1. Introduction: parent-teacher conferences in multi-ethnic schools

Relationships between school and home are encouraged in contemporary educational policy in Western countries. They are part of policies of decentralization, in which responsibility of the actors for shaping their own lives is emphasized (Dahlstedt, 2009). School success for children is considered not solely the responsibility of the school, but also of the parents who should stimulate and support their children and create an academic atmosphere in the family. However, not all groups welcome or value these efforts of the school in the same way, also depending on how relationships between school and home are perceived. For instance, some might perceive these attempts as a 'colonialization' of the home by the school (Edwards & Warin, 1999).

Part of the popular explanations of the underachievement of minority and migrant children is the assumption that cultural values and practices of upbringing might be not stimulating for academic achievement or might even be contrary to the values of the school (Archer & Francis, 2007; Huss-Keeler, 1997). A related explanation is that partnerships between teachers and parents depend on cultural understandings of home-school relationships and of what role parents can play in fostering their child's school career (Lareau, 2003). Partnerships between teachers and parent of different backgrounds are reported to be more difficult to establish.

One of the scenarios in which these home-school relationships are enacted are the parent-teacher talks that are held a couple of times throughout the school year. These are part of the institutional regime of the school, and asymmetrical in nature in the sense that its rules are laid out by the institution and that the teacher has more control than the

parents (Walker & MacLure, 2005). As can be expected from the literature on the role of cultural diversity in school success, and how this impacts on teacher-parent partnerships, this balancing of interests in an institutional setting can be more riskfull in case the parent and the teacher have different backgrounds. Although there is a growing literature on the involvement of minority parents or parents with a migration background in schools most studies rely on interviews with parents and teachers (see for instance Kim, 2009, for an overview). Only a minority of studies is based on observations of actual conversations between parents and teachers.

In this chapter we will study parent-teacher conferences in Dutch primary schools. Dutch primary schools in the big cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht now have on average about 50% of students from migrant families. We are particularly interested in how conferences involving minority students' parents develop as compared to conferences between teachers and native Dutch parents. This interest was developed from the fact that many schools, including the ones we were working with in our research, reported difficulties in their parent-teacher conferences with minorities. They reported that these conferences are difficult to manage and are sometimes characterized by conflict. The migrant parents in the schools participating in our research are mainly first generation migrants from rural areas in Morocco and Turkey. At home they speak a mixture of their native language and Dutch, and their knowledge of the Dutch educational system is overall less developed compared to majority parents. Most of them, especially the mothers, have only enjoyed a few years of education themselves in their country of origin.

The parent-teacher conferences we study concerns a particular type of institutional talk at the end of primary school in the Netherlands, when children are generally twelve years of age and are about to leave primary school and enter secondary school. The primary school system and the secondary school system are two separate systems in the Netherlands, and the transition from the one to the other is accompanied with many institutional activities including talks between parents and teachers. Secondary education in the Netherlands consists of a tracked system, too complicated to explain in detail here, but with globally three levels: a level of general education as a preparation for

university, a level of general education as a basis for professional education, and a level of vocational education with a more general and a more practical path. Children and their parents are not free to choose any one of these levels, they have to apply for admission. In deciding about admission, a secondary school considers two pieces of information: the child's score on the National Test (CITO test), and the advice of the teacher of the primary school the child is leaving. This advice combines information about the intellectual abilities with a description of relevant characteristics of the child. In the parent-teacher talks we are studying this advice is discussed and parents and teachers are supposed to come to an agreement on the educational level that applies for the child. We were especially interested in these conversations as they represent attempts to explain, or justify why a particular level applies or does not apply. These conversations allowed us to study how teachers and parents dialogically construct these explanations and justifications and to what extent they are able to reach common ground while doing so. Our questions in this study therefore are: how do parents and teachers construct accounts for the school results of children interactionally? How is this done in parent-teacher conferences with immigrant parents as compared to majority parents? And how is this construction related to assuming or creating 'common ground' culturally speaking?

2. Theory: a dialogical approach to diversity

In their studies of teacher-parent conferences, some authors have adopted an approach based on a cultural differences theory. The assumption of this approach is that misunderstandings and dissimilar interpretations between people with different cultural backgrounds easily occur because of differences in cultural expectations and knowledge. Sometimes, these differences are considered to be connected with broad cultural orientations, often expressed as dichotomies, such as collectivism/individualism or masculinity versus femininity. A study by Greenfield, Quiroz & Raeff (2000) of 9 parent-teacher conferences at a primary school in the US, involving Latino immigrant parents, is one example of a cultural differences approach. Greenfield et al interpret the conflicts in these conferences as having to do with parents' and teachers' disagreement about

developmental goals, which the authors link to the collectivist culture of the parents and the individualistic culture of the teachers. Although we acknowledge the importance of bringing in possible differences in cultural orientations as explanations for what happens in these conversations, we would like to suggest a different approach based on the dialogical nature of these encounters.

Earlier we have argued against a perspective on culture that foregrounds long term (and thus static) discontinuities in favor of a cross-context perspective that combines a situated approach with one that considers longer-term and broader social and cultural processes (de Haan & Elbers, 2005a; de Haan & Elbers, 2005b; see also Elbers, 2010). In this chapter, we build on this perspective, that acknowledges the 'fluent' character of culture next to more 'instantiated' forms of culture, but foreground the dialogical and transformative nature of cultural diversity.

Instead of seeing the differences between migrant parents and teachers in the light of cultural discontinuity, thus in terms of 'instantiated' forms of culture, we approach teacher-parent conversations from the perspective of the transformative processes that migrant parents and teachers go through when they are confronted with culturally diverse pedagogies. This perspective is informed by the notion of culture as dialogue. In addition, especially our methodology is also informed by intercultural communication theories.

2.1 Culture as dialogue and negotiation of meaning
        The idea of opposing and diverse frames of reference cannot explain what happens in the conversations between teachers and migrant parents as participants in these conversations constantly shift their positions depending on how the dialogue with the other partner develops. Instead, we need a model of culture as dialogue for understanding these intercultural settings.
We refer to the idea that cultural meanings and cultural differences are not given, but 1) reconstructed in dialogic encounters and 2) actively organized and managed between members of particular social groups. With respect to the first point, we build on views on

culture that acknowledge its fundamentally dialogical nature, that is, views that argue that cultures are continuously produced, reproduced, and revised in dialogues with their members (Clifford, 1988; Mannheim & Tedlock, 1995). As Mannheim & Tedlock argue, cultural events or dialogical encounters between members of cultural groups are not the sum of the actions of individual participants. Instead, individual productions of culture reflect former dialogical encounters, and shared constructions of culture are the key sites of production of culture. In this view every cultural notion tastes of the lived encounters in which these cultural notions were articulated, analogous to the Bakhtinian view that 'each word tastes of the dialogical encounters in which it has lived its socially charged life' (Bakhtin, 1981. p. 293). Moreover, these events or dialogical reproductions depend on who is there and the (history of the) positions taken. For instance, a critical evaluation of the notion of democracy by a member of a democratic society will be different depending on if one is speaking to a person who considers him or herself a member of a Western democracy and is willing to defend this system as compared to someone who positions him or herself outside this system and attacks the concept from an outsiders position. The particular reconstruction of democracy that is the 'result' of these dialogues will bear the traces of the particular dialogical encounter. Thus, the (sum of) meeting grounds and its particular participants are primordial in what a cultural meaning finally becomes. All culture is, as Clifford has argued 'interculture', that is, the result of the reinvention of particular, different