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Superdiverse and multilingual, but still languageless: How unconscious and unintended raciolinguistic attitudes in school-based parent cafés can co-promote exclusion

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Abstract

It is widely emphasized that there are existing gaps between parents who understand themselves as residents and parents who are positioned as immigrants or even 'perpetual foreigners'. This qualitative study illustrates how unconscious and unintended raciolinguistic attitudes position some groups of parents and keep them excluded despite the programmatic idea of school-based parent cafés, legitimized by governmental strategies of better inclusion. The theories of raciolinguicism and monolingual habitus are further explored to understand intertwined mechanisms of creating groups. The analysis was planned and carried out using the Grounded Theory based on interviews. As the main findings, it is argued that German is understood as the language that leaves parents with another first language languageless with no or just limited communication skills. In certain school-related contexts, the monolingual habitus of German can be replaced by another dominant language. The study also showcases the phenomenon of (self)othering that can occur unintendedly in parent cafés.

Keywords: school parent cafés, raciolinguicism, monolingual habitus, migrant parents, perpetual foreigners

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Introduction

Migrants become more diverse, even superdiverse, i.e., the reasons for migration, legal and social status of immigrants, their languages, beliefs, and religions vary substantially. At the same time, societies with immigrant influx also (have) become super-diverse regarding these factors (Vertovec, 2024). National governments of the receiving societies apply strategies and instruments to manage this development. This is especially relevant for education, both for adults and for children. One of these instruments is called the *school-based parent café*. The intention and program of parent cafés aim at integrating diverse populations (Medvedev, 2020). Parent cafés are a well-established part of adult education, educational authorities usually fund them, and they offer informal opening hours (Medvedev, in press). In our case, a public adult education training institution regularly offers courses for parents to become 'mentors'. These mentors are the parents who start parent cafés in their children's schools and run them. In the opening hours, trained mentors typically offer counselling on the educational system and learning opportunities for children in the neighbourhood. The visitors are less experienced parents, new to the school or neighbourhood, or those searching to become mentors themselves. Mentors in the cafés also offer learning opportunities for adults, e.g., on cooking international cuisines. Some use festive days for intercultural activities, and others offer trips to places of interest in the cities (Medvedev, in press). Many countries have similar family learning[1] programs and consider them part of the Adult Basic Education system (Desjardins, 2017).

However, a well-organized program and good intentions regarding the acknowledgement of a superdiverse society do not always end up in normalizing this urban superdiversity. Scholars point to long-lasting gaps between groups who understand themselves as residents and groups who are positioned as immigrants. This process builds on collective *racial knowledge* (Terkessidis, 1998). Several factors play a role in this process. Denying a legal status with formal rights (to work and vote) keeps immigrants at the margins of societies as well as out of (adult) education (Heinemann, 2014). On the other hand, education reproduces power relations, e.g., by reproducing racism (Doğmuş et al., 2022) and a monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 1994). This often happens without full intention (El-Mafaalani, 2021). Racialisation and linguicism (Heinemann & Dirim, 2016) intersect substantially in the educational sector because, since the establishment of nation-states, one dominant language has been considered constitutional for a state (Gogolin, 1994). The establishment of this language takes place via the educational system (Gogolin, 1994) and is reproduced in integration courses for adults (Heinemann & Sarabi, 2020). Overall, linguistic practices as well as racialization play a fundamental role in keeping immigrants in a status of *perpetual foreigners* (Wu, 2023), even though government activities (like the establishment of school-based parent cafés) try to invest in better integration. Therefore, this article focuses on how raciolinguistic attitudes can be expressed, also with no intention. The basis for the analysis is interviews with parents, teachers, and social pedagogues who run school-based parent cafes, conducted in 2023 in Hamburg.

The paper starts with a theoretical lens regarding linguistic diversity within the larger framework of Bourdieu's theory of habitus. Building on this, a short literature review reveals that parent cafés reproduce power relations in many ways. The research question narrows the focus to school-based parent cafés. For the main study, a qualitative empirical approach with an open-ended methodological approach was chosen, based on Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 2010), including coding procedures (Strauss and Corbin 1996). 18 qualitative interviews form the basis for an

inductive grounded theory-based analysis. Some GTM-generated codes that did not match the initial research question, but seemed relevant, have not yet been published. The authors discussed these codes and searched for theory. Especially the raciolingiustic theory helped understand the ambiguity, sharpen the research question, and identify new semantic connections in the prior collected material. Findings are presented in three main categories: German as a metaphor of human language, Alternative linguae francae, and Racolinguistic deprofiling. The discussion suggests that migrants are kept perpetual foreign because monolingualism dominates the discourse.

