



Ragni Vik Johnsen\*

# “Quiero *juksar* en la *julaftenito*” – Playfulness and metalinguistic awareness in translingual family interactions

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**Abstract:** This article explores playfulness and creativity in translingual family interactions. In particular, it focuses on how and to what ends adolescents mobilize multilingual resources in family interactions. It investigates the cases of two multilingual families with adolescent children (13–18 years old). The families have different linguistic backgrounds, but have in common that one of the parents have migrated from a Spanish-speaking Latin-American country to Northern-Norway, and that Spanish represents a linguistic resource and a heritage language in the families. The data consists of self-recorded family interactions (29 recordings, ca. 5 h.) and were collected over the course of one year. By analysing interactions where the adolescents employ Spanish features, the article offers insights into how adolescents negotiate the position of the heritage language Spanish in the family. A close, turn-by-turn analysis demonstrates that the adolescents in a creative and playful manner employ a multitude of linguistic resources to fulfil interactional achievements: Through metalinguistic talk and playful translingual practices, the adolescents challenge and negotiate identities and family roles, exert agencies, and demonstrate metalinguistic awareness and sociolinguistic control.

**Keywords:** family multilingualism, adolescents, playful language, translanguaging

## 1 Introduction

Research on how children and adolescents employ multilingual resources in creative and playful ways, and how such practices reflect metalinguistic awareness and trigger metalinguistic reflections, have been conducted in various contexts, such as peer groups (Lytra 2007; Madsen and Svendsen 2015; Svendsen 2004) classrooms and schools in general (Cekaite and Aronsson 2004; Poveda 2005;

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\*Corresponding author: Ragni Johnsen, Institutt for språk og kultur, UiT Norge Arktiske Universitet, Tromsø, Norway, E-mail: [ragni.v.johnsen@uit.no](mailto:ragni.v.johnsen@uit.no). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5839-6763>

Rampton 2006; Åhlund and Aronsson 2015). However, research exploring adolescents' creative and playful language use in the *family* is still rather scarce (but see De Fina 2012; Vidal 2015). Research on children's participation in family interactions have tended to focus on smaller children (e.g. Gyogi 2015; Kheirkhah and Cekaite 2015; Said and Zhu 2017) rather than adolescents.

Adolescents are often seen as social and linguistic entrepreneurs, which often manifest in creative and innovative language use (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003; Nortier and Svendsen 2015). Adolescents' language use might provide important insights into the social and linguistic dynamics of multilingual families, because of the growing independence from adults and parental authorities that characterizes adolescence. This article puts to ground a close, interactional sociolinguistic analysis of family interactions to explore i) how adolescents use their multilingual resources creatively and playfully in intergenerational talk and ii) how they accomplish interactional endeavours and challenge and negotiate ascribed roles and identities in family interactions.

The primary data set consists of 29 audio recordings (ca. 5 h.) made by the participants themselves, whereby a selection of one recording from each family was selected for closer analysis in this article, based on the high frequency of translingual practices. The families in focus have different linguistic biographies, but live in the same Northern-Norwegian city, and have in common that one of the parents is from a Spanish-speaking, Latin-American country. Spanish may be defined as a heritage language in all the families, which in this article is understood as "a language that is often used at or inherited from home and that is different from the language used in mainstream society" (He 2011: 587). The analysed examples illustrate how the adolescents use playful frames as a resource to negotiate agencies, family roles, and identities, and how they demonstrate metalinguistic awareness and sociolinguistic control. In line with Lytra (2007), playful talk is understood as a broad range of verbal activities such as teasing, joking, verbal plays and music-making, that can be linked to the notion of performance (cf. Bauman 2000). Moreover, playful talk is a site in which participants negotiate social relationships and make identity claims and displays. In this article, playful interactions are analysed to explore the ways adolescents negotiate agencies and use their multilingual resources to accomplish and challenge interactional goals within the family context.

The remaining parts of the article is structured as follows: First I present the theoretical framework that draws on research of child agency in multilingual families (e.g. Fogle and King 2013) and hybrid, (heritage) language practices (e.g. Canagarajah 2019; García and Wei 2014). Next, the participants and method are presented, as well as the data collection and coding procedures. Finally, I present the findings and discuss how playful, translingual and metalinguistic talk might

shed light on how families, younger generations, adolescents in particular, negotiate the position and meaning of heritage languages in the home. In sum, the article contributes to research on adolescent language use as well as research on family multilingualism, and highlights playful talk as privileged sites for studying identity negotiations.

## 2 Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Metalinguistic talk, creativity and translingual practices

Simply put, metalinguistic talk refers to talk about talk: Language use indexes a range of social and cultural meanings, and an essential characteristic of language is its potential to refer to itself (Jaworski and Coupland 2012). The metalinguistic dimension of language may be observed both through explicit comments about language and in language use, and may reveal aspects of speakers' ideologies, experiences or identities (cf. Jaworski and Coupland 2012; Verschueren 2012). Blum-Kulka's (1997) comparative study of dinner talk and pragmatic socialization in Israeli, American and American-Israeli families demonstrates how bilingual and Israeli families do far more metalinguistic comments than the monolingual, American families. Such metalinguistic comments consisted of word meaning queries, code-switching and naming games, or self-directed linguistic humour. She points out the families' experiences of different sociolinguistic contexts as an explanation for these cross-family differences. For example, the Israeli context of recent language revival and individual factors such as family members' recent history of second language learning make it more reasonable to expect a higher level of explicit attention to language matters.

