

6 Telling stories multimodally: what observations of parent-child shared book-reading activities can bring to L2 kindergarten teachers' training

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1. Introduction

In teacher training curricula, books are presented as an ideal material for building and enriching young children's language (Boisseau, 2005; Canut, 2001; Canut, Bruneseaux-Gauthier, Vertalier, & Lentin, 2012; Cellier, 2015). Cellier (2015, pp. 32-34) explained that there exists a strong link between book reading, story-telling, and the acquisition of vocabulary because teachers use narratives as a prop to give context to linguistic forms and to establish repetition routines of words or syntactic structures with the pupils. Preservice kindergarten teachers are therefore encouraged to use children's books to help their pupils acquire and master language. Most textbooks also warn teachers that they should carefully choose the children's books they want to present to the class, ensuring that the text is not too complex to understand for a child of three, four, or five years old (Canut et al., 2012, pp. 51-78; Cellier, 2015, p. 32). Canut et al. (2012) addressed one missing link in this training system, which is how teachers should be trained in using books to foster their learners' language acquisition. The authors show that teachers need to anticipate lexical and contextual difficulties. Cellier (2015) added that teachers need to ensure that the children understand the words and acquire them and will be able to later recall the new lexical items. Overall, books are presented as a rich support

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material that can be used to elicit child-child and adult-child interactions, to enhance the children's language development, and to help widen their lexical repertoire (Canut, Masson, & Leroy, 2018).

Yet, the routine of reading at home with children is hardly ever mentioned. In a comparative study of book-reading activities with teachers in school and with low-income mothers at home, Dickinson, De Temple, Hirschler, and Smith (1992) showed that teachers should be aware of the social and cultural routines children may or may not be accustomed to before engaging in book-reading activities. The authors showed that the routines established at home are a prelude to the activities that teachers set up in class. However, if some pupils do not engage in Shared Book Reading (SBR) activities with a parent at home, these children are missing one piece of the puzzle. Taking into account the children's book-reading experience and observing how books are being used and how stories are being told at home in a highly multimodal and intimate situation could help teachers better adjust to children's needs in class and favor individual first and second language development.

In this chapter, I propose analyses of story-reading activities from a usage-based and first language acquisition perspective. The goal is to raise methodological questions for the professionalization of future kindergarten teachers who engage in L2 teaching with children aged three to six. This paper questions the links between the home and school environments in a context of L2 learning with beginners. The link between L1 and L2 acquisition is pertinent, as parents' practices and language use when interacting with children who do not master their mother tongue might inform the design of training programs for kindergarten teachers who teach a foreign language to pupils from three to six². The chapter is organized as follows. First, I present a review of SBR activities and the use of books during adult-child interaction at home and in class. Second, I present my analytical approach to language use and development and its application to children's linguistic and

2. In France, kindergarten teachers can teach a second language, but it is not compulsory. Lately, parents of three to six year old children have been asking for early second language teaching at kindergarten schools. Consequently, some school directors and researchers are advocating for and implementing specific programs in early second language teaching (see Cnesco, 2019, and <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/19/Hebdo22/MENE1915455N.htm>).

interactional competences: I present results from my own projects on reading at home (Beaupoil-Hourdel, 2017; Beaupoil-Hourdel, Leroy-Collombel, & Morgenstern, 2019) and propose qualitative multimodal analyses of the data to account for the participation framework and content of SBR activities. Corpus-based analyses of parent-child SBR activities at home will contribute to show how the parents in the corpus naturally and spontaneously engaged in SBR activities with their children. Third, based on my analyses, I draw some guidelines for the professionalization of preservice teachers who are trained in universities, keeping in mind that the ecology of reading books at home significantly differs from that of reading books in class.

In this chapter I aim to theorize parents' spontaneous behavior in order to provide professional guidelines for teachers in the context of story-reading activities in a second language in class with children who cannot read yet. The analyses focus on how meaning is co-constructed by the adult, the child, the story in the book, and the surrounding environment by taking into consideration all the semiotic resources that the speakers have at their disposal (vocal productions, words, actions, gestures, and facial expressions). To analyze how meaning is constructed in this context, particular attention is paid to the book itself, its written and visual contents, as well as how it is manipulated by the participants.

2. Literature review

Research in first language acquisition has shown that routines are essential for children to develop language. Routines, or *scripts* (Bruner, 1983; Schank & Abelson, 1977), offer a format and a context for a specific action to develop along with language. Thanks to the repetition of such routines, children learn to behave as co-participants in interaction and to mobilize language in specific contexts while adjusting to the unfolding action and their speech partners. Thanks to routines and embodied social practices, children learn when and how to take a turn in interaction or what lexical forms are expected in a specific context; this is how they manage, at a very early age, to take part in activities like

eating together, taking a bath, playing a board game, greetings, or telling stories and reading books (Snow & Goldfield, 1983).