Theoretical approaches: From monolingual habitus to linguicism and raciolinguicism

Pioneering theories on language and education, especially Gogolin (1994) have built on Pierre Bourdieu's approach to explaining how Language contributes to the reproduction of power (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu shows how languages, as well as types of speech, distinguish between social classes, and how the formality of writing stabilizes these power relations. In the mid-nineties, in a very early phase of educational research on migration in Germany, Gogolin (1994) connected the concept of habitus to language diversity and immigration. Gogolin's research with schoolteachers shows that teachers do not know about the nation-building process and understand German as the only relevant language within and above education. This process of forgetting the historical development and the process of playing out power relations without reflected intentions to do so are core characteristics of what Bourdieu calls habitus (Wittpoth, 2004). Gogolin thus summarizes her findings in the term of a monolingual habitus of teachers and in schools. Today, as the term *habitus* has become common in educational research, the concept of a monolingual habitus is easy to understand and apply. But re-reading Gogolin's monograph calls to mind that migration was seen as a minority issue in the educational discussion, marginalized as something only necessary during a temporary *migration crisis* (Gogolin 1994), which would not need any attention *after the so-called crisis* in the 1990s anymore. It is an unfinished process towards understanding Germany as an immigration country, to see migration and linguistic diversity as an ongoing process, and to build substantial capacities for educational and interdisciplinary migration research. Nevertheless, some seemingly long-discussed issues are being (re-)discovered by groups pleading for a conservative or even right-wing societal turn. Linguistic concepts, often also built on Bourdieu's theory, inspire this research in many ways (Piller, 2016). A more recent discourse now interferes with the discussion of linguistic diversity. The early discourse on *racial knowledge* (Terkessidis, 1998), personal and structural violence, and racism (Hall, 2008) was modified and broadened, e.g., as *unintentional racism* (El-Mafaalani, 2021).

Post-colonial theories intertwine with linguistic and educational theories in many ways (Akbaba & Heinemann, 2023; Dusi & Addi-Raccah, 2025). These theories inserted the term *othering* (Said, 1978) into the educational discourse. For this article, othering is understood as a process of constructing an autochthonous group as normal and that of discriminating populations that do not match the criteria of normality as others. The concept is also applied to populations within countries (Jansson, 2017) as well as to between-country othering processes on a global scale (Grotlüschen & Buddeberg, 2020). Moreover, the othering process also occurs as *self-othering* (Medvedev, in press).

Within this discussion, early notions of linguicism (Heinemann & Dirim, 2016) as language-based racism were reconsidered (Akbaba, 2024). Linguicism discriminates against languages by understanding some as more prestigious and others as less so. The authors of this paper also understand the non-acceptance of grammatically or phonetically imperfect use of language in everyday communication as discrimination. Furthermore, research shows that teachers do not accept (playful) multilingual mixtures of dialect and informal registers within a school that they understand monolingually. Thus, language receives full validation when it is used without accent and dialect, and any mistakes in grammar and spelling (Akbaba, 2024).

This relates to international discourses on raciolinguicism, that resonate with educational research and point to the racism that lies within linguicism: Flores and Rosa (2015, 2023) as well as Rosa and Flores (2017, 2020) build on research regarding education, employment, legal representation, asylum, citizenship, and migration and conclude based on their review: 'Linguistic classifications and procedures can exclude racialized populations from access to opportunities and resources' (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 630)

The raciolinguistic perspective (Rosa & Flores, 2020) is considered in this paper as a precise instrument to figure out how racisms play out and how this reproduces a status as languageless foreigners, even when government programs come with the best intentions. Rosa and Flores' approach points to ambiguities in structures and practices: 'While on one level this framing of the issue celebrates multiculturalism and multilingualism, on another level it is premised on modifying the behaviors of racialized populations in ways that obscure how white supremacy structures these populations' experiences and societal positionalities' (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 149f).

As our research builds on infrastructure that according to its programming has been established to foster a better representation of all parents in schools through parent cafés, this approach allows a deeper understanding and questioning 'how structures of privilege and power are reproduced or disrupted through such programming' (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 640).

