

# 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

Studying the linguistic environment of young learners is an indispensable key to the understanding of child language acquisition. The language children hear is the most important source of information they have to acquire a linguistic system. They have to connect form, meaning and diverse levels of interaction and identify the relevant cues that guide them in this process. The linguistic matter that surrounds them is one of the various forces spurring this development.

The study of child-directed speech (CDS) furthermore offers valuable insights into adult language (e.g. adult speakers' metalinguistic knowledge, as reflected in corrections of young children; Hellwig & Jung 2020) and processes of language shift (e.g. the exact processes involved in the interruption of intergenerational transfer of a language; Grenoble & Whaley 2006). We must understand processes of language shift to deal successfully with the rising loss of languages around the world. While small, marginalised language communities often find themselves confronted with the loss of their identity, linguists see the empirical base of their theories disappear (Pye 2020). The goals of these two groups do not always overlap but both could mutually benefit from responsibly conducted language documentation that includes child language and child-directed language. Currently, there are acquisition studies for about 1–2 per cent of the world's languages, and even this sample largely consists of Indo-European languages (Stoll 2015: 114). These languages not only have comparatively unusual linguistic features (Stoll 2015), but

they are also mostly spoken in so-called WEIRD<sup>1</sup> (Western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic), that is, hegemonic societies. These have been found to differ substantially from the majority of communities around the world on various dimensions of social description (Henrich et al. 2010). Thus, current theories of language development are based on a sample biased towards a rather atypical part of the global population:

The vast majority of the world's languages are spoken by small populations that have fewer than a million speakers, lack socio-economic power, typically are not literate, and do not share Western cultural presuppositions. (Anand et al. 2011: 2)

Especially in rural, subsistence-based societies, the language environments of children differ substantially from Western, urban settings (Lieven & Stoll 2009). This variation in setting is reflected in the input of young language learners. Yet, children from all linguistic backgrounds typically acquire a language at roughly the same pace, following similar timetables (Casillas et al. 2020a, 2020b). In order to gain a full picture of how they achieve this, we must carefully examine the relationship between the many factors relevant to child language development in diverse contexts.

Rowe and Snow (2020) recently proposed three dimensions to analyse input to children: interactive features, linguistic features and conceptual features. They review a large amount of literature that proves that features belonging to each of these domains are helpful for child language acquisition. However, they equally predict that these features will vary between languages, cultures and other factors. Over the last few years, the study of child language development in small-scale societies has grown, providing indispensable contributions to the central questions of the field. However, much of this research focuses on the cultural context of language acquisition and the amount of language input. Nevertheless, our knowledge of the structural variation in children's input is still rather limited (Pye 2020; Hellwig & Jung 2020; Vaughan et al. 2015). The relationship between language by and with children is what ultimately influences theories of language learning. Yet, as Hellwig and Jung (2020: 208) state, 'this can only be the second step, necessitating dedicated studies later on. A first step would be to map cross-linguistic variation'.

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term *educated* in this acronym is problematic. There are many other forms of education besides the formalised education intended here. If I continue to use it nevertheless, this does not mean that I want to devalue any form or construction of knowledge besides the institutionalised one.

The present work aims to push the limits a bit further by describing the register of child-directed speech in Qaet (Baining). Spoken by about 10,000 people (Hellwig 2019: 1), Qaet is a non-Austronesian language of the Baining Mountains of East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea (see Figure 1.1). I collected the data for this study in Raunsepna, a remote village where people largely carry out subsistence farming, while also cultivating some cash crops. Children acquire Qaet as their first and dominant language, followed by the national languages Tok Pisin and English. The central topic of this work is a direct comparison of language directed at adults and language directed at children (24–60 months). My findings are supplemented by a description of the socio-cultural context of children's language socialisation.

Where evident, I will describe how those factors interact with the language use evident in the comparative study. Moreover, I will attempt to make suggestions with regard to the function of the relevant features in reference to previous research.

In Section 1.2 I will outline the theoretical assumptions underlying my investigation, while referring to previous research on language directed at children.

## 1.2 Child-directed speech

This work draws on the assumption that input and interaction are the driving forces behind child language acquisition, a position central to the functionalist or usage-based approach to language acquisition.

