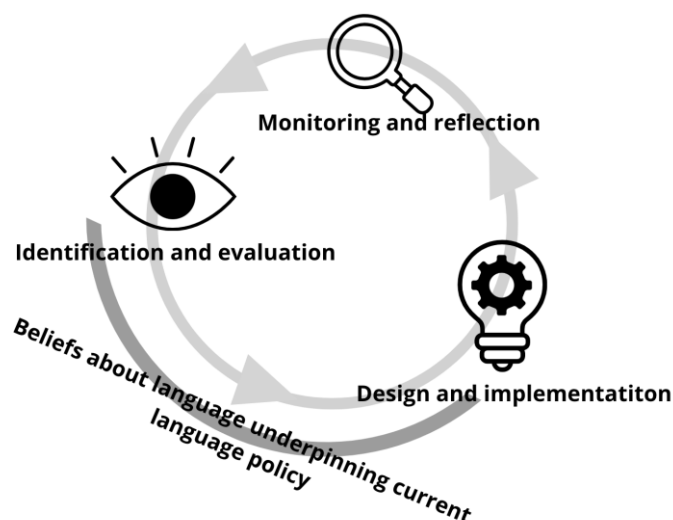
- Does the implementation address the mismatch and align with community expectations?
- Has it strengthened the community's resilience?
- What adjustments are needed moving forward?

This guideline works both for adaptive and transformative language management. Practically, however the adaptive and transformative responses to the noticed mismatch differ and can be distinguished based on several criteria.

Adaptive language management does not require a wide range of actors. The response is adjusted to the mapped expectations of the actors. Response does not offer a new quality in a given framework, that is - a sustained change of approach towards the community needs. On top of that, as it is mainly focused on adjusting to the current situations, beliefs, while might be recognised, are not addressed. Transformative language management, on the other hand, usually, requires participation of several actors in order to offer sustainable outcomes. A response to the mismatch that is transformative is characterised by the fact that it changes the language-political framework and offers a new quality, a

new approach. In order to do that, the beliefs underpinning the expectations are shifted. The adaptive and transformative expectation-based LMPs are illustrated in Figure 13 and 14.

Figure 13 *Adaptive Language Management Process*



Note. Figure created in Canva by the author, 2025.

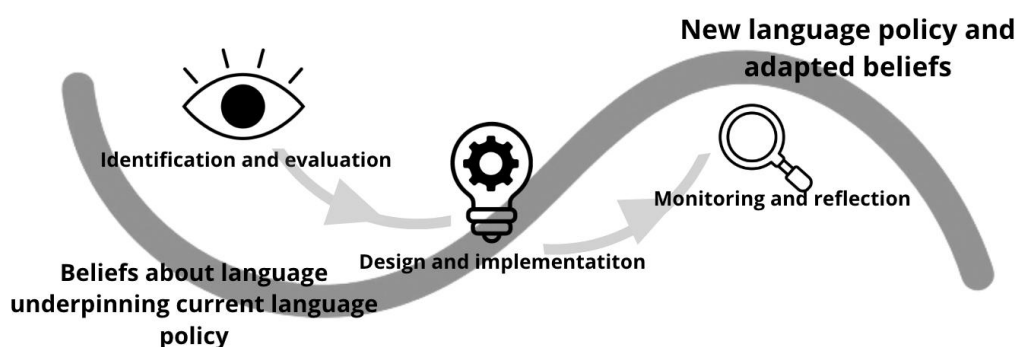
Figure 13 presents an adaptive cycle. In Stage 1, the language manager, here, the community and its Initiatives, spots a mismatch: the current language situation doesn't serve the community's needs. The Initiative and community expectations are articulated against the mismatch and weigh their significance. This is the go/no-go moment. If the problem is material and actionable, they green-light the process and move forward.

In Stage 2, the manager designs a response. Building on what was learned in Stage 1, they ask what can realistically be done to close the gap, what resources are needed for implementation, and who must be involved. A central question appears: can this be delivered within the existing framework, or do prevailing language beliefs need to be surfaced and addressed? If the plan is feasible within the current arrangements, implementation begins.

In Stage 3, the manager monitors and reflects. They check whether the strategy actually reduces the mismatch, watch for new issues, and reassess how well the response aligns with community needs. Findings feed back into the next cycle: adjust or rethink.

In the adaptive process, language beliefs remain largely in the background, acknowledged but not directly challenged. The strategies work within existing rules. Of course, the framework and beliefs can shift due to the external conditions, and then, the Initiatives have to adapt again.

Figure 14 *Transformative Language Management Process*



Note. Figure created in Canva by the author, 2025.

In the transformative LMP, by contrast, beliefs are brought to the surface and engaged. New opportunities are created and, at times, a new policy framework emerges. Hence, the process is presented not as a cycle but as a curve (see Figure 14). The manager then adapts to that transformed landscape in the next cycle. The model helps us to summarise the responses to the research questions posed in Section 1.4.

The model operates across levels of language management, as summarised in Table 6. For example, Section 4.5.2 discusses an adaptive response at the macro level by the Initiative Wawel in the form of providing HL classes in Baden-Württemberg. The community noted the absence of such classes and mapped a mismatch of expectations – namely, that German authorities expect the community to take over provision despite the existence of a treaty. However, rather than designing and implementing a new framework, the Initiative utilised existing pathways and worked with the Polish consulate, leaving the authorities’ expectations unchallenged. A similar pattern appears at classroom level in Section 6.3.2: teachers recognise that materials designed for Polish as a first language pose challenges and require extensive adjustment, yet they still design the response in terms of continued use of those materials. They see the mismatch – the materials are not realistically adapted to HL learners’ needs – but the response reproduces historical approaches to HL education. At family level, the Initiatives

notice the need for more opportunities for peer interaction, however, as discussed in Section 5.6.2, the response is to continue with existing operations.

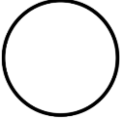
Transformative language management is observed at the institutional level in the “Polish in Hesse” campaign, which introduced a new configuration and challenged the expectation – widely held in German institutions – that Polish as a heritage language is a private matter for families and the community (see Section 5.2). At family level, training and workshops that clarify the basics and offer practical tips create opportunities for families to reflect on everyday language management and to implement new strategies (see Section 5.6.1). Finally, Section 6.2.2 discusses courses that utilise students’ multilingual resources, implementing a transformative design in response to the noticed mismatch – while classes are theoretically held in Polish, German is also used. Table 6 summarises the LMP stages alongside the adaptive and transformative responses.