One of the mechanisms that keeps people in a minority position is understood as ascribing a form of *languagelessness* (Rosa, 2019) that discriminates against every other language than the monolingually dominant one as irrelevant and as non-language. For this article, we use the approach of a monolingual habitus as the broadest and most influential concept. We also use the categories of (self)othering and raciolinguicism as a frame for a deeper analysis of the language-related categories derived from the main study (Medvedev, in press) that dealt with the question how does the practice of the school parent cafés address the anticipated superdiversity of the target groups and the perceived diversity of the participants, and what decisions does this entail. The additional in-depth study can be presented in and through the following three main categories: German as a metaphor for human language, Languages of 'major minorities' as alternative linguae francae, and Raciolinguistic deprofiling.

Literature review: Parent cafés between empowerment and marginalization

Parenting is seen as part of lifelong and lifewide learning (Aarsand, 2014). Many adult education centers offer parent or family education (Mallows, 2008). In adult education, 'cafés' are a metaphor for learning opportunities that do not require formal enrolment (regarding the characteristics of a café: Medvedev, 2013). Adult learning and education

thus can take place in learning cafés, parent cafés or school-based parent cafés. The themes vary:

- Learning cafés may offer language learning opportunities for test-takers or offer a variety of themes within adult basic education (Grotlüschen, 2025)
- Parent cafés can focus more on parenting, e.g., regarding the changing roles of parents (Faircloth, 2023) or the shift of responsibility between state and the individual (Oelkers, 2012) but also address school-related themes (Hackstein et al., 2023)
- School-based parent cafés aim at school-parent co-operation and offer recreational and social activities (Medvedev, 2020)

Learning café settings that can also address parents are normally located in and run by non-school institutions. In this way, school-based parent cafés are a very specific example of an adult-learning format placed in a school context. Some empirical studies that build on school-based parent cafés are presented in this literature review.
Parent cafés provide opportunities to talk and ask for advice, but also offer cooking, sports, or sewing events (Hackstein et al., 2023). The cafés serve as centres for information, e.g., on institutions for children and youth in the area. The parents who organize the cafes have a multiplier and communicator function in their communities and back into the schools (Hackstein et al., 2023; see also Medvedev, 2020). However, cafes report that few parents regularly participate (Hackstein et al., 2023). It can be assumed that they form an in-group of multipliers who try to keep the café open for the neighbourhood. Parents and parent cafés are also seen as a facilitating structure for inclusive education (Schuppener et al., 2023).

As part of a compilation on power relations regarding the cooperation of parents and schools, Dean (2021) claims that schools label some parents as difficult to reach, but that these parents feel empowered and reinforced in school-based parent cafés. On the other hand, Dean shows how formal parent boards are dominated by privileged parents so that both parent groups find themselves in a competitive relationship with each other. The negotiations between these groups reveal unequal power relations with deprivileged parent groups experiencing racism and classism (Dean 2021, similar findings: Medvedev, 2020). This is not a singular experience, as racism in German schools has been discussed for quite a while (Doğmuş et al., 2022).

Overall, this literature suggests that school-based parent cafés are organized to empower and integrate (linguistically) diverse families. The qualitative studies we find also show convincingly, that racism, classism, and overall power relations have already been indicated within school and parent co-operation. Theories of power reproduction, monolingual habitus, linguicism, and raciolinguistics argue that existing power relations are (subtly) stabilized even though government programs are installed to overcome them. This leads to the research question of how possible unconscious and unintended raciolinguistic attitudes in school-based parent cafés co-promote exclusion.

Methods and data

Alexei Medvedev has been working as a practitioner for over 10 years and, therefore, is well-established within this infrastructure. At the same time, Author 1 belongs to a university research group led by Anke Grotlüschen. This double positioning requires a high reflection of the researcher's role regarding possible biases and prior knowledge

constraints derived from being a practitioner in the field for a long time. Before the data collection started, ethical clearance was obtained from the school authority. The faculty's doctoral committee approved the research design. Besides, the coding process and the analysis steps were discussed and validated by a research colloquium of a postgraduate school of the same faculty.