The metalinguistic dimension of language can be linked to linguistic creativity: Being linguistically creative requires metapragmatic awareness; that is, the ability to reflect on the metalinguistic and indexical dimensions of language through, for example, metapragmatic descriptions, styling and performances, code-switching or other contextualization cues (Coupland and Jaworski 2012; Verschueren 2012). As Wei (2011: 1223) puts it, creativity may be understood as “the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language”. One way of demonstrating linguistic creativity and awareness is through metapragmatic play, that is, playful comments about “*how* or by *whom* language is used” (Cekaite and Aronsson 2004: 373). Metalinguistic play in language learning settings maintains participants' attention to language form (Poveda 2005), and may potentially be a resource in second language learning (Åhlund and Aronsson 2015). Creative language use and playful practices

have received considerable attention in sociolinguistic research on multilingual children and adolescents. Research on metalinguistic and metapragmatic play and performances in schools and classrooms shows for example how such practices work as in-group peer-entertainment, and contributes to negotiate, challenge, confirm or change social relations and interactions among pupils (Åhlund and Aronsson 2015; Cekaite and Aronsson 2004; Svendsen 2004). Moreover, research on adolescents in peer contexts in general shows that adolescents often use language in creative ways to index a range of interactional functions, such as demonstrating affiliation or disaffiliation with relevant social groups, social class, in-groupness and hybrid ethnic identities (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003; Blackledge and Creese 2010; Jonsson et al. 2019; Madsen et al. 2016; Nortier and Svendsen 2015; Quist and Svendsen 2010; Rampton 1995, 2006). In linguistically heterogeneous environments, linguistic behaviour tend to be creative and multilingual individuals often cross presumed linguistic boundaries and often mix features from different languages to convey a message, also called (*poly*)*languageing* (Jørgensen 2008; Svendsen 2004) or *translanguageing* (García and Wei 2014). Translanguageing also denotes a pedagogy and theoretical approach to language that challenges language separation and monolingual ideologies, and encourages the use of students' full linguistic competences as resources for teaching and learning (cf. Canagarajah 2011; García and Wei 2014). The diverse, and often overlapping meanings of the term has been criticized (e.g. Albury 2017; Jaspers 2018). In this article, translingual practices refer to instances where the family members flexibly combine the linguistic features and resources at their disposal.

Within the multilingual family context, translingual, creative and playful practices are scarcely studied. This might be related to how research on multilingual families has been strongly influenced by the sociolinguistics of Fishman, an influence which also is evident in the more recent field of Family Language Policy (see e.g. King et al. 2008; e.g. Spolsky 2012). With its focus on language maintenance (see e.g. Fishman 1965, 1966, 1991, 2001) and transmission of 'whole' languages, research in this tradition has been criticized for putting to ground a view of languages as abstract, bounded and discrete entities (Gomes 2018; Hiratsuka and Pennycook 2019; Pennycook 2016). This bias may have resulted in a blind spot for the transmission of "truncated repertoires" (Blommaert 2010: 103) and the function of translingual or polylingual and creative practices in multilingual families. There are, however, exceptions. Hiratsuka and Pennycook (2019) show, for example, basing on a longitudinal study in a trilingual family, how language choices are interwoven with social practices and doing family life. They introduce the term "translingual family repertoire" to refer to a set of shared multilingual practices that are vital in creating and maintaining family life and

argue that the use of these multilingual repertoires is not necessarily linked to specific language goals or policies, such as language maintenance (Hiratsuka and Pennycook 2019: 5). By contrast, Higgins (2019), argues that translanguaging practices may be employed as a strategy to use or maintain heritage languages. She investigates expressed stances towards the use of Hawaiian within families of native Hawaiian ancestry, and found that partial knowledge of Hawaiian was portrayed as an authentic way of being Hawaiian among her participants, and as a natural way of sustaining the language.

Moreover, a few studies also explore creative language use in intergenerational talk. In a study of family interactions in an Italian-American family, De Fina (2012) points out multigenerational family interactions as significant sites for the study of language and identity processes in communities of immigrant descent and finds that younger generations use different interactional strategies to engage with the heritage language. Vidal (2015) finds in a study of three multilingual and multicultural siblings' interactions with their grandfather, that both the granddaughters and the grandfather used stylizations to create affiliations or disaffiliations and to create insider and outsider identities. Similarly, Canagarajah (2012) demonstrates how children use “self-styling” as a resource to affirm their place in the Tamil community, and within families to strengthen family bonds and perform Tamil identities. In a similar vein, Dorich (2017) investigates parent-child interactions in a Norwegian-Ecuadorian family and suggests that children's creative use of heritage languages can be interpreted as a way of experimenting and demonstrating control over the linguistic medium. While most of these studies have focused on stylized language, they altogether demonstrate that creativity has an important role in negotiating social relations in multilingual families.

The above-mentioned studies of creative and playful negotiations of family bonds and identities in interaction draw on the extensive research on language socialization that has been conducted in monolingual families (see e.g. Eisenberg 1987; Goodwin and Cekaite 2018; Gordon 2009; Miller 1987; Tannen et al. 2007). Gordon (2009: 75), for example, investigates how families use intertextuality in interactions to create “familylects” and “family cultures”, while Tannen (2004) demonstrates how family members frame pets as conversational partners, as a way of rekeying an interaction as humorous or playful. Eisenberg (1987) and Miller (1987) investigate verbal play, teasing more precisely, as a socialization practice in the home that contributes to e.g. shaping family relationships. This article draws on Lytra's (2007) conceptualization of playful talk, originally developed to investigate playful interactions in among in a primary school. Lytra (2007: 36) broadens the scope of playful talk, and describes it as a flexible category that denotes a wide range of verbal activities such as teasing, joking, verbal plays and music making, as well as more fleeting and unstructured activities. As she argues,

playful talk can be linked to the concept of performance. In a performance, “the act of expression is put on display, objectified, marked out to a degree from its discursive surroundings and opened up to interpretive scrutiny and evaluation by an audience” (Bauman 2000: 1, cited in Lytra 2007:17). In this sense, playful talk is a site in which speakers display metalinguistic and/or metapragmatic competences (Jaworski and Coupland 2012: 26). This article assumes the broad scope of playful talk suggested by Lytra (2007): Playful talk is understood as a creative performance and as a site of identity work, which, applied to the family context, creates a frame to understand how family members, particularly adolescents, construct, negotiate and perform social identities through interaction.

