Academic language in early childhood interactions: a longitudinal study of 3- to 6-year-old Dutch monolingual children

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Preface

The present study was conducted within a larger research project called ‘the Development of Academic language at School and at Home’. The title of the project was abbreviated into the acronym the ‘DASH project’. The project concerns a special research area funded by the Dutch council for scientific research (NWO)\(^1\). The DASH project was conducted by researchers affiliated with three Dutch universities: Utrecht University, Tilburg University and the University of Amsterdam. The project is interdisciplinary in that it was conducted at both a social sciences department (Utrecht University) and at linguistics departments (Tilburg University and the University of Amsterdam).

The project consisted of four ‘part projects’: One general study and three in-depth studies that each had its own unique focus. The in-depth studies focussed on academic language development in three language groups: A monolingual Dutch group, a Turkish-Dutch group and a Moroccan-Berber-Dutch group. This dissertation concerns the Dutch in-depth study.

The chair and coordinator of the DASH project was Professor Paul Leseman (Utrecht University). The team of the general study (Utrecht University) consisted of Dr. Aziza Mayo, Anna Scheele, MA, and Marielle Messer, MA. The team of the Turkish in-depth study (Tilburg University) consisted of Professor Ton Vallen, Dr. Rian Aarts and Serpil Demir, MA. The team of the Moroccan-Berber in-depth study (Tilburg University) consisted of Dr. Jeanne Kurvers, Dr. Abder el Aissati, Dr. Yahya E-Rramdani and Mohammadi Laghaoui, MA. The team of the Dutch in-depth study (University of Amsterdam) consisted of Professor Folkert Kuiken, Dr. Rob Schoonen and Lotte Henrichs, MA.

All participants that were involved in the current in-depth study were also participating in the general study conducted by Utrecht University. The Utrecht University researchers (and research assistants) who visited the participating families assessed standardised tests in order to collect data on children’s cognitive capacities, executive functioning and general language skills. The University of Amsterdam researcher (the author of this dissertation) and research assistants, who conducted the in-depth study, had a more narrow focus on parent-child and teacher-child language interactions. Some of the data that was collected for the general study was used in the current study. The data that was collected for the Turkish and the Moroccan-Berber in-depth study was not used in the current study.

The DASH group met frequently in the first four years of the project, when data collection was in process. Over the course of the project, a number of plenary meetings were organized in order to keep track of the progress of each of the particular studies. Each study will initially be separately reported upon.

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1 The project number of the special research area is: 411-03-060. The general studies and the three in-depth studies that constitute this research area are referred to by the project numbers 411-03-061, 411-03-062, 411-03-063 and 411-03-064 respectively.
As a final remark, I would like to mention that the voice chosen for the dissertation is ‘we’. Sometimes, the pronoun ‘we’ explicitly refers to the complete DASH research group, for example when decisions with regard to the coding scheme are discussed in chapter 2. In other parts of the dissertation, ‘we’ refers to the author of this dissertation and to her supervisors.