In this section, I will illustrate the background of the current debates on CDS. The central topic is the effect of CDS on child language acquisition, connected to its universality and complicated by the immense amount of variation found in communities around the world.

Functionalism is one of two major, but conflicting, theoretical approaches to language acquisition. The other, nativism, assumes that children are born with knowledge about a certain number of abstract rules and principles that are universally shared by all languages in the world (Chomsky 1965, 1981). This theory arose as a reaction to the logical problem that children hear only a finite number of sentences but are able to produce an infinite number of utterances nevertheless.



**Figure 1.1: The Gazelle Peninsula in Papua New Guinea.**

Source: Anne Wiesner, with permission.

Children's language input has been described as 'impoverished' (Chomsky 1965), further disqualifying its relevance for language acquisition. In reaction to this problem, nativist theories predict that, based on the very small number of sentences children hear, they would only have to activate the relevant features for their language in their innate grammar.

Piaget (1957) argued that there was no acquisition device necessary but, on the contrary, general cognitive learning mechanisms would be sufficient in order to acquire a language. Bruner (1974) and Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the role of interaction and social learning in this process. The 'motherese-hypothesis' (Snow 1972; Snow & Ferguson 1977; Nelson 1977) assumed that a specifically tailored input is the most important factor in language acquisition. These works led to functionalist or usage-based accounts of language acquisition (Tomasello 2003; Lieven & Tomasello 2008; Tomasello 2009; Ambridge & Lieven 2013). These propose that 'children's language acquisition is driven by – and hence cannot be explained without reference to – their desire to use language to perform communicative functions' (Lieven & Stoll 2013: 3). Basic cognitive abilities of children, mostly their intention-reading skills and

their ability to identify patterns, enable them to identify form-function mappings in language (Tomasello 2003). For instance, joint attention, that is, when a child focuses their attention on the same shared conceptual ground as their conversational partner, can help the child identify the goals of their conversational partner and draw conclusions about the functions of the constructions they hear (Tomasello 2009).

While initially much emphasis was laid on children's language input, the children's own role in this process was never neglected:

Language acquisition is the result of a process of interaction between mother and child which begins early in infancy, to which the child makes as important a contribution as the mother, and which is crucial to cognitive and emotional development as well as to language acquisition. (Snow 1977a)

However, later, following the ideas of Bruner (1985), the active role of children in the process of language acquisition received more attention (Gallaway & Richards 1994; Nelson 1996, 2007; de León Pasquel 2011). In the current work, I assume that the interaction between caregivers and children is of central importance in order to understand the nature of the language directed towards children. What children hear differs on various linguistic levels from the language directed at adults (Snow & Ferguson 1977; Gallaway & Richards 1994). CDS is shorter, clearer, less complex and more grammatical than adult-directed speech (ADS). It contains fewer hesitations, more imperatives and questions, its intonation patterns are exaggerated, and it is more repetitive than ADS. The vocabulary is restricted, containing reference mostly to the here and now, and less diverse than adult-directed speech.<sup>2</sup>

When adults speak with young children, many of these features figure prominently in their language but they disappear as the child matures (Phillips 1973; Harkness 1977), a process referred to as finetuning (Snow 1996).<sup>3</sup>

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2 Summaries of the features of CDS are to be found in Snow (1972), Snow and Ferguson (1977), Gallaway and Richards (1994), O'Grady (2005), Lieven and Stoll (2009), Saxton (2009) and Vaughan et al. (2015). The detailed findings of previous research on the relevant features of CDS (Section 1.5) are presented in the respective sections.

3 This does not mean, however, that caregivers modulate their speech consciously to provide adapted language lessons for their children.

There is broad evidence that several features of CDS support language acquisition in various ways (Richards & Gallaway 1994). Reduced complexity (e.g. of utterances, see Chapter 4) facilitates comprehension by minimising the processing effort and necessary concentration span (Newport et al. 1977). Explicit prompts to listen, content questions, variation sets and a higher fundamental frequency (Warren-Leubecker & Bohannon 1984) serve to attract and direct children's attention: focusing on the 'relevant aspects of the context is a necessary condition for the acquisition of a language and for successful communication' (Richards & Gallaway 1994: 263). Prosodic features (see Chapter 6) such as an exaggerated frequency range and hesitations potentially facilitate identification of the boundaries of words and phrases, given that the relevant modifications often occur at salient positions in the sentence (Richards & Gallaway 1994; Snow 1972; Jones & Meakins 2013).