Table 6 *Summary of the Adaptive and Transformative Language Management Processes by the Bottom-Up Initiatives*

LMF step	Classroom and HL education	Families and Community	Advocacy and relationship with Institutions and other organisations
What is identified and what is evaluated? 	● Logistic challenges and limitations such as location for the courses, staffing, and lack of materials; ● Diversity in students' ages; ● Diversity of students' proficiencies in HL; ● Presence of dominant language (German) in classroom interactions; ● Need to adapt materials for the HL students – however, the lack of guidelines is not articulated explicitly; ● Change in students' demographics and with them – the need for changing approaches – is noted but not addressed.	● Emotional strain associated with multilingual upbringing; ● Parental networks and mobilisation create new opportunities for communities seeking to maintain the HL; ● Parents' goals for HL classes are often unstructured; ● Diverse home language practices – home practices inform classroom language management; ● Parents often have a limited repertoire of practical language-management strategies at home; ● Peer interaction among students is valuable – it motivates participation and approximates first-language socialisation;	● German education authorities have no – or very limited – knowledge of obligations regarding HL provision; ● Need to mobilise networks of other Polish community-based organisations to increase visibility and amplify their voices; ● Need for horizontal links across immigrant communities to promote HLs; ● Time constraints and general fatigue limit full engagement with horizontal links; ● Need for formalisation and further integration of HL classes into the school system; ● Need for certification and

		● Parental engagement in multilingual development should be proactive.	language tests to document HL proficiency.
What design and implementation are in place? 	● Reactive management strategies in response to presence of German (e.g., asking students for repairing or translation); ● Inclusive, mostly manual tasks, in which all students can participate; ● Ad hoc literacy tasks depending students' attendance to German schools; ● Use of Polish coursebooks designed for schooling in Poland ● Calibrating goals depending students' and parents approaches to classes; ● Framing HL education within development of plurilingual competences; ● Project-based courses, as the one	● Establishment of the Initiative and delivery of HL classes; ● Additional HL input that differs in terms of quality – structured HL use in an educational setting; ● Provision of a Polish-speaking network of families; ● Provision of spaces for peer interaction; ● Support for distress related to multilingual upbringing (emotional guidance/parent counselling); ● Awareness-raising activities for parents to build knowledge of multilingual development and equip them with practical tools; ● Succession planning: the need for a new generation of parents to take	● Creation of structures and procedures to establish HL classes in the respective federal states; ● Maintenance and development of the Polish community-based network; ● Upscaling advocacy efforts to the level of German Ministries of Education; ● Maintenance of horizontal links with other community-based organisations – though currently very limited.

	prepared by Cecylia, with translanguaging design and inclusion of resources; ● Knowledge sharing opportunities for teachers, though rare and limited.	over is noted, but no design is in place yet.	
Are any reflection and monitoring in place? 	● Limited reflection and monitoring opportunities on implemented strategies, often confined to the knowledge-sharing events such as conferences or meetings for HL teachers. ● No monitoring related to the teaching outcomes set in place besides Initiatives' internal meetings	● Monitoring is limited: the Initiatives identify needs through regular interactions, but they do not evaluate the impact of their actions (e.g., awareness-raising on multilingual upbringing). ● Systematic reflection is lacking: current strategies tend to reinforce community responsibility for HL provision and do not sufficiently include parents who speak the majority language.	● The Initiatives monitor the situation of the provision of HL classes done by state. ● They monitor the ongoing debates related to the HL classes provision ● Monitoring the developments of the HL education in other federal states ● Discussion about the future steps - whether formalisation or current flexibility is a solution to HL classes

What adaptive strategies are present in this domain? 	• Flexible management of the languages in the classroom – presence of teachers’ translanguaging shifts; • Calibration of goals – making HL classes safe space for students through playful and engaging tasks; • Relying on first-language-like instruction, as usually done in Polish as HL teaching.	• Ongoing opportunities for peer interaction and parental networking; • Maintaining operations and awareness-raising activities without their assessment (dissemination of information about multilingualism through websites or newsletters); • Provision of emotional well-being support for parents.	• Provision of HL classes in Baden-Württemberg with support from the Polish consulate (operating within existing frameworks); • Maintenance of horizontal and vertical links to keep provision visible.
What transformative strategies are present in this domain? 	• Application of translanguaging pedagogy framework and language awareness in tasks; • Hybrid approach to instruction – applying foreign language teaching methods in the HL classroom.	• Establishment of the Initiatives (founding community-run provision); • Awareness-raising activities that equip parents with tools to increase language input at home.	• Creation of a new framework for HL provision in Hesse – alongside classes offered by the Initiatives, the state now also provides classes.

7.2 Language Management and Language Beliefs in the Bottom-up Initiatives

Through analysis of several sociolinguistic domains: advocacy, family and community, and the classroom, the research questions (see Section 1.4) were addressed in the corresponding chapters. Below is a brief summary using the community-based resilient language management model.

7.2.1 Everyday Language Management in Heritage Language Classes

Adaptive language strategies prevail, as they do not require changes to the current model of HL teaching or surface underlying beliefs. In the observed classes, students often initiate language management and act as the primary agents. As a result, German often functions as a support language yet remains unacknowledged, and methods from foreign-language didactics are not widely applied. Even so, mismatches are noted by the educators, and there are isolated attempts to design and implement responses that reflect HL learners' multilingual realities, for example through reflection on lesson content. Teachers show openness to multilingual strategies in everyday management, and Initiatives experiment with presenting Polish through European or patriotic lenses to reinforce its status within the community. This suggests two practical implications: some community practices can be transferred and scaled, and this requires more chances for teachers to exchange good practice and to reflect on current HL methodologies.

7.2.2 Community strategies for family language management

When the Initiatives seek to influence language management in families, they tend to lean on the early surge of energy that comes with setting things up. In that mobilisation phase, opportunities for increased and enriched input – in both quantity and quality – often emerge. The same momentum builds family networks and peer interaction among HL learners, which matters because strong ties and dense networks are a core element of community resilience. Many strategies, however, still rest on that initial push. New activities do appear – for example, workshops for parents in response to observed struggles with day-to-day language management – yet there is little reflection on how to harness family networks more systematically or how to create peer opportunities beyond the classroom. As things stand, the Initiatives tend to continue in an unchanged form, without a clear plan to bring parents into the Initiatives' activities in sustained ways or to transfer gains from the classroom into family networks.

7.2.3 Influencing Public Policy from the Community

The Initiatives act as community advocates and intermediaries: they voice the needs and expectations of Polish-speaking families and educators to local school administrations, education authorities, and consulates. Their advocacy, however, depends heavily on arrangements within each federal state. The Initiatives' strategic repertoire includes leveraging existing structures and cultivating horizontal links with other Polish and immigrant-community Initiatives. Results are uneven. Time and resources are thin, and the Initiatives' voice is sometimes sidelined, for instance during wider debates on the future of Polish as a HL in Germany. Moreover, Initiatives tend to prioritise vertical ties over horizontal ones, working "up" with institutions more than "across" with peer communities. This tendency follows from their priorities – Initiatives need Polish institutions to operate at all in some cases (as with the Wawel Initiative) and to negotiate sustainable change with German authorities in others (as in Hesse). Despite these efforts, German authorities remain largely indifferent to HL classes, offloading responsibility onto communities and treating HL as a community matter. Even when the value of HL is acknowledged in curricula, the framing often reinforces the expectation that immigrant groups should carry the burden of social cohesion.

7.2.4 Beliefs Underpinning Strategies

The monolingual bias runs through the dissertation as a quiet baseline. It underpins strategies across levels, yet it shows up differently depending on where you look. For example, at the macro level, German institutions often treat HL provision as an internal matter for immigrant communities. At the community and classroom level, multilingualism is frequently affirmed in principle but only partially enacted in practice and when we look deeper pedagogy tends to mirror first-language didactics from Polish schools in Poland, which is also a reflection on monolingual bias.