Telling stories and reading books are common social practices in corpora of adult-child spontaneous interactions in families from an upper-middle-class background (as frequently evidenced in the CHILDES L1 Database). Interestingly, parents often use books with young children who cannot read. In these families, books are used for interaction and transmission of cultural knowledge about the world. Previous research has shown that routines of SBR activities (Beauvoir-Hourdel, 2017; Cameron-Faulkner & Noble, 2013; Noble, Cameron-Faulkner, & Lieven, 2018; Payne, Whitehurst, & Angell, 1994) trigger lexical development (Payne et al., 1994) and grammatical development (Cameron-Faulkner & Noble, 2013). Snow et al. (1976) and Hoff-Ginsberg (1992) have shown that language used during SBR involves a higher mean length of utterance than in spontaneous adult-child dyadic interactions, suggesting that both the parents and the child produce longer turns in the context of SBR than during spontaneous interactions. Parents' utterances are longer and grammatically richer during SBR because the stories have a different register from oral speech (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Cameron-Faulkner & Noble, 2013). Cameron-Faulkner and Noble (2013) observed a wider range of nouns and verbs and a more complex set of sentence types in SBR than in Child-Directed Speech (CDS) and oral speech in general. Their study relied on two types of books: books with pictures only and books with a written story. They expected that the first type of book would not alter the linguistic richness and complexity of the adults' utterances, but results showed that both types of books generate more complex constructions than free play CDS (Cameron-Faulkner & Noble, 2013). Therefore, books are often viewed as a form of enriched linguistic input (Cameron-Faulkner & Noble, 2013).

Other studies have shown that SBR activities help children develop narrative skills (Bamberg, 1987; Heath & Branscombe, 1986; Magee & Sutton-Smith, 1983) with the ability to adopt somebody else's perception (Leroy-Collombel, 2013; Lever & Sénéchal, 2011). They also enhance children's capacity to talk about themselves, their experiences, and others' feelings (Beauvoir-Hourdel,

2017). From a linguistic perspective, because the story in a book is not located in the here and now and does not focus on the child, SBR activities help young children develop skills for talking about displaced events and characters. Books offer a suitable context to mobilize the past, present, and future tenses as well as aspectual forms (Leroy-Collombel, 2013). SBR activities offer a favorable context for children to acquire oral language. The activity itself triggers a constant back-and-forth movement between children's daily lives and the work of fiction they are reading, but it also prompts displaced speech on the part of both parents and children. Storybooks add a new dimension to language itself since language is no longer used to carry out actions, but rather to talk about displaced events or imaginary characters (Beaupoil-Hourdel, 2017, pp. 56-57). This particular context may allow children to make sense of the world and to mobilize language to express their feelings, likes, and dislikes as well as to relate to the characters and the events encapsulated in the narrative (Beaupoil-Hourdel, 2017).

Children's books in SBR activities are multimodal objects since they make it possible for a written text to be oralized by the parent and embodied through prosody, rhythm, and added gestures or facial expressions (Beaupoil-Hourdel et al., 2019), but also because the text is usually accompanied with pictures that illustrate the narrative. The multimodal nature of books helps children build indexicality (i.e. the context-dependency of natural language), symbolization, intersubjectivity (Leroy-Collombel, 2013), and communication skills, as they learn to make sense of a text thanks to the visual cues at their disposal, be they pictures from the book or kinesic behavior used by the adult reading the story (Beaupoil-Hourdel, 2017; Beaupoil-Hourdel et al., 2019). A book is not a mere object with a text and pictures, it is "a game relevant semiotic object of a particular type" (Goodwin, 2003, p. 221) because the object is required for the activity and the interaction to develop.

In SBR activities at home, the adult takes the role of an intermediary who is the only one who can deliver the story to the child who cannot read (Frier, 2011). The adult is therefore crucial as well as the way they tell the story, modulate their voice, handle the book when reading the text, look at the child, and ensure joint attention. In this respect, when teachers read stories to pupils, they also take

the role of an intermediary, and knowing the social practices the children are exposed to at home could help develop and enrich prospective teachers' training programs.

Books do not have the same status in all households. [Bonnafé \(2011\)](#) explained that although in some families, books are available for children, in others, books are absent or for adults only. Even among families from the same socioeconomic background, the frequency of book-reading activities varies ([Beaupoil-Hourdel, 2017](#)). These studies suggest that the social role of books differs between families, even those from similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Shared book-reading activities have been studied in families of various socioeconomic status³ and in school ([Canut, 1997, 2001](#); [Canut & Gauthier, 2009](#); [Frier, 2011](#); [Vertalier, 2009](#)) and some research has compared book-reading practices and language development at home and in school ([Frier, 2011](#); [Heath, 1983](#); [Payne et al., 1994](#)). In the literature on teachers' professional acts in the context of book-reading activities, [Canut and Gauthier \(2009\)](#) provided advice to teachers on how to choose a children's book to read in class. They advocated using books (1) to which the children can easily relate as a way to prompt language production and help them understand the story, (2) with easily recognizable pictures, and (3) that meet specific learning goals that the teacher needs to establish before reading the book in class. These pieces of advice could easily be given to teachers who use books in an L2 context. [Canut \(1997\)](#) addressed the practice of telling the story of a book instead of reading the story. She mentioned that the two activities are different because the first one does not give access to the written material of the book. [Boisseau \(2005, pp. 140-141\)](#) described two types of oralization of a book: reading a story from beginning to end while sticking to the text and reading with pauses, enrichment, scaffolding, elicitations, and reformulations of the text. He explained that the first activity helps build linguistic skills in children. Teachers are advised to engage in this type of reading activity to help children distinguish between oral language and written

3. See, for example, [Dickinson et al. \(1992\)](#), [Frier \(2011\)](#), [Payne et al. \(1994\)](#), and [Heath \(1983\)](#) for studies on low-income families and [Cameron-Faulkner and Noble \(2013\)](#), [Beaupoil-Hourdel \(2017\)](#), and [Leroy-Collombel \(2013\)](#) among others for studies on families from the middle class.

language. He suggested that teachers stick to the text and use prosodic contours that mark the difference between spoken and written language. In this activity, the children are engaged in a comprehension task, and thus they are only listening to the teacher. Pictures are shown to them, but they are not commented upon. In the second reading-type activity, the book is used to foster children's language acquisition. The teacher may read the book once, twice, or more, and then the children are asked to tell the story or work on the narrative, react to the content, or make parallels with their own experience of the world. The children are active, and the book is a pretext for interaction. The pictures can be commented upon, and sometimes the story can emerge from the description of images. The text of the book is less important than the interaction the book yields. In a second language learning context with beginners and kindergarteners, the second type of oralization is mostly recommended to prospective teachers (Voise, 2018).

