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SUPPORTIVE FAMILY-TEACHER COMMUNICATION IN FINNISH ECEC: LOOKING AT WHAT WORKS IN MULTICULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

"A view from an Inclusive education perspective"

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ABSTRACT

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Effective communication between families and teachers supports School-Family partnerships that benefit children’s development. The scope of strategies for maintaining ongoing communication should vary according to each families’ character, therefore, we utilized a variety of methods such as digital and oral forms of communication. This pilot case study set out to investigate and deepen our understanding of the supportive family-teacher online/offline communication practices and the nature of multicultural family-school partnerships in the Finnish early childhood education context. The central aim was to discover the flow and communicative organization of school-family partnerships including how families and teachers request and answer to each other. Considering the challenges of understanding the structure of partnerships, audio-recording of morning/afternoon transitions were analysed using conversation analysis, and text exchanges were studied using digital conversation analysis. A one-on-one interview with participants and weekly letters were also used as supporting evidence. The research was conducted in Helsinki with a total of two multicultural family-teacher partnership, Case 1 being a successful father-teacher partnership and Case 2 being a digital communication supporting school-family partnerships. The patterns of the conversation were revealed in Case 1: *Jointly focusing on the institutional goals, Co-creating culturally sustainable practices, and Mutual understanding through repetition* and in Case 2: *Trust growing by trust* and *Ongoing exchange of information*.

In both cases, a pattern of welcoming and respectful interactions between the two spheres was revealed, and through successful school-family partnerships, inclusive ECEC environments were co-created and maintained to enrich children's learning experiences. Epstein's (2018) theory on two-way communication was revealed to be an important element in building and maintaining successful multicultural family-school partnerships. There were other common patterns used by the participants when the trouble sources occurred in ongoing interactions, with four significant factors (1) using alternative expressions (2) based on the amount of already shared knowledge (3) open-repair and (4) repetition. We conclude that common grounding knowledge built through practices between teacher-family may help to overcome linguistic and culturally derived differences. Despite the sampling limitation, this study’s findings represent a starting point for understanding the nature of multicultural family-school partnerships, and the current practices of communication in various ways.

Keywords: School-Family Partnerships; parent-teacher communication; digital communication; Finnish early childhood education practices; multicultural families; Institutional Interaction

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INTRODUCTION

“It would be fun to explore other languages and your child's world next week”

This quotation is from a weekly letter written by a teacher to the families, who was a part of this study which explores supportive family-teacher communication in Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. The quote illustrates the starting point for the current research: we see that the daily experiences of multicultural families and children in Finnish ECEC are in the process of cultural and linguistic adaptation and identity formation. In the face of a rapidly changing world, current educational goals call for urgent activation of collaborative family-school partnerships. One of the reasons is to create personalized learning environments that support and motivate each child to nurture their passions and enable agency (OECD, 2018). It, therefore, acts as an important starting point to acknowledge and identify possible strategies for supportive communication in multicultural family-teacher partnerships.

While there has been much research on multicultural families’ and teachers’ perceptions of partnerships in the Finnish context (Arvola et al., 2017; Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018; Lastikka, 2019; Levinthal et al., 2021) none have addressed the way by which interactions of partnerships are structured. Previous research has established that the quantity of communication may not be as functionally necessary to develop school-family partnerships (Paccaud et al., 2021). Instead, communicating in relational engagement entails constructing quality relationships in a reciprocal, equitable, and respectful way (Sheridan & Moorman Kim, 2015). What is less clear is how the relationships are established, the structure of the dialogues, as well as how mutual goals are attained when communication problems arise.

It is important to gain more empirical evidence to understand family-teacher interactions that encourage joint support for children’s learning and interests. Thus, one underlying premise of this study is the social interaction that naturally

occurs between multicultural families and teachers in Finnish ECEC. To address such phenomenon, in this study we used the theme of Epstein's (2010) *School-Family-Community Partnerships,* which advances our understanding of what constitutes successful school-multicultural family partnerships. Considering the challenges of understanding the structure, flow, and communicative organization of partnerships, conversational analysis methods were needed to investigate the social interactions between multicultural families and teachers through morning/afternoon transitions and digital platforms (Christian & Jon, 2002).

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 draws together the previously published research relevant to the current research. It defines school-family partnerships as social interaction and then reviews the literature regarding communication and barriers to practices. We also critically consider Conversation Analysis (CA) as a methodological and theoretical framework in Chapter 2. The research design for the pilot case study and the methods we have chosen to adopt are the subjects of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 organizes the main findings according to the major themes, which relate to patterns of talk on a case-by-case basis: Case 1: Successful Father-Teacher partnerships *1) Jointly focusing on the institutional goals, 2) Co-creating culturally sustaining practices,* and *3) Mutual understanding through repetition.* Case 2: Digital communication supporting School-Family partnerships *1) Trust grows by trusting,* and *2) Ongoing exchange of information*. Chapter 5 is for more general conclusions regarding the research questions, based on the discussion presented in the previous chapter. It mentions the limitations of the current research and recommendations for future research.

In the research, *'multicultural family'* refers to families of children living with at least one immigrant parent/guardian in Finland. Although the term *immigrant* was considered, *multicultural* or *culturally and linguistically diverse* hold more positive attitudes (Sawrikar & Katz, 2009). The term *family* is mainly used versus *parents* to respect a range of family structures. Finally, throughout the thesis, the word *school* refers to the state funded ECEC within Finland.

1 SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AS A SOCIAL INTERACTION

In this chapter, we view school-family partnerships in which families and teachers cooperate to enhance the development of children's socio-emotional skills. From the perspective that successful school-family partnerships emerge out of cooperative interactions, we note the establishment of two-way communication between teachers and families in the Finnish ECEC context. Finally, we identify barriers that lead to insufficient collaborative practices, especially in the case of school-multicultural family partnerships.

1.1 School-Family partnerships

In many curricula frameworks across countries, enhancing shared responsibility and cooperation between guardians and schools is considered one of the most powerful ways to support children's growth (Albaiz & Ernest, 2021; Boulaamane & Bouchamma, 2021; Epstein & Mcpartland, 1976; Orell & Pihlaja, 2014). Epstein (1985) has advocated the *Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence* for a long time and considered children as active actors in their development and success in school. She also developed a framework of six types of parental involvement: *parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with community*. It emphasizes various forms of high-quality communication to facilitate extensive programs of school-family partnerships (Christenson & Reschly, 2010).

Previous studies on school-family partnerships have explored the complex character of factors that promote or hinder parental involvement and interactions (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Norheim, 2020; Turney & Kao, 2009). Families' motivation and beliefs appear to be related to both their participatory practices and children's outcomes (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Clark and Ladd (2000) found that autonomy support from families was correlated with children's social competence, cognitive development, interaction with peers, and self-regulation. They applied Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) *model of the parental involvement process* which focuses on the psychological and contextual factors that impact the parents' active participation.

Five levels of parental involvement suggested by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) have inspired actions for developing strong school-family partnerships. The first level of factors, which impacts parents' initial decision to engage in their children's learning, is related to their own motivational beliefs, perceptions of others' invitations, and awareness of their life contexts. The second level focuses on the specific forms the involvement takes. Next, the process of parental involvement, influencing children's outcomes, constitutes the third level. The fourth level contains the mediating variables, for instance, the use of developmentally appropriate practices for children and the fit between home and school expectations. Finally, the fifth level concentrates on students' capability, including self-confidence, motivation, ability, and knowledge management to achieve successful outcomes in school.

However, it is important to acknowledge that those predictors of involvement primarily focus on parental motivation, whilst concealing the role of the school in arranging programs that encourage families to participate in their children's education, in a productive manner (Sheldon et al., 2010). In this respect, poor school-family partnerships, as a result of the social dynamic shift cannot be associated simply with a low parental interest in children's education, as it is sometimes implied by educators. In order to build inclusive partnerships with families, educators should be able to converse with various groups of families to generate shared responsibility for students (Arvola et al., 2017). This indicates that families should have more ownership of their actions, and teachers should have a deeply reflective attitude for implying equal partnerships (Graham-Clay, 2005).

Epstein's (2010) theory of overlapping spheres of influence is based on the combination of psychological, educational, and sociological perspectives. Based on this theory, we seek social interactions, communication processes, and emotional bond building between multicultural families and teachers. Considerations of the mechanisms by which certain interactions between families

and teachers for individual children may occur, such as family-teacher meetings, are also consistent with the present study. With Epstein's definition of partnerships, this pilot study experimented with innovative approaches to reveal online/offline communication and interactions between culturally and linguistically diverse families and teachers in the Finnish ECEC.

1.1.1 School-Family partnerships to support children's social development

School-family partnerships associated with positive outcomes on children's school performance are at the cutting-edge of the global education agenda (OECD, 2018). The benefits of the partnerships continue to extend beyond children's academic achievement to the social skills necessary for successful social adaptation (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Patel & Agbenyega, 2013; Tobin & Kurban, 2018). Much of the literature since 1960 has explored the relationship between school-family partnerships and children's academic learning, as well as social and emotional skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Wentze (1999) reported that families might have an impact on the development of children's social and motivational processes through continuous home-based involvement. In another study, Clark and Ladd (2000) found the influential family variables affecting children's friendships and sense of self-efficacy in social relationships. These findings demonstrate families as vital factors that influence multiple aspects of children's school and social life, but the school's role is deficient.

The growing interest in school-family partnerships impacting children's social skills has initiated much research into school-based intervention programs related to positive behavior support (Jones, 2018; Lareau, 2000; McIntosh et al., 2014; Strickland–Cohen et al., 2021). The research conducted by McWayne et al. (2004) found that among 307 children, who have their families actively involved in the school context and promoted learning at home, tend to have more positive social relationships. In the same context, Knoche et al. (2012) proved that when families of disadvantaged children participated in Getting Ready, an intervention program, their children showed higher levels of interpersonal skills and lower levels of anxiety than children of non-participated families. These

studies clearly suggest that various strategies and practices in schools that encourage and accommodate families can create shared responsibility for children's social and emotional development.

With regards to the relevance of children's positive well-being in the context of daily life and social interaction within the family and daycare, educators have important implications for children's social-emotional support (Walton, 2020). Looking at the Finnish context, early childhood education is based on the national core curriculum (Finnish National Agency For Education, 2019), which emphasizes the well-being of children as a central aim. Children's well-being in Finland has been studied broadly (Kirvesniemi et al., 2019), however, studies of children of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly in the ECEC context are lacking. Additionally, much of the literature on home and school collaboration has mainly focused on children's learning, parental engagement or involvement, and parents' or teachers' collective experiences in these partnerships (Ishimaru, 2019; Levinthal de Oliveira Lima & Kuusisto, 2020; Paz-Albo Prieto, 2018).

Given today's social diversity, communication between home and school is critical to provide children with practices of respecting another's experience, expertise, and values (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Epstein, 2018). It is the schools' responsibility to promote collaborative partnerships with families, and teachers should demonstrate respect for diversity (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). School-family partnerships are sustained by two-way communication within welcoming and responsive environments (Pirchio et al., 2013). On this basis, how effective communication can invite families to work as partners supporting children's social-emotional and educational development will be further explained in the next chapter.

1.2 Communication in School-Family partnerships

Two-way communication between school-family is a vital part of efforts to improve children's social-emotional and academic learning outcomes (Epstein, 2010). Open dialogue with teachers makes it easy for families to monitor children's learning progress, countering the children's problems, and actively supporting their learning at home. Whereas for teachers, it could lead to an appreciation of

home resources and strengthened understanding of the family's views about their children's abilities and development. Schools' responsibilities include having open and dynamic communication channels, which allow for information sharing about program content and implementation, as well as the development and strength of children (Dor, 2018).

The fundamental contribution of past research has revealed how communicative interactions are created out of the contributions of both the families and the teachers (Blitch, 2017; G. A. Cheatham & Ro, 2011; Kuusimäki, 2022; Rimm-Kaufman & Yubo, 2005). According to Giles and Gasiorek's *Communication Accommodation Theory* (CAT), when interacting, participants modify their communicative behaviour centred around the assessment of their fellow participant and their intention to create and uphold an optimistic individual and group identity. Furthermore, participants come with preliminary notion, which is influenced by elements such as relevant interpersonal, intergroup histories, and predominant sociohistorical perspective (Giles & Gasiorek, 2012).