Data were collected via a large infrastructure of school-based parent cafés (hereafter: SPC) in Hamburg. At that point, 50 schools took part in the Schulmentoren project, 40 of which were active in parent education. 64% of these schools (n=32) have or have had a parent café, 10% of other schools (n=5) state that they are planning one. This means that 74% of all schools (n=37) have dealt with the topic of parent cafés.

All the schools participating in the Schulmentoren project were reached out to, 18 of them gave a positive response. So, the full sample consists of 18 interviews with 47 participants (45 female, 2 male). The teams responsible for the parent cafés - school staff members (teachers or social pedagogues) and volunteer parent mentors - were interviewed using problem-centred interviews (PCI). 17 interviews took place in person between September and November 2023 in Hamburg in schools and in one case in an out-of-school venue. The language of the interviews was German. The linguistic and functional composition of the interviewees was as follows: 21 interviewees spoke German as their first language, 26 as a second language. 25 parents in their function as parent mentors and 22 school staff members (teachers and social pedagogues) were interviewed. For the moment of the study, all the interviewees were involved in the management of their school's parent café.

All interviews have been recorded, auto-transcribed, manually revised, anonymized, and approved by all the participants. The analysis was planned and carried out using the Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). The qualitative interview protocol was developed in an open mode to allow for inductive analyses.

The main part of the study was submitted for publication (Medvedev, in press). Within the full coding and publication process, it became obvious that there are many more relevant aspects of racism, stereotypes, and linguistic exclusion left out of the coverage of the main study. These aspects were fully coded, but because they did not belong to the initial research question, they were put aside for a new in-depth analysis that is presented in this article. This analysis builds on the theories of racism and linguicism (see above). The initial codes 'Othering', 'Self-othering', 'Programmatic', 'Challenging participants', 'Linguistic practices', 'Supposed knowledge about non-participants', and 'Perceived heterogeneity' were elaborated anew. New semantic connections were identified.

Findings: How the status of being forever foreign is produced

The most important findings of this study can be summarised in three thematic blocks: German as a metaphor for human language, Languages of 'major minorities' as alternative linguae francae, and Raciolinguistic deprofiling.

German as a metaphor for human language

Several recurring patterns in the interviews reveal presumably unconscious and unintended monolingual habitual attitudes. The concept of 'a language' is consistently equated with the idea of speaking 'the German language'. By saying someone is not speaking 'the language' the interviewees probably do not mean the parents would not

have any command of any language. However, by perpetuating it, the German language is repeatedly considered the only relevant language (which mirrors a monolingual habitus). The interviewees (interviews#1, 8, 9, 14) seem to forget about the multilingualism of the parents, sometimes their command of different script systems like Arabic and Cyrillic, their efforts to manage their children's language skills. German becomes a metaphor of 'the language'. If parents do not speak (enough) German, any other language competence is made invisible. This happens because in the interviews on a symbolic and metaphorical level, German, as one of the languages spoken today is made into the human language per se: In the statements, the assessment of the parents' (supposed) German competence(s) becomes a judgment on the (in)ability or partial ability of human speech par excellence. This can be observed in many interview passages (see below). A post-colonial interpretation of this finding refers to what Rosa and Flores (2017) call 'longstanding racialized ideologies of languagelessness' (p. 624).

Three levels of this subjective-symbolic languagelessness can be distinguished. The most radical level implies that parents who do not speak or understand German, alias 'the language', would be rather languageless than multilingual, because other languages than German are made invisible, as this quote of a parent volunteer expresses: 'It doesn't matter that the language is not there. Nevertheless, they [parents who don't speak German] can do something for the school and for the pupils. And I think that's something very important' (interview#9, items[2] 13, 17, 26, 61-64, see also interview#1, item 16 interview#8, item 37; interview#14, item, 35).

Although the second level of languagelessness acknowledges that the parents speak some German, i.e. 'the language', it emphasizes language deficits that take the form of 'some', 'many', 'several', 'relatively high' 'linguistic barriers' (interview#1, item 16; interview#6, item 59; interview#12, item 23), 'comprehension barriers' (interview#14, item 54) 'perhaps language difficulties' (interview#17, item 13), 'language problems' (interview#17, item 32) and would therefore possibly impair communication in the SPC:

> If we know that someone is coming who is not so proficient in the language, that we can have someone come in to translate and all sorts of things, because that's just...many people don't know that the parents come to school and are integrated. (interview#15, item 21)

If parents 'with language barriers' dare to speak German, i.e. 'the language', at school, there was a risk that their language skills would be 'judged' (interview#12, item 43) by other parents or that they even might be 'laughed at' (interview#6, item 59).