In parent-child interactions it seems that parents or children read a book for the story and the intimate moment that this activity creates. The two types of oralization presented by Boisseau are often intertwined in parent-child SBR activities. Indeed, the second type of reading often unexpectedly surfaces while the first type of reading activity is unfolding (Beaupoil-Hourdel et al., 2019). One major difference between school and home is the goal of the activity. In teacher-pupil interactions, reading books meets explicit goals, and the teacher chooses the book for specific reasons. In parent-child interactions, the activity is one among myriads of others and the reading of a book is only possible if both the child and the parent agree on engaging in the activity. Moreover, studies on parent-child interactions during SBR activities have shown that in this context, CDS is always within the child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978, p. 87) defined the ZPD as the difference between what a child or a learner can do alone and what they could do with the help of an expert interlocutor, like a parent or a teacher. It appears that most parents naturally and spontaneously adjust to their child's ZPD, which enables the child to learn and acquire new words and knowledge. Teachers need to propose tasks that are provided within the children's ZPD if they want the pupils to learn. In the context of L2 SBR activities, teachers need to choose a book and to use it in class while ensuring that the task is within the children's ZPD.

This review of the literature highlights the fact that children learn language in situations that include ‘joint attentional processes’ (Tomasello, 1988). Research in first language acquisition often documents adult-child dyadic interactions as one of the situations in which children acquire language, but Goffman (1974) and cross-cultural studies of children’s socialization indicate that they also learn language in multiparty interaction with other members of their community (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). These studies suggest that it is therefore interesting to look at children’s language development in varied contexts and situations such as in dyadic interactions with a parent at home and in multiparty interaction with the teacher and other pupils at school.

Research on second language training programs for kindergarten teachers has shown that children between three and six learn foreign languages through immersion in a foreign-speaking context (Voise, 2018). It has been found that in foreign-speaking or multilingual learning contexts, young children’s productions consist of exaggerated repetitions and transformation of language forms (phonetic, morphological, and syntactic features; Čekaitė & Evaldsson, 2019). The authors showed that learning a foreign language for children from three and six involved playing with languages. In this respect, instructional activities in a foreign language should be entertaining for the children and should add playful learning activities. Voise (2018) added that L2 teaching in a kindergarten context involves creating spaces for drama as both the teacher and the pupils need to enact the language verbally and nonverbally in order to build L2 linguistic competences. Research on professionalization for kindergarten and primary school teachers’ advocates for the design of programs which train students in gesture studies (Tellier, 2006, 2008; Tellier & Yerian, 2018) and multimodality (Aden, Clark, & Potapushkina-Delfosse, 2019; Soulaine, 2018) in order to teach foreign languages to beginners. Similarly, teachers’ training and professional practices could benefit from analyses of the social practices parents set up at home. Little research has been done on how parents’ practices at home may be useful for kindergarten teacher training, and to what extent they could offer new perspectives on multimodal (verbal and nonverbal) construction of linguistic, narrative, and communication skills in young children at school.

3. Data collection and analysis

In this study I analyze the interaction framework of adult-child book reading situations at home and draw implications for teacher education. I use four longitudinal corpora of two monolingual French-speaking children (Madeleine and Anaé), and two monolingual English-speaking children (Ellie and Scarlett) filmed at home⁴. The goal of this study is to draw a link between routines of L1 story-reading activities at home and L2 teaching activities at school with children under the age of six.

The children filmed in their family in interaction with their parent were video-recorded one hour a month from ten months to four years old in spontaneous and natural interaction. I use three corpora from the Paris Corpus (Morgenstern, 2009; Morgenstern & Parrisé, 2012, 2017) and one dataset collected in London by Sam Green (UCL ESRC). The French data were entirely transcribed using the CHAT format with the software CLAN (MacWhinney, 2000). The parents of the children signed a consent form and allowed us to transcribe and analyze the recordings, show them at conferences, and cite and show pictures of their interactions in academic papers. For the present study, I analyzed videos of the four children every six months. The home data is composed of 36 hours of videos, and SBR activities correspond to five hours of the overall data. In Madeleine's, Anaé's, and Scarlett's data, SBR context represents about 25% of the overall data. In Ellie's corpus the percentage is lower, with 6% of the time being devoted to reading books with a parent. Yet, Ellie and her mother engaged more often than the three other dyads in other types of activities, like cooking, that take time to develop. All the parents are educated middle-class adults. Books were present in their home environments and were available to the children. At the beginning of the data collection, the children were ten months old, they had access to board books, and the parents willingly read books to them.