Negative evidence such as recasts (target-like repetitions of the children's non target-like utterances) provide the child with useful information regarding the acceptability of her utterance (Cross 1977; Hoff-Ginsberg & Shatz 1982; Barnes et al. 1983; Farrar 1990; Saxton 1997). Due to their proximity (both within the sentence and also semantically) to the utterance they refer to, recasts are also highly intelligible (Barnes et al. 1983; Saxton 1997).

As a consequence of this discovery, early research hypothesised that CDS was necessary for language acquisition, and therefore universal by definition (Snow & Ferguson 1977). However, the interplay of diverse factors turned out to be more complex than assumed. I illustrate this by referencing research on the effect of disfluencies on comprehension:

Disfluencies provide neither semantic nor syntactic information; as a matter of fact, disfluencies provide the child with 'false' information [...] Intuitively, therefore, it would seem that disfluent speech should be hard for young children to process and we might expect that speech addressed to young children would be relatively free of disfluency. (Broen 1972: 4)<sup>4</sup>

This view has been challenged by recent developments providing evidence that certain types of disfluencies tend to occur ahead of 'difficult linguistic material' (Clark & Fox Tree 2002; Owens et al. 2018; Thacker et al. 2018: 5). Hesitation particles such as *uh* or *uhm* in English, for

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<sup>4</sup> Ellipsis that appear in square brackets indicate that the author has removed unnecessary text from a quote; ellipsis that appear without square brackets are as they appear in the original quoted text.

example, often occur before words introducing new discourse referents or referring to infrequent ones (Nilsson Björkenstam et al. 2013). Even toddlers of 28–32 months of age ‘use disfluencies online to compute expectations about the speaker’s referential intentions’ (Kidd et al. 2011: 13). Hesitations, therefore, are not necessarily hard to process, and fewer hesitations are not necessarily beneficial for comprehension.

If CDS was a necessary condition for language acquisition, we would expect it to be universal. Due to a bias towards WEIRD languages (see Section 1.1), early research did not consider variations between different languages. Evidence for this variation was provided by scholars from the paradigm of language socialisation (Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs 1986), who not only demonstrated that the learning environments of children differ extensively around the world, but that this variation crucially affects language directed towards children (CDS).

Neither in Samoa (Ochs 1988) nor among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea (Schieffelin 1990) was a register of child-directed speech discovered. On the contrary, children in both communities receive little direct input and only rarely experience dyadic or coordinated joint attention.<sup>5</sup> Both Schieffelin and Ochs demonstrated how the ideologies held within those communities towards children and child language acquisition were responsible for these linguistic practices. Similar evidence has since been reported for many children from non-industrial societies. The complex and varying relationships between socio-economic factors, caregiving-styles, parental beliefs and actual language practice are the topic of Chapter 2. The amount of variation between language environments is substantial and far from being sufficiently explored.

Still, in recent years, there have been advances in mapping this diversity, and drawing the relevant conclusions concerning the mechanisms of child language acquisition. While in many societies, children receive only very little directed speech, it is probable that all societies have their own special ways of interacting with children; however, different languages yield ‘different ranges of modifications’ (Gallaway & Richards 1994: 257).

In many languages, the mean fundamental frequency is higher in CDS than in ADS. Bryant and Barrett (2007) show that adult Shuar hunter horticulturalists from Amazonian Ecuador can discriminate between

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5 Dyadic joint attention happens between two people, while coordinated joint attention happens when two people interact together with a concrete object.