## 2.2 Child agency and identities in multilingual families

Ahearn (2001: 112) defines agency provisionally as a “socioculturally mediated capacity to act”, and suggests to distinguish different types of agency (of power, of compliance, of resistance etc.). Agency is not only a product of intentionality, but also mediated by social, cultural and linguistic contexts, routines and strategies (Ahearn 2001; Al Zidjaly 2009). How agency is acted, accepted or constrained is socially and culturally variable: Child participation may for instance be accepted and encouraged in some contexts or communities, but mitigated and restricted in others (cf. Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). Child agency has been investigated in various sociolinguistic fields to shed light on different sociolinguistic processes, such as language socialization (Schieffelin and Ochs 1987), language shift (Luykx 2005), family language policies (Fogle and King 2013) and language practices and identity negotiations multilingual families (Gyogi 2015), to mention some. However, sociolinguists interested in child agency in multilingual families (see e.g. Fogle and King 2013; Kheirkhah and Cekaite 2015; Palviainen and Boyd 2013; Revis 2016; Said and Zhu 2017) have identified the need for more research to analyse family interactions (cf. Said and Zhu 2017) and for more data that include children in order to understand the family’s trajectories and repertoires as a whole (cf. Smith-Christmas 2017).

Acknowledging child agency in the family context has a long tradition within the field of language socialization which put to ground a bidirectional view of socialization (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). Children are seen as active participants and co-constructors in socialization, and have the potential to shape language practices and social roles within families (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Pontecorvo et al. 2001; Schieffelin and Ochs 1987). In addition, children may hold competences, for example digital competences (cf. Aarsand and Aronsson 2009),

or linguistic competence (cf. Tuominen 1999) and thereby be in a position to socialize their parents.

According to Blum-Kulka (1997: 258), bilingual socialization means both “bilingual practices in the process of socialization and socialization towards balanced bilingualism”. In effect, language practices, for example language choice and shared multilingual family repertoires, may become a resource to claim membership and negotiate social identities within the family (Blum-Kulka 1997; Van Mensel 2018). Still, scholars have noted how the unequal distribution of language competences in multilingual families may, for example, subvert the asymmetrical power hierarchies within families, as children claim the role as language teachers or language experts over both parents, younger or older siblings (Blum-Kulka 1997; Kheirkhah and Cekaite 2017; Obojska 2019). Moreover, balanced bilingualism is not always the goal of socialization. Canagarajah (2019) suggests a “practice-based” approach to the study of heritage language use, and bases this on how language practices in diaspora communities often are hybrid, translingual and relative. The language practices reflect how many families; younger generations in particular, negotiate linguistic demands and challenges of diaspora communities on the one hand and from the majority society on the other.

Drawing on language socialization research, scholars in the field of Family Language Policy (FLP) have also begun to identify a need to include children’s perspectives when studying multilingual families. Studies in this tradition explore the role of child agency in the negotiation of familial language policies and language maintenance efforts, and how children may challenge or resist their parents’ language choices and/or language ideologies (e.g. Fogle and King 2013; Obojska 2019; Palviainen and Boyd 2013; Revis 2016). A few studies point for example at how parents’ linguistic influences decrease as children move into adolescence (Caldas and Caron-Caldas 2002). Gyogi (2015) investigates how bilingual Japanese-English-speaking children in England exercise agency vis-à-vis their mothers’ beliefs and practices. She finds that the bilingual children in her study challenge and resist the monolingual policies pursued by their mothers (as a minority language maintenance effort) by flexibly drawing on their linguistic repertoires.

In sum, agency can be understood as an accomplishment of social action. Children’s agency in multilingual families may be understood in relation to their influence on language socialization processes, language choices and their identity constructions, meaning that identity construction can be one kind of social action that agency can accomplish (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Identity is understood within the framework proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), who suggest five main principles for analysing identity: emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality and partialness. Identity is product of interaction, and may encompass a wide range of social categories, roles and positions that may be temporary,

emergent or more stable, which may be indexed through labels, stylizations (cf. 2.1) or ways of speaking.

In a multilingual family context, different generations often construct different indexical relations between language and identity, due to their different migratory experiences and language competences (De Fina 2012; Hua 2008). However, as mentioned, research investigating adolescents' language use and identity constructions in multilingual families is still scarce.

This article investigates how adolescent children (and their parents) in interactions use metalinguistic talk and translingual, creative and playful talk to align with, resist or challenge identities or indexical relations associated with particular language choices, as well as how family members in family discourse act through and with language.

### 3 Data, methods and participants

The data was collected as part of a bigger project on language practices among adolescents in multilingual (Spanish-speaking) families in Norway (Johnsen 2021). Families were recruited through personal networks, Facebook sites and colleagues, and three families agreed to participate in the study, two of which are in focus of this article. The children in both families are adolescents (13–18), where Sol and Tania attend secondary school, and Matilda upper secondary school. Below, the two families' linguistic biographies and language practices are presented, with a particular focus on the adolescent children. All names are pseudonyms.

**Family 1:** The participating part of the family in focus consists of two members, the mother and her daughter Tania (13). They also have a dog, Pepa, and the mother has a Norwegian boyfriend who visits them regularly. The mother is born in Chile, but moved to Germany in early adulthood. There she met Tania's dad, and Tania was born in Germany. They moved together to Norway when Tania was about 10, and Tania lives partly with her mother and partly with her father now. The data was collected by and with Tania and her mother. At home with her mother, both Tania and her mother report to speak Norwegian and German, and that they do not report to follow any strict language policies at home. The self-recordings reveal that both Tania and her mother switch between German and Norwegian, and that they occasionally speak Spanish, though mostly the mother, and often just short phrases. With her father, Tania reports that she speaks only German. As the examples will show, Tania uses her mother's Spanish competence as a resource in school tasks, as Tania takes Spanish as her mandatory foreign language subject at school. In recordings where the mother's Norwegian partner was present, both the



mother and Tania tended to speak more Norwegian to each other (even if he was not present in the same room). Also, their dog, Pepa, seemed to influence language choice patterns: When talking to the dog, both the mother and Tania often used Spanish pet names and Norwegian commands.