This chapter falls in the field of interactional linguistics (Goodwin, 2017; Morgenstern, 2014; Morgenstern & Parrisé, 2017) and considers language as

4. The children's parents allowed us to use their real names.

a system in which all modalities of expression play a role in the construction of meaning. Goodwin, Goodwin, and Yaeger-Dror (2002) showed that to express themselves, adults and children mobilize a variety of semiotic means they can combine or use in isolation. In line with this definition, this paper proposes qualitative analyses of excerpts from the corpus to analyze the adult-child interaction framework during story-reading and story-telling activities at home. In this study, none of the children are readers, and story-telling activities were therefore incorporated as part of a complete story-reading protocol. Using a constructivist, usage-based (Tomasello, 2003) and multimodal approach, I analyzed the vocal channel (speech and vocal productions) and the visual channel (actions, gestures, and facial expressions) and how the semiotic resources are mobilized by the speakers and contribute to the narrative that is oralized. To tag the story-reading activities in the data, I used transcriptions with CLAN and a spreadsheet grid to link the productions with the context. Detailed analyses of gestural forms were done using the software ELAN (Wittenburg et al., 2006) to focus both on the forms of the visual productions and the synchronization with other modalities of expression like speech or vocalizations. Prosodic analyses were also conducted with the software PRAAT. This methodology is based on the use of four compatible analytical tools (CLAN, EXCEL, PRAAT, and ELAN), which sustain fine-grained multilayered analyses. Coding the data in only one tool like ELAN would be time-saving, but the analyses would be less detailed.

4. Findings

4.1. Reading books with a parent at home

Children acquire language in a rich context composed of words, gestures, actions, vocalizations, facial expressions, and the objects they manipulate or talk about in interaction with others. The study of book-reading activities is therefore a useful means of analyzing the development of language in young children, as books are familiar objects in the home of the four children in the data and they are also education materials for teachers. Figure 1 presents eight pictures of book-

reading activities in the home data. These pictures give a visual representation of shared book-reading activities at home.

Figure 1. Pictures of shared book-reading activities from the home data



Reading books at home first relies on choosing a book to read (Pictures b, c, and g). In the data the parents never chose a book to read without the child's approval. Before a child is two years old, the parents mostly choose a book and assess whether the child is willing to engage in the activity; after age two, children usually choose books and initiate reading activities.

Reading books at home with a parent for a child under four usually goes along with picture-pointing and picture-naming routines (Pictures d and e). Pointing gestures are frequent gestural forms in early children's language development (e.g. Bates, Camaioni, & Volterra, 1975; Goldin-Meadow & Butcher, 2003; Leroy, Mathiot, & Morgenstern, 2009; Morgenstern, Caët, & Limousin, 2016; Tomasello, Carpenter, & Liszkowski, 2007) and in book-reading situations, the parent and the child often point to the pictures of the book to name them or comment on them. Using a book sometimes creates explicit language teaching from the parent who can name the referent of the pictures the child points to or

elicit specific spoken lexical productions from the child by asking what is in the picture, as in Example 1. In this example, Anaé is two years and one month old, and she is telling a story to her mother using a book. She describes the action of several animals climbing up a hill. She turns a page but stops speaking because she does not remember the noun *mouton* (*sheep*) or does not recognize that the drawing represents a sheep. The mother helps Anaé produce the target word by pointing to the picture (Appendix 1, Line 3), drawing a parallel with the experience of the child during her last holiday (Appendix 1, l. 4), by giving information about the grammatical gender of the animal in French with the article “le” (Appendix 1, Line 7) and finally by initiating the word when she utters the phoneme <m> for *mouton* (Appendix 1, Line 10). In Appendix 1 the mother uses the book to help the child recall a specific lexical item, and in doing so she builds lexical and phonological knowledge. Gestures are often mobilized in this type of context as the participants at times mimic the characters of the story (pouting, finger-wagging gestures for rejection, etc.), use metadiscursive gestures to react to or comment on the narrative (palm-up gestures to show absence, hands on the head to convey surprise; Figure 1, Picture h), draw attention to and name pictures (pointing gestures), and define words (iconic gestures, pointing gestures to objects in the environment, etc.). Gestures help the parent and the child create meaning thanks to shared attention during book-reading activities.

The pictures in Figure 1 also show that reading books at home with a parent is an intimate moment. The bodies of the participants are very close to each other (Pictures a, d, e, f, g, and h), and the parent often touches the child’s body, with the child sitting close to the parent (Pictures e, f, g, h) or on her lap (Pictures a and d). Figure 1 thus shows that SBR at home is a highly multimodal routine in which the text of the book, the pictures, the spoken productions of the participants, their gestures, facial expressions, and vocalizations are all intertwined. These moments are not only intimate parent-child moments; they are also enjoyable moments (Pictures a and f), and they often establish implicit and explicit learning activities during which children learn new vocabulary and mobilize words and linguistic structures they already know in order to build a narrative with an adult. SBR activities are rich linguistic situations because of

the participants' engagement and because books can be viewed as social objects that trigger and sustain interactions.