The third level of linguistic de-recognition qualifies strongly developed German competence(s) of parents with a first language other than German rather as an exceptional situation, which only conceals the deficient view: 'We offered German courses. I remember, for example, that in those eight years, the mothers, who have a migrant background but still speak German very well, taught German to each other. What a great thing!' (interview#5, item 50). As a significant contrast, a quote from another interview can be cited here, which also attests that language deficits of parents with German as their first language are the exception rather than the rule: '[...] I even have German parents that I care of who are illiterate, who can't read the marks at all but would never say so. And then of course they are afraid' (interview#1, item 44).

Even if the programmatic of the individual SPCs sounds positive at first glance, for example by announcing a notion to create 'a broad linguistic base' (interview #1, item 35) or 'to develop something in the field of language' (interview #14, item 50), such a

positive agenda can also contain exclusionary traces that shape a biased view of the target groups and later the participants: ‘We don't just provide linguistic support, even if you can also speak the language but need support from a mum or dad, then we are also responsible for that’ (interview #8, item 20, see also interview#1, item 16; interview#17, item 13).

The thesis of the monolingual habitus of the German school is confirmed several times in the interviews, in that a dichotomous structure of German vs. other languages is repeatedly evident, which is well expressed in this quote, for example:

> Well, we speak German in the group. But we have a few options, and it has also happened that parents who have found each other have then spoken something in their language. It was also the case that (...) that didn't bother them. It was kind of like, well, if one of them didn't understand something, the other mum would tell them. So, it was quite pleasant so far. (interview#12, item 40, see also interview#1, item 35; interview#6, item 60; interview#8, item 11; interview#18, item 26)

This pattern is typical and repeated often. It shows that the interviewees stick to German. They see multilingual practices as an auxiliary construct of the parents and accept it. However, the interviewees aim to communicate monolingually.

Another interview provides concrete compensatory approaches that, on the one hand, contribute directly to language support for parents, but at the same time emphasize the language deficits of German learners who still speak ‘*broken German’* and anchor the status of German in its educational language variant even more firmly as a normative (language) education goal: ‘Yes, in the German language, there is plenty of proverbs and all these images and metaphors. And if you can just drop something like that, as someone who is a German learner, it's perceived very differently’ (interview#6, item 22). The preservation of the monolingual habitus is not only justified by the intention to promote language, as shown above with the example of proverbs but is also problematized as a resource issue: ‘[...] multilingual design. It is simply enormously time-consuming, especially when we have to make every single invitation’ (interview#6, item 61). Nevertheless, it would be presumptuous to claim that the monolingual habitus concerning German remains constant or solely dominant in the SPC.

Languages of ‘major minorities’ as alternative linguae francae

The image of the dichotomous positioning of German as the hegemonic language in the school system vs. other languages described above requires two additions in the context of the study conducted.

Firstly, this positioning does not reveal neither language hierarchies nor language competition relating to the languages as a whole in the interviews[3]. For example, English or other languages of the global North don’t dominate and are not valued differently from the languages of origin of the largest parent communities. The interviews tend to show that because of gentrification and the increasing superdiversity in the neighbourhoods, new individual parents or parent groups with additional languages are being added that were not previously represented in the SPC, even though these languages may belong to the global players:

> I don't know why other immigrants have joined. (...) Apparently, several other countries have been added, such as Portugal. Spanish, which we didn't have, is now available and the parents also come to the parents' café. (...) Today we had four Spanish-speaking

> mums, so no German, but Spanish. And they came anyway and felt really comfortable. (interview#9, item 32)

In this specific situation, the two classic (post)colonial world languages Spanish and Portuguese are perceived more as unexpected guests with astonishment, with no corresponding coverage to be provided yet.