Another underlying belief is the marginalisation of immigrants' HLs. At times, marginalisation is reproduced, for instance, by under-engaging majority-language parents and centring responsibility for HL development on the immigrant parent. At the same time, the Initiatives do challenge marginalisation by invoking affective and utilitarian discourses. The affective discourse frames HL as belonging, and highlights ties with family in Poland. It is often supported by "Polishness" narratives, emphasising the historical and cultural heritage. The utilitarian discourse frames Polish as a useful skill, alongside European discourse that presents Polish as a European language worth knowing and that skills obtained through HL provision are in line frameworks such as CEFR. Together, these moves make

HL education visible and are aimed at presenting HL as cultural capital and by that also enhance the status of Polish.

7.3 Limitations and Future Work

The evidence is geographically and temporally bounded, and it comes from a specific community of Polish-led Initiatives in Germany. As a result, the findings are most applicable to similar settings, but can be adjusted for use in other language communities. The analytical model is designed to be transferable, but it is explicitly community-based and assumes a multi-stakeholder environment – its fit may weaken where another agent is placed at the centre of management. In those cases, scope conditions should be checked before applying the model.

The next step is to test the model's recommendations with users – Initiatives, families, teachers, and local authorities – to assess what is workable and useful in practice, placing emphasis on co-creation and close cooperation with the Initiatives. To apply the study's recommendations – such as incorporating methods from foreign-language didactics and increasing parental engagement in class activities – materials should be co-designed, yielding, for example, course or event scenarios. After each trial, feedback would be gathered to document adjustments over time and the reasons for them. In parallel, the focus could turn to advocacy: whether horizontal links across communities strengthen leverage, and whether dedicated grants for advocacy and awareness-raising, that could be brokered jointly by academia and the Initiatives, enable more transformative outcomes. Taken together, these activities aim to turn the model into usable tools and to clarify when adaptation is sufficient and when a more far-reaching transformation is required.

7.4 Reflexivity Brought Into Action: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Having outlined the model and summarise the responses to the research questions, the question becomes: what recommendations can be offered to the Initiatives and to other community-driven efforts to sustain and strengthen HL provision? The following subsection distils the lessons learned from this research into practical tips for improvement. It is important to emphasise that these suggestions are not prescriptions imposed from outside, but reflections grounded in close observation of practices already in place. Naturally, the recommendations here centre on the bottom-up Initiatives and their work.

The Initiatives studied here are led by persons and communities who have invested considerable time, energy, and often emotional labour into creating and sustaining these spaces. Their work is already resourceful, adaptive, and deeply committed to the goals they have set. The recommendations that follow are therefore intended as supportive tools that may help to consolidate existing achievements, ease some of the burdens carried by community leaders, and open possibilities for further development where desired.

7.4.1 The Initiatives

- Map the actors and their expectations – misalignments are inevitable, but recognising them is the first step to set the LMP in motion.
- Strengthen partnerships with parents – invite them to take roles beyond the classroom and create low-barrier ways to take part in the Initiative’s work.
- Create more peer-to-peer spaces for families – build community bonds and open up chances to use Polish beyond the formal teaching context.
- Support educators – make time for exchanging experience and materials, whether within a single Initiative or across the region.
- Keep vertical links with other communities in view – they are a resource that can amplify voice and strengthen your position with German authorities.
- Monitor and reflect – simple routines such as an annual community meeting, short feedback surveys, or a collective review help avoid stagnation and make learning from practice explicit.

7.4.2 Heritage Language Educators

- Network and exchange – other teachers face similar issues; learn from and evaluate their responses.
- Plan for multilingualism in an intentional way – design tasks that include and build on students’ language resources to support HL development.
- Apply methods from foreign-language didactics to tasks that typically mirror first-language instruction, so provision reflects how HL learners actually acquire language.
- Talk with parents about their expectations and goals for HL education – this builds agency, invites co-design, and offers a basis for explaining why drawing on other language resources can be beneficial.
- Involve parents through homework – set activities that prompt simple, purposeful interaction at home.

7.4.3 Parents

- Be a co-creator of the programme – engage beyond drop-off and pick-up, take small roles, and join events; you are part of a community that shares goals for HL maintenance and development.
- Reflect on your goals for HL classes in light of home practices – set targets that are realistic for your family’s time, routines, and resources.
- Keep an open line with teachers – share what works and what does not at home, and ask how home activities can align with class aims.
- Connect with other families – arrange peer-to-peer meet-ups so children use Polish outside class and parents can swap ideas and support.
- Give brief feedback to the Initiative – respond to short surveys or speak up at meetings so provision can improve with your needs in mind.

7.4.4 Recommendations for the Institutions

- Enable community-based initiatives to network – Polish consulates can convene Polish organisations, and German authorities can bring together communities within a region to build a cross-community network.
- Polish institutions can provide support – financial where possible and substantive (training, materials, mentoring) where funds are limited.
- As German school authorities, recognise initiatives as an expression of civic engagement – do not undermine their efforts; keep channels open and make yourselves accessible.
- School authorities in Germany should share responsibility for monitoring HL provision – if HLs are framed as an intercultural resource, support data collection and publish regular summaries, enhance HL visibility and inform parents about the possibilities of courses.

These recommendations are not meant to be a manual but rather a guide that communities can adapt to different contexts. Resilience in community-driven language management, as the results of the research show, lies not only in coping with challenges but also in proactively recognising the expectations of the actors involved, which can result in sustainable change. By naming the steps of management, identifying what needs to be done, and being vocal about the processes, the Initiatives and the communities centred around them can approach their activities with renewed clarity that strengthens the everyday management of HL provision and the long-term prospects of language diversity.

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Appendix 1 Cases Description

Table 7 Cases Description – Summary

	Die Brücke	Wawel	Krasnale
Official name	Deutsch-Polnischer Verein Die Brücke e.V.	Verein für polnische Kultur und Bildung e.V.	Deutsch-polnische Elterninitiative zur Förderung der Zweisprachigkeit e.V.
Location	Darmstadt, Hesse	Rhein-Neckar region (mainly Heidelberg, Mannheim, Eppelheim), Baden-Württemberg	Frankfurt am Main, Hesse
Years active	1999–present	2008–present	2008–present, Saturday school ran until 2021 (then operated as nursery and kindergarten only)
Target population (present)	Parents and children aged 3–5 (sometimes older) for whom Polish is a HL	Children and young people (to age 18) for whom Polish is an HL, plus parents	Polish-speaking children and young people (approx. 5-15), plus parents
Governance	Founded by activists and parents; governed by a Board operating within the framework of its registered status. Members pay annual fees.	Founded by activists and parents; Board-governed within the registered status. Members pay annual fees; classes open to non-members at a higher rate. Operates with the support of the Polish Consulate.	Founded by activists and parents; Board-governed within the registered status. Members pay annual fees; classes open to non-members at a higher rate.
People involved and contact during the research	Two teachers (both trained in Poland: one preschool teacher; one former maths teacher). Contact with both, plus two current Board members and one former Board member.	~14 teachers (including two Board members). Regular contact with two teachers trained in Poland; contact with two Board members, students, and occasionally parents. Parents do	Seven teachers hired (when operating as a Saturday school); contact with four (including two Board members). Parents do not attend classes.