4.2. Books as social objects

Reading books with a parent is a frequent and recurrent activity in the data, and it happens spontaneously. The dyads were filmed in spontaneous daily activities at home, and they were not expected to engage in any specific interactions during the sessions. Therefore, all book-reading activities that developed were spontaneously initiated by the parent, the child, or both of them. In [Appendix 2](#), Anaé is one year and four months old, and she has just taken up a book to read with her mother. At this age, Anaé cannot read, and it is her mother who usually reads stories to her. Yet, in this situation, the mother asks Anaé to tell the story herself (“Alors, tu nous racontes” / “So, tell us the story” [Appendix 2](#), Line 8). The child immediately engages in the activity ([Appendix 2](#), Line 10) and produces high-fall prosodic contours without words. At almost a year and a half, Anaé's speech is not developed enough for her to tell a story but her vocalizations with syllabic segmentation, and high-fall prosodic contours along with the handling of the book show that she has incorporated the script of the activity. She mimics her mother, and her embodied routine shows that SBR is a social practice she has been socialized in. Interestingly, the mother initiates the situation and positions Anaé as the reader or the storyteller right from the beginning, even though she knows that her child cannot tell a story from beginning to end or read. [Appendix 2](#) illustrates that reading books at home is a complex activity that mobilizes the coordination and synchronization of speech, prosody, and specific actions of manipulation of the object, but before being able to use words to create a narrative, children need to understand the whole frame of the activity itself. In this excerpt Anaé's embodied routine of shared book activities highlights that she has incorporated the actions of reading a book (opening a book, putting it in front of her, turning the pages, and closing the book) and the prosodic structure of a narrative (prominent high-fall prosodic contours). Moreover, she can coordinate her actions and her vocalization and voice a story the way her mother would do it. Yet, the context of shared book-reading activities is not

only crucial for children's language development, but also for the development of perspective and intersubjectivity.

4.2.1. *Acquiring intersubjectivity*

When they use a book, children and their parents focus on fictitious characters and their experience of the world. In adult-child data collected in the participants' homes, the center of attention and of the interaction was mostly the child. In the context of SBR activities, a shift occurred, and the characters of the story became the focus of attention. Children's books frequently address situations children experience in their everyday life, like refusing to eat, going to their grandparents', and going to nursery school. In this perspective, book-reading activities may help children learn to understand their own experience of the world through the characters in a book. The activity itself yields talk about others by using third-person pronouns and mobilizing verb endings that concord with these pronouns. They may also help children understand their own feelings by relating to the story and the characters. In this sense, reading books and relating to the characters may help develop theory of mind in young children along with affective stance and intersubjectivity (De Weck, 2005), as in Appendix 3, when Madeleine is one year and eleven months old. Her mother is reading *Le Petit Poucet* (*Hop-O'-My-Thumb*), and one picture in the book shows a crying mother of some children. Madeleine starts depicting the picture ("sa maman elle pleure", "his mother is crying"; Appendix 3, Line 1) and verbally and then physically offers her bunny to the character (Appendix 3, Lines 12 and 26). Madeleine's voice in Line 1 follows a rising intonation contour, and the mother immediately feels the need to offer an explanation to the child in Line 5. Madeleine and the mother discuss ways of comforting the character. The mother asks if she would like to give the character her bunny, and then Madeleine reuses the verb "consoler", "comfort", and repeats it three times. The mother's spoken production translates into words the affective stance Madeleine has conveyed with her actions, her gaze, the orientation of her body toward the book, and the prosody of her utterances. The mother offers linguistic scaffolding and a new word (Appendix 3, Line 20) that the child immediately takes up (Appendix 3, Line 22). In Line 26, Madeleine puts her bunny on the book and says "tiens", "there" (Appendix 3, Line 27) with

a creaky voice. Her action of offering her bunny, the bunny itself, and the use of the creaky voice show that Madeleine is relating to the character and empathizing with her. She understands that the character is crying and that she needs comfort. When Madeleine is feeling sad and wants to cry in the data, she wants her bunny; her actions in this context constitute a multimodal way of taking the character's feelings into account and adjusting to them, without putting herself as the focal participant in the interaction. Even though Madeleine's mastery of language is not complex enough for her to use words spontaneously in this situation, she identifies with the character and manages to display an affective stance toward the object in a multimodal fashion (using not only language, but gestures and modified voice quality).

4.2.2. *Multimodality during book-reading activities:
giving body and voice to the characters*

Examples 2 and 3 are instances of lexical enrichment provided by the mothers, but they also highlight that the parent or the child constantly sets a back-and-forth movement between the narrative and the child's sphere of experience. In [Appendix 4](#), Scarlett is one year and five months old, and she is reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with her mother ([Figure 2](#)).

Figure 2. Scarlett pointing to the 'Hungry Caterpillar' in the book



Figure 3. Scarlett's mother touches the child's stomach



In the narrative, the caterpillar eats too much during the day and feels sick. Scarlett knows the story; her mother often reads the book to her. In this excerpt the mother elicits the productions of “stomachache” (Line 1) with her prosody when she says “that night he had a” with a rising prosodic contour (Figure 3). Scarlett answers “stomachache” (Appendix 4, Line 3) and points to the caterpillar on the page (Appendix 4, Line 4). The combination of her spoken and gestural utterance indexes the reference (the caterpillar) and associates the sensation of stomachache to the drawing of the caterpillar feeling sick on the page. The mother gives positive feedback to her daughter by repeating the noun “stomachache” (Appendix 4, Line 5), touching Scarlett’s stomach, and adding “his tummy hurt his tummy was owie” (Appendix 4, Line 5). In doing so, she enriches the child’s spoken production and the narrative itself. The text of the narrative in the book stops after “that night he had a stomachache”. The mother’s multimodal explanation enriches both the narrative and the interaction. Her utterance builds upon Scarlett’s pointing gesture synchronized with the word “stomachache” (Appendix 4, Lines 3 and 4) as she nonverbally explains to the child where the locus of the pain is, using the child’s body when she touches Scarlett’s stomach while explaining that the caterpillar had a sore stomach. The rubbing of the child’s stomach and the use of a lexicon the child knows for pain

(“hurt”, “owie” [Appendix 4](#), Line 5) not only contribute to the meaning but also explicitly add logical order to the events of the story: the mother makes the parallel between eating too much food and having a stomachache explicit. The mother’s gaze also goes from the book to the child, illustrating that she is no longer reading and that she is redefining the focus of the story. At that moment, the mother puts Scarlett at the center of the interaction.