**Family 2:** The family consist of four members: the father, the mother and two teenage daughters, Matilda (17) and Sol (15). The father is from Peru, and moved to Norway in early adulthood. Within the family, the mother speaks Norwegian, while the father speaks mostly Spanish to the daughters and Norwegian to the mother. He reports in the interview that he wanted the daughters to learn Spanish and that it feels natural for him to speak Spanish with them. He states that the daughters speak Norwegian to him, but as the self-recorded data reveals, they occasionally respond him in short phrases Spanish, for example in metalinguistic and playful talk. The family travels occasionally to Peru to visit the paternal part of the family, and the last visit took place about a year before the examples below. Both the teenage daughters have chosen Spanish as their mandatory foreign language subject at school and Matilda has continued with Spanish up until her last year in upper secondary school.

### 3.1 Data collection and coding procedure

The two families self-recorded interactional data from family interactions, which resulted in 29 recordings in total (see Table 1). The families were instructed to record family interactions, but no further instructions were given. They were given the opportunity to delete interactions or part of interactions if they wished so. It turned out that many of the recordings were taped during dinner or other mealtimes. The recordings vary in length and each family did not provide equal amounts of recordings. The total duration of each family’s recordings was, however, more or less the same (see Table 1). The self-recordings were collected over a period of about 12 months, and the families had the recorder with them for 2–5 weeks at a time, during three periods within this timespan.

**Table 1:** Data overview.

	Family 1	Family 2
Recordings	20	9
Hours of interactions	2.22	2.47

During data-collection, semi-structured interviews and follow-up conversations with the parents and the adolescents were also collected, as well as several visits when leaving and picking up the audio recorder.

The self-recordings were segmented in ELAN where they were initially coded for language choices. The recordings were listened to repeatedly, and short resumes of each recording's content were logged. During this coding process, it was noted that in both families, the adolescents rarely employed more than a few Spanish features in the recorded interactions. Based on this initial coding procedure, interactions that involved sequences of *translanguaging* were analysed (see Tables 2 and 3 below). Although it is possible to describe everybody's language use as translanguaging (cf. García and Wei 2014) including the overall language practices in this study, this article operationalizes translanguaging as instances where speakers flexibly change between features from two or more traditional languages in the same turn. Two of the recordings, one from each family, entailed more translingual practices than the rest, and those two recordings constitute the main data in this article. These two recordings were also rich in metalinguistic discussions and playful talk. Subsequently, the translingual interactions involving (some features of) the heritage language Spanish, as well as playful talk constitute the analytical focus of this article.

The selected self-recording from Family 1 consists of 302 “turn units” (cf. Levinson 1983 : 297), distinguished from other units primarily by prosodic and intonational features (see Table 2). The “uncategorized” category involves turns that were impossible to code for language choice, either because of poor sound quality, instances with lexical syncretism between German and Norwegian, or “other” utterances, that is, laughter, affirmative sounds etc. Note that even though Family 1 consists of just two human family members, Tania and her mother, not all the utterances presented in Table 2 are examples of dyadic communication – some utterances, especially the mother's utterances, are directed to the dog, Pepa.

The selected self-recording from Family 2, consists of 842 turn units, distributed as follows:

**Table 2:** Overview of language choices, Family 1.

Recording A	Tania	Mother	Total
Norwegian	16	71	87
German	32	50	82
Spanish	8	23	31
Translanguaging	5	7	12
Other/uncategorized	35	55	90

**Table 3:** Overview of language choices, Family 2.

Recording B	Sol	Matilda	Father	Mother	Total
Norwegian	154	189	79	167	589
Spanish	7	7	146	1	161
Translanguaging	3	4	6	0	13
Other/uncategorized	15	21	22	21	79

While none of the recordings contain a large proportion of translanguaging (as defined above) combining features from different languages does occur in both families. Spanish is present in both recordings by both generations, but as the analysed excerpts will show, how it is used vary greatly. In Family 2, Norwegian is clearly preferred by the children, while Tania in Family 1 seems to prefer German in addition to Norwegian.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Family 1: Pepa the dog, and silly Spanish words

The first two excerpts show how Tania uses Spanish to actively engage in negotiating the position of Spanish by framing it as a resource within the family (Excerpt 1 and 2), and furthermore to display metalinguistic competence (Excerpt 2). In the interviews, Tania downplayed her own productive competence in Spanish, and emphasized how her competences and use of Spanish had changed throughout her life (see Johnsen 2020b). However, at the time of data collection, Tania had just started secondary school, where Spanish was offered as an optional foreign language subject for all pupils. In the turns preceding Excerpt 1, Tania talks about an upcoming test in Spanish, a topic that triggered a high percentage of Spanish utterances and metalinguistic talk about Spanish words in this self-recording. The mother had, for instance, instructed Tania in some formal grammatical rules of how to demarcate plurality in Spanish nouns: “**se le pone una zeta- eh una s al final, si es plural (1.5) xx es mas o menos facil xx los es masculino no?**” (in English: “you put a ‘z’- eh a ‘s’ if it’s plural (1.5) xx it’s more or less easy xx ‘los’ is masculine, right?”)

Simultaneously, both the mother and Tania occasionally direct commands to their dog: They have just recently gotten the puppy, Pepa, and Excerpt 1 shows a part of conversation where Tania has pointed out that Pepa can jump up onto the

couch, but that she cannot jump down by herself. They are both calling on Pepa to come to them when Excerpt 1 starts.