	Parents may assist in class when needed.	not attend lessons.	
Founding	Membership fees; supplemented by small public/private grants	Membership fees	Membership fees, supplemented by small public grants
Characteristics of the courses and other activities offered	Two weekly classes (90 minutes): ages 3–4 and 5+; merged post-pandemic. Additional extracurricular activities.	Broad offer (~15 courses per school year), for preschool to youth. Groups by age; onsite and online; typically 90 minutes. Includes TELC preparation (Polish as a foreign language tests).	Seven courses for preschool and primary pupils, plus two for lower-secondary. Examples: reception class, Polish for Years 1–2, Year 4, Year 5, and older students. Typically 90 minutes. During the pandemic: classes for Year 4, Year 5, and older pupils.
Materials used	No fixed curriculum; predominantly physical and arts-based activities.	Teacher-crafted curricula. Younger groups: worksheets and hands-on tasks; older groups: Polish first-language coursebooks with additional tasks prepared by teachers.	Teacher-crafted curricula and tasks based on selected texts; some groups use coursebooks (Polish as first language or as a foreign language) as support materials.
Forms of assessment	No formal assessment.	No formal assessment. Drawing on parents' and teachers' observations, classes may take more of a Polish-as-a-foreign-language focus.	No formal assessment. Drawing on parents' and teachers' observations, classes may take more of a Polish-as-a-foreign-language focus.
Policy interface	Strong links to Polish-diaspora associations; links to local municipalities; contacts with state ministries of education (via the KMK).	Strong links with the Polish consulate, strong links with regional school authorities. Moderate links with other Initiatives.	Strong links with the Polish Consulate, local authorities, and Polish-diaspora organisations; moderate links with other minority initiatives.
Venue and resources	Classes held in a child-adapted community centre; two rooms rented, including storage.	Classes held in varied venues: private-school premises, public-school classrooms, and community centres.	Saturday classes held in a Realschule building rented from the municipality; space available once a week and shared with other initiatives.

Privacy notes	All personal and special category data were anonymised; the names of interviewees and individuals present during participant observation were replaced with pseudonyms. Interviewees were informed about audio-recording, data use and storage, and advised of their right to raise ethical or GDPR concerns and to withdraw consent at any time. For observations, board representatives were informed in advance, and consent was documented from the educator and parents/guardians via email. No photographs of children were taken – only classroom spaces and anonymised materials (e.g., worksheets) were photographed.	All personal and special category data were anonymised; the names of interviewees and individuals present during participant observation were replaced with pseudonyms. Interviewees were informed about audio-recording, data use and storage, and advised of their right to raise ethical or GDPR concerns and to withdraw consent at any time. For observations, board representatives were informed in advance, and consent was documented via email from the educator and parents/guardians. No photographs of children were taken – only classroom spaces and anonymised materials (e.g., worksheets) were photographed.	All data were anonymised, and interviewees' names were replaced with pseudonyms. Interviewees were informed about audio-recording, data use and storage, and advised that they could raise ethical or GDPR concerns and withdraw consent at any time.
Key LMPs	(1) The initiative noted that Polish HL classes were absent from the Hessian school system and assessed the gap significant in light of community demand; it designed a multi-actor plan with partner networks and implemented the “Polnisch in Hessen” campaign (see Chapter 4) (2) Low parental engagement in community efforts was identified and evaluated as a barrier to sustainability; no sustained design or	(1) The team identified local demand for Polish HL classes in specific areas of the region and evaluated feasibility with school authorities; they designed delivery options and implemented classes in partnership with schools (see Chapter 4). (2) The teachers noticed gaps in suitable HL materials/frameworks, assessed this as a curricular shortcoming, designed lessons drawing on first-language instruction support,	(1) Facilitators observed benefits of peer interaction for HL development, assessed this worth pursuing, designed small-group classes (adapting during the pandemic), and implemented the format (see Chapter 5) (2) The team noticed parents' limited knowledge of multilingual upbringing, assessed it as a support need, designed workshops with simulations, and implemented a parental training (see Chapter 5).

	implementation has followed to date (see Chapter 5) (3) Adaptive language management in classes - In classrooms, teachers noticed emergent German use and evaluated it as pedagogically useful; they designed ad-hoc translanguaging moves and implemented on-the-spot adjustments to tasks and grouping (see Chapter 6).	and implemented these materials in regular teaching (see Chapter 6).	(3) Transformative language management in the classes: In class, teachers saw students leveraging their full repertoires, evaluated this as a pedagogic asset, designed tasks to build on those resources, and implemented them in routine practice (see Chapter 6).
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Appendix 2 Interview Guideline and Script

I. Welcome and Context

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I'm conducting research on how Polish bottom-up initiatives in Germany manage languages and contribute to heritage language maintenance. I'm particularly interested in your experiences, opinions, and any examples you can share. Everything you share will be treated confidentially. Your name and personal details will not be published without your permission. The interview will take about one hour. Is it okay if I record our conversation for transcription purposes?

II. Background Information

1. What is your role in the organisation?
2. For how long have you been involved in the organisation?

III. Organisational issue and class organisation - basic information

1. Could you tell me how your organisation started and what kind of activities your organisation offered at the beginning?
2. And what kind of activities do you organise now?
3. What courses do you usually offer? (Before the pandemic and currently)
4. How many teaching staff do you have?
5. Approximately how many students attend?
6. How are classes organised? (By age or by proficiency or by any other criteria)
7. Is there a centralised strategy or curriculum?

IV. Classroom language management (Questions intended for Educators)

1. How long have you been teaching here?
2. Do you also teach elsewhere (school, consulate, other organisations)?
3. Which age groups or grades do you teach?
4. How many students are in each group? Do you have a size limit?
5. How often are classes, and for how long?

6. What are the main goals of your course(s)?
7. Do you create your own curriculum or follow a fixed one?
8. How do you choose or prepare teaching materials?
9. Which languages are usually spoken in the classroom?
10. What is the typical Polish and German proficiency level of your students?
11. Are there rules about when to use Polish versus German?

V. Language beliefs

1. What are the main purposes and goals of your organisation?
2. Who are your activities intended for?
3. How do you see the role of the federal state in heritage language policy?
4. How do you see the role of families?
5. What motivates parents to enrol their children?
6. What attitudes do parents have towards Polish classes?
7. Would you say your students are interested in learning Polish?
8. How would you describe attitudes towards Polish in the Polish community and in German society? Have these changed?

VI. Influence on language management within families

1. What does your organisation do to promote Polish within Polish-background families?
2. How do you reach and engage parents?
3. Do parents participate in organisational activities?
4. Do you think parents are aware of what multilingualism is?
5. What do you do to spread awareness about multilingualism?

VII. Interaction with broader language-political landscape

1. How do you perceive heritage language policy in your city and federal state?
2. How does your offer compare to other institutions teaching Polish?
3. What is your experience with local institutions (schools, Ministry of Education)?
4. Do you think German schools and ministries support heritage language learning?
5. Does your organisation receive support from German, Polish, or municipal authorities? If yes, what kind?
6. Do you co-operate with other Polish or immigrant initiatives? How?