The child and the mother are taking part in a co-operative activity and building on each other’s utterances and actions to tell the story of the caterpillar. They are engaged in co-operative semiosis in which they both build actions and utterances using the other’s previous multimodal utterances to tell the story of the caterpillar ([Goodwin, 2017](#)). The shift of focus carried out by the mother, the enrichment of the narrative, and the routine of mapping the sensation onto the child’s body are ways for the mother to give bodily form and substance to the narrative and to contextualize the narrative in order to help the child understand the story. The mother’s scaffolding, contextualization, and recontextualization routine is apparently effective, since Scarlett easily retrieves the word stomachache at the beginning of the excerpt. Thanks to this routine, she mobilizes several modalities to say that the caterpillar had a stomachache. In the data, children under four usually describe what they see in pictures, and their mothers often verbalize what the characters’ feelings and sensations are.

Embodying characters during story-reading activities is quite frequent in the data ([Figure 4](#), below). In [Appendix 5](#), Ellie is three years old and is reading *The Cat That Went Woof* with her mother. In the narrative, Patch is a puppy who is always cheerful and shows happiness by wagging his tail, and Tiger is a cat who is sad because she is no longer the only pet in the house.

In [Appendix 5](#), anytime Ellie or the mother says “wagged his tail” Ellie moves her body as if she were the dog and smiles broadly. During this session, Ellie asks her mother to read the same book over and over, and either she incarnates the characters herself with her body to mimic the movements of the dog and the cat or she and her mother play with a toy dog and a toy cat to illustrate the narrative. The repeated reading and acting out of the same book and the playful routine of

embodying the narrative with their body or with toys is a way for children to learn new vocabulary and syntactic structures and to develop the use of past tense and intersubjective and affective stance along with narrative skills. As a result of this repetitive routine, Ellie can almost tell the story herself, and she accompanies her mother in the process. This example illustrates Ellie’s use of several parts of speech needed for the development of a narrative: she uses third-person pronouns (“she” [Appendix 5, Line 19] and “it” [Appendix 5, Line 21]), possessives (“his” [Appendix 5, Lines 8 and 13], “her” [Appendix 5, Line 25]), and preterit forms by adding -ed endings to lexical verbs (“barked” [Appendix 5, Line 3] and “wagged” [Appendix 5, Line 8 and Appendix 5, Line 13]), and she also uses the infinitive form with the verb “bark” (Appendix 5, Line 23) and the modal form “would” (Appendix 5, Line 25). She also uses a be+ing aspect when she says, “it’s not having a fuss” (Appendix 5, Line 21). Ellie knows the narrative and she is able to tell parts of the story and explain to her mother why the cat is not happy. The activity encourages the child to use various words and grammatical structures as she and her mother explore the logic and causality of the story.

Figure 4. The mother enacts the story with toys



In Appendix 5 we observe that the mother’s utterances serve different interactional functions: She reads the story (Appendix 5, Lines 1, 7, 22, and 24), illustrates

meaning concretely by manipulating various toys (Appendix 5, Lines 4 and 10) and questions Ellie (Appendix 5, Line 15 to 22).

In the sequences presented, what makes the activity crucial for language acquisition is the agency of the children, who are not passively listening to the story. The children are linguistically – and even physically – active and with the mothers, they participate in the construction of the interaction framework. The role of the mother is crucial, as she visually checks that the child understands the story, enriches the narrative, defines words, and engages the child during the activity through multimodal elicitations. This analysis of at-home SBR illustrates that reading books and telling stories is a complex activity with a high level of engagement and shared attention by both participants. In our corpus, the children have all been socialized in reading books with a parent and in linguistically and physically engaging in the activity.

5. Some perspectives for professional language training

The analyses of the data show that interactions are crucial for children to acquire their mother tongue. Interactions develop thanks to linguistic and nonlinguistic features, and speakers use all the semiotic means at their disposal to communicate. This paper shows that the key feature that seems to sustain language acquisition and development in young children is the fact that they learn to express themselves in interaction with a competent other speaker. The role of the parent may shift from that of a co-participant in the interaction to an expert speaker who can repeat, explain, or define lexical or verbal items, contextualize meaning, and provide lexical, verbal, phonological, or morphological feedback to the child. As such, the role of the parent in the context of L1 acquisition may, to some extent, resemble that of a teacher. My claim is that knowing how a child acquires his or her mother tongue could inform and enrich kindergarten teachers' professional practice, especially when they engage in L2 teaching. Based on the analyses of the home data, this section will present some perspectives for professional language training for prospective kindergarten teachers on both theoretical and applied levels.