English ADS and CDS when listening to samples, and are better at inferring speaker intentions from the CDS-samples. These findings were replicated with adults from the Turkana society in northwestern Kenya (Bryant et al. 2012), suggesting that the subjects know the relevant registers from their own languages. Yet, Pye (1986a), for K'iche' Maya, and Defina (2020), for the Australian language Pitjantjatjara, both report the mean fundamental frequency to be the same in CDS, and occasionally even lower than in ADS. With regard to utterance type, Rowe (2008) and Hoff-Ginsberg and Shatz (1982) found that a great prevalence of questions is not only typical for CDS (in WEIRD languages), but is also associated with growth in the vocabulary of children. However, Pye (1986a) reports that K'iche' CDS contained even fewer questions than ADS. Instead, he found a large number of imperatives. Vogt et al. (2015) report equally high amounts of imperatives for Changana in a rural community in Mozambique, but much less in a nearby urban community.

From these few instances of possible variation, the following question emerges: how do these input characteristics, which are so different from those that have been reported to be salient, interact with children's language acquisition? Recent research has addressed the effect of CDS on vocabulary size in communities where children receive little directed input. As children in many societies only receive minimal directed input, it seems likely that they are able to learn from overheard speech. The results, though, are contradictory. Shneidman and Goldin-Meadow (2012) found that Yucatec Mayan children did not profit from overheard speech despite receiving little directed speech. Rural children in Mozambique (Mastin & Vogt 2015), however, apparently learned new words from watching the actions of others.

Yet in both groups—Mayan children and children in Mozambique—the total amount of language directly addressed to them correlated with vocabulary growth. This highlights the central importance of CDS for language acquisition and the urgent need to document its manifold faces.

## **1.3 Qaqet Baining**

### **1.3.1 The Qaqet language**

Qaqet is a non-Austronesian language and a member of the Baining language family that consists furthermore of the distinct languages Mali, Simbali, Kairak, Uramot and Makolkol (Stebbins 2009). The Baining



people are very likely the original inhabitants of the Gazelle Peninsula (Stebbins 2009). All of the languages are minority languages while Makolkol is possibly even extinct (Hellwig 2019). They are associated with the geographically defined East Papuan languages, a group of 25 non-Austronesian languages spoken in Island Melanesia (Hellwig 2019). For a full description of Qaqet grammar, see Hellwig (2019).

In accessible coastal regions, Qaqet people live together with people from various ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Thus, Tok Pisin—their *lingua franca*—is taking over rapidly in many domains and Qaqet is becoming increasingly marginalised (Hellwig 2019). In remote inland villages, however, the situation is different. Marley (2013) finds that few non-Qaqet live in Raunsepna; these include several non-Qaqet spouses who live with their Qaqet families, but mainly mission staff who stay only temporarily. As such, there is little necessity for the use of Tok Pisin (Marley 2013). As a consequence, Qaqet is spoken regularly in all domains of daily life, and acquired as a first language by children, resulting in a fairly stable language situation.

### 1.3.2 Colonial history

During the last centuries, the Qaqet Baining experienced marginalisation and violence from various actors. Near the end of the eighteenth century, the Tolai, the dominant ethnic group in East New Britain nowadays, arrived from New Ireland (Stebbins 2009). From the very beginning, the relationship between the two groups was hostile. Baining people suffered from raids and enslavement by the invaders (Fajans 1997: 33f). The Tolai considered themselves superior and conveyed their negative image of the Baining people to the German missionaries (Hiery 2007).

Colonialists then took Baining land, forcing the Baining to live in centralised settlements and work for others on their own heritage land (Fajans 1997: 37ff). During the Great War, when Australians took colonial leadership from Germany, influenza and other epidemics diminished the population considerably. During World War II, Japanese occupiers killed and tortured Bainings and destroyed their crops (Fajans 1997: 40ff). By the 1950s, coastal Baining populations had been so diminished that they were called a ‘dying people’ (Hiery 2007: 8), a prediction that fortunately has not come true.

The mountainous inland regions of the island were not visited by missionaries until 1939, the first of whom only returned in 1951 (Hiery 2007). At that time, Catholic missionaries established the mission centre at Raunsepna. They built a hospital, a school and a road, which was however destroyed by torrential rains in the early nineties.

Even today, Baining people experience marginalisation from neighbouring groups (Dickhardt 2009; Rohatynskyj 2001; Hiery 2007). Moreover, with globalisation, the land grabbing practices of logging and palm oil companies further threaten their lives and livelihoods as self-sufficient people who exclusively rely on their own land.