Appendix 3 Questionnaire for Teachers

Title: Język polski jako język dziedziczony. Perspektywa nauczycieli (*English: Polish as a Heritage Language. Teachers' perspective*)

Part of the questionnaire	Polish	English
Introduction	Jestem doktorantką na uniwersytecie im. Jana Gutenberga w Moguncji i zajmuję się naukowo polityką językową i zarządzaniem językiem. Za chwilę przejdę Państwu do ankiety skierowanej do nauczycieli języka polskiego jako języka kraju pochodzenia w Niemczech. W ankiecie synonimicznie do "język kraju pochodzenia" używam pojęcia "język dziedziczony". Ankieta jest całkowicie anonimowa i składa się z 32 obowiązkowych pytań oraz trzech fakultatywnych pytań otwartych. Wypełnienie jej powinno Państwu zająć mniej niż 15 minut. Zwyczajem anglosaskim pytania będą sformułowane w drugiej osobie liczby pojedynczej.	I am a doctoral student at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and my research focuses on language policy and language management. You are about to take part in a survey aimed at teachers of Polish as a heritage language in Germany. In the survey, I use the term 'heritage language' as a synonym for 'language of origin'. The survey is completely anonymous and consists of 32 mandatory questions and three optional open-ended questions. It should take you less than 15 minutes to complete. In accordance with Anglo-Saxon custom, the questions will be formulated in the second person singular.
Section I	W tej części odpowiesz Państwo na pytania dotyczące podstawowych informacji - jak długo Państwo uczą języka polskiego w Niemczech, w których krajach związkowych Państwo wykonują zawód nauczyciela itp.	In this section, you will answer questions about basic information – how long you have been teaching Polish in Germany, in which federal states you work as a teacher, etc.
Question 1	Proszę zaznaczyć lub podać kraj swojego urodzenia.	Country of origin (Poland, Germany, Other)
Question 2	Proszę podać rok swojego urodzenia.	Date of birth (Short answer)
Question 3	Jak długo mieszkasz w Niemczech?	How long have you lived in Germany? (Short answer)
Question 4	Płeć	Gender (Female/Male/Other)
Question 5	Jakie masz wykształcenie?	Education (Selection: Secondary/ Bachelor's /Master's)

		/Doctoral (PhD) Other)
Question 6	Czy jesteś rodzicem?	Are you a parent? (Selection: Yes/No)
Question 7	Jak długo uczysz polskiego w Niemczech?	For how long have you taught Polish in Germany? (Short answer)
Question 8	W jakiej grupie wiekowej znajdują się Twoi uczniowie? Możliwe jest zaznaczenie więcej niż jednej odpowiedzi.	Age groups of your students (Multiple Selection: 0-2, 3-5, 6-9, 10-14, 15-18, 19+, Other)
Question 9	Gdzie uczysz polskiego? Możliwe jest zaznaczenie więcej niż jednej odpowiedzi. (Wybór: Szkoła polska przy ambasadzie lub konsulacie; Niemiecka szkoła i zajęcia w ramach HSU; Stowarzyszenie założone przez rodziców; Zajęcia prowadzone przez Polską Misję Katolicką; Prywatna szkoła językowa; Inne)	Where do you teach Polish? (select all that apply) (Selection: Embassy/Consulate school; German classes within HSU; Parents' Association; Classes run by Polish Catholic Mission; Private Language School; Other)
Question 10	Które z poniżej wymienionych miejsc uznałabyś/uznałbyś za główne miejsce swojej pracy? (Wybór jak wyżej)	What is the main place where you teach Polish? (Selection as above)
Question 11	Proszę zaznaczyć kraj związkowy, w którym pracujesz. Można zaznaczyć więcej niż jedną odpowiedź.	Federal state(s) (select all that apply)
Section 2	W tej sekcji znajdują Państwo 21 twierdzeń. Muszą Państwo oznaczyć w jakim stopniu zgadzają lub nie zgadzają się z danym stwierdzeniem. Skala od 1 (zupełnie się nie zgadzam) do 5 (całkowicie się zgadzam)	In this section, you will find 21 statements. You must indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement. Scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)
Question 12	Instytucja, w której uczę, ma przygotowany program zajęć.	The place where I teach has a curriculum for each course.
Question 13	Aktywnie uczestniczę w przygotowywaniu programu zajęć.	I actively participate in preparing the curricula.
Question 14	Uczniowie mogą używać innych języków na moich zajęciach.	Students are allowed to use languages other than Polish in my lessons.
Question 15	Polski jest jedynym językiem instrukcji, którego	Polish is the only language of instruction I use in my

	używam na zajęciach.	classes.
Question 16	Materiały, które przygotowuję na zajęcia dla moich uczniów, zawierają elementy języka niemieckiego.	Exercises I prepare for my students include elements of German (e.g., translation tasks).
Question 17	Na zajęciach wykorzystuję to, że uczniowie znają inne języki niż język polski.	I draw on students' knowledge of languages other than Polish during classes.
Question 18	Na moich zajęciach stawiam uczniom oceny.	In my classes, I assign grades.
Question 19	Program zajęć, które prowadzę jest interdyscyplinarny, tj. zawiera elementy przyrody, historii, geografii, itp.	The curricula for my classes are interdisciplinary (e.g., elements of science, geography).
Question 20	Niemieckie Ministerstwo Oświaty i ministerstwa oświaty poszczególnych krajów związkowych wspierają naukę języków kraju pochodzenia, np. naukę polskiego, rosyjskiego, tureckiego.	Germany's ministries of education support heritage-language classes (e.g., Polish, Russian, Turkish).
Question 21	Rząd Niemiec i rządy poszczególnych krajów związkowych wspierają organizacje pozarządowe, które prowadzą lekcje języków kraju pochodzenia, np. polskiego, rosyjskiego, itp.	The German government provides financial support to NGOs that organise heritage-language classes.
Question 22	Lekcje języka polskiego jako dziedziczonego są łatwo dostępne w Niemczech.	Polish heritage-language classes are easily accessible in Germany.
Question 23	Lekcje języka polskiego jako dziedziczonego cieszą się popularnością wśród Polaków w Niemczech.	Polish heritage-language classes are popular within the Polish community in Germany.
Question 24	Polskie instytucje państwowe takie jak Konsulat lub Ministerstwo Oświaty wspierają lekcje języka polskiego jako dziedziczonego w Niemczech.	Polish government institutions (e.g., consulates, Ministry of Education) support Polish classes in Germany.
Question 25	Generalnie nauczyciele w niemieckich szkołach państwowych wspierają dwujęzyczność	Teachers in German schools support their students' bilingualism.
Question 26	Generalnie, polscy rodzice w Niemczech wiedzą, czym jest dwujęzyczność.	In general, Polish parents in Germany are familiar with the concept of bilingualism.
Question 27	Generalnie, polscy rodzice w Niemczech wspierają dwujęzyczność swoich dzieci.	In general, Polish parents support their children's bilingualism.
Question 28	Generalnie, dzieci są zapisywane na zajęcia języka polskiego jako dziedziczonego, żeby móc	In general, children are enrolled in heritage-language classes so that they can communicate with