5.1. Theoretical training: training program in conversation, CDS, and multimodality

Interacting with others in one's mother tongue or in a foreign language is a competence that students need to be trained in (Manoïlov, 2017, 2019). Manoïlov and Oursel (2019) advocated for the design of training programs prompting the development of L2 interactional skills at the university level. They explained that L2 learners need to be taught interaction skills to acquire a new language and to be able to speak the language. Yet, to train students, trainers need to be trained beforehand. Although the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) mentions that students should be able to interact with each other or with native speakers of their L2, L2 training programs in universities provide little knowledge and competences to trainers regarding interaction (Manoïlov & Oursel, 2019). The previous analyses of the home data show that children acquire language in interaction because their co-speaker provides scaffolding on various linguistic and nonlinguistic features. Training programs in higher education could therefore incorporate theoretical training regarding the notion of interaction and feedback and the factors that contribute to an interaction between speakers. For kindergarten preservice teachers, in particular, theoretical training in interaction, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, interaction analysis, CDS, and didactics of second/foreign languages and cultures could therefore enrich existing programs in higher education.

In the examples analyzed, the multimodal and plurisemiotic nature of language is also striking; adult-child interaction develops and is secured thanks to the constant efforts each speaker displays in order to make herself understood and to understand the other. For preservice teachers, developing explicit multimodal teaching practices could probably enhance their pupils' comprehension and learning in a foreign language. Peng (2019) showed that L2 teachers who exploit the potential of multimodal pedagogies promote students' motivation and willingness to participate in class. Tellier and Yerian (2018) suggested that prospective teachers be trained in gesture studies and the multimodal nature of language as part of their professional training. Learning to analyze video data of various types of human interaction ranging from home data with adult-child

dyadic interactions to teacher-student interactions in class would probably help teachers develop a set of L2 pedagogic gestures.

There exist numerous typologies of gestures, but one goal of a research-based training design for kindergarten teachers in multimodality could consist in showing that gestures can be used in isolation or in coordination with speech and can perform a wide range of sociopragmatic functions. Teachers could be trained in using iconic gestures to make meaning or to visually represent an object and in using deictic gestures to locate objects in the environment, and they could be provided with guidance in the development of their own pedagogical gestural system to promote learning. In the context of L2 interaction, some gestures can take up a metadiscursive function and be used to comment on the linguistic aspects of a spoken utterance (Debras et al., 2020). Teachers could therefore be trained in using specific gestures to help their pupils with syntactic word order and phonological realization of words in an L2 learning context. They could for instance use a fixed and exaggerated set of gestures like the extension of the forefinger and the thumb in opposite directions to visually represent variations in vowel lengths or the use of beats to help students with the realization of stress patterns. Prosodic features at the sentence level could be performed visually with ample arm movements. Teachers are trained in breaking notions down for their pupils to understand, which helps them learn new knowledge and skills. Similarly, they could learn to identify the role and impact of their gestures when they teach a foreign language. They could learn to assess in what context they should better use words alone, words in combination with iconic gestures or embodied cognition, or when they should dissociate the use of iconic gestures and pedagogic gestures and use the spoken modality alone. The complementary nature of speech and gestures in interaction does exist, but speakers sometimes fail in mobilizing several modalities when expressing themselves (Throop & Duranti, 2015) and in professional settings, teachers should be trained in reflecting upon their use of semiosis when they are teaching. A gesture can be performed on the head or the hands, but also on the face, the shoulders, the arms, and the whole body, and higher education programs should include the training of teachers in using multimodality to promote learning and help their pupils develop language and communication skills.

5.2. From theory to practice: a multidisciplinary approach to language teaching and the role of context

The selection of examples presented in this chapter shows that before children can utter words and produce narratives using a book or toys, they are exposed to language. The input they get is linguistically rich and adapted to their level of understanding. The parents stay in the children's ZPD, and they do not expect their children to communicate with words at all times. Parents' postures may inform future L2 kindergarten teachers and encourage them to create opportunities for their pupils to listen to an L2 before being expected to produce words and short sentences. In this perspective, L2 kindergarten teachers could be trained in designing learning activities mostly based on comprehension skills and less on production skills.

In the home data, the role of the parent changed depending on the discourse context. Sometimes the parents provided linguistic feedback and corrected the children's previous oral production; sometimes they did not interfere. The parents did correct some mistakes and rephrase some utterances, but they seemed to favor the development of communication skills over linguistic correctness. Similarly, the role of the teacher as an expert in the language taught should also be addressed: Example 2 shows that before being able to tell a story with words, Anaé learned to tell a story with vocalizations. Before uttering their first words, babies learn to recognize and produce the prosodic contours or melody of their mother tongue (Martel & Dodane, 2012). In a school environment with children under six, having the pupils play with prosodic contours and more generally with phonological realization of the foreign language should be presented to prospective L2 teachers as part of the learning processes of a foreign language. Several researchers in early second language acquisition have advocated for teaching languages during music sessions in class because language and music share common features (Dodane, 2002; Voise, 2018). Dodane (2002) claimed that music could help train learners' vocalic and prosodic system for uttering words in a foreign language. Llorca (1992) explained that dancing and drama help incorporate prosodic contours. The role of repetition is also crucial in the process of learning languages (Examples 1, 2, 4, and 5), and Voise (2018)

recommended that future kindergarten teachers be trained in teaching songs in a foreign language to enhance the acquisition of an L2 prosodic system in pupils. Therefore, professional language training should probably be built in coherence with professional music training in higher education. More generally, transversal courses could be implemented to train future teachers in multidisciplinary and soft skills.