### 1.3.3 Previous research

Early work on the Qaqet language dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The first grammar was published by Rascher (Missionarii Sacratissimi Cordis, MSC), a missionary who lived for years among the Northern Qaqet (Rascher 1904). Further notes on the language can be found in Parkinson (1907) and Schmidt (1905), followed by word lists (Stehlin 1905/1906; Volmer 1926) and a grammar sketch (Volmer 1928). There is a collection of edited narratives (Bley 1914). Later, missionaries from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) published a phonological sketch (Parker & Parker 1974) and a grammar sketch (Parker & Parker 1977). The linguistic analyses in the present study are based on the extended grammar by Hellwig (2019).

For the sociolinguistic background, this work draws on an MA thesis about language use among the Qaqet in Raunsepna (Marley 2013) and on work by Hellwig (2020) and Hellwig and Jung (2020). The latter attests the presence of variation sets in CDS in Raunsepna, which is one of the typical features of CDS (see Section 1.2). Likewise, work on language attitudes in the Baining communities of Mali (Stebbins 2004) and Uramot (Stanton 2007) has informed the present study.

The Qaqet have received a considerable amount of anthropological interest (Parkinson 1907; Burger 1913; Rascher 1909; Laufer 1946–49, 1959; Hesse & Aerts 1982; Hesse 2007; Rohatynskyj 2000, 2001; Fajans 1983, 1985, 1993; Dickhardt 2012). Their colonial history is described in detail by Hiery (2007). For the anthropological aspects in the present study, two publications are of special importance. Dickhardt (2009) studied the concept of morality among the Qaqet, based on several

field stays in Raunsepna between 2002 and 2006. He provides detailed descriptions of the economic background and moral principles in the village. Fajans (1997) based her ethnography of the Qaqet Baining on fieldwork conducted in the 1970s in two villages. Among other topics, she also provides a detailed analysis of Baining child care practices. A central point in her description is her claim that ‘child culture’ is scarce among the Baining, and play is devalued by adults:

The Baining [...] regard children’s play as the antithesis of proper social activity [...] This is why, although Baining children are not treated harshly, the Baining suppress spontaneous play by children. (Fajans 1997: 168)

Further, Fajans argues that ‘a society that fixates on work and suppresses play can become (at least through our eyes) a dull society’ (1997: 7). Lattas (2020) describes how this portrayal of the Baining as a dull society without social structure or even gossip has been received and used in various media channels despite the protests of other researchers who have worked with them. He criticises Fajans’s ‘depolitical understanding of fieldwork problems’ (Lattas 2020: 103), which does not take into consideration that the Baining were deliberately avoiding being studied, an interpretation he shares with Dickhardt (2009: 132):

this habitus is not a disposition of shyness and dullness, but rather an attitude of intentional distancing and resistance against inappropriate arrogation, in an effort to retain their own autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

Anthropological research reproduced the marginalisation that the Baining had experienced from various outsiders by establishing an image of a non-playful, dull culture (Lattas 2020). With the progress of digitisation and the ubiquity of the internet, this image arrived on the first smartphones in Baining villages, raising awareness of the image reproduced among anthropologists and thereby reviving yet again structures that should long have been overcome.

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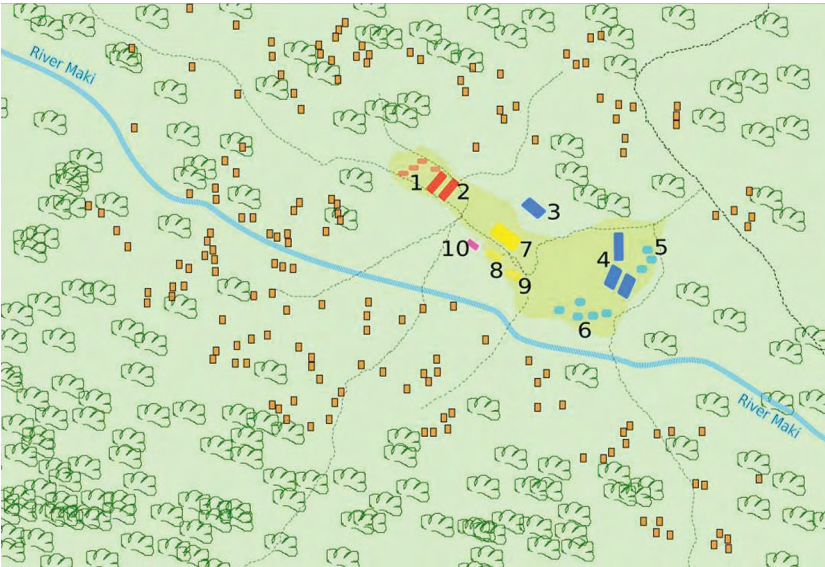
<sup>6</sup> Translation by author. Original: *so erscheint dieser Habitus weniger ein Habitus der Scheu und Stumpfheit als vielmehr ein Habitus gewollter Distanzierung und Widerständigkeit gegen als unangemessen erachtete autoritäre Anmaßung im Bemühen darum, die eigene Autonomie zu erhalten.*