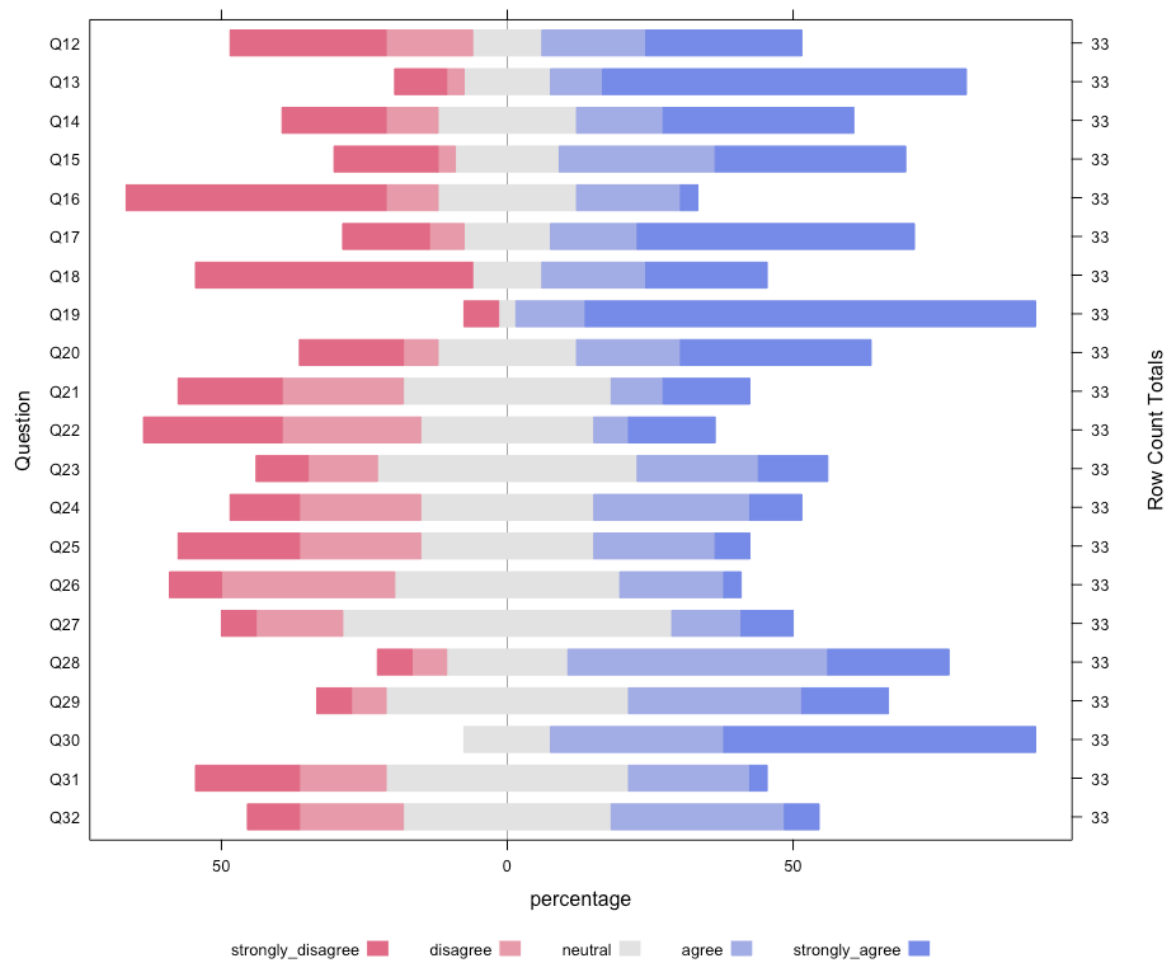
	porozumiewać się z rodziną w Polsce.	family in Poland.
Question 29	Generalnie, polscy rodzice w Niemczech postrzegają dwujęzyczność swoich dzieci jako wartość.	In general, Polish parents view their children's bilingualism as valuable.
Question 30	Rodzina jest podstawą dwujęzycznego rozwoju dziecka.	The family is the primary context for a child's bilingual development.
Question 31	Znajomość języka polskiego jest w Niemczech postrzegana jako atut w edukacji.	Proficiency in Polish is seen as an asset in education in Germany.
Question 32	Znajomość języka polskiego jest w Niemczech postrzegana jako atut na rynku pracy.	Proficiency in Polish is seen as an asset in the job market.
Section 3	W tej sekcji znajdą Państwo trzy pytania otwarte. Sekcja nie jest obowiązkowa. Mogą Państwo nie odpowiadać na pytania i przesłać ankietę.	In this section, you will find three open-ended questions. This section is not mandatory. You may choose not to answer the questions and submit the survey.
Question 33	Jakie dobre rozwiązania funkcjonują według Ciebie w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako dziedzicznego w Niemczech?	What do you think are some good solutions for teaching Polish as a heritage language in Germany?
Question 34	Co można by zrobić lepiej w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako dziedzicznego w Niemczech?	What could be done better in teaching Polish as a heritage language in Germany?
Question 35	Jakie są problemy nauczania języka polskiego jako dziedzicznego w Niemczech	What are the problems with teaching Polish as a heritage language in Germany?

Quantitative Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 21 Likert-scale items. Figure 15 shows the response distributions: colours denote response categories, and the length of each coloured segment indicates the percentage of teachers selecting that option. On the left y-axis, items are numbered; the x-axis shows percentages; the right y-axis reports the total number of responses used for each item.

Figure 15 *Distribution of Respondents' Answers*

Polish as HL in Germany: teachers' perspective



Note. Plot created by author, 2022.

Appendix 4 Questionnaire for Parents

Title: Lekcje języka polskiego i inne aktywności w stowarzyszeniu polonijnym (English: *Polish Language Lessons and Other Activities at the Polish Initiative*)

Part of the questionnaire	Polish	English
Introduction	Drodzy Rodzice! Za moment wypełnicie anonimowy formularz dotyczący Waszych oczekiwań względem stowarzyszenia i lekcji polskiego. Formularz składa się z czterech części: 1. Podstawowe informacje o Was i Waszych dzieciach (np. wiek i języki komunikacji). 2. Pytania o powody zapisania dzieci do stowarzyszenia. 3. Pytania o Państwa poziom zadowolenia z różnych aspektów działań stowarzyszenia. 4. Pytania o zdobywanie wiedzy na temat wielojęzycznego wychowania dzieci. Wyniki ankiety zostaną wykorzystane do mojej pracy doktorskiej o oddolnych stowarzyszeniach rodzicielskich i ich roli w polityce językowej. Będę ogromnie wdzięczna za Państwa pomoc. W razie pytań proszę pisać na adres: kwiatkow@uni-mainz.de	Dear Parents, You are about to complete an anonymous questionnaire about your expectations of the association and the Polish classes. The form consists of four parts: 1. Basic information about you and your children (e.g., age and languages of communication). 2. Questions about your reasons for enrolling your children in the association. 3. Questions about your satisfaction with various aspects of the association's activities. 4. Questions about gaining knowledge on multilingual child-rearing. The results will be used in my doctoral dissertation on grassroots parent associations and their role in language policy. I would be very grateful for your help. If you have any questions, please write to: kwiatkow@uni-mainz.de
Section 1	Podstawowe informacje Poproszę o wpisanie odpowiedzi, które dotyczą Państwa i Państwa dzieci.	Basic information Please provide answers that concern you and your children.
Question 1	Jaka jest państwa narodowość? Więcej niż jedna odpowiedź jest możliwa. Wybór: polska; niemiecka; inna	What is your nationality? (More than one answer is possible.) Options: Polish; German; Other
Question 2	Proszę podać swoją płeć. Wybór: kobieta; mężczyzna; inne	Please indicate your gender. Options: Woman; Man; Other
Question 3	Proszę podać swój wiek. (Krótka odpowiedź)	Please state your age. (Short answer)