The adult-child interactions in the examples analyzed previously developed in a specific context, and the meaning of each verbal, nonverbal, or multimodal utterance could be retrieved thanks to the discourse context in which it was produced. In the examples, all mothers drew an explicit parallel between the story and the child's life. These parents constantly contextualized, decontextualized, and recontextualized the situations depicted in the books to help their children understand the narrative and to make the depicted events meaningful to them (Example 4). Because the children related to the characters and their experiences, they were engaged and interested in the stories. The focus on story-reading activities illustrates that parents provide rich linguistic input that goes beyond the text written in the book.

In a school environment, learning contexts matter; contextualizing interactions in meaningful situations for the children appears to be a prerequisite for language development. Teachers can also be trained in designing learning situations that go beyond the material of a book with the use of games as learning practice in class. [Figure 5](#) shows a kindergarten teacher in class. She is French and is teaching English to her pupils aged four and five⁵. She is telling the story of *the three little pigs* to her class. The teacher used a book to introduce the story earlier during the year. In the following lesson, the teacher decided to use flashcards for the three little pigs and their houses and a puppet for the wolf ([Figure 5](#)). She fully embodies the narrative, uses drama, and changes her voice to catch the children's attention. In the sequence, all children are engaged in the narrative and

5. This sequence comes from a classroom dataset collected as part of the IMAAJEE Project (Beaupoil-Hourdel, 2019), whose goal is to investigate the role of embodied cognition in second-language-learning kindergartners in France. The IMAAJEE corpus is still being collected and is currently composed of 17 hours of video data showing an experienced teacher teaching English to 27 pupils and seven preservice teachers who have accepted as part of their training education to take turns and teach English to the pupils one morning a week over a period of five weeks.

contribute to the story with words and embodiment. The teacher tells the same story as the one written in the book, but she recontextualizes it differently, as she uses flashcards and a puppet to tell the story. After this session, the children were allowed to play with the puppet. Some of them used English and a hoarse voice and others gibbered in a husky voice. Playing with the material used during L2 teaching lessons could be presented in language teachers' training programs as a way to develop learning in doing. Contextualization, decontextualization, and recontextualization are processes for language learning. Knowing that, implementing a fully integrated multidisciplinary approach to L2 kindergarten teachers' training programs would probably help preservice teachers develop professional skills in L2 teaching.

Figure 5. The teacher telling the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'



6. Conclusion and directions

The present chapter presents analyses of at-home adult-child interactions during shared book-reading activities. The qualitative analyses of the data show that children learn their native language in interaction. More specifically, the analyses document the rich array of multimodal strategies used by the mothers to illustrate meaning, check comprehension, and elicit prior knowledge of the

story being read and words previously used. In this context of shared attention and mutual engagement, children sometimes acquire new words and often use words and linguistic structures they already know in a new context. The role of the parent as a rich linguistic input provider is crucial. Knowledge of language development in adult-child interactions when children are not yet proficient speakers in their native language could thus inform training designs for preservice L2 kindergarten teachers in France, within the umbrella of the 21st century.

In an applied perspective, the analyses proposed in this chapter have implications for the training of future kindergarten teachers in order to ensure that they establish learning situations that favor language and individual development in young children. During SBR activities, children learn to talk about fictitious events and characters as well as displaced events. Parents linguistically enrich their children's productions by providing multimodal feedback. In this context, both CDS and the text of the book contribute to create a discourse context with enriched syntactic, lexical, and phonological content. The parents provide lexical and phonological input, syntactic repairs, and feedback. The parents' practices may thus inspire teachers' practices – the chapter thereby proposes guidelines for the design of training programs for preservice L2 kindergarten teachers on both theoretical and applied levels.

Higher education programs should develop courses and training on the notion of interaction in order to teach a second language to young children. Indeed, L2 kindergarten teachers need to take into account young children's communication skills as well as their mastery of their L1 in order to provide structured teaching adjusted for the linguistic, cognitive, and interactional developmental of children between three and six.

Prospective teachers could be trained in the use of multimodality in L2 teaching so as to promote L2 understanding and learning. Young children learn their native language in a holistic fashion, using all the semiotic resources they have at their disposal. Programs in higher education could thus be aligned with this natural language process that is at work in L1 acquisition. Courses on gestural

modality and on how gestures contribute to meaning-making in interaction could be implemented.

This study also invites reconsideration of what learning a language means for beginners. L2 teaching should be contextualized, relying on activities that make sense to pupils. Moreover, learning a new language for young children raises the question of how this learning should be assessed, since comprehension activities should prevail over production activities. The home data may have implications for pedagogy in the sense that the analysis shows that before being able to speak a language, learners need to play with the language itself. Playing with words, prosodic patterns, and the sound of some phonemes is part of the language learning process – and should be implemented in L2 training programs in higher education. More and more researchers have advocated for multidisciplinary training designs in higher education to help L2 teachers thrive in school environments. Research in prosody has claimed that building L2 learning activities into music or drama sessions might help pupils acquire the prosodic structure of some sentences and enter into a new foreign language.

While the chapter highlights the crucial role of the parent or the teacher in the data when it comes to sparking language learning in young children, it also shows that multimodality is a medium for children to index meaning and express themselves. Training programs in pedagogy should therefore focus on the intricate relationship between interaction and multimodality in L2 teaching activities. My general objective in this chapter was to show that research in first language acquisition should not be completely separated from the field of second language acquisition. Detailed qualitative analyses of spontaneous adult-child interactions at home may be valuable for the design of training programs in higher education for preservice teachers.

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8. Supplementary materials

<https://research-publishing.box.com/s/y1zepryvsvoai1vzeduadvazyx3u24gi>

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