Secondly, linguistic majorities and constellations can arise permanently or situationally in the specific SPC settings in which a language other than German can become the alternative lingua franca, like Albanian (interview#9, item 39), Arabic (interview#8, item 37), English (interview#6, item 36) or Russian (interview#14, item 20). Turkish as the 'majority language' (interview#9, item 43) stands out in particular (interview#3, item 42), also when it comes to parents who do not come from Turkey but 'fortunately understand Turkish' (interview#16, item 32; interview#3, item 30). Despite their own German-as-a-second-language (or educational language) support agenda, the SPC managers are prepared to allow an urged, pragmatic change of monolingual habitus from German in favour of another language, which in turn takes place with othering backlashes: 'Actually, we always want to speak German, but when the Turks come together, that's just the way we always speak' (interview#3, item 49). In another interview, a new parent mentor is praised for being 'a German native speaker' and a 'Turkish learner' (interview#9, item 45), which is supposed to be an indication that there are also spaces within the school system in which the German monolingual habitus does not (or no longer) apply and is replaced by a different monolingual practice. Although this may correspond to the linguistic majority situation in the specific SPC, it does not lead to the permanent establishment of a multilingual habitus that would consider the actual multilingualism of the superdiverse parents.

The interviews reveal the programme's focus on linguistic diversity, which is seen as a positive and welcome challenge by the project teams:

> There are always conversations in our own language, because some parents don't speak German, for example, Arabic or Turkish. We also have Polish, well, they are there. We have also tried to find an Albanian-speaking parent mentor. We haven't found one yet. But that always offers diversity to reach other parents as well. (interview#1, item 35)

In such interviews, the focus is both on the broadest possible representation of linguistic diversity in the SPC and on the pragmatic complementarity of the limited linguistic resources available and the languages of origin of the participants that can be covered:

> I speak Albanian, it means all the dialects. We have twelve different dialects and that's what I speak. So, people can come to me from Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, everywhere who are here, I can translate that, and then of course we have the other parents, so there's a lot of Turkish. (interview#9, item 39)

However, the interviews show that in fact, the idea of multilingualism remains at the level of the programme, while the spoken practice in the SPC tends to be rather monolingual, even if the dominant language is other than German. There is a contrast when the interviewees speak of imagined communities as well as imagined (super-)diversity of parents as target groups outside, and when it comes to linguistic practices on the micro-level. This imagined linguistic diversity often turns to become monolingual (or at best bilingual) due to the lack of ever-functioning recipes how to deal with more than 2 languages at a time in one place.

Raciolinguistic deprofiling

As already mentioned, apart from the binaries German vs. other languages or the language of the quantitatively strongest community vs. other languages, the findings show no other linguistic hierarchical patterns of thought and action. In addition to the phenomena described above, the interviews also show how undifferentiated grouping occurs, which can be described as a raciolinguistic deprofiling, a term that emerged empirically during the study. This becomes visible when umbrella terms, for example, names of (sub)continents or religions are used as labels for the designation of some groups of parents. This kind of deprofiling racialize, exoticize and depersonalize these groups and thus attempt to objectivistically justify their positioning as '*perpetual foreigners'*, i.e., as ever non-participants outside the scope of the SPC:

> [...] at the moment, they are of Turkish, Arab, Serbian background, i.e. mothers from this background (...). Of course, we have ten other nationalities at the school. We certainly also had African mothers. That's not the case right now, but that's a completely different topic. (interview#5, item 33)

Black parents are often directly associated with the continent of Africa. Undifferentiated statements are made that construct a speechless group of 'African parents' (interview#1, item 41), parents 'from African background' (interview#5, item 35) or even an amorphous, depersonalized entity *'the African'* (interview#1, item: 39) that will always remain outside. The same applies to parents with an ascribed religious identity, which also appears as a linguistically undifferentiated group: 'Yes, these are mothers: Turkish, Arabic, Serbian origin. They are Moslems, partly from a Moslem background, Moslems with headscarves' (interview#5, item 25).

These findings demonstrate, as mentioned above, an astonishing parallelism with the tradition of racializing and devaluing practices and ideologies of the colonial era by positioning 'colonized subjects as incapable of communicating legitimately in any language' (Flores & Rosa 2017, p. 624). Applied to SPC settings, it means that the immanent languagelessness assumes a permanent inability of constructed (groups of) parents to participate independently in the German school system. This, in turn, legitimizes even more the need for permanent supportive, mediating structures: '[...] the headmistress always came, introduced herself and also had small conversations. But they tended to be migrant parents. And gradually it turned out that they came because they had problems' (interview#18, item 16). Strictly speaking, this formulation contradicts a typical SPC programme, because it is precisely the parents who should be allowed to participate better in school activities and, among other things, to articulate their needs. While the problematic motivation to participate is declared to be a disposition for parents with a first language other than German, it is assessed differently for parents with German as their first language. This is illustrated by a quote on the question of why the parents' café is rarely or not at all frequented by parents whose first language is German:

> From the outside, they [parents whose first language is German] probably see the parent café more like a social welfare centre where they can get help. (...) They don't really need to visit the parent café because they can usually solve their problems themselves. (interview#1, item 53)

At first glance, another interview develops a contrary mode of explanation, as it is about parents with German as their first language who come to the café for advice. At the

same time, however, it is emphasized that it is about 'individual appointments' in an '*adjacent room'*. This separation into main and side rooms shows how processes of othering and self-othering (Medvedev, in press) are also reproduced in the SPC. This creates an exclusivity and special position of German-speaking individual parents within, or more precisely, alongside the group of regular host parents with other first languages, by creating a mixture of 'othering' ('they are the others') and 'self-othering' ('we are the others'). The parents not affected by othering are characterized as being close to education and their search for advice is legitimized by a lack of time:

> They are also close to education, many with German roots, who simply come when they are unsure. Even if they can't find the time, don't have much time when they're working and then this application again and then they don't know that they come from the daycare centre, all-day. (interview#16, item 20)

As a result, their search for advice is declared to be understandable and they are constructed as independent and having few problems. In this respect, it seems to require an explanation that they seek advice, and it seems impossible that they could be a regular part of the group subject to othering or self-othering.

It should be noted that most of these statements were made by interviewees who speak German as a second language, mostly parents. This shows how the institutional context of the school system, with its monolingual habitus and internalized racist knowledge, can be adopted and reproduced, probably unconsciously and unintendedly, by the SPC staff. It manifests itself, as we have seen, when the staff describes the language practice of the participants in the SPC or makes general judgments about the language abilities of the target groups.

The binary opposition German vs. other languages is repeated when the interviewees speculate about the reasons for and against participation in the SPC: 'I don't remember that we had parents here who only spoke German' (interview#5, items 37-39). Here too, in the construction of German and non-German, attributions and racist knowledge are used: 'Well, I looked at the list again for the first time. It was a really mixed group of parents. Not a single German parent was there. They were all migrant parents' (interview#18, item 16, see also interview#3, item 57). In another interview, there is talk of a single pupil in the class 'who really has parents from Hamburg' (interview#14, item 54). It can also be seen that an intersectional raciolinguistic and classist attribution also takes place, in that German as a first language automatically suggests a different social status of the parents: 'Parents with only German roots who enrol their children here. Then it's academic parents who register their children here, newcomers from other privileged neighbourhoods' (interview#16, item 24) This constantly and literally leads to othering or self-othering: 'Of course, you realize, at the beginning you already noticed, the difference or the demands of both, of the other parents are different' (interview#16, item 24).

The interviews with SPC staff explicitly show that in socio-spatial contexts such as the SPC as 'an institution within an institution' (Medvedev, 2020), unconscious and unintended reproduction of the monolingual habitual patterns, internalized racist knowledge, and as a result, raciolinguistically driven intersectional inclusion and exclusion mechanisms can intertwine. Besides, they go in two directions: outwards, when different constructed (target) groups are evaluated differently and their participation or non-participation is justified in different raciolinguistic and sometimes also classist, ways (othering), and inwards, where comparable processes take place at

the level of the participants and the café staff, and where self-reflective mechanisms can be described as self-othering.

Discussion of findings, limitations, and implications

The research question was whether and how unconscious and unintended raciolinguistic attitudes reproduce or challenge power relations in school-based parent cafés. The data revealed three categories: German as a metaphor of human language, Languages of 'major minorities' as alternative linguae francae, and Raciolinguistic deprofiling. The main study was not conducted to understand raciolinguistic attitudes, so the interview protocol did not integrate raciolinguistic theory. That means there may be more hidden or unintended mechanisms than the ones reported here. It would be most interesting to continue with an interview protocol that starts from the findings regarding languagelessness, the pro and contra of alternative linguae francae, and the many ways of raciolinguistic deprofiling by adding assumptions of belonging to lower social class because of insufficient skills in the dominant language. However, the findings show several procedures that contribute to keeping some groups of migrants as perpetual foreigners in the school system.