Ex. 1 Talking to Pepa, the dog<sup>1</sup>

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Mother | så kom, <i>spring</i> (..) ja så::n<br>so come, <i>jump</i> (..) yes the::re                                 |
| 2 | Tania  | <b>(esa)/(está) estúpida HA ha</b><br>(this)/(you are) stupid (one) HA ha                                    |
| 3 | Mother | <b>estúpida nei, no es estúpida, es pequeñita</b><br>stupid no she is not stupid she is teeny tiny           |
| 4 | Tania  | Pepis m::  |
| 5 | Mother | <b>tan chiquitITA, Pepis Pepis, ja</b> ((high pitched voice)) <sup>2</sup><br>so teenytiny, Pepis Pepis, yes |

In line 2, Tania playfully calls Pepa stupid, and this is actually one of the few times in the self-recorded data that Tania produces a Spanish utterance without the topic being school related, or as a response to something her mother has said. The mother corrects Tania, and states that Pepa is just small, not stupid. The interaction is playful: The dog is framed as a conversational resource (cf. Tannen 2004), that could be offended, and the mother “defends” Pepa of the accuse of being stupid. She repeatedly calls Pepa small and tiny, in what can be characterized as “dog-directed speech” (Ben-Aderet et al. 2017). In other recordings, the mother also frequently speaks to the dog in a mix of Spanish and Norwegian. In this excerpt, we see how both the mother and Tania speaks to Pepa in Spanish, and thereby “socialize” Pepa in the different repertoires present in the family, including Spanish, and thus position Spanish as a shared family resource. Moreover, the dog is a third party and, being a dog, Pepa cannot judge Tania on her Spanish skills. Consequently, the playful talk directed at Pepa may be interpreted as a playful free zone to speak Spanish.

After this interaction, the footing changes again as the mother attempts to return to the initial topic of conversation; the upcoming Spanish test. However, Tania withholds the playful key, which contrasts her mother’s more serious tone of voice, and she laughingly identifies a word she claims having problems with:

<sup>1</sup> See transcription conventions below. Translations given on separate line.

<sup>2</sup> High-pitched voice is one way people modulate their voices when speaking to dogs, particularly puppies, and can be characterized as „dog-directed speech” (Ben-Aderet et al. 2017).

## Ex. 2 Funny Spanish people

- 1 Tania *xxx und diese Wörter müssen wir können. Das einzige Wort, womit ich Probleme hab, sind ‘suéter’*  
xxx /and we have to know these words. The only word I have problems with are ‘suéter’
- 2 Mother Huh?
- 3 Tania **\$suéter\$**  
\$sweater\$
- 4 Mother **suéter?**  
Sweater?
- 5 Tania Ja hhh ((aspirated laughter))
- 6 Mother **(en)/(un) suéter**  
sweater a sweater?
- 7 Tania He \$ja\$
- 8 Mother ja
- 9 Tania det va litt teit ord  
it was a stupid/weird word
- 10 Mother *Das ist [ziemlich-*  
That is quite-
- 11 Tania **[\$suéter\$**
- 12 Mother *ja, das [is wirklich teit.*  
yes, that is really stupid/silly
- 13 Tania **[je-jeans? ((Spanish pronunciation))**  
[je-jeans
- 14 Mother **jeans?**
- 15 Tania det e (enklig) så morsomt nå:r [spansk prøve å- spanske folk prøve å  
it is (really) so funny when [spanish tries to- spanish people try to
- 16 Mother *[el jeans (..) he he he he*  
*[the jeans (..) he he he he*
- 17 Tania snakke engelsk eller [prøve å- he he  
speak English or try to- he he
- 18 Mother [ja (..) **el jeans, el suéter pero nosotros**  
**decimos eh: -**  
[yes (..) the jeans, the sweater, but we say eh: -
- 19 Tania **zapatos**, det huske æ veldig godt [fordi du  
shoes, that I remember very well [because you-

- 19 Mother **[zapato**  
[shoe
- 20 Tania **[ pantuflas**  
[ slippers
- 21 Mother **Pant(h)uf- hah dice pantuflas xx que se llama  
pantuflas?**  
Sli(hi)pp- hah does it say “slippers” xx that it is named  
slippers?
- 22 Tania nei (.) men æ huske det fordi du brukte alltid-  
No (.) but I remember because you always used to
- 23 Tania **“ponte los zapatos, ponte las pantuflas”**  
“put on your [shoes, put on your slippers”
- 24 Mother **[-patos, ponte las pantuflas**

In this excerpt, Tania explains that they need to know certain lexical items for the Spanish test, and she states, while laughing, that the only word she has problems with is the word *suéter* (English *sweater*). Tania indicates that she finds the word funny by tittering, and changes the footing from a formal lexical or grammatical drill, into a more playful frame. In line 49 Tania evaluates the word *suéter* as a “silly” or “weird” word. She does not explain *why* she finds it weird, but provides another example of a similar laughable word: *jeans* (line 53). She seemingly does not have a particular problem with learning or remembering the word, as she is able to retrieve them in this context. These two lexemes have in common that they are English loan words in Spanish that are pronounced with Spanish phonology. The laughable matter seems to be the mix of Spanish and English features. Tania’s jocular listing of English loanwords to Spanish also demonstrates a form of metalinguistic play and awareness: She displays amusement of the phonology of the words, i.e. a Spanish-like pronunciation of English words. In this context, metalinguistic play seems to have the function of amusement and entertainment, as well as opening for metalinguistic reflections on how loan words are incorporated into Spanish, and on the difference between English and Spanish phonology. At the same time, there is also an implicit act of identification going on. In line 14, Tania explains, in Norwegian, why she finds these particular words so amusing by stating that it is “funny” when *Spanish people* try to speak English and thus positions Spanish users as “the others” (Coupland 2010).