### 1.3.4 The community: Raunsepna



**Figure 1.2: The valley of Raunsepna, seen from the gardens in the mountains.**

Source: Photograph by the author.



**Figure 1.3: Map of the Raunsepna mission centre today.**

Note: Scattered brown squares: villagers' homes; yellow area = mission centre; 1 = nurses' homes; 2 = hospital; 3 = elementary school building; 4 = primary school buildings; 5 and 6 = teachers' homes; 7 = church; 8 = convent; 9 = priest's house; 10 = linguists' work house.

Source: Map produced by the author.

Raunsepna (see Figure 1.2) is a remote village in the Baining Mountains (see Figure 1.1) that consists of four hamlets (see map in Figure 1.3). The village is inhabited by approximately 1,300 people (Dickhardt 2009) who live primarily from subsistence gardening supplemented by a cash crop economy. The basic household unit consists of a married couple and their unmarried children.<sup>7</sup>

According to Dickhardt (2009: 140), most households cultivate three to four subsistence gardens, sized 0.25–0.5 hectares. Some of these gardens are located close to the village centre, while others are only accessible after several hours of walking. The most important staple foods from the garden are taro and Singapore taro, supplemented by a large variety of leafy greens. There are also several other crops like cassava, sweet potatoes, corn and wild sugarcane. This diet is enriched by some hunting (e.g. of birds, wallabies) and occasionally by meat from pigs and chickens.

Major cash crops today are peanuts, which are grown in the mountains close to the village and alongside the road to Malasait (see Figure 1.1), and cocoa and copra, which are cultivated in plots of land close to the coast referred to as ‘blocks’. For most families, cash crops are their only source of monetary income; the harvest is mostly sold to distributors in the markets of Kerevat and Kokopo.

Due to the distribution of the gardens and blocks over a large area, most families live a highly mobile lifestyle with different members of the family regularly spending extended periods of time in temporary houses close to the various areas under cultivation.

Despite this, the houses close to the village centre of Raunsepna (see Figure 1.3) are considered the primary home by most families from Raunsepna (Dickhardt 2009). The so-called *station* at the centre of the village provides services run by the Catholic church such as a health post, a school (elementary and primary) and a convent. Qaqet from all over the region regularly visit Raunsepna for these services. Occasionally, children from other villages are left semi-permanently with their relatives in Raunsepna to attend school.

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7 Older relatives occasionally dwell with their family if they need support, but usually, even single elders or widows choose to stay in their own houses, see Dickhardt (2009: 140).

## 1.4 Database and methods

In language acquisition research, a combination of different types of data are considered a best-practice-approach (Kelly & Nordlinger 2014). Hellwig (2020: 37) describes the challenges posed by the application of certain methodologies in non-Western settings far from lab conditions:

On the one hand, there is a need to document characteristic speech practices—in their own right, and as instances of alternative ways of socializing children into narrating stories. And, on the other hand, there is a need to follow prescribed methodologies that arose in Western contexts—methodologies that were developed for good reasons, and that make the collected data comparable cross-linguistically.

In the present study, different data types and methods have been used to describe the register of CDS in Qaqet and compare it to Qaqet ADS.<sup>8</sup> In this section, the choice of each method will be explained with regard to its advantages and disadvantages for the actual purpose. Descriptions of the methods are found in the relevant chapters. All the data were collected during three extended field stays in 2015 (two months), 2016 (seven months) and 2017 (two months).