A key to supportive communication is accepting each other's experiences and expertise, which may build mutual trust, openness to feedback, and empathy between families and teachers (Forsberg, 2007; Gestwicki, 2015; Graham-Clay, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman & Yubo, 2005). Adams and Christenson (2000) conducted a survey to assess practices and to create recommendations for improving trust in family-school relationships. The high-quality interactions with families strongly predicted achieving trustworthiness than the amount or frequency of contacts or demographic variables. In the same vein, trust also depends on cultural characteristics (Qin, 2020). For example, Blitch (2017) found that the teachers had more difficulty building trust with families with less familiar cultural backgrounds. Interpersonal trust can be developed upon repeated interactions enhancing familiarity (Adams & Christenson, 2000), yet the structure of quality communication shaping the partnerships with multicultural backgrounds families remains unclear.

Different types of interactions between families and teachers are available throughout the Finnish ECEC program (Lastikka, 2019), including transition times, coffee mornings, parent meetings, individual ECEC plans, and written communication via email, text message (e.g., weekly letters). In addition, interpreting services or digital communication platforms are continuous efforts to

bridge the language gap and enhance interactions with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Kuusimäki, 2022). The popularization of digital devices has transformed communication between families and teachers into easier interactions by allowing them to receive messages simultaneously (Palts & Kalmus, 2015).

More recent studies have demonstrated how the use of digital platforms may aid in the prevalence of two-way communication (Kuusimäki et al., 2019; Korhonen & Lavonen, 2014). Diverse communication channels allow families to communicate in their preferred ways, making it easier for family members involved in their children's development and learning (Arthur et al., 2018). Continuing on this line, Kuusimäki (2022) proposes to consider information topics when determining the communication channels to prevent conflicts and sensitive issues between schools and families. When we think of school-family partnerships as the creation of relationships based on two-way communication, the question is which interactions are understood to be supportive and meaningful, and how trustworthy relationships are built. Thus, it is important to understand how the various communication channels are used by both families and teachers, including the communication strategies adopted accordingly.

1.3 Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care

The Finnish ECEC recognizes all children as active agents of exploring and perceiving their surroundings and learning environments, creating joyful and meaningful experiences (Finnish National Agency For Education, 2019). It also emphasizes children's personal relationships, learning, expansion, and development in safe environments that allow for play and other activities. Furthermore, it also conveys the importance of inclusiveness in educational contexts where children's diverse languages and cultures are the core values of the system. Since the 1990s, the phenomenon of multiculturalism as part of children's world has been identified in Finnish early childhood education documents (Layne & Lipponen, 2016).

The Finnish government's concentrated efforts for providing stable ECEC services to all families, regardless of their background, was further improved to cover all children under school age centralizing the learning process through

activities (Salminen, 2017). Providing individualized learning opportunities is considered part of ensuring a high-quality early childhood education by indicating that each child has a right to get support based on their developmental requirements (Karila & Alasuutari, 2012). With regards to educational goals rooted in social welfare, universalism, and equal access, individuality and respect for a child are also the main priorities when learning takes place (Paavola & Pesonen, 2021).

Within the ECEC framework, the teachers are encouraged to offer young children an educational interaction and atmosphere that embraces holistic growth, development, and learning (Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016). Regarding everyday practices, this also means providing sufficient opportunities to see and experience diversity and differences, which encourages children to express themselves and be comfortable interacting with others (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). For example, it continues to use family resources and languages as part of children's daily activities and playtime.

In the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018 (2019), the significance of the collaboration between schools and families is well documented in separate sections on *co-operation with guardians* and *operational cultures*. This notion underlines the task of educators to guide families when designing their children's individual ECEC plan (Karila & Alasuutari, 2012), as well as to support family-teacher and family-family interactions to enhance the sense of community. However, building meaningful school-family partnerships is challenging and often requires the partners to appreciate the different skills and strengths of each other (Norheim & Moser, 2020). In the next chapter, we continue discussing the barriers associated with partnerships with families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

1.4 Barriers for School-Multicultural Family partnerships

Families, who had poor interactions with teachers or were dissatisfied with the school as students, tend to be more hesitant to cooperate with schools (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Uncertainty about participating in school activities or the lack of appropriate options for the families' conditions may be the other reasons for some families (Dor, 2018). These issues are further compounded, for instance, for the

families with cultural differences or language barriers with the teachers (T. L. Baker et al., 2016). For example, Bouakaz (2007), who interviewed Arabic-speaking immigrant parents in Sweden, found that engaging in Swedish schools to support their children's learning was hindered by their own earlier school experiences.

Teachers, on the other hand, may lack proper training in how to communicate effectively with diverse family structures, experiences, languages, and values (Lee et al., 2018). These complexities may lead to teachers' dissatisfaction and discomfort with differences, which can result in a diminished interest in interactions with families (Layne & Lipponen, 2016). A similar tendency was found in the Finnish context, where the educators struggled to engage the non-Finnish speaking families in their children's educational process (Sinkkonen & Kyttälä, 2014). Therefore, it is important to adequately recognize the variety and level of responsibility of schools and families when actions are taken to realize school-multicultural family partnerships. It involves challenging the power structures and practices of diverse sociocultural communities in educational settings.

1.4.1 Diverse languages and cultures

One of the most powerful demographic trends in today's society is the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity within schools. The rise in students with at least one parent born abroad is partially impacting the consequent shifting makeup in the school systems (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Stance towards cultural and linguistic diversity within the school is largely considered in two ways. One is to embrace the value of diversity, and the other is to view it as a burden that hinders the learning of other students. Various studies have suggested that the families' lack of competence in the second language is an obstacle to participation, suggesting that removing language barriers could lead to a closer school-family relationship (Goodman & Hooks, 2016; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Miller, 2019).

A considerable amount of literature demonstrates that each family has different beliefs about their roles and the ways of interacting with teachers and children (Blitch, 2017; Dyson, 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Vesely et al., 2013). For instance, the Finnish families view partnerships as complementary to the

teachers' responsibilities (Böök & Perälä-Littunen, 2015), whereas the immigrant families see the teachers as professionals and see themselves as subordinates (Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016). A study conducted by Dyson (2001) found that the conversation topics and preferred communication channels with schools differed between non-immigrant European-Canadian and Chinese immigrant families. Non-immigrant European-Canadian families conversed more and preferred face-to-face interactions with their children's teachers, whereas mainly dealing with school-related issues via written communication was the preferred communication way for Chinese-Canadian families.

Recent research in school-family partnership advocates an inclusive approach to the richness of diversity, suggesting that the diversity in children's families and experiences should be considered positively, not as a problem or flaw (Ainscow, 2016; Hong, 2017; Walton, 2020). A case study conducted by Jokikokko and Karikoski (2016) found that a teacher's positive experiences in a multicultural setting provided her with a higher appreciation of diversity, more self-confidence, and practical skills to encounter diversity in a positive way. It is evident that language barriers, regardless of the intentions of the schools and the families, could be one of the biggest hurdles to school-family partnerships, without adequate communication strategies.

The questions remain regarding how communication is handled when conflict arises, how the teachers and the families understand and respect cultural diversity during interactions, and the types of communication skills that sustain successful school-multicultural family partnerships. Thus, in the present study, we attempt to reveal the processes and practices of effective communication and partnerships between school-multicultural families.

1.4.2 Asymmetrical power relations

After limited language skills and cultural differences, power relations are one of the most frequently identified barriers to creating inclusive partnerships between families and ECEC practitioners (Norheim & Moser, 2020). Empirical findings suggest that power differences as complex and intertwined barriers that regularly operate the practices of school-family partnerships (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Escayg, 2019; Kingston, 2021). Bilton (2017) found that British

families tend not to display their expertise in the subject of conversation to avoid challenging the authority of teachers. In the case of Finland, educators with a prominent level of professional education tend to treat families as passive customers (Alasuutari, 2010; Hujala et al., 2012; Karila & Alasuutari, 2012). These findings support an expert model (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) that limits the opportunities for the families to participate and considers them a less important role than the teachers.

On the other hand, when the teachers work as service providers to meet the needs of the families, the balance of power shifts towards the families (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; McNamara et al., 2000). This may be the case with a consumer model, which places families in a more influential position. For example, Pillet-Shore (2012) observed that the teachers try to minimize harm to avoid conflict and strengthen relationships with the parents. All the above-mentioned elements reveal the asymmetrical nature of family-teacher relationships, and the gap between the literature on equal school-family partnerships and typical practices found in the field (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Hence, the prevailing view amongst many researchers and professionals is that developing ways to share the power more equitably between families and teachers should be taken as the ideal (Epstein, 2018; Paananen et al., 2019; Tveit, 2009). According to this view, actively listening to families' voices and incorporating them into decision-making can collaboratively create inclusive educational settings (Olusegun et al., 2013). Likewise, a qualitative study (McNaughton et al., 2008) found that the families considered the three active teacher's listening skills were essential during the conversation: taking notes, discussing the next steps, and showing interest and concern. Another core element for multicultural families to form mutual trust and respect with the school was the intercultural sensitivity of teachers (Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016). Such competencies value the families as assets in their children's schooling and learning, and support the construction of strong school-family partnerships (Shivers et al., 2004).

The current Finnish ECEC curriculum has increased teachers' responsibility to integrate diversity into their day-to-day practices with children and families (Arvola et al., 2017). However, the teachers reported several difficulties when trying to address insufficient school-family partnerships, particularly multicultural

family partnerships. A mixed-method study conducted by Hakyemez-Paul et al. (2018) found that although Finnish early childhood educators' views on family partnerships are overall positive, the lack of legal support is an obstacle to implementing collaborative partnerships. In another study, teachers reported the shortage of professional skills as a reason for insufficient partnership and communication with families (Hong, 2017). These findings support the need to develop both pre-service and in-service teacher education, particularly through simulation-based pedagogical approaches to expand teachers' knowledge and competency in communicating with families, especially in multicultural settings (Deng et al., 2020).

A fundamental contribution of past research on partnerships is the discovery that multiple factors are intertwined to generate positive interactions as well as complex and potentially unstable relationships between families and teachers. The studies presented thus far provide evidence of insufficient school-family partnerships in that communications with families tend to be limited. Regardless of their background, all families should be encouraged to participate in their children's early education. As noted above, language and culture are central to the construction of social relationships with teachers, which often consist of power relations, conversations, and identities. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate successful school-multicultural family partnerships, to identify ways to develop supportive and trustworthy environments for this to happen.

1.5 The present study and its research questions

Considering supportive communication contributes to establishing successful school-family partnerships, the present study aims to analyse social interactions between multicultural families and teachers in the Finnish ECEC practices. Based on this, we can see how the participants are involved in their partnerships through various types of communication channels. The purpose of the study is twofold: to determine the nature, frequency, and effectiveness of multicultural families-teachers' interactions; to justify the methodological approaches in which spoken and online data can be used in tandem to support the unraveling of school-family social dynamics. To guide the study, we asked the following research questions:

1. How do the partnerships between the families with multicultural backgrounds and the Finnish teachers are built?
    a. What is the frequency of the conversation and what is the content of the conversation?
    b. How do the families or the teachers elaborate proposals of the request and how do they answer the proposals of the request?

2. What can the online/offline conversation observed between the multicultural families and teachers tell us about the nature of their relationships?

    a. What are the families and the teachers trying to achieve when engaging in online/offline conversation?

To support this investigation, we applied Conversation Analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework. More specifically, in order to understand the construction of communication and the partnerships between school-family in naturally occurring interactions. Conversation analysis studies, for example, allow understanding of to what extent the participants share common ground (Pietikäinen, 2017), how the turn in conversation is constructed with respect to intended recipients (Billing, 1999; Harjunpää, 2017; Sacks et al., 1974; Wetherell, 1998), and how participants achieve mutual understanding (Heritage, 2005). Hence, conversation analysis enables us to understand various types of social interactions (spoken conversation, online written conversation) that make up school-multicultural family partnerships in the Finnish ECEC context (D. Giles et al., 2015; Ten Have, 2007; Virtanen & Kääntä, 2018).

2 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AS THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Conversation Analysis (CA) studies the structures and practices of the use of language in interactions, as a form of dynamic sequence of social actions between individuals. Using CA as a central theoretical and methodological framework, we discourse about the key elements of CA and, simultaneously, differentiate the possibilities of applying the method in dialogues produced within face-to-face and online interactions. Lastly, we present an overview of how CA methodology has been developed and applied in various fields.