The mother aligns with Tania’s display of amusement by confirming her evaluation (line 11) and by repeating the word and laughing (line 15). In lines 15 and 17, the mother pursues a pedagogical goal by marking the grammatical gender of the word *jeans*, and she adds, “we say”, perhaps to position herself as being part of the “other” group or to inform Tania of regional, lexical variations. For example, in

a later sequence of the same recording, the mother claims a similar position, and uses Tania’s engagement with her Spanish homework to teach Tania a Chilean lexical variant of the Spanish word for socks, *medias*: “**ya, pero en Chile nosotros decimos calzetines (0.6) y en Chile esto es una media** (.) Strumpfhose eh: *Strumpfhose* (.) *strømpebukse*” (tr. well, but in Chile we say **calzetines** (socks), and this is **media** (tr. sock/tights), *Strumpfhose* (tr. tights in a mix of Norwegian and German) eh: *Strumpfhose* (tr. tights in German), *strømpebukse* (tr. tights in Norwegian)) The use of the first-person plural indicates that she includes herself, and perhaps Tania, in the language community of Chilean Spanish. By informing Tania of the regional variations of Spanish, she also manages to modify Tania’s broad generalization of how “Spanish people” talk.

Throughout the conversation, Tania seems more engaged with practicing listing words for the glossary test, than with listening to what her mother says. Consequently, the mother does not succeed in providing an alternative lexeme. She is interrupted by Tania, who lists another word for the glossary test: *zapatos* (English *shoes*). Tania links this word to a personal, and shared, memory of an expression her mother used to say (line 22–24). The word *pantufla* (English *slipper*) is also a noun that is more commonly used in South American Spanish than in Iberic Spanish. By activating this memory, Tania makes a link between words she is learning at school, and her knowledge of Spanish as part of her biographical repertoire.

The two excerpts demonstrate how the two family members negotiate the role and position of Spanish. In both excerpts, Tania actively engages in positioning Spanish as a shared resource between her and her mother, as well as a linguistic resource related to both school and the family. Excerpt 1 shows how the puppy dog is socialized in the linguistic repertoires of the family, and how Tania actively takes part in doing this. As described by Tannen (2004), many families use their pets as interactional resources to mitigate potential conflicts and signal shifts in keying from conflictual to playful or humorous. In this context, talking playfully to the puppy in Spanish may also be interpreted as a safe, harmless way to incorporate Spanish features in daily interactions.

Excerpt 2 shows on the one hand how the mother frames Tania as a learner of Spanish by claiming the role of a language teacher and corrects and backs up Tania’s Spanish. Tania, on the other hand, oscillates between playfulness and formality in her responses. She positions Spanish as a school language by relating it to a specific test and by reproducing lexical drills learnt in school, and as a family language, for example, by playfully addressing the puppy in Spanish and connecting Spanish with particular familial memories. There is not necessarily a contradiction between the mother’s pedagogical goals and Tania’s metalingual plays. Through her contributions Tania controls the metalinguistic activity by

naming words and by playfully reflecting upon the indexical meanings of these words, both global indexical meanings of how “Spanish people” talk, as well as local, familial meanings. She also displays autonomy (in ways that may be associated with performing “being an adolescent”) by not paying attention to what her mother says, interrupting her and steering the conversation. Moreover, in changing the footing to a playful frame, she displays autonomy by not readily accepting a role as a novice, implied by her mother’s claim to the expert role.

## 4.2 Family 2: Postman Pat and Christmas dinner

Excerpts 3 and 4 below are recorded in Family 2, which consists of the father, mother and two teenage sisters, Matilda (17) and Sol (14). The first lines of these excerpts demonstrate a language choice pattern which is typical of most interactions in the recorded material of Family 2: The father addresses the girls in Spanish, and the girls respond in Norwegian. However, both excerpts also illustrate how the daughters, particularly the youngest one Sol, employ Spanish in playful ways and thereby create spaces to use Spanish and negotiate the roles of expert and novice between them and the father.

The sequence in Excerpt 3 is part of a longer episode of playful talk in the family, consisting of word plays, improvisations and musical performances of the theme song from Postman Pat. The mother asks at one point how to sing it in Spanish (“how is that ((song)) in Spanish”), and thereby also positions the father as a Spanish expert. In the proceeding turns, the father responds by translating the song turn by turn. Sol asks him to sing it, but the father refuses, and Sol completes the task herself, which is where Excerpt 3 starts:

Ex. 3 Postman Pat

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Sol    | vent vent ka va Postmann Pat igjen<br>wait wait how do you say Postman Pat?            |
| 2 | Father | <b>Cartero Pat</b><br>'Postman Pat'  |
| 3 | Sol    | <b>Cartero Pat Cartero Pat</b> ((singing))<br>Postman pat postman pat                  |
| 4 | Father | <b>Con su gat-</b><br>With his ca-   |
| 5 | Sol    | <b>con su gato blanco y negro</b> ((singing)) ha ha ha<br>With his white and black cat |
|   | Mother | ((laughing))   |



- 6 Father **no:: ga- con su gato negr- negro y blanco**  
No: ca- with his black and white cat
- 7 Sol **negro y blanco**  
Black and white
- 8 Mother ((laughing))
- 9 Father Ha ha ha ha ha
- 10 Mother Nei, det va-  
No, it was-
- 11 Father **Mi hija, pasame el agua por favor**  
My daughter, pass me the water please
- 12 Sol **eh el está ehm antes de tiempo en su ehm ruta de trabajo** ((ryhtmic singing))  
Eh he's ehm always on time on his ehm work route  
((rhythmic singing))
- 13 Father **trabajo**  
work
- 14 Sol æ sa det jo  
That's what I said
- 15 Father **ah yo escuche traje**  
Ah I heard “brought”
- 16 Matilda Ha ha
- 17 Mother He he he
- 18 Sol Ka betyr det?  
What does that mean?
- 19 Matilda betyr ikke det snær- eh  
Doesn't that mean like- eh
- 20 Father **de traerte**  
From bringing
- 21 Matilda **trajo**  
brought
- 22 Father **traer de traer (.) ta med (2.) traer traigo, él traje**  
Bring, from bring (.) to bring ((in Norwegian)) to bring I  
bring, he brought

In translating the song to Spanish, Sol creatively incorporates Spanish into the interaction. She uses her father as linguistic support and sings the translated version of Postman Pat in Spanish, in what could be interpreted as playful meta-pragmatic socialization (Blum-Kulka 1997), and is similar to the translanguaging strategies described by García and Wei (2014). Her father claims the expert role several times during the interaction and positions himself as a language support

for Sol, and corrects her (lines 4, 6 and 11). In line 11 Sol rejects the correction, leading the father to clarify that he misheard her (he heard *trajo* (tr. brought) instead of *trabajo* (tr. work)). Sol asks what this word means, and thus creates an opportunity for an informal language learning sequence. Her older sister Matilda attempts to answer, but the father again takes the role as the teacher and provides another example of the same word (in a different verb-form), translates it to Norwegian and conjugates the verb in tense in Spanish.