First, German is understood as 'the language', and this leaves migrants languageless with a racialised understanding of them as being without communication skills. Applying the raciolinguistic theory to this finding, one identifies attitudinal patterns that can also be read as 'the ideological assumption that racialized subjects' language practices are unfit for legitimate participation in a modern world' (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 627). These procedures are reproduced by the dominant use of the word *language* as a synonym and metaphor for *the German language*. The school's power relations stay in place, as only those parents are considered fully integrated who have the language and therefore do not have problems anymore that would direct them to parent cafés. The parent café community is thus othered itself and kept in an implicitly proclaimed status of *perpetual foreigners* (Wu, 2023).

Second, *major minorities* play a certain role by providing more linguae francae, that come with informal translation services and self-help. However, the interviewees consider this only as pleasant as long as it does not disturb them. The major minority languages such as Turkish or Arabic are not integrated into the school system, e.g., in the linguistic landscape of a school, of textbooks or forms. Nevertheless, our findings also demonstrate how in certain school-related contexts the monolingual habitus of German as status quo can be replaced by another dominant language. This leads us to a broader understanding of the study by Gogolin (1994).

Third, raciolinguistic patterns are in several places visible in the interview sample. The interviewees subtly connect the command of the German language with academic achievement, higher social class, and the true ability to cope with life. Migrants are understood as others, as those who are different and who have problems that direct them to the cafés where they will find help. This confirms the study by Dean (2021), which shows how intensely classism and racism is reproduced in schools. In our study, the processes of othering and self-othering – e.g., by migrant parent mentors who run the parent cafés – go hand in hand. At the same time, these exclusion practices and attitudes take place unintendedly and unconsciously as shown in the study by El-Mafaalani (2021). This study also shows that othering can also occur in the reciprocal form of self-othering.

Linguicism on the level of more or less prestigious languages is not relevant in the interviews. However, broken German is often repeated as a status that needs to be healed, and this shows linguicism on the level of accents and dialects (Akbaba, 2024).

Overall, the study shows how several subtle mechanisms, unintendedly and unconsciously, keep groups of parents at a distance despite the programmatic idea of school-based parent cafés as part of governmental strategies of better inclusion. These micro-level practices that can also co-produce exclusion backlashes need to be critically interrogated along with discourses on a policy level standing behind these practices, that Rosa and Flores (2017) define as 'the foundational forms of governance through which such diversity discoursed deceptively perpetuate disparities by stipulating the terms on which perceived differences are embraced or abjected' (p. 641)

The raciolinguistic perspective reveals that even well-intended programs can become part of an excluding society. By comparing the findings with earlier research on adult family learning, a substantial lack of critical perspectives becomes visible. Some earlier family learning providers were substantially rooted in the feminist movement with critical standpoints and themes, e.g., on bodies and self-optimization (Macha, 2017). The special characteristics of the program under consideration are twofold: First, it is not just a parent café in an adult education centre, but a *school-based* parent café. This implies a move from non-formal adult education towards formal, school-oriented learning. Second, the program is not critical of any institution or authority, but the authority itself funds and uses it as a tool for integration. This makes it much more difficult to insert critical perspectives into the program (e.g., postcolonial or queer-feminist perspectives) than if it were a café hosted as part of a social movement for popular adult education (von Kotze & Walters, 2023). It would be interesting to see what changes when the adult mentors are trained and encouraged to offer a more critical family learning program that empowers mentors and parents to scrutinize the racialized and gendered position they are given in the German educational system. This would also strengthen the ties with the adult education community and may weaken the formal power of the schools in the (school-based) parent cafés.

One of the core elements of multilayered intersectional super-diversity (Vertovec, 2024) is to integrate awareness of multilingualism. This also affects adult education and learning, including teacher training. As the school-based parent cafés in this study are part of an overarching urban structure, it would be possible to offer further adult education modules on linguicism, raciolinguicism, monolingual habitus, as well as othering and self-othering. Otherwise, some (constructed) groups or individuals will always be kept in a position of being perpetual foreigners.

Notes

1 In German: *Familienbildung* – this has overlaps with family literacy as well as family learning/education. We use family learning, because it is not misunderstood as being focused on literacy only or on children's education only.

2 The interview numbers point to the person. The items point to the paragraph in the interview.

3 Linguicism in the sense of a rejection of dialect, accent, or grammatically incorrect expressions can occur in many ways, but the interview protocol does not cover this aspect.

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The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

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