2.1 Conversation Analysis

Garfinkel's (1967) *Studies in ethnomethodology* and Goffman's (1983) *The interactional order* had a great influence on the emergence of Conversation Analysis, which systematically examines naturally occurring dialogues (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff et al., 1977). In the 1960s and 1970s, Harvey Sacks established a framework for studying spoken interaction and further developed fundamental concepts of conversational structure, such as turn-taking and sequential matters. In 1973, Sacks published *opening up closing* with Schegloff (1968) who focused on openings and the systematics of its sequential organization. The ways of using conventions for CA transcripts were developed by Gail Jefferson (1989), one of the foundational contributors.

The primary concern of CA is in revealing underlying structures, the interactional order, and how the subjects achieve intersubjectivity in interaction

(Heritage, 1997). According to Heritage (1984), a sequential a*rchitecture of intersubjectivity* is the way in which interaction rules and practices are drawn by participants that constitute a shared understanding of where they are within the social interaction. Heath (1990), who previously performed a video-based analysis of medical consultations, contributed to the introduction of CA into video recording. As Schegloff (1996) stated, the conversation is the scale by which mundane interactions are explored and practised, through which we form relationships while constructing social identity and dealing with daily lives.

Over the past five decades, an extensive amount of research has uncovered the minute details of interactive structures (Billing, 1999; Lester & O'Reilly, 2019; Rauniomaa, 2008; Sacks et al., 1974; Wetherell, 1998). It allows describing the context in which speakers operate an orderly and interactionally coordinated progression across a wide range of situations (Francis & Hester, 2004). Since the participants display their understanding of the prior turn by using both verbal and nonverbal resources (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, pitch range, and voice quality), examining how it is used by participants to complete their action is important (Pietikäinen, 2017). Hence, another fundamental principle of CA is to enable multimodal communication resources (verbal and non-verbal) to be documented in transcription (Ten Have, 2007).

The meaning of a word or utterance also can be socially indexical (Myers-Scotton, 2020); therefore, its meaning may differ depending on the context in which it is embedded. For instance, a sigh could be interpreted as a demonstration of fatigue, a sign of struggle when speaking, or even approval of a proposal made rather than just a loud form of air exhalation, varying on the context (Rauniomaa, 2008). For this reason, the researchers are required to prioritize participants' understanding of naturally occurring interactions when examining spoken interactions, whether institutional, casual, or official (Bogdan et al., 1975). The appreciation of CA goes far beyond contributing to the study of language use (Ten Have, 2007), it is concerned with the description of how certain practices can yield a certain recognizable actions (Schegloff, 1996).

CA has developed in two types depending on the context of the interaction that takes place, *pure CA* and *applied CA* (O'Reilly et al., 2020). Whereas the former focuses on turn-taking and sequential organization in ordinary conversation, the latter is based on institutional interaction for discovery, such as

institutional rules, instructions, and obligations. Ten Have (2007) states that pure CA can be used to study all kinds of conversational interactions regardless of context or purpose. We applied pure CA with the aim of analysing online/offline interactions between families and teachers, rather than seeking particular kinds of data and analysing in terms of taking findings to design practical guidelines (i.e., emergency call service, courtroom proceedings, and interviews).

With the emergence of contemporary communication technologies in the 1980s, more and more communication takes place in the online environment. Accordingly, the interest of conversational and discourse analysts also shifted to analysing online interaction (D. Giles et al., 2015). Over the past few years, there has been a growing interest in using CA for online interactions known as digital CA (Adkins & Nasarczyk, 2009; D. Giles et al., 2015; Meredith, 2020; Paulus et al., 2016; Vayreda & Antaki, 2009; Virtanen & Kääntä, 2018, 2018).

Laursen (2005) applied CA to find patterns and gain insight into how turns are constructed to achieve particular actions among adolescents, using short message service (SMS) for their communication. Despite the growing literature applying digital CA, the field is still in its infancy and there are methodological questions to be answered (Paulus et al., 2016). Nevertheless, digital CA allows analysts to address some of the context, such as text-based chat and interactions across various online platforms (Meredith, 2017). In doing so, we can achieve a broad understanding of how digital platforms and online interactions impact the relationships and the communicative practices between teachers-families. In this study, we used CA methodology for analysing interactions, namely that are defined and constrained by the social routines of a school setting, carried out both in person or online dialogues.

2.2 Fundamentals of CA

In this section, we discuss in more detail the four analytically distinct but interlocking organizations to investigate online/offline interactions. We also cover other features between the two types of interactions by applying Ten Have (2007)'s CA technique for spoken interaction and Meredith (2019)'s digital CA technique for text-based interaction. The key organizational features of interactions are *turn-taking; sequence organization; repair; and turn-design*

2.2.1 *Turn-taking*

Firstly, the notion of *turn-taking* is based on interactants' activities organized in systematic ways. As a systematic analytical exploration, Sacks et al. (1974) assert that individuals take turns in conversations one at a time. According to this view, only one person speaks at a moment, and the conversation takes a turn with other participants, with as little overlap or gap as possible. In the beginning, participants get one turn each, after which the other speaker takes their turn. The idea of continuous units of talk constructing turn-by-turn bases, in which the speaker changes occur, is also formed at the end of *turn constructional unit* (TCU). To summarise, complete sentences, expressions, single words, or non-verbal utterances (e.g., grunts, whistles, harsh inhalation of breath) are considered as a turn according to context awareness.

Ten Have (2007) states that turns can be designed in several ways, the present speaker can select the next speaker, also any speaker can self-select to take the turn themselves. A turn can also be continued by the same speaker, an example of a clear turn-taking sequence can be seen in Excerpt A. The noticeable gap occurs in line 22 before both Harri and Mika self-select the turn. At the very beginning of the turn, the overlapping talk in which both participants attempt to take the conversational floor has become evident indicated by the use of square brackets. As Sacks et al. (1974) demonstrated, one speaker (in this case Harri) pauses and discontinues his turn, and the other speaker (in this case Mika) continues to keep the floor.

Excerpt A (Rauniomaa, 2008, p.138)

```
19    HARRI: nii  just,
             PRT  PRT
             exactly
20           ...(0.4)
21    MIKA:  joo,
             PRT
             yes
22           ...(2.4)
23-> HARRI: [ihan   niinku ala-a      vastaa-va-a],
             really PRT    field-PTV  correspond-PCP-PTV
             like within the field
24    MIKA:  [e<F>=-n  mie  oo  nyt  meno-s</F>]  kuitenkaan
              NEG-1SG   1SG  be  now  go:INF-INE    however
              I am not really going
             mihinkään mut,
             anywhere  but
             anywhere but
```

It is quite common to have inconsistencies in turn-taking depending on the context of the online platforms (Willing & Rogers, 2017). Another example of turn-taking in digital CA is given below in Excerpt B. This is a multi-person chatroom where there are more than two people. In this case, it is unclear who will take the next turn, although Roy initiates the sentence by giving the next turn to Pooh. Instead of Pooh taking the turn in the following line, Roy takes the next turn himself and mentions Prim. In online interaction, turns to be out-of-order or for recipients not to respond to previous messages are common practices, contrary to the organizational character of face to face interactions (Stommel, 2013).

Excerpt B (Panyametheekul & Herring, 2017)

Roy: POOH, do you have a special friend yet?
Roy: Prim and I will find one for you.

In such instances, it is possible to pursue a response (Meredith, 2019). However, if the topic of turn was not taken up by co-participants, the original sender may locate the turn to pursue of response (Laursen, 2005). Meredith (2017) further adds that in online interaction the turn is constructed and completed when the message has been sent to the recipient. Given the separation of message structure and sending, turn-taking is also affected by the time factor that resulting in a longer time gap than spoken interaction. However, this does not justify the existence of long gaps. It is important to note that the length of the gap between turns can usually be accounted for by the context in which the interactions take place. If the turn gaps are relatively short and then suddenly becomes longer, it is considered an accountable matter (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003).

2.2.2 Sequence organization

The orderly nature of spoken interaction indicates that conversation tends to occur in sequences, through a series of turn-taking. The arrangement of talk-in-interaction is described by Schegloff (2007) as *Sequence organization*. The fundamental category of a sequence is two-part adjacent turns, which is called *adjacency pairs*, as talking through more than two different speakers. The first utterance sequence is usually followed by a sequentially appropriate succeeding

course of action. A sequence of two adjacent utterances could be elaborated, resulting in extended sections of talk being constructed about the central structure adjacency pairs. Paired actions are recognizable as, *a first pair part* (FPP) that which one participant creates an utterance slot and *a second pair part* (SPP) for the next utterance as an appropriate reaction to the first (e.g., question-answer, greeting-greeting, proposal-acceptance/rejection).

A key to comprehending adjacency pairs is that sequence follows the goal-coherent of interaction (Schegloff et al., 1972; Ten Have, 2007). When the speaker initiates a particular kind of utterance as the first pair part for the recipient, he or she must instantly produce the second pair part. An example of adjacency pair is given below in Excerpt C, where a speaker self-selects the turn and presents utterances for the offer-acceptance pair types. In the given sequence, Wes accepts (I'll take some more ice) Mom's offer (Would somebody like some more ice tea), which demonstrates the adjacency pair sequence (Schegloff, 2007).

Excerpt C (Schegloff, 2007, p.5)

```
1 Mom:  = ˙ hhh Whooh! It is so hot tuhnight. *Would somebody like
2       some more ice tea. ((* = voice fades throughout TCU))
3       (0.8)
4 Wes:  Uh(b)- (0.4) I('ll) take some more ice.
```

The interactor may extend the sequence by elaborating the turns at the beginning, middle, or end (Willing & Rogers, 2017). Jefferson and Schenkein (1978) state that *sequence expansion* is up to the participants of the interaction to decide on turn-basis to expand, break-off, or restrict the format of the sequence. There can be adjacency pairs formatted utterances that function as a *pre-sequence* to the next pair (e.g., do you know X?). It functions as a preparation for the next pair. That is, the speaker produces pre-questions to determine whether the next turn can be returned as designed. Alternatively, a *post expansion* might occur once the core sequence has been completed. This is an acknowledgement or assessment in the third position that serves as a kind of *closing sequence* (Schegloff, 2007). Nevertheless, larger expansions are also possible, such as repairs and other ways of reworking or reiterating the topic of the core sequence (Schegloff, 2007; Ten Have, 2007).

Whereas, if we look at sequence organization in online interactions, Meredith (2019) argues that there could be significant disruption in sequence organization. In the Excerpt D from a Facebook conversation, we can see that Gavin does not reply to all the questions in one turn (line 7-10). Rather, he takes one turn for each question in the order they were asked. Participants could respond in sequence as they receive messages, which results in a disruption in turn adjacency. Interactions that can lead to disrupted turn adjacency are quite common in online conversation. Besides, a turn can be self-selected by writers and the writers can also take consecutive turns by stopping and starting at various points during their turn (Benwell & Stokoe, 2011; Tudini, 2010)

Excerpt D (Meredith, 2014, p. 108)

1	Isla:	back to that profile pic haha
2		(41.0)
3	Gavin:	haha
4		(8.0)
5	Isla:	how' s work going?
6		(3.0)
7	Gavin:	I change profile pics like
8		boxers
9		(3.0)
10	Gavin:	not working yet

This could result in unrelated turns that can travel between an FPP and SPP since participants cannot monitor each other's turns. Although some studies indicate that disruption in turn adjacency can result in misunderstanding, it has been noted that users carve a way to sustain intersubjectivity by addressing the user they want to interact with or send the message to (Meredith, 2019). Stommel & Koole (2010) mention that in non-parallel interactions such as emails, there are several FFPs and there is no compulsion for SPPs due to the context of the platform. However, the participants, in these interactions, maintained coherence by quoting the message they received when responding. Although online platforms bend the rules of sequence, Meredith (2019) claims that it is still possible to preserve coherence through action and careful turn design.

2.2.3 Repair

A fundamental principle for CA is the notion of *repair*, which represents a set of practices in the progress of the talk, where trouble occurs, such as problems of mishearing, understanding, or misused words (Lester & O'Reilly, 2019). Repair organization as sequentially structured phenomena, as defined by Schegloff et al. (1977). It shapes the composition of the sentence, and refers to an individual's efforts to handle troubles, arising in a conversation (see also Jefferson, 2007; Schegloff et al., 1977). Once the participant initiates repair, the interaction may not interrupt the point at which the trouble source occurred (Ten Have, 2007). Any utterance could be considered repairable, which means the utterance in the repair sequence could be reconstructed as the trouble-source turn. There is a varying set of repair options in the specific sequential places where the particular techniques are available to carry repairs (Sacks et al., 1974). Four types of repairs can be applied depending on who initiates and performs the repair.