In the interaction, Sol exerts agency by negotiating positions and setting the key and footing for the interaction. We see Sol both claiming (lines 1 and 13) and rejecting the role of pupil (line 12) and her father's repeated language instructions. The father takes the role of language teacher (lines 2, 4, 9, 16), and creates opportunities to claim the role as an expert and to support the daughter's initiative. At the same time Sol's playful use of Spanish creates an opportunity for her to employ Spanish and to initiate and control an informal language learning interaction.

The final Excerpt below (4) is recorded a few weeks before Christmas. Sol is a vegetarian, but during this dinner conversation, she states that she misses to eat the traditional Norwegian Christmas dish *ribbe* (English *pork ribs*). To alleviate her cravings for this dish, she suggests that she is going to cheat ("I- I will cheat on Christmas Eve"), that is, to forget her vegetarian diet for a little while on Christmas eve and have a taste of the Christmas dish. Her parents, particularly her father, are afraid she will get sick if she suddenly starts to eat meat again. These conflicting interests between them develop into a small argument between Sol and her father, where the father suggests, in Spanish, that she should start eating meat little by little from now on.

Ex. 4 Planning the Christmas dinner

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Sol    | ja men æ kan spise LITT ribbe<br>Yes but I can eat a LITTLE bit of rib   |
| 2 | Father | <b>si quieres comer ribbe para navidad [de aho-</b><br>If you want to eat rib for Christmas, from no-                              |
| 3 | Sol    | (((makes a burping/vomiting<br>sound)))  |
| 4 | Father | <b>Escucha, desde ahora deberias ir a comer una vez por<br/>semana un</b><br>Listen, from now on you should go and eat once a week |
| 5 |        | <b>poquito de carne si hasta acust- [que- QUE</b><br>a little bit of meat until you get us- that- THAT                             |
| 6 | Sol    | <b>[pero no no no quiero,</b><br><i>But I don't don't don't want to</i>  |

- |    |         |  |
|----|---------|--|
| 7  |         | <b>yo quiero eh</b> [eh ju- juksar en la julaftenito.<br>I want to eh eh ch- cheat-ar on Christmas Eve-ito |
| 8  | Father  | <b>[está mejor si va acostumbrando</b><br>It's better if you get used to it                                |
| 9  | Matilda | [\$ juksar\$ ((while laughing))<br>Cheat-ar  |
| 10 | Mother  | [he he (..) he he ((laughter increases))   |
| 11 | Father  | ((laughing))   |
| 12 | Matilda | ((laughs loudly))  |
| 13 | Sol     | ((joins in laughing))  |

Sol and her father have divided opinions on the topic: Sol wants to eat a little bit of meat just on Christmas Eve, while her father insists that she starts getting used to meat before this day. The disagreement between them is performed in several ways: First, the father and Sol express their diverging positions in the first two lines (and in the turns preceding the excerpt). Second, Sol also seems to display disagreement by making a burping sound (line 3), which is ignored. Third, the father demonstrates parental authority by asking Sol to ‘listen’ (line 4). There is a slight increase in tension between the participants at this point, however, but in lines 6–7, Sol succeeds in changing the footing of the interaction: She accommodates the father’s use of Spanish by switching from Norwegian to a mix of Spanish and Norwegian. Sol’s utterance is perceived as marked both because of her language choice, but also because of the translingual code she employs, which is also very uncommon in the material as a whole (cf. Table 3). At one level, the mix of features can be interpreted as a display of limited Spanish lexical competence: As Sol seemingly lacks the correct Spanish lexemes, she compensates by “spanifying” Norwegian words instead. She adds the Spanish infinitive ending *-ar*, to the verb *jukse* (*juksar*, English tr. *to cheat*) and adds the diminutive ending *-ito*, to the Norwegian word for Christmas eve (*julaftenito*, English *Christmas Evito*). These items can be understood as indexing “spanishness”. At the same time, by “spanifying” Norwegian words, Sol demonstrates grammatical competence of Spanish linguistic features and of how to construct sentences in Spanish. The mixing of Spanish and Norwegian features can be interpreted as a translingual performance and a conscious play with linguistic boundaries and norms (Bauman 2000; García and Wei 2014; Jørgensen 2008).

Moreover, Sol’s code-shift can be interpreted as a face-saving act (cf. Goffman 2005[1967]): Through the accommodation she manages to mitigate the growing tension between her and her father and achieves an alignment with her father, with the father claiming parental authority and clearly disagreeing with Sol’s point of view. Undermining her father’s authority appears non-threatening in the situation,

because Sol also ridicules herself in her performance. As Rampton (2009: 160) argues, performances (such as stylizations) may at times better be interpreted as actions that restore or preserve normal relations and re-stabilize the “ordinary world”. In this sense, by changing the key into a more playful one, Sol reframes the conversation from possibly conflictual to non-threatening, and re-establishes the interactional order (cf. Rampton 2009).