Question 4	Proszę podać wiek swoich dzieci, na przykład: pierwsze dziecko - 3 lata, drugie dziecko 6 lat. (Krótka odpowiedź)	Please state your children's ages, for example: first child – 3 years, second child – 6 years. (Short answer)
Question 5	Proszę wskazać swoje wykształcenie. Wybór: podstawowe; gimnazjalne; średnie; zawodowe; wyższe; inne	Please indicate your highest level of education. Options: Primary; Lower secondary; Upper secondary; Vocational; Higher education; Other
Question 6	Jaki jest Państwa pierwszy język? Proszę wybrać lub wpisać swój pierwszy język lub - jeśli jest ich więcej - pierwsze języki. Można zaznaczyć więcej niż jedną odpowiedź. Wybór: polski; niemiecki; inne	What is your first language? Please select or enter your first language – or, if you have more than one, your first languages. (You may select more than one answer.) Options: Polish; German; Other
Question 7	W jakich językach rozmawiacie w domu? Można zaznaczyć lub wpisać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź. Wybór: polski; niemiecki; inne	Which languages do you speak at home? (You may select or enter more than one answer.) Options: Polish; German; Other
Question 8	W jakim języku komunikujesz się z dziećmi? Można zaznaczyć lub wpisać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź. Wybór: polski; niemiecki; inne	In which language(s) do you communicate with your children? (You may select or enter more than one answer.) Options: Polish; German; Other
Question 9	Jaki jest preferowany język dziecka? Którego języka używa chętniej w komunikacji? Można zaznaczyć więcej niż jedną odpowiedź. Wybór: polski; niemiecki; inne	What is your child's preferred language? Which language do they prefer to use in communication? (You may select more than one answer.) Options: Polish; German; Other
Question 10	Czy dzieci wciąż uczestniczą w zajęciach języka polskiego organizowanych przez stowarzyszenie? Wybór: tak; nie	Are your children still attending Polish classes organised by the association? Options: Yes; No
Question 11	Jaki długo Państwa dzieci uczestniczyły w zajęciach? (Krótka odpowiedź)	For how long did your children attend the classes? (Short answer)
Question 12	W jakim kraju związkowym odbywają się zajęcia organizowane przez stowarzyszenie? Wybór:	In which federal state are the association's classes held? Options:
Question 13	Czy dziecko uczestniczy w zajęciach polskiego organizowanych przez inne instytucje (np. przez konsulat czy niemiecką szkołę)? Wybór: tak; nie	Does your child attend Polish classes organised by other institutions (e.g., by the consulate or a German school)? Options: Yes; No

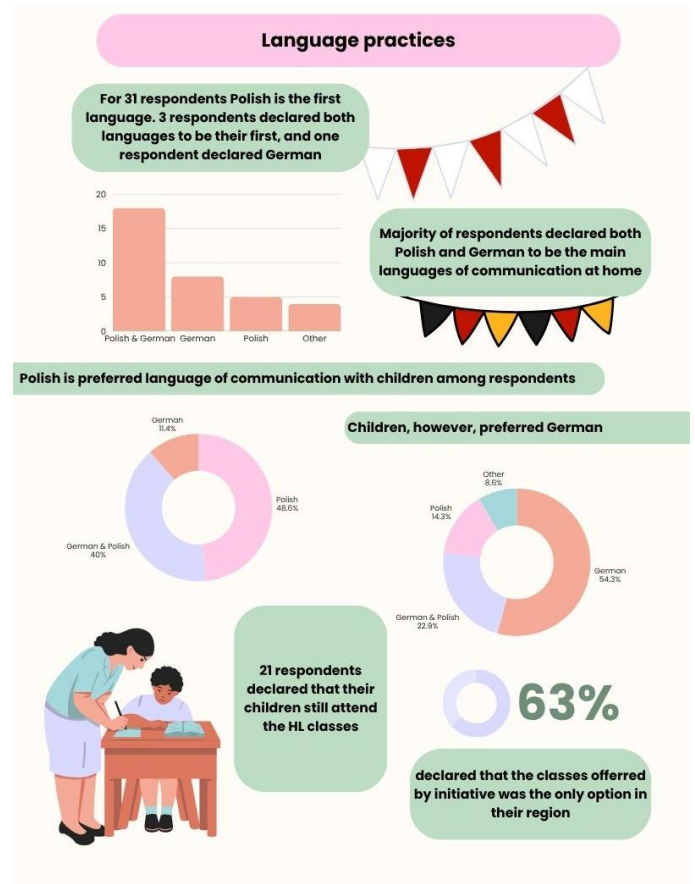
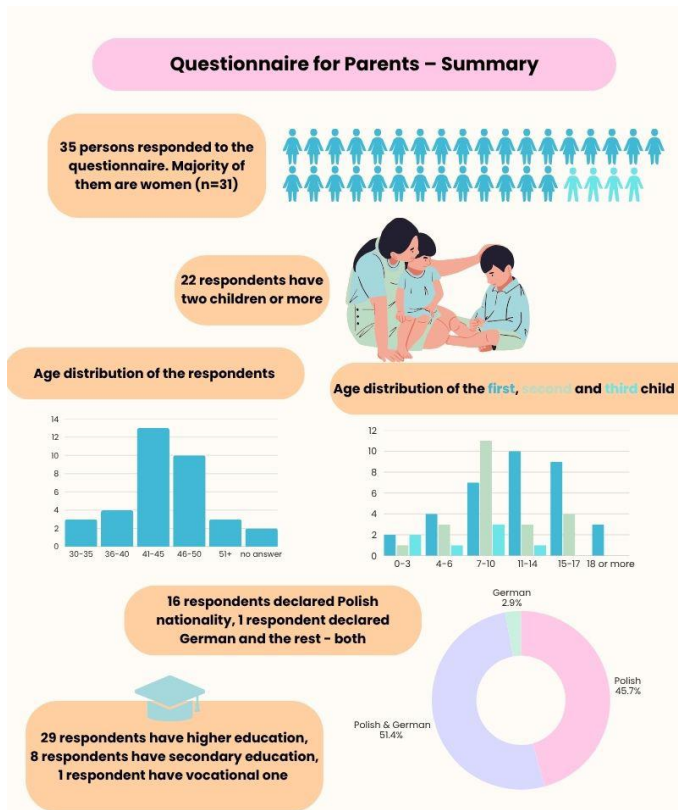
Question 14	Czy mieli Państwo możliwość skorzystania z innych ofert nauki języka polskiego oprócz zajęć organizowanych przez stowarzyszenie (na przykład zajęcia HSU, szkoły przykonsularne)? (Krótka odpowiedź)	Have you had access to other Polish-language learning options besides the association's classes (e.g., HSU classes, consulate-affiliated schools)? (Short answer)
Question 15	Jakie są Państwa cele związane ze znajomością języka polskiego u Państwa dzieci? Przykładowo, czy chcieliby Państwo, żeby dziecko znało polski, aby mogło się komunikować z rodziną w Polsce; lub żeby znało polski, aby mogło studiować w Polsce, itp. (Długa odpowiedź)	What are your goals regarding your children's knowledge of Polish? For example, would you like your child to know Polish so they can communicate with family in Poland; or to know Polish in order to study in Poland, etc. (Long answer)
Section 2	Powody i oczekiwania Poniżej widzą Państwo powody zapisania dzieci na zajęcia w przypadkowej kolejności. Proszę je pogrupować od najbardziej istotnego w Państwa przypadku do najmniej istotnego. Na przykład, jeśli dla Państwa najważniejszy był kontakt dzieci z innymi polskojęzycznymi rówieśnikami, proszę go przesunąć na samą górę.	Reasons and expectations Below you will see reasons for enrolling children in classes, shown in random order. Please rank them from most important in your case to least important. For example, if the most important reason for you was contact with other Polish-speaking peers, please move that item to the top.
Question 16	Dlaczego zapisali Państwo swoje dzieci na zajęcia polskiego? Proszę pogrupować od najbardziej do najmniej istotnego powodu. Do pogrupowania: • Żeby moje dzieci lepiej czytały po polsku. • Żeby dostać porady, jak wielojęzycznie wychować dzieci. • Żeby moje dzieci miały kontakt z rówieśnikami, którzy mówią po polsku. • Żeby moje dzieci lepiej mówiły po polsku. • Żeby poznać innych rodziców, którzy wyemigrowali i wychowują dzieci w Niemczech. • Żeby moje dzieci lepiej rozumiały język polski. • Żeby moje dzieci lepiej pisały po polsku. • Żeby moje dzieci dowiedziały się więcej o polskiej historii. • Żeby moje dzieci rozwijały świadomość	Why did you enrol your children in Polish classes? Please rank from the most to the least important reason. Items to rank: • So that my children read better in Polish. • To receive advice on raising children multilingually. • So that my children have contact with peers who speak Polish. • So that my children can speak Polish better. • To meet other parents who have migrated and are raising children in Germany. • So that my children understand Polish better. • So that my children can write better in Polish. • So that my children learn more about Polish history.