Self-initiated repair. This is the most common type of repair, the same speaker who creates trouble source initiates the solution. Another case of self-initiated repair occurs when the recipient indicates misunderstanding. For example, the speaker identifies the problem and then initiates the repair on the previous turn (Schegloff et al., 1977). *Self-initiated other repair.* This is generally performed in the next turn, whereby the recipient is encouraged to initiate repair by the speaker who caused the trouble source. According to Drew (2005), self-initiated other repair is done often with an open-class repair initiator (e.g., huh, what), where the participant identifies a discontinuity in the topic or indicates that the previous turn's response is inappropriate.

Excerpt E (Ten Have, 2007, p. 135)

15	P:	of als ik gedronken heb (.) en danne: -hh ja dan naderhand heb ik maagzuur
15	*P:*	*or when I've drunk (.) and then uh ·hh then afterwards I have gastric acid*
16		(2.1)
17	D:	hartwater
17	*D:*	*heartburn*
18		(2.0)
19	P:	wattista'
19	*P:*	*what's that*
20	D:	hh
21	P:	huhh
22	D:	oprispingen
22	*D:*	*belches*
23	P:	ja: da- dat noem ik dan maagzuur
23	*P:*	*yes tha- that's what I call gastric acid*

It provides the original speaker an opportunity to self-repair the trouble source and often leads to another type of repair, *Other-initiated self-repair.* The speaker produces the trouble source and constitutes the actual repair, not the recipient who initiates the repair. It can be observed that the speaker sometimes cuts off the current utterance and restarts it by correcting a mistake or using a different expression. *Other-initiated repair*. A repair (*heartburn* in line 17, Excerpt E) is done by others, rather than the one who produces the trouble source (*gastric acid* in line 15). In other words, the different person, who recognizes the trouble source, initiates the repair, or provides a solution to the problem.

Despite the frequently occurring repair phenomenon in conversation, it should not be considered a general feature of spoken interaction. The continuity of interaction consists of the sequence flows, in which the speakers respond to each other, which in technical terms is *progressivity* (Schegloff et al., 1977). It is fruitful to consider *repetition* as another means of signalling trouble in progressivity. Repetition is not only used in the various phases of repair, but also for requesting confirmations and receiving the previous utterance (see also Rauniomaa, 2008; Roh & Lee, 2018; Schegloff et al., 1977). The use of repetition to indicate comprehension of prior utterances or to enhance one's clarity is commonly practiced in everyday conversations (Pietikäinen, 2020; Rauniomaa, 2008; Roh & Lee, 2018).

Excerpt F (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003, p. 258)

2	Bebbi:	Winke mal zum Ketzchen
		Wave once to the ((name))
		Wave to Ketzchen
3	Bebbi:	Winke mal zum Kaetzchen
		Wave once to the ((name=little cat))
		Wave to Kaetzchen

The Excerpt F is the case for online interactions, in which the functions and practices of repair appear differently from talk-in-interaction (Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003). When the sender misspells the message, it can only be corrected in the next turn. In line 2, Bebbi misspelled the name, and then initiated a self-repair to correct the typo in the next turn. Participants marking their corrections also found in Collister's (2011) study on the use of an asterisk (*) as a repair morpheme in

online-only phenomenon. Likewise, several different means (e.g., lexical repetition, lexical substitution, conjunctions) can be used to maintain conversational coherence in online contexts (Laursen, 2005; Paulus et al., 2016; Vayreda & Antaki, 2009). Yet, Meredith (2017) argued the similarities in participants' concerns on repairing the trouble resources, whether turn repair occurs in online or offline interaction.

2.2.4 Turn-design

The fourth type of organization is *turn-design*, which concerns how the speaker organizes turns in a way that suits the recipient (Drew, 2005). Identification and recognition in designing the turn (Sacks et al., 1974), such as addressing a particular recipient's name have consequences for the subsequent interaction. To use the first name effectively, without a need for a repair, is a matter of mutually supposed knowledge (Heritage, 2005). More precisely, the participants create a sequence of turns connected to the next responding turn, which means contingency for the subsequent turn. It relates to the matter of speakers' understanding of what co-participants are doing in their previous turns (Harjunpää, 2017). In technical terms, *intersubjectivity* refers to shared meanings constructed through interlocutors' interactions (Sacks et al., 1974).

The majority of studies on online interaction successfully provided some applicable indications by applying turn-design of spoken interaction (Giles et al., 2015; Meredith, 2017; Meredith & Stokoe, 2014; Stommel & Koole, 2010). Concerning the context of instant messaging interactions, for instance, Meredith (2017) focused on the opening sequence of Facebook chat. Identification and recognition sequences that only occur when needed, depending on affordance and interaction context basis. He further claims that participants may follow similar sequences as face-to-face interaction (e.g., standard opening greeting), but topic initiation is more common in online chatrooms.

Apart from recipient design, opening sequences also vary depending on the context and platform of the conversation (Paulus et al., 2016). In a one-to-one chatroom, one must send a message to initiate an interaction, which generates an electronic alert informing the intended recipient of the received message. Another feature of online interaction is that writers can edit or type a message

according to the expected next turn (Laursen, 2005). The term CA for spoken interaction may not apply to digital CA for text-based interactions, as the way online interactions are understood and analysed may vary by technological context (Adkins & Nasarczyk, 2009; Giles et al., 2015; Meredith, 2019).

2.3 CA methodology in various fields

2.3.1 CA applied to the analysis of online interaction

Cherny (1999) was one of the first researchers applying CA to online interaction for studying multiuse dimensions, an older version of the online game. He studied elements of sequence organization and turn-taking in a virtual world. Subsequent studies conducted on online interactions have explored institutional talk, such as counselling (Ekberg et al., 2016; Stommel & te Molder, 2015), library help services (Stommel et al., 2017). There have also been some studies into how chat systems are used by second-language speakers (Negretti, 1999; Tudini, 2010). Interest has also arisen in using CA to analyse social media interactions and other platforms (Licoppe & Morel, 2018). As CA application to online interaction is categorically different from the ordinary talk, there have newer avenues of research for CA with the popularity of internet-based platforms that are rooted in fields like music, live streaming, interactions via Skype and online team gaming (Giles et al., 2015).

Joanne Meredith (2017) focuses on online communication practices, especially the technological affordances of online interactions. She studied how key features of CA are organized in online interaction, and how affordances are used across platforms. She analysed Facebook chat instant messages between participants. Examining technological affordances as a lens for digital CA, two key interaction practices of adjacency and openings were focused to find online interaction patterns argued that digital CA in online interaction can have different implications versus using CA in ordinary talk. She also touched upon the criticism of CA terminology, and the different implications of turn-taking and sequence organization in the case of online versus spoken interaction (Meredith, 2019).

The review revealed that CA gives evidence and profound knowledge about the nature of online interactions, and contributes to wider arguments about the

role of technology in society (Meredith, 2020; Paulus et al., 2016; Virtanen & Kääntä, 2018).

2.3.2 CA applied to the analysis of Teacher-Family interaction

One of the earliest studies to use CA in inter-institutional settings was conducted by Baker & Keogh (1995). Two institutions (school, home) were explored as an idealized concept through dialogue, how the children were morally accountable to both the entities and how the institutes were constructed through talk, despite their physical and spatial existence. The use of CA methodology revealed that participants (teachers, parents) wanted to present a 'moral version' of themselves to each other. However, the central focus of the study was the conversation topic on student achievement rather than the nature of school-family partnerships.

Danielle Pillet-Shore (2012) used CA to explore problems of praise in parent-teacher interaction to reveal the systematic practices through which research subjects achieved social action. She undertook video-based studies on parent-teacher conversations and organized them systematically. The transcription system developed by Jefferson (2007) was used to derive the findings. Indeed, Pillet-Shore (2012) enhanced the field of CA, through a number of studies by using multimodal perspectives of a situation. In later studies, she used CA in order to discover how interactions are organized when the teachers evaluate the students during parent-teacher meetings (Pillet-Shore, 2016).

Cheatham and Ostrosky (2011) explored the roles of parents and teachers through CA during parent-teacher conferences. The patterns of interaction were discovered that the teachers assumed more of an advice giver's role whereas the parents were mostly at the receiving end. This study was central to the topical motivation of the current study as it reflects how roles/identities are negotiated during interactions that take place at school. However, as in the previous studies mentioned above, the school-family partnerships building phase was not questioned or explored. In another study, they used a mixed methodology including CA to study goal setting in parent-teacher conferences (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013). A comparison was used to find the teachers' expectations from Spanish-speaking parents and native English-speaking parents.

Bilton (2017) conducted a case study-based research that focused on parent-teacher conversations at an English school. The goal was to investigate how parent-teacher conversations were structured and the content of their interactions, through audio recordings of parent-teacher meetings. He also asked the participants to self-record their meetings to allow for a more natural, context-related conversation. The various types of data, one-on-one interviews, school records, and performances of the students were used to support the evidence. However, here also we miss any focus on learning about the multicultural family-teacher partnership practices in relationship building. A study conducted by Bilton et al. (2018) used CA to explore how parents and teachers relate to each other, especially in parent-teacher meetings. They further justified their approach by stating that unstructured interviews with participants helped them understand the participants better. Besides, the setting enriched their capacity to decipher the data in a detailed manner. Bilton (2017) has been one of the major influences in the design of the current study, in terms of the methodology and exploration of the parent-teacher dynamic.

In the Finnish context, Mirka Rauniomaa (2008) used CA to study recovery through repetition in Finnish and English conversations. It encompassed analysing casual conversation where the speakers had felt that their utterance was not reacted to in an adequate way. The participants use repetition and offer their utterances for a more adequate response. Rauniomaa (2008) justified using CA by stating that it provides social significance and structure even to the most ordinary interactions. As evidenced through the literature, school-family partnerships in ECEC are far less and have not been explored extensively through CA, especially not in the Finnish context. Hence, the current study not only fills the gap in studying school-family partnerships but also adds aspects of multicultural families that are much less explored in multiple contexts.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodologies we have used in this study include conversation analysis of audio-recording, digital conversation analysis of text exchanges, and thematic analysis of both the interview data and the weekly letters. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology adopted for the present research.

3.1 The pilot case study

The present pilot study is designed as a case study that aims to understand the construction of positive relationships between Finnish teachers and families with multicultural backgrounds in ECEC settings. As mentioned before, we established three aims for the pilot study:

1) Achieve the reliability and validity of the research instruments.
2) Identify the need to modify research questions or other processes to obtain rich data.
3) Investigate methodological issues.

Attempting to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon requires the elaboration of instruments. The confidence in the reliability of the obtained data can be increased when using consistent and proven tools (Bassey, 1999). Considering the aims of this study and the research questions raised, we determined to address school-family partnerships using a qualitative research perspective. The research design applying a qualitative approach is based on the discovery of subjectively meaningful (Bernard & Bernard, 2013), which is particularly relevant to our study. We ask questions about people's life experiences and the description of specific cases.

In addition, this research was designed under the case study method with the fundamental characteristic of an empirical inquiry (Gagnon, 2010; Woodside, 2010). Case study often collects data from multiple sources (Houghton et al., 2013) and considers the various perspectives of those involved (Hamilton &

Corbett-Whittier, 2012). This smaller study attempts to investigate the nature of successful partnerships between teachers and families with multicultural backgrounds. To reveal the 'elusive phenomenon' in the ECEC, we adopted a microsocial constructionism stance underlying the premise of the perspective that knowledge is not static but is co-constructed in the detail of interactions in the everyday life (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008). It led us to wonder what functions a person's talk might have for the interactions that constantly keep each other engaged. CA as a methodological framework takes up a social constructionist position and works with an elaborate and complex approach (Peräkylä, 2004).

It also investigates interactions in the institutional contexts, including participants' orientations to specific identities and the underlying organization of their activities (Heritage, 2005). However, we conducted 'pure CA' on the basis of unmotivated looking, instead of 'applied CA' which is intentional on some form of the institutional practical application of the findings (O'Reilly et al., 2020; Ten Have, 2007). Within the methodological literature, it is generally accepted that CA aims to discover unrecognized concerns as a detailed naturalistic study of interaction (Sacks et al., 1974). Thus, it allows the researchers to examine socially organized practices and identify sequentially structured phenomena of naturally occurring interaction (Lester & O'Reilly, 2019).

3.2 Participants and methods

3.2.1 Participants

The process of recruiting for the present study was mainly conducted through social media. Additionally, we sent the research invites through the ECEC's mailing lists, visited and called several ECECs in Helsinki to select the candidates, who are especially qualified in the context of this study. During the first phase of the recruitment, we shared a document with a brief description of the study, and the link/QR code to the standardized questionnaire. We used criterion sampling strategies, in which the selection of participants take place with the purpose of the research. We aim to understand how teachers and multicultural families engage in partnerships and collect data from natural interactive experiences through different communication channels.

We received 44 responses, and 6 participants who met the standard for this study ended up recording or sharing their online/offline conversations with the teacher/child's family. Initially, three teacher-family partnerships agreed to either record their interactions or share the text exchanges. In the end, two school-family partnerships were selected, with two participants in each case study. Another partnership between a teacher and mother from Somalia also recorded the first conversation. The recording situation may not have been completely natural because it was too short at 35 seconds and the beginning was missing. For this reason, we had to leave these recordings and the partnership out. The field of research is ECEC, which belong to the Finnish public/private education system.

Case 1. Case 1 is the partnerships between the teacher and Father from France. The teacher is a Finn, who has studied and lived in Finland and considers herself a social educator. She has worked as an early childhood educator for more than 10 years and has experienced multiple successful partnerships with multicultural families. One such partnership was explored in this study. The father on the other hand has been living in Finland for more than 5 years and works full-time. The relationship between teacher and father is less than a year and they consider their partnership as 'good'.

Case 2. Case 2 is the partnership between a Finnish teacher and a mother from Turkey. The mother has been living in Finland for 3-5 years. The 3 years old child joined the international daycare for 2 years and currently has been continued in a Finnish daycare. The participants rated their partnerships as 'good', and the length of the relationship is less than a year. They do not use any school digital platform but communicate through text and email. The mother is in a same research group as the researchers and works in the education field.

3.2.2 Data collection instruments and procedures for each case study

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person qualitative data collection was hindered by the social isolation recommendations in place at the time. The safety of participants and researchers was top priority and adhering to social distancing was a core public health preventive practice. Safety recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021) and

the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare were followed in Early Childhood Education, during the scheduled data collection period from December 2021 to February 2022. ECEC operations continued by implementing the recommendations in the Helsinki metropolitan area that outsiders should avoid visiting the institution. Along with these safety measures, data collection methodologies and processes had to be modified and adapted (Dayal & Tiko, 2020).

In the realm of school-family communication, which can take place face-to-face and via digital platforms, it is necessary to understand whether and how this relates to developing relationships. Since each case study demanded a different approach to capture the essence of the communication strategy adopted by the family and school, we present the instruments and procedures according to each case separately. It is important to emphasize, however, that when using different instruments to collect the data from the dialogues (e.g., text messages, or letters), contextualizing the relevance of the communication to the partners in the same way. Thus, it is important to know if this is the preferred way of establishing dialogue, and understand how the tools (SMS, paper notes, letters and etcetera) are used by both parents and teachers. Hence, the individuality of each case study allows researchers to study evolving teacher-family partnerships through different communication channels, with respect to participatory structures and interaction efficiencies. In the following lines, we explain the data collection process in both cases and illustrate the data sets in Figure 1.

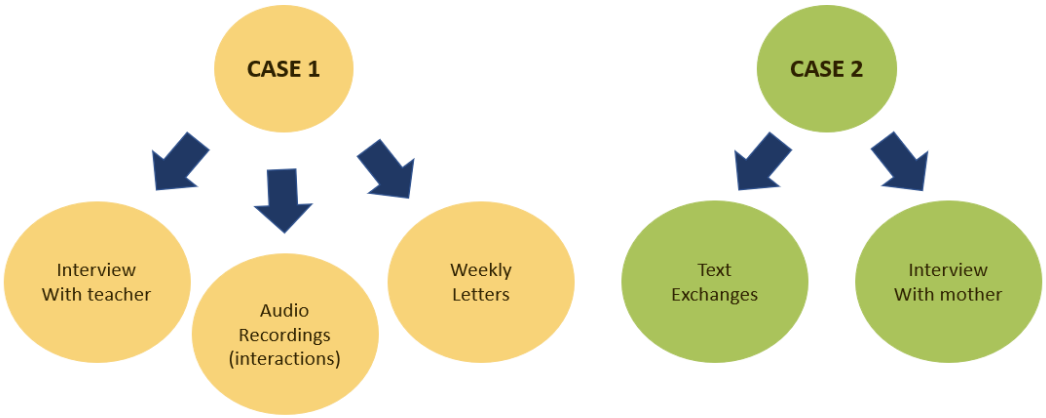

Figure 1. The structure of dataset for each case study

Case 1. The main instrument used for data collection in Case 1 was audio recordings. The data amounts to approximately 20 minutes of conversations, with five face-to-face conversations ranging in length from 1 minute to 4 minutes. Supported by consistent previous findings in parent-teacher interaction research (Bilton et al., 2017; Pillet-Shore, 2016), the audio recording was recognized as the most appropriate resource to access the fine details of interactions. Prior to data collection, an initial step was to have physical access to the environment, which encourages participants to fully engage in the research (Heath et al., 2010). At the preliminary meeting, trust and working arrangements with participants were established, including brief presentations and the recording instructions for the proposed research. Discussing the project with core participants helped clarify any distinctive challenges with the setup and identify key concerns. After the fieldwork, the teacher of Case 1 agreed to record the conversation by herself while complying with COVID-19 safety regulations (Pietikäinen, 2020).

It could be argued that video recording is a more reasonable option because of its benefits in producing elements of the participants' gaze, body position, gestures, and facial expressions in the analysis of communication and meaning construction processes (Heath et al., 2010). However, while video recordings provide a wealth of contextual information. There may be ethical privacy concerns inevitably capturing non-participating families, children, and teachers in the background during the transition period. In addition, setting up the equipment in advance so as not to compromise the naturalness may not capture when the teacher and the father are outside the range of the camera, moving with the child. Due to these reasons, digital audio recording with a smartphone carried by the teacher was more convenient than a video recorder, allowing one to record all the surrounding sounds from a distance.

Case 2. In Case 2, the main tool used for data collection was text exchanges between the mother and the teacher. Conversation analysis of the short message service (SMS) is one way to gain insight into how participants achieve particular actions in online interactions (Harper et al., 2005). Text messages were extracted from the app used by the partners to communicate. All the text excerpts were identified by time records and identifiers of who sent the message. A total corpus

of approximately 34 messages was sent and received by two participants during nine different one-week periods between September and December in 2021. All participants were informed of their rights to refuse the message transcription, and that the study was ongoing.

In sequence, the participants' consent was obtained for individual unstructured interviews to generate supporting evidence. In an open-ended nature of an unstructured interview supported by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), the question categories are not pre-established and emerge through social interactions between the researcher and the respondent. Wherein questions arise spontaneously and also encourage participants to speak freely about the topics considered to be relevant could be more useful than a semi-structured interview for discussing a wide variety of topics (Chauhan, 2019). In both cases, the transcripts were presented to the participants at least one day prior to the interview. Participants' comment on the accuracy of the transcripts and any background information deemed relevant was taken into account, during the data analysis.

A secondary interview was conducted after the analysis and interpretation were completed, usually 1-2 weeks after the data was given. Once again, copies of interpretation on data were provided at least a day before the interview took place. The interview was conducted as a process of sense-making to obtain participants' critical commentary and alternative interpretations. (Ten Have, 2007). To avoid COVID-19 infection, all interviews were conducted via video conferencing platforms, Zoom and Teams. Each interview lasted about one hour, and the audio was recorded and immediately transcribed. In accordance with the ethical guidelines suggested by David et al. (2001), a process of evaluating participants' understanding of the study and their willingness to participate was implemented at the end of the interviews. Additionally, from the first week of Case1 participants' relationship, the teacher sent 19 class-wide emails, but only one letter was used as supportive evidence of our findings.

3.3 Data analysis

To understand the meaning of mutual actions accomplished by the participants, the present study attempts to answer the question of how the participants implicate institutions' relevant identities and negotiate relationships through talk-in-interaction and online interaction (Meredith, 2019; Ten Have, 2007). We adopted Conversation Analysis (Heritage, 2005; Meredith, 2019; Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 1996) as the primary theoretical and methodological framework to examine the transcripts of audio-recorded and text exchanges of episodes between multicultural families and teachers.

As for Case 1, in order to provide as much information on the actual interaction as possible, the materials were presented in two lines: the Finnish original and a free English translation, the published language. Those two languages and interactional context were familiar to the researchers; however, some cultural background knowledge was required to understand the interactions, especially when the participants used another language alongside Finnish and English. Turns were carefully transcribed according to the Jefferson system (Appendix A), which allowed to capture all considered elements related to the indexes and to generate readable and well-informed transcripts for meaningful analysis (e.g., Kämäräinen et al., 2019). A moment-by-moment basis was interpreted with the transcription consisting of timing and sequential organization where a given utterance fits within a sequence of talk (e.g., pause, overlap, latched, emphasis, pitch).

It should be noted that the interactions were originally video recorded. Yet, in light of the issues mentioned in section 3.2.2, we did not examine the video material and limited the analysis to the audio recording and the written transcript. Then we conducted a 'technical' analysis according to the guidelines presented by Ten Have (2007), and the study of Bilton (2017) as illustrative examples. Ten Have (2007, p 125) proposed to analyse four types of interactional organization: *turn-taking organization; sequence organization; repair organization;* and *the organization of turn-design* (see section 2.2). To add value to the analysis, we mostly worked with the original data to identify pronunciation and intonation, and the participants cross-checked the transcription and analysis.

To analyse the online interaction via SMS, which is the core data of Case 2, digital CA proposed by Meredith (2019) was applied and the study of Harper et al. 2005) was taken as an example. Meredith (2019, p 243) provides five core organizational features of online interaction: *turn taking; sequence organization; repair; openings;* and *embodied conduct* (see section 2.2). All the exchanged text messages were transcribed in precisely the identical format as the messages displayed on the participant's mobile screen. The transcription included typographical errors, spaces between words in text messages, the number of lines, and anonymized names (Harper et al., 2005).

As for our purpose of gaining insight into the meaning, the interview data was investigated through Schegloff's (1997) *situated analysis* considering the theoretical and broad contexts. We first produced the verbatim transcripts of the interviews then adopted a hybrid approach to thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The key to the hybrid approach was to focus on the content that uses an a priori coding framework and then data-driven inductive analysis (e.g., Bilton, 2017). For all these reasons, we placed data from the interview transcripts in the category of conversation analysis. Next, codes were modified as participants brought new insights that were not accessible in the previous step. In addition, the weekly letter was a useful addition to this two-part approach for Case 1. Later, we focused on areas where the interpretations of the researchers and the opinions of the participants differed. Finally, looking at the entire dataset allowed us to identify common topics throughout the conversation.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Obtaining and maintaining ethical approval is relevant throughout the current research process. We have clearly determined the aims, objectives, and research questions for granting research permits in two municipalities in Finland, based on where the two researchers reside. In keeping with the ethical code of conduct and research integrity, we only conducted the research in Helsinki with the permit (Finnish National Board on Integrity, 2009; All European Academics, 2017). In our research, each participant was given privacy, confidentiality and autonomy, and the participants had the right to withdraw and discontinue at all stages. Under the families' preference, the information letter and informed consent were

provided in English which was also used as lingua franca between the families and the researchers, and the same were provided in Finnish for the teachers.

Virtual qualitative research (e.g., interview via video conferencing and instant messaging) suggests that participants frequently not accessible the consent forms delivered online (Roberts et al., 2021). It is on account of unfamiliar vocabulary and other concerns. We have paid attention to a variety of issues ethically for collecting data. In order to undertake the research based on audio recording and instant messaging, we considered some best practices of using self-recording data and interviewing via video conferencing. As with others (Sy et al., 2020), we also identified that it is necessary to consider the technical proficiency of the participants to obtain data virtually. In our case, the participants electronically signed the consent form and followed the instructions to self-record their conversations and capture the text exchanges.

We had to be constantly aware of the aspects of our positions, values, culture, and linguistics that could influence the interview situation and the distribution of power since both had experience working with multicultural families as a teacher and are currently working as international researchers in Finland. Since one of the participants in Case 2 was in the same research group as ours, we clarified and explained the implications of the participant's right to confidentiality and prevented confusion when transitioning from colleagues to researcher roles. Furthermore, to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity, any information that could reveal their identity was blocked out from the data. Throughout the data, no names were mentioned, neither the names of the participating schools were revealed. Due to the nature of parent-teacher interactions, some of the conversations between participants include those with or about children, but the names in the database were changed to Child.

Furthermore, we shared our final thesis with the participants, which could be used as a reflecting tool on current practices or as good practices examples for future school-family partnerships in their day-care. Finally, we will respectively delete all data obtained from the participants, as we were granted permission to store the data only until the end of April 2022 (Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman, 2021).

4 CASE STUDY FINDINGS

In this chapter, we present the findings from the individual cases. Within each of the sections, we present excerpts from online/offline conversations to illustrate relevant interactional patterns. Themes identified for Case 1 of Successful Father-Teacher partnership: *Jointly focusing on the institutional goals, Co-creating culturally sustainable practices, and Mutual understanding through repetition* and Case 2 of Digital communication supporting School-Family partnership: *Trust growing by trust* and *Ongoing exchange of information*. At the end of the chapter, we will discuss the contextual relevance of communicating with partners in the same way.

4.1 Case 1: Successful Father-Teacher partnership

The following section will present how the father and the teacher establish successful partnerships throughout the morning/afternoon transitions. The various types of repairs show how the participants construct their intersubjectivity and meaningful interactions toward goal-directed joint actions.

4.1.1 Jointly focusing on the institutional goals

The two excerpts are related to specific goal orientations pursued by the institution and the process of establishing parental and professional identities. The following Excerpt G was taken from a conversation during morning transition involving the teacher and the father, who must act out to engage the child in the centre routine (Heritage, 2005).

Excerpt G

1 T: Huomenta, Bonjour↑

Morning, Morning ↑

2 F: [Huomenta] (.) Huomenta↓ Teacher.

[Morning] (.) Morning↓ Teacher.

3 T: Mitä kuuluu?

How are you doing?

4 F: Uhh Hyvää.

Uhh Good.

5 (0.2)

6 T: Täällä on aika liukasta.

It's quite slippery here.

7 (0.4)

8 T: ↓Tuutsä hakee liivin (-).

↓Are you coming to get the vest (-).

9 F: Child, Mihin menet?(0.2) ↑Mihin menet?

Child, Where are you going?(0.2) ↑Where are you going?

10 F: Moi, Huomenta.

Hi, Morning.

11 (0.7)

12 T: <°Täällä teille liivi.= Auttako isä päälle?°>

<°*Here's a vest for you.= Will daddy help put it on?*°>

As for most of the conversations analysed in this paper, the teacher often tries to create a collaborative and inclusive atmosphere that can promote interactions and relationships among children, families, and educators. In this case, she greets them both in Finnish and the child's first language (line1). Concerning her professional responsibility, the demonstration of slippery floors could be seen in performing safety-related tasks in line 6. It follows by an initial proposal *Tuutsä hakee liivin* 'are you coming to get the vest'. Neither the father nor the child attends to the utterance, after which a 0.4-second pause occurs (line7).

It is the latter that the father takes up by questioning with a rising pitch *Mihin menet* 'Where are you going?' (line9), expressing that he cooperates with the teacher and eases the morning transition. Then the teacher continues her turn by initiating a repair on an introductory statement and uses the insertion of confirmation sequences, *Auttako isä päälle?* 'Will daddy help put it on?' (line12). It involves special turn-taking procedures, talking through child, which is systematically different from ordinary conversation. It could be in the form of an effort to include the child or indirectly specify the father.

The father does not respond vocally but he helped the child put on the vest. This suggests that the interaction during this sequence is to share intentionality for specific goal orientations that are related to their institution-relevant identities. Interactions that are organized jointly focusing on facilitating morning transitions are also evident in the following Excerpt H. Here, the father manages the situation actively to support the child's interaction with the teacher.

Excerpt H

13 T: Vähän aika leikkiä sit pääset tönne(.) vähän värittelemään.

Play a little while and then you get there(.) to a bit of coulouring.

14 F: ↑Värittelemään?

↑Colouring?

15 T: ↑mm::

16 F: (-)

17 F: °Noniin. Mä tykkään. °

°All right. I like it. °

18 F: (0.4) Minkä väri sun sun lempi?

(0.4) What is your your favorite color?

19 C: (-)

20 F: ↑Oranssi, °Niin°

↑Orange, °Right°

21 T: [↑Oranssi,]= Niin::

[↑Orange,] =Right::

22 F: Ja vähän pinkki=pinkki myös.

And a little bit of pink=pink as well.

23 T: =Niinpä, Tuolla on se pinkki rekka. Käyt sä hakemassa?

=Right, there is the pink truck. Will you go get it?

24 F: ↓>Mikä on sun lempi väri. < =↑<Mikä on sun lempi väri?>

↓>*What is your favorite color.* < =↑<*What is your favorite color?*>

25 C: (-)

26 F: °Kyllä° ↑hehe

°*Yes* ° ↑*hehe*

27 T: [hehe Kyllä,] Joku on.

[hehe Yes,] some colour is.

28 F (0.3) Noniin, Hauska päivää jatkoa.

(0.3) All right, Have a fun rest of the day.

In the above Excerpt H, the teacher announces a plan for upcoming activities to the child. The fathers' turn is constructed as preferred by repeating prior utterance *Värittelemään* (colouring) with a high pitch to seek the attention of the recipient, the child. In line 15, the teacher creates a response token *mm* in high pitch indicating a desirable impression of the previous turn. The joint efforts fail in securing the child's responses. Thereafter, the father uses a content question (wh-question e.g., what, where, when, why) that is syntactically coherent with the speaker's prior utterance *lempi* 'colour' (line 18). The father's wh-questions *Minkä* 'what' initially elicit the desired response from the child, but it is inaudible (Rauniomaa, 2008). In lines 20-21, the father and the teacher take up and repeat the last element from the prior turn, *Oranssi* 'orange', in a much louder and higher pitch. Upon hearing the answer, they maintain building interactions to engage the child in the morning activity. Then the father invites the child to react, initiating unsolicited additional information to the previous questions (line 22).

The teacher recognizes the contribution of her co-participant and respects the information offered by the father. Hence, the next turn is designed to be consistent with the father's description. The teacher invites the child to engage in an extended learning experience based on his interests and preferences (line 23). This suggests that the correspondence between home and school ensures that the child is confident and comfortable with the morning transitions as the joint goal. Further support for this idea comes from the comments made by the teacher during her interview:

> It's kind of like to reinforce that it's easier for the child to stay there. Who likes that one pink truck, that's the one. He gets the fact that it's there for free. Just supported that child to stay there in the day care centres, so it's easier.
>
> Teacher

Thus, it seems likely that the interaction involves the participants in specific goal orientations that are monotonical and jointly constructed by both participants during the morning transition. Here, when the child rejects the request made by the teacher, the father's job becomes to step in to support the teacher.

4.1.2 Co-creating culturally sustainable practices

In two conversations, the teacher identifies the diversity and differences, and actively implements them in daily practice to create a supportive environment for the families. Additionally, the teacher contributes to creating learning opportunities that validate the children's linguistic and sociocultural practices. Father also expands the child's learning opportunities while acknowledging the community language of their environment and presenting language and cultural differences as assets.

In the following Excerpt I, the participants engage in and move between 'sociable' and 'institutional' talk. In this conversation, the teacher points to the moon and invites the father to identify the moon in his first language.

Excerpt I

53 T: ↑Kato se tön(.) tuolla on komea kuu*::(.)* ↓

Se oli se(.) susi kuu.

↑Look at that(.) there is a beautiful moon::(.) ↓

It was that(.)the wolf moon.

54 F: ↑Susi kuu? hehe

↑ Wolf moon? Hehe

55 T: °Tuolla, katso tönne.°

°There, look at that.°

56 F: ↑Ah jaa (.) >Kyllä kyllä<.

↑Ah yes (.) >yes, yes<.

57 T: °Hienoa.°

°Great.°

58 T: Mikä se oli ranskaksi?

What was it in French?

59 F: ↑La lune, ↓Pleine lune. La lune is like full umm you know Susi Kuu.

↑The moon, ↓Full moon. The moon is like full mm you know the wolf moon.

60 T: [(-)]

61 T: Ok.(.) wow.

62 F: (-), Joo. Hän rakasta kuut.

(-), Yes. He loves the moon.

63 T: Se onkin hienoa.

That is great.

64 F: Yeah:: =(-)

65 T: hehe.

66 F: (0.2) Au revoir Teacher.

(0.2) Bye Teacher.

67 T: Au au revo...miten se sanotaan?

Au au revo...how do you say it?

68 F: ahh. Au revoir.

ahh. Au revoir.

70 T: Se on liian vaikea mulle.

It is too difficult for me.

71 F: Joo joo, on vaikea. On vaikea kieli.

Yeah yeah, 't's hard. 't's a difficult language.

72 T: [he he], hei hei.

[he he], *bye bye.*

The teacher creates a beginning of the source utterance in a relatively high pitch. It becomes a starting point for the slight shift from the topic of the previous conversation. In line 53, she directs the father's attention to their immediate environment, the moon in the sky, and states her observation. The father repeats *susi kuu* 'wolf moon', which functions as an initiate's repair. It allows the original speaker to self-repair the trouble source (J. Robinson & Kevoe-Feldman, 2010). Indeed, in line 55, the teacher modifies the utterances and uses similar expressions, but reorders and simplifies the phrase.

A second utterance adjacently produced by the father (line 56) shows an understanding of the previous turn, builds intersubjectivity, and indicates successful recovery. For example, *Ah jaa, kyllä, kyllä* 'Ah yes, yes, yes' with an upward pitch displays his interpretive act of understanding and agreement of what was being pursued by the teacher in the previous turns. It triggers the turn produced by the teacher asking how to say the word moon in French (line 58), which could be understood as promoting the development and use of their first language within the early childhood setting.

Nonetheless, even the very limited answers that the father gave were used by the teacher to build a series of connected sequences, the first (53-58) becoming a pre-sequence to the next (59-65), which in turn acts like a pre-sequence for the core sequence of this part (66-72). In line 66, the father

produces ending greeting sequences in his first language and the teacher accepts the idea by trying to pronounce it.

During the interview, the teacher emphasizes interactions with the family, promoting positive partnerships and engaging in collaborative dialogues in which they support each other to implement culturally responsive practices.

> I ask them about Christmas. He told me a lot what kind of Christmas he spends in France. To gather around to know about him, of course. It is difficult when he does not know Finnish properly, then our conversations may be that mixture of English words and French words.
>
> Teacher

The following Excerpt J shows how the teacher and father work together to promote the child's cultural and linguistic identity in the centre. The teacher describes the child's daily activities, and the father extends the storytelling sequence by asking for confirmation of the language used in the song (line 29).

Excerpt J

26	T:	Lauluu koettu paljon tänään.
		A lot of singing was done today.
27	F:	ok. uh
28	T:	[ihmiteltty lumi ukkoja ja summuita. (or)]
		[wondered about snowstorms and fogs. (or)]
29	F:	ok, Suomeksi tai?
		ok, In Finnish or?
30	T:	uh (.) mitä?
		uh(.) what?
31	F:	Suo(.)Suomeksi? uhh joo, laulu on paljon onnnea.
		Fi(.) In Finnish? uhh yeah, song is Many congratulations.
32	T:	>Joo(.) Joo<
		>*Yes(.) Yes*<
33	F:	Like koska koska, Child, child tietää ↑Happy Birthday?

Because because, Child, Child knows ↑Happy Birthday?

34 T: Joo, >Me laulataan Englannkisi kin<, joo.

Yes, >We sing in English as well<, yes.

35 F: [uh(.) joo. but päivänkodista?

[uh(.) yes. but from the day centre?

36 T: =Joo.

=Yes.

37 T: uh::joo.ok. ranskaksi °en jaksa°.

uh::yes.ok. In French °I can't°.

38 T: =↑Sitä me ei osataan(.), mut totta(.)

=↑That we don't know(.), but well(.)

39 T: Co-educator osaa esimerkeksi saksaksi

mut mä en osaa(.) mut (-)

Co-educator knows for example in German

but I don't know(.) but (-)

40 F: [joo]

[yes]

41 F: Niin koska(.) Friend1 puhuu(.) sa saksa.

Yes because(.) Friend1 speaks(.) ger german.

42 T: ↓°joo.°

↓°*yes.*°

43 ((F to C))

44 F: ((Singing Happy Birthday in French)) °he he°

45 T: °Niin, joo.°

°*Yes, Yes.*°

46 T: (-) opetellaan ranskaksi. hehe

(-) let's learn in French. hehe

47 F: Joo.

Yes.

The introduction of storytelling opens a cumulative ‘trouble-talk’ sequence. In lines 26-46, the father and the teacher build upon each other’s contributions to expansion in which the topic of the core sequences ‘singing’ is taken. In line 30, the teacher addresses the open-class repair initiator (e.g., huh, what) to signal that the trouble-source turn is an inappropriate response in her view, on the prior turn (line 28). The impression on the teacher’s systemic response was either the father’s motivation was unclear or based on the language limitation (Rauniomaa, 2008). However, he uses turn-initial tying techniques that appear to be oriented to crossing the language barrier, such as using linguistic elements *Suomeksi, laulu, paljon onnnea* ‘Finnish, song, many congratulations’. The initiative taken by the father of the repairable (self-initiated repair) is to engage with and build upon the priorly used speakers’ utterances and their stance (line 31).

In turn, the teacher marks positive polarity by using the Finnish response particle *joo* ’yes’ to indicate that she understands the prior utterances (Harjunpää, 2017). Then, the father elaborates on his prior question with rising intonation at the end signals, *koska child tietää happy birthday?* ‘Because child knows happy birthday?’. The turn begins with *koska* ‘because’ explaining the reason, the rising intonation here is not questioning whether the child knows the song, but rather a justification for the prior question of wondering if they sang in Finnish or in English. Teacher's turn *joo ok ranskaksi en jaksa* ‘yes ok in French I can’t’ can be seen to display an understanding of the prior speaker’s turn.

Here the participants construct and revise their intersubjective understanding through mutual interaction as it evolves turn by turn (Ten Have, 2007). Although there is no question whether the teacher can sing in the child’s first language, she provides follow-up information in lines 36-38. It led to the father singing a happy birthday song in French. The teacher understands prior turn as a suggestion and produces vocal acceptances as a preferred response, *opetellaan ranskaksi. hehe* ‘let’s learn in French hehe’. Thus, it appears that the father provides ample resources or assets that may be valuable

in child's learning. In addition, the teacher demonstrates her preferences by quick and direct acceptance to convey situations consistent with the father's wishes.

The father appears to be comfortable initiating communication, and the teacher supports the family with effective communication strategies. Evidence taken from week 39 letter written by the teacher below shows the teacher implementing pedagogies and curriculum that enables the use of languages spoken by children and their families.

> Next week we will celebrate book week and you can bring a book for us to look at here at the nursery. The book does not have to be in Finnish, but in another language that is important to the family (- in which case pictures are important). It would be fun to explore other languages and your child's world next week.
>
> Week 39 letter

Two conversational features indicate how the father and the teacher respect the linguistic diversity and assist bilingual children to extend their first language in school context. Both participants use the resources such as books and songs representing inclusive linguistic practices to support culturally sustaining learning environments. It promotes building meaningful and trusting relationships between home and school, including the joint creation of culturally sustainable practices (Robinson & Jones-Diaz, 2006). Next, we will elaborate on the examples of using various repetitions to establish mutual understanding.

4.1.3 Mutual understanding through repetition

An important aspect of the partnerships in the sense of being considered partners is that families and teachers support one another in meeting their interpersonal needs and reaching mutual understanding (Epstein, 2018). This section presents an Excerpt K demonstrating the process how mutual understanding among participants is built through repetition. The episode is an afternoon transition during outdoor activity, where the teacher multitasking to observe a group of children and communicate with their families. One can observe in this episode that the father often overlaps with the teacher by producing the acknowledgment token *aha, ok, Joo* 'yes'. Similarly, short pauses are mostly owned by the father.

Excerpt K. below shows how the father and teacher use repetition to be able to understand and contribute to ongoing interaction.

Excerpt K

25 T: Toi noin, Huomenna piti olla retki.

mm, Tomorrow was supposed to be an excursion.

26 F: Aha.

27 T: (-)

28 F: Ah:: (-)

29 T: Meidän piti lähteä kävelemään(.)

niin ei huomenna(0.3)[Keskiviikkona]

We had to go for a walk (.)

so no tomorrow (0.3) [on Wednesday]

30 F: [joo] [hhh Ok Ok] ei huomenna keskiviikkona. >Ok Ok<

[yes] [hhh Ok Ok] not tomorrow on Wednesday. >Ok Ok<

31 F: uhm::(0.2)Ta Tarviko hän(.)um::(-)

uhm::(0.2) D Does he need(.) um::(-)

32 T: Ei ei

No no

33 T: = (-) Me mennään vaan kavelemään ja katsotaan miten

District näyttää.

= *(-) We are just going to go out and see how*

District looks like.

34 F: Ok Ok (0.1) ↑ole hyvää.

Ok Ok (0.1) ↑ is good.

35 T: ↑hhh?

36 F: hhh:: ja::(.) päiväuni ja ja lounas?

hhh:: and:: (.) day nap and and lunch?

37 T: <↓nukkunut ↑nukkui tosi ↓pitkää>

<↓has slept ↑slept really ↓long>

38 F: Ok.

39 T: ↓ [Joo] >ehkä oli väsynyt< =

↓ [yes] >Maybe he was tired< =

40 T: ↑ja söi ↓°lounaan hyvin°(.)<tos montaa(.) annosta>(.)

>mut välipala ei maistunut sitten enää<

↑and ate ↓ °lunch well ° (.) <very many (.) Servings> (.)

> But didn't eat snacks anymore then <

41 T: =Pari Omenaa.

=Couple of apples.

42 F: Ok

43 T: hhh

44 F: ah a(.) oli oliko se omenaa? ↓

ah a(.) was it an apple? ↓

45 T: Omena.

Apple.

46 F: Ok

47 T: Joo.omenaa.

Yes.apple.

48 F: Ei.Ok.Ei

No.ok.no

49 F: uhm::Ok mutta hyvää tietää. han ei, ei,

ole hyvää päiväunin kanssa kotona.

uhm::Ok but good to know. he is no, not,

good with naps at home.

50 T: ↑Ah, OK, Tällä nukko tosi pitkää.

↑Ah, Ok, Here he sleeps really long

51 F: =(-) ei haluaa päivä uni, umm ei haluaa syödä.

=(-) doesn't want to nap, umm doesn't want to eat.

52 T: Annat sä mulle sen? Kiitos.

Are you giving it to me? Thank you.

The example begins with the teacher producing the account of what was planned for the next day, which is reconstituted as the trouble source. The father produces only a minimal uptake *aha* in the second position signaling to the speaker that she can go on (Schegloff, 1996). It is possible that the teacher continues with additional information about the changed plan, but it is inaudible. In line 28, the father produces a vocalism, ‘ah’, which signals for requesting further expansion, rather than a realization or a discovery of something new. The teacher accepts the father’s response, which reveals a problem in understanding of her utterance. The teacher then performs a self-repair using simpler expressions in the next turn (line 29).

While the father overlaps to produce the repetition of the whole turn as a function of comprehension with the chain use of *joo, ok* particles, the teacher is still extending the expansion (line 29-30). After achieving a sufficient understanding regarding the object, the father’s follow-up question concerning the preparation for child’s activity is addressed to teacher directly, however, he does not finish the sentence. The repair with having specified the event is initiated in the next turn, indicating that the teacher understands the purpose of unfinished source utterances (Robinson & Kevoe-Feldman, 2010). Both parties actively cooperate in achieving a solution and demonstrating their interest in sharing information.

The father takes a turn by asking the teacher a question in line 36 and her answers (line 38-41) are clearly produced with louder voice, altered pitch, and distinctive prosodic quality. Its loudness and relatively unusual changes of the pitch was hinted at in line 35 and 37. Turns were interrupted by someone else, reflecting an institutional environment that requires teachers to make an effort to

communicate with many children at the same time with their families (Harjunpää, 2017). The direct repetition of past utterances that occurs in lines 42-55 can be seen as co-constructing a shared understanding among the participants.

The father initiates repair on the shared information *pari omenaa* 'a couple of apples' (line 41-42) with confirmation request *oli oliko se omenaa?* 'was it an apple?'. It motivates the teacher to carry out a repair by repeating the trouble source utterance twice in the ongoing sequence. The father then provides post-expansion and unsolicited additional information to the previous description (Ten Have, 2007), containing homely observations (line 49). The teacher repeats the answer just given above (line 50) and father repeats the descriptions that have been provided in prior turn. However, this trails off while the teacher is being interrupted by others.

The Excerpt K presented in this section exemplifies how the interpretive work embodied in either parties' repetition eventually elicited the achievement of mutual understanding. Although the father has language restriction and the teacher needs to perform multiple tasks, the parties build a series of connected sequences and cooperate with each other. In Excerpt K, the problem is apparently resolved with repetition and expansion that includes repair practices.

4.2 Case 2: Digital communication supporting School-Family partnerships

The following section will present how digital communication enables a respectful and effective partnership between the Finnish teacher and the mother in the ECEC context. The frequency of digital interactions and the content of communication primarily shifted from the child's participation to supporting the learning, which indicates the development of this partnership between the teacher and the mother. The findings are characterized by two parts: the first month of the teacher-parent relationship and exchanges thereafter.

4.2.1 Trust grows by trusting

During the first month of the mother-teacher relationship, all six pairs of text messages originated from the mother. The following Excerpt L is the initial messages between the participants specifically for the exchange of information

regarding the child's condition. The sequence is analysed regarding the interactional and relational consequences experienced by the parties.

Excerpt L

1	01.09.2021 08.46 am	Mother	Hello Teacher A, this is Mother. Is Child better :(He is emotional these days
2	08.49 am	Teacher A	Hi! Yes he is calm down now. He wanted To come work with you, but now Is okay :)
3	08.51 am	Mother	Oww! Thank you so much :) have a great day

In line 1, the mother starts her turn with three distinctive actions which are greeting *Hello*, inquiry *Is child better*, and announcement *He is emotional these days*. The mother specifically designs the turn for the intended recipient (recipient-designed turn), as well as identifies herself as a sender. The identification sequence by the mother, which occurs only in this opening in the dataset, is a key aspect of online interaction. After the first text exchange, the affordance of the medium allows the messages to remain in the chat room. Due to the platform allowing only the mother and the teacher functions in chat rooms, it is clear who sends the message and who receives it (Meredith & Stokoe, 2014).

The same message structure as the first message applies to the teacher's turn, in line 2. The teacher arranges her SPPs in chronological order, that is, she orients to the original order of FPPs (König, 2019). The response preserves or reproduces the action structure of the previous turn in the package-text, rather than inverting it as in an ordinary conversation (Hutchby & Tanna, 2008). The greeting is responded with a greeting token *Hi!*, then the relevant response for the inquiry *Yes he is calm down now*, and the assessment on the announcement *now is okay.* The utterance 'now' may indicate that interactions in the physical environment, which participants previously experienced together lead to online communication.

In Excerpt M below, we found additional features to the reciprocal principle that strengthens the relationship and interaction between the two parties.

Excerpt M

1	22.09.2021 07.29am	Mother	Good morning, Child is still coughing, so I would prefer to keep him home and make him rest, but of course he is playing nonstop instead of resting
2	07.31am	Teacher B	Ok. Are you coming to the parents eavning to Day at 17:15? T:Teacher B
3	07.50am	Mother	Yes, of course
4	07.51am	Teacher B	😉👍

A new sequence starts with a greeting token, as we might observe in face-to-face interaction. Here, the participants treat this opening no different than any other form of interaction, rather than using a greeting token to check the availability of the recipient. The mother's message does not have a FPP state and is not designed to require a response from the recipient. Her text is a sort of situational announcement that could have the position as a single entity, in line 1. However, the teacher responds immediately with *Ok*. It can be seen that the teacher's goal was to show that she receives and understands what the mother intended, even though the mother does not call for a response (Harper et al., 2005).

A new sequence of the text was initiated by the teacher. In line 2, the teacher produces a first pair part of a yes/no question-answer adjacency pair. It led to further communication where the mother responses *yes, of course,* which is a second pair part. Both Extract L and M contain such utterance indicating the closing conversation. At this point, the reply is not just for confirmation or agreement. Rather, responses at the end of a turn display social actions of interconnections in online environments (Harper et al., 2005). The text exchanges between the mother and the teacher appear to be a ritual act that ensures constant interaction to build and maintain relationships.

4.2.2 Ongoing exchange of information

When we looked at the organization of topic text exchanges in the very first month of the partnership between the mother and the teacher, we found that it is mainly about the mother informing the child's participation regarding the absence or lateness. This topic continues over a period of months; however, the mother

starts to open the interaction with a question about the name of the song or regarding her child's learning experiences. The following Excerpt N comprises the mother's opening of the sequence of question-answer adjacency pair.

Excerpt N

1	14.10.201	Mother	Audio from Mother
2	16.43pm	Mother	audio file (00.11)
3	16.44 pm	Mother	Hello Child has been singing this song non stop 😅 and we have no clue about what is it?
4	17.01pm	Teacher A	Hi! Ican not get the link open. But he was singin Today : Liike on lääke From JVG
5	17.10pm	Mother	Owww yess 😀 thanks a lot

She produces a combination of the text and audio files of a song sung by the child and question-answer adjacency pair is initiated. In line 4, the teacher's turn specifies a trouble source, the *audio file* from the prior turn. There is no possibility for a transition space repair, instead, the participant initiates repair in the next opportunity space. Next opportunity space repairs can be either self- or other initiated, in this case the teacher completes the repair with answering the inquires. It indicates that the function and position of repair in online interactions slightly differ from talk-in-interaction (Meredith, 2019). However, it also reflects a more general underlying feature of institutional interaction, with the parent bringing the home resources and the teacher bringing the resources from the school sphere. The text is again closed off with confirmation, as observed in the previous Excerpts.

Another important feature here is the use of emojis during the interactions, in order to employ the sender's stance or emotions towards the part of the interaction. In the above Excerpt N, the mother uses a smiling face with an open mouth and cold emoji at the end of the first pair part. In here, the use of emoji also provides information on the sender's stand regarding how the context should be understood by the recipient. In addition, another emoji, the smiling face with an open mouth, is used in line 5. It indicates the mother's stance towards the previous turn that she receives the desired answer from the teacher. The types of emojis may differ across the sequential and interactional context, but it equally

indicates the participants' stance on the specific sequences. During the interview with the mother, she explained the usage of emojis as expressing her actual feelings for initiating the messages.

> Actually, I'm trying not to use it to be like more formal. When I'm writing the text, I'm really laughing in that time. Or I'm really smiling or like if I'm really feeling that sadness. I would prefer to show it also with emoji. I can imagine my face in that moment.
>
> Mother

The child's experiences with the teacher in the physical environment have been connected to the interactions between the teacher and mother through online communication. The following Excerpt O from the opening sequence message shows how CA can be used to explore the connectivity of in-person and online interactions.

Excerpt O

1	23.11.2021 08.44am	Mother	Good morning! Today Child has just woken up! So he ll be late. And about the song he asked for paw 🐾 patroll song 😑
2	08.46am	Teacher A	Ok

In line 1, the mother initiates the turn with greeting token and announcement. There are two essential characteristics of the findings. First, the opening sequences indicate the developed teacher-mother relationships. One goal to achieve through openings is to construct or reconstruct the relationships among participants. It is noticeable that the mother's first turn is not made understandable to the recipient but is not treated as a problematic or trouble source. Teacher's response also displays an understanding of the topic-initiation, by replying *Ok* (rather than asking for what song she meant to). It demonstrates some prior shared knowledge between the mother and the teacher about the topic. Therefore, neither the participants require expansion nor repair.

> This activity was about music. I'm sure she sends an email. But then of course she mentioned also face to face too. Because she sends the emails all in Finnish, most of them in Finnish. That's why sometimes she explains in English too when I go there. I do remember that we talked about the songs too, like face to face.

Mother

From this small fragment of data, we can see that the mother and the teacher have found ways to share an understanding and maintain intersubjectivity. That is the lack of information on the first pair part is not an issue, which needs to be repaired. The status of relationships can also be understood with the reduced number of textual exchanges between the participants. From the beginning of the relationship among them to three months later, the frequency of the mother's texts to the teacher significantly decreased, from six times to once per month. The mother noted that her distrust of the educational systems led to frequent contact with the teachers, but that number dwindled as she began to build trust with her child's teachers. During her interview:

> You know sometimes with Finnish kindergarten, it's like they're very fine and then let them whatever they want. Because yeah, I see that happens. It was like raining and they were fine with all that clothes and I took child. Maybe that was the reason. I was more trying to adapt and keep texting, trying not to text though. But yeah, it was fine and then I started to really trust the main teacher especially and I see that she knows what she is doing.
>
> Mother

4.3 Discussion

Considering family diversity in the Finnish ECEC context, this pilot study was designed to explore successful partnerships of inclusive and participatory practices between multicultural families and Finnish teachers. The main purpose of the research was to understand the context in which families and teachers work together, how their mutual interaction goals are achieved, and the nature of their relationships. The implementation of successful partnership practices is a complex and socially constructed process (Miller, 2019), and in that sense, the current discussion is directed towards how to best define empirical evidence.

When answering the research question regarding how multicultural families and the teachers build the partnerships, two factors are judged to be important for the discussion. First, successful partnerships were supported by welcoming and respectful interactions, which were sustained throughout the conversations to achieve mutually desirable institutional goals. Second, Epstein's (2018) theory

on two-way communication practices was revealed to be an important element in building and maintaining successful home-school partnerships.

Regarding the notion of two-way communication, when the teacher initiated and led the sequence, the father often played an actively supportive role by sometimes expanding on the teacher's activity, and vice versa, as seen in Case 1. In this way, creating a welcoming environment and facilitating collaboration in which both participants express their ideas and emotions equally. In the context of digital interactions, the teacher did not initiate any requests or explanations, and instead maintained a welcoming dialogue by openly listening to what the mother requested for, suggested, and informed regarding her child's matters, such as absences and learning interests. The results of the present study concur with previous research by Blitch (2017), that positive relationship experiences of ethnic-racial minority families and teachers specifically include practices of mutual respect.

This is consistent with Lastikka (2019), who found that the most important Finnish ECE inclusion practices were to encourage conversation and mutual understanding, as well as to promote families' language and culture. Previous research has focused on the act of requesting rather than the process of how the request is received, and it has been mainly concluded that, for example, families wanted more detailed facts or more specific information concerning their child's academic progress (e.g., Patel & Agbenyega, 2013; Tobin & Kurban, 2018). A possible example that reflects pedagogical practices in which participants cooperate to create and maintain an inclusive ECEC environment are the different types of requests supported by each other. For instance, when the child did not respond to the teacher's request, the father integrated the child's home resources into the educational environment. Likewise in Case 2, the teacher cooperated with the mother's request to find a song that the child sings at home.

Conversation analysis allowed us to identify situations in which the parties recover and maintain intersubjectivity through repetition. These involved repair practices and building a series of connected sequences until the problems were clearly resolved (Rauniomaa, 2008). The common repair practices included direct clarification questions, modifying the utterances, and repeating the trouble source in the next immediate turn. It is consistent with Giles and Gasiorek's (2012) CAT, in which according to them, participants modify their communication depending

on their assessment of their co-participant and their intention to maintain positive individual and group identities. In our findings, the participants sharing the successful partnerships considered each other's requests and proposals, and these were reflected in the conversation.

Turning to the second question about the nature of school-family relationships and what they are trying to achieve, the interaction patterns between the teachers and the families indicate that collaborative relationships are being built. The quality of school-family interactions was a better predictor for parents in building trust with teachers than contact frequency or demographic variables (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Finnish schools have worked with digital platforms for twenty years (Kuusimäki, 2022) to facilitate communication, however, it did not play a significant part in the successful partnerships covered in this study and we cannot answer how it serves in terms of trustworthiness. In our findings, the frequency of digital communication decreased as the family adapted themselves to new routines and educational systems when transitioning the child from home to an institution.

These findings align with prior findings (Blitch, 2017) that the family's trust in the educational system overall seems to mediate their distrust of teachers' competency and credibility. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that the family's impression of the educational service might further shape the follow-up interaction with teachers, especially in the beginning of a relationship, rather than the high knowledge and experience of the teachers. The study argues that the initial stage of a relationship, which builds families' trust in the host country's education system, is a crucial step in establishing successful school-family partnerships. Thus, we suggest that future studies should include the first point of interactions between families and teachers, in which teachers begin to build families' sense of belonging and partnerships through welcoming and respectful interactions.

Moreover, the interactions included frequently occurring language-related misunderstandings, yet, it was solved through active cooperation, rather than becoming a source of conflict (Joshi et al., 2005). The relationship in Case 1 is built on shared knowledge and interactions, demonstrating the success in understanding the co-participant's uncompleted questions based on common grounding practices. These results are consistent with Epstein's (2010) theory of

overlapping spheres of influence that the school and family become closer due to time and experience factors. Consequently, trustworthy partnerships can be interpreted as factors that support children's behavior and learning (Pirchio et al., 2013). This was observed in Case 2, where the content of the interactions expanded from the child's participation to the child's interest and learning as a stronger relationship was built. Given all the interaction practices between the families and the teachers, who actively cooperate in maintaining intersubjectivity (Heritage, 2005) and repairing each other, it is justified to refer to them as successful school-family partnerships.

5 CONCLUSION

This pilot case study set out to deepen our understanding of the nature of school-multicultural family partnerships and the supportive family-teacher communication practices in the Finnish ECEC context. Conversation analysis revealed a pattern of welcome and respectful interactions between the two spheres, for instance, all requests were accepted by the co-participants. The inclusive ECEC environment was co-created through successful family-school partnerships and sustained to enrich children's learning experiences. The second major finding was common grounding knowledge built through practices between teacher-family communication, which may help overcome linguistic and culturally derived differences and maintain school-family partnerships.

There were other common patterns used by the participants when the trouble sources occurred in ongoing interactions, with four significant factors (1) using alternative expressions (2) based on the amount of already shared knowledge (3) open-repair and (4) repetition. The empirical findings in this study provide new insight into the functions of repetition as a core part of everyday teacher-family interactions, primarily through understanding or seeking support from the co-participants (Rauniomaa, 2008). These practices may offer teachers and families a practical routine to defend themselves against potential misunderstandings.

Finally, this pilot study has drawn upon naturally occurring online/offline talk in conjunction with other types of data (e.g., interviews, weekly letters) and encouraged innovative research designs. Broad-based comprehensive approaches, which use a variety of methods were effective in respecting the individuality of each case study. As a consequence of learning from the piloting, using (digital) CA is particularly useful for understanding how textual and conversation interactions can be analysed together. Especially, to answer questions related to communication patterns and the unique nature of school-family partnerships. Along with the contemporary demand for evidence-based

practice, focusing specifically on how (digital) CA is used to investigate multilingual family-teacher interactions, we can find another fruitful area of research.

5.1 Limitations in applying CA in this pilot study

This pilot study is a starting point for understanding the practice of multicultural families and teacher partnerships in the context of the Finnish ECEC, yet there are limitations to the sample size related to the extension of the materials analyzed. Although generalizability is not a concern of research designed under this qualitative epistemology, further studies should consider widening the scope of materials collected, or extension of the period involving data collection. Larger datasets would allow developmental analysis on the construction of partnerships. Identifying issues related to the effectiveness of the instruments was a beneficial part of the piloting process. The more conventional limitation of doing CA is that it is immensely challenging for the researcher, and takes an extended period to transcribe, code, interpret and then re-code the data to find themes and patterns. Hence, finding and studying empirical studies to conduct CA correctly is necessary, as it is a complex process (Heritage, 2005).

Additionally, CA in institutional talk needs further development in terms of structures and features of multi-field application of CA. Further research should be conducted with broadening CA's perspective to include digital interaction data. Lastly, CA's development in emotional displays has begun lately and is still underway. CA has traditionally focused on verbal data, however emphasis on phonetics and tone of voice is being studied (Ten Have, 2007). We suggest this pilot case study may become a good prototype, generating more detailed findings of the online/offline interaction patterns of successful partnerships (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

An additional uncontrolled factor was the COVID-19 pandemic, which also resulted in the adoption of hybrid qualitative methods, such as self-audio recording and video-conferencing interviews as the data was collected during peak pandemic era (Roberts et al., 2021). We find that the shift to a virtual modality affected almost every aspect of the research process, from designing our research questions to recruitment, data collection, and analysis. Despite

these limitations, this study also presents valuable insights into how to perform virtual qualitative work with a thoughtful and purposive perspective on both methodological rigor and ethics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Transcription conventions

.	Falling intonation
,	Slightly rising intonation
?	Rising intonation
↑	Rise in pitch
↓	Fall in pitch
underlined	Emphasis
[]	Overlapping talk
(.)	Micro-pause
(1.5)	Pause (time in sec)
=	Contiguous utterances, no pause or gap
> <	Faster
< >	Slower
e::i	Lengthening
° °	Softer voice
.hhh	Inhalation
hhh	Exhalation
he he	Laughter
# #	Creaky voice
(or)	Uncertain transcript
(-)	Inaudible word
(( ))	Transcriber's comment