Regardless of whether Sol had a humorous intention or not, the uptake by the other family members is clearly humorous and constitutes an occasion for metalinguistic criticality and for indexing attitudes towards language. Her older sister Matilda repeats one of Sol’s “spanified” words, and laughs increasingly more. This might be interpreted as a friendly tease. As De Fina (2012) argues, joking about other family members’ language competences may become a resource in identity negotiations and a way to construct (dis)alignment, and similarly, by teasing Sol, Matilda distances herself from her. Sol succeeds in drawing attention to linguistic form and the norm transgression of mixing features from different languages (see De Fina 2012 for a similar example). The joint laughter over Sol’s mixed utterance indicates that there are certain expectations regarding the role and use of Spanish in the family, and that transgressing these expectations by for example mixing languages, may be perceived as funny. Moreover, the shared laughter also creates an occasion of negotiating a shared bilingual identity in the family: They are all capable of distinguishing different linguistic norms, and consequently to identify norm breaks. In playing with the family repertoires, Sol’s mixing of features also creates an effect of in-group humour and in-group identification. The father, for example, does not enforce a monolingual context, but accepts the metalinguistic playfulness of such multilingual interactions. The same humorous situation would doubtfully occur if she had responded without mixing languages. Ultimately, Sol exerts agency through her accommodation by renegotiating the frame of the conversation: She changes the subject, saves face and produces laughter.

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

This article has provided four examples of translingual, metalinguistic and playful talk in two families. The analysis of the intergenerational interactions has shown that playful activities form a vital part of the two multilingual families’ communication and constitute a site where the family members through their linguistic practices negotiate agencies and identities as well as displaying metalinguistic awareness and competences. In the presented excerpts, the adolescents engaged in negotiating the position of Spanish in the family, and thereby also negotiating social positions within the family. The playful key of the conversations (often

initiated by the children themselves through a change of footing) opens for negotiations of expert and learner identities where the adolescent children may escape the position as language learners.

Also, the parents make use of non-serious, informal moments to engage with the adolescents in different ways. The parents use various strategies (e.g. claiming authority or the role as language teacher, language choice) to achieve pedagogical goals, for example, guiding children towards specific language norms. Similar to what Kheirkhah and Cekaite (2017) show, the excerpts of Family 2 show that siblings may engage in each other's language use through metalinguistic discussions and informal language lessons. While the parents tend to exploit children's metalinguistic comments to orient towards linguistic norms, the children's multilingual playfulness is a way of demonstrating participation and engagement in the heritage language and to use language in accordance with their own competences and preferences. Research from the classroom context has shown how children often use multilingual features as a resource in metalinguistic plays to create free-zones and play frames (Cekaite and Aronsson 2004). Such activities imitate formal instructions and are also expressions of children's participation, engagement and agencies. This study shows that similar practices take place also in the playful, metalinguistic talk between parents and adolescent children.

In the presented examples, the adolescents create possibilities to negotiate the role and meaning family languages and family identities. Previous research on child agencies in multilingual families has tended to interpret not responding when addressed in the heritage language, or not complying with parents' language teaching initiatives as actions of a resistance (towards the family language policies) (Fogle and King 2013; Revis 2016). The examples provided in this study suggests that not complying with parents' positionings, initiatives or language choices also encompass several other interactional achievements.

The mixing of Spanish and Norwegian features that was presented in the excerpts, can be interpreted as conscious play with linguistic boundaries and norms, and can be viewed as instances of *translanguaging* (cf. García and Wei 2014; Jørgensen 2008). In line with Canagarajah (2019), the article has shown that even fragmentary use and hybrid heritage language practices can be enough to develop a shared indexicality within certain communities. The adolescents' use of Spanish suggests that speakers with only partial knowledge of a family language can use translanguaging practices as a way to construct continuity: The excerpts showed how adolescents construct Spanish as a family language and how they employ Spanish to construct family identities, by, for example, drawing on family biographies or socializing less knowledgeable family members, both pets and younger siblings, into the family's linguistic repertoires. Through metalinguistic and metapragmatic

comments the participants' draw attention to linguistic form, and creates a basis for informal language learning.

Spanish is, to some extent, positioned as a resource to construct continuity and a sense of belonging in the family. However, the analyses also suggest that the use of Spanish is not *only* related to heritage language and heritage identities. Rather, translanguaging practices have various functions in family interaction. For example, transgressing norms and playing with linguistic boundaries is shown to produce a humorous effect in both monolingual and multilingual conversations (Åhlund & Aronsson 2015; Cekaite & Aronsson 2004; Johnsen 2020a; Norrick 1993). Playful talk, translanguaging practices and displays of creativity may be constitutive for new understandings of the meaning of the heritage language and of entirely new practices and multilingual family repertoires (cf. Van Mensel 2018; Hiratsuka and Pennycook 2019). These meanings and practices are constantly negotiated in everyday family interactions, and are influenced by each family member's socio-linguistic experiences. The translanguaging practices documented shows how these instances of shared amusement reinforce a multilingual identity and how the adolescents creatively and playfully employ their multilingual repertoires for their immediate communicational tasks. For example, while parents may explicitly claim expert roles, the children do not readily accept a learner role, and the adolescents actively use and display their metalinguistic and metapragmatic competences to negotiate agencies, and alternative identities and social positions.

As the examples showed, communicative goals may swing from didactic to playful during the course of an interaction: Similar to the findings in Hiratsuka and Pennycook (2019), the excerpts in this article demonstrate how participants change their attention, changes the key of the conversation, and jump between conversational topics and partners (which may also include family pets). These shifting orientations also reflect in language use. The findings in the present study support the idea that language use in multilingual families expands beyond language maintenance strategies and language policies (cf. Hiratsuka and Pennycook 2019). Using Spanish in interaction do not necessarily derive from explicit language maintenance strategies, however, heritage languages may hold a particular position and be reproduced as an indexicalized identity resource for the family members. Exploring how heritage languages are used by the different generations in multilingual families, may challenge the commonly reproduced static, homogeneous conception of languages, that is often found in studies of language maintenance and intergenerational transmission.

Transcription conventions

-	Interrupted talk
MAJ	Emphatic speech
[	Onset of overlapping talk
“hi”	Reported speech
\$yes\$	Smiling voice
xxx	Unintelligible speech
(yes)	Uncertain transcription/guess at unclear word
((laughing))	Researcher’s comment
?	Rising intonation (like in a question)
unmarked	In colloquial Norwegian
<b>italics</b>	In Spanish
<i>italics</i>	In German

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