	językową i kompetencje wielokulturowe (np. uczyły się tłumaczyć z jednego języka na drugi, porównywać zwyczaje w Polsce i w Niemczech). • Żeby moje dzieci dowiedziały się więcej o polskiej kulturze (np. o tradycjach, o literaturze i sztuce)	• So that my children develop language awareness and intercultural competence (e.g., learn to translate between languages, compare customs in Poland and Germany). • So that my children learn more about Polish culture (e.g., traditions, literature, arts).
Question 17	Być może poprzednie pytanie nie uwzględniło wszystkich powodów lub niektóre powody są tak samo ważne i trudno je uszeregować w odpowiedniej kolejności. Tutaj mogą Państwo podzielić się dodatkowymi informacjami. Pytanie nie jest obowiązkowe, ale każda dodatkowa informacja jest bardzo pomocna. (Krótka odpowiedź)	The previous question may not have captured all your reasons, or some reasons may be equally important and hard to rank. You can share additional information here. This question is optional, but any extra information is very helpful. (Short answer)
Sekcja 3	Zadowolenie W tej sekcji ocenią Państwo, w jakim stopniu są Państwo zadowoleni z różnych aspektów lekcji polskiego organizowanych przez stowarzyszenie. Jeśli któreś ze stwierdzeń Państwa nie dotyczy, np. Państwa dziecko nie jest w wieku szkolnym i nie uczy się czytać i pisać, proszę zaznaczyć "nie mam zdania". Wybór: Bardzo niezadowolona; niezadowolona; ani zadowolona, ani niezadowolona; zadowolona; bardzo zadowolona; nie mam zdania	Satisfaction In this section, please indicate how satisfied you are with various aspects of the Polish classes organised by the association. If a statement does not apply to you (e.g., your child is not school-aged and is not learning to read and write), please select "No opinion." Scale: Very dissatisfied; Dissatisfied; Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; Satisfied; Very satisfied; No opinion
Question 18a	Rozwijanie umiejętności rozumienia języka polskiego.	Development of Polish listening/understanding skills.
Question 18b	Rozwijanie umiejętności mówienia po polsku.	Development of Polish speaking skills.
Question 18c	Rozwijanie umiejętności czytania po polsku.	Development of Polish reading skills.
Question 18d	Rozwijanie umiejętności pisania po polsku.	Development of Polish writing skills.
Question 18e	Rozwijanie świadomości językowej (np. tłumaczenie z jednego języka na drugi).	Development of language awareness (e.g., translating from one language to another).

Question 18f	Nauka o polskiej kulturze (świątach, literaturze, sztuce).	Learning about Polish culture (holidays, literature, arts).
Question 18g	Rozwijanie kompetencji wielokulturowej (np. porównywanie zwyczajów w Polsce i w Niemczech)	Development of intercultural competence (e.g., comparing customs in Poland and Germany).
Question 19	W tej części ocenią Państwo, w jakim stopniu są Państwo zadowoleni z innych aspektów działalności stowarzyszenia. Wybór: Bardzo niezadowolona; niezadowolona; ani zadowolona, ani niezadowolona; zadowolona; bardzo zadowolona; nie mam zdania	In this part, please indicate how satisfied you are with other aspects of the association's activities. Scale: Very dissatisfied; Dissatisfied; Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; Satisfied; Very satisfied; No opinion
Question 19a	Kontakt z innymi rodzicami, którzy wychowują dzieci w Niemczech.	Contact with other parents raising children in Germany.
Question 19b	Kontakt dzieci z polskojęzycznymi rówieśnikami.	Children's contact with Polish-speaking peers.
Question 19c	Poradnictwo odnośnie do wielojęzycznego wychowania.	Guidance on multilingual child-rearing.
Question 19d	Organizacja wydarzeń okolicznościowych dla rodzin (np. różnych świąt).	Organisation of family events (e.g., various holidays)
Question 20	Czy jest coś, co stowarzyszenie mogłoby robić lepiej? (Odpowiedź nie jest obowiązkowa.) (Short answer)	Is there anything the association could do better? (Optional), (Short answer)
Section 4	Zdobywanie informacji o wielojęzyczności W tej sekcji odpowiedzą Państwo na pytania związane ze zdobywaniem wiedzy na temat wielojęzycznego wychowania dzieci.	Gaining information about multilingualism In this section, you will answer questions related to gaining knowledge about multilingual child-rearing.
Question 22	Czy otrzymali Państwo informacje lub porady dotyczące wielojęzycznego wychowania dzieci? Wybór: Tak, otrzymała(e)m takie informacje i porady od stowarzyszenia; Tak, otrzymała(e)m takie informacje i porady z innego źródła; Nie; Inne	Have you received information or advice on multilingual child-rearing? Options: Yes, I received such information/advice from the association; Yes, I received such information/advice from another source; No; Other
Question 23	Jakie wskazówki Państwo otrzymali? Czy udało się Państwu jakieś wskazówki wcielić w życie? Odpowiedź na pytanie nie jest obowiązkowa, ale	What advice did you receive? Were you able to put any of it into practice? This question is optional, but any information is very

	każda informacja jest dla mnie bardzo cenna. (Długa odpowiedź)	valuable to me. (Long answer)
Question 24	Czy chcieliby Państwo uczestniczyć w zajęciach na temat wielojęzycznego wychowania dzieci? Wybór: Tak; Nie; Może	Would you like to take part in sessions on multilingual child-rearing? Options: Yes; No; Maybe

Figure 16 Summary of Parents' Responses to the Demographic Part of the Questionnaire



Note. Figure created in Canva by author, 2024.

