

## **Ecological perspectives in early language education: Parent, teacher, peers, and child agency in interaction**

Mila Schwartz

*Home, school and community together make up pieces in the jigsaw of children's lives. Children are constantly uniting the pieces in their learning, but how far do we recognize this?* (Kenner, 2004, p. 1). How do young children as agents maintain and enrich their home languages and learn the socially dominant language? The importance of a supportive classroom environment and home-school collaboration as critical social and affective factors in home language maintenance has been recently elaborated by Schalley and Eisenclas (2021). In this talk I will set the stage for an ecological approach to early language learning and education, claiming that learning at home, in an educational institution and in the community cannot be approached without thinking of the ecological role of *family, teachers, and peers as agents acting in interaction* (Schwartz, 2018; 2022). This interaction may facilitate, or in some cases also impede the child's active engagement in the target language learning. Further, I will present a Model of Ecology of Child's Early Language Learning drawn on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) perspective on child development. Specifically, I will discuss the child's early language learning at home and in classroom as interaction within the socio-cultural and linguistic context, using five out of six key elements of environments: *Individual-, micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems* (Schwartz, 2018; 2022). Each environment will be illustrated by current research. Drawing attention to the ecology of early language education, I will close the talk with an argument, claiming that research and field projects together *with* families and teachers as agents in interaction is necessary. This interaction will increase the quality of *pedagogical support* for teachers and families and create partnership in promoting home language maintenance and socially dominant language competence (e.g., Ragnarsdóttir, 2022).

### **References**

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