This study mainly draws on staged data from a narrative study using the Pear Film (Chafe 1980) as a stimulus (see Section 3.1 for a full description). This method has the benefit of allowing many aspects of the situation to be controlled by the researcher. It enabled me to choose the participants and the content of the communicative event. Each adult participant was asked to produce two versions of the same story, one directed at a child, and one at an adult.

In this way, two comparable subcorpora were created. These systematically compared differences between the two data sets can thus be attributed to differences between the two registers in Qaqet, namely ADS vs CDS.

Reference to examples from the staged corpus will be made by specifying the text name, for example, Pear plus the narrator's three letter speaker code (e.g. ARL) and an A for 'adult' and a P for 'child' (*pikinini* 'child' in

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<sup>8</sup> The present work is a description of the register of CDS in Qaqet. No production data from children are included, hence no conclusions regarding the effects of input on child language development will be made.

Tok Pisin), for example, PearAMTP for the Pear Story narrated by AMT to a child. Additionally, the example's running number in the specific text is given. The name of the example source is given following the free translation. The corpus has been analysed quantitatively for features reported by previous research as typical of CDS in other languages. With 10 data sets for comparison (consisting of an ADS- and a CDS-version of the narration), the present study draws on a relatively small sample. Therefore, all statistical tests used are non-parametric, which is the best choice if tests for a normal distribution are impossible due to small sample sizes. In addition to the quantitative comparisons, discourse-analytical methods have been applied to investigate interactional patterns.

Despite their benefits for comparability, staged data are susceptible to effects of the stimulus and the recording situation (see Section 3.1 for details on challenges encountered in the current study), and therefore do not produce naturalistic outcomes. Accordingly, the outcomes have to be compared to other data types. The present study draws on four more data types: interviews, participant observation, entire-day-data (i.e. audio-recordings of children's language environment) and longitudinal data.

I conducted 22 interviews with 36 participants about their attitudes towards child care, child language and language in general (a detailed description of the methodology is given in Section 2.2). The references for examples from the interviews are specified following their free translation, consisting of 'Int' for the text-type 'Interview' and the speaker codes of those who participated in the interview.

In order to assess language attitudes in a given community, questionnaires or interviews are usually employed. As direct techniques, 'interviews or questionnaires typically measure consciously and deliberately constructed and expressed attitudes' (Speelman et al. 2013: 84). Interviewees may decide on their own what information they are willing to share. Instead of regarding this as a weakness of the method, this quality of direct techniques could also be appreciated as preserving the autonomy of the subjects.

The decision to conduct interviews instead of using questionnaires was motivated by insights from previous research. Agheysi and Fishman (1970) remark that 'the research interview can be particularly effective for attitude assessment, especially when used to complement the observational method' (Agheysi & Fishman 1970: 151). A further benefit they report is that interviews, as opposed to formalised questionnaires, allow the

researcher to react in a flexible manner to the moods of the interviewee and adapt the method, if necessary. For the present study I benefitted not only from the results, but also from the methodological experience gained from previous research on attitudes conducted in Raunsepna: Marley (2013) reported difficulties with questionnaires, mostly due to the low familiarity of the participants with the method, while group interviews worked well. Hence, I decided to conduct interviews with at least two people present, allowing for the possibility for the interviewees discuss the answers collaboratively.

Despite the aforementioned benefits of direct techniques for the autonomy of subjects, there are some disadvantages. Haggan (2002), assessing beliefs about the use of CDS among Kuwaiti adults, demonstrated that interviews do not capture the true language behaviour of a community. Reported behaviour and actual behaviour vastly differed. Thus, in addition to the interviews, I employed other methods to collect data on the actual language behaviour of people in contact with children.

For this purpose, I employed two methods. First, I took the results from participant observation into account: primarily in Chapter 2, but occasionally in the other chapters of this work. Participant observation as a method is based on interpretation (Milroy & Gordon 2003): all impressions are filtered through the lens of the researcher's own background. However, regular interaction with the community on a day-to-day-basis allowed me to familiarise myself with many people, with their customs and their thoughts. Thereby, I gained insights that otherwise might have been ignored, as described by Eckert (2004). In personal encounters, participants are usually more open and relaxed than when being recorded. Moreover, the mutual trust built in regular personal encounters is helpful for most other methods of data collection with the community. Still, data from participant observation can usually not be evaluated quantitatively. In order to gain data on the amount of speech children hear in the course of the day, I decided to supplement the data from participant observation with naturalistic audio recordings.

I audio-recorded four children's actual language environments on several days to test for the amount and the source of their input. In the present work, these data have been incorporated to supplement the findings from the interviews with regard to the language environment. The use of audio data instead of videos was originally intended to make the method less obtrusive. Still, in practice, the nature of these data turned out to be hard



to process due to the missing video. Moreover, only a small part of the data collected could be used for analysis. Still, the recordings of children's entire days allow for a preliminary estimation of the amount of input and the types of activities that are typical for a child's linguistic environment.

Throughout the study, occasional reference will be made to the longitudinal corpus constructed by our research team<sup>9</sup> since 2014 (Hellwig et al. 2014–19). The corpus comprises weekly, hour-long video-recordings of children from nine families, four of these from Raunsepna and five from coastal Kamanakam, resulting in a corpus of more than 250 hours of recorded spontaneous interactions. For the present study, only the data from the families dwelling in Raunsepna have been used. The benefit of these longitudinal data is that they are more naturalistic than staged data, and allow for insights into the development of children. Unfortunately, the construction of longitudinal corpora is an extremely time-consuming effort. These longitudinal data are thus not yet in a state that allows for systematic data extraction. Therefore, only preliminary insights will be reported, mainly to complement the entire-day-data in Chapter 2. First impressions will be reported to allow for estimations about the occurrence of certain observations in naturalistic rather than staged contexts. Such preliminaries are incorporated to build hypotheses that may be tested by future research.

Once in a state to allow for systematic tests, the longitudinal corpus will enable us to test hypotheses derived from the data on which the present study is based.

All the data have been archived with the Language Archive Cologne.<sup>10</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of data that includes children, access is restricted. During fieldwork, I discussed access rights and ownership of data in detail with all the participants to obtain informed consent.

If researchers aim to study a certain culture, they must not only keep in mind the history of the culture in question but also their own background. All research on culture is shaped by the researchers' beliefs and values (Errington 2008: 5). Ascribing certain patterns to a whole culture or language community is always a delicate matter, especially as these patterns may be driven by unconscious beliefs of how things should be.

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9 Documenting Child Language: The Qaqet Baining of Papua New Guinea. Funded by the Volkswagen Foundation's Lichtenberg Program.

10 Hellwig, Birgit, Carmen Dawuda, Henrike Frye & Steffen Reetz. 2014–19. *Qaqet corpus*.

Early colonial anthropology is often very clearly based on the assumption of the superiority of the researchers' own culture and therefore promotes colonial interests (Errington 2008: 12). However, while these assumptions may be less obvious in today's research, the distribution of power between the studied and the studying unfortunately has not changed much.

The present work is also based on a profound imbalance in the relationship between the researcher and the participants. While I have the ability to travel and to do research, this is not the case for the people with whom I am working in Raunsepna. My observations and interpretations are just as mediated by my attitudes as everyone else's.

## 1.5 Outlook

This monograph is divided into two parts. Part I, consisting of this chapter and the following one, lays the foundation for Part II. In Chapter 2, I investigate the language environment of children in Raunsepna. With regard to the amount of language, I determine if it is comparable to the amount that children in similar settings receive. For beliefs about child language acquisition, I present interview results that connect to patterns found in actual language practice. Additionally, I offer new evidence on child play among the Qaqet. The chapter contextualises the staged data presented in Part II, where the results of seven empirical substudies are presented, each presenting my investigation of single features that are known to vary between CDS and ADS in other languages. In Chapter 3, I introduce the Qaqet Pear corpus. Chapters 4 to 7 are dedicated to a quantitative comparison of ADS and CDS. Additionally, I assess potential benefits for children of the type of input found in the data, based on previous research on the effect of such input. While this is also true for Chapters 8 and 9, I concentrate on the modifications found in CDS, as there are no instances of the relevant phenomena in the ADS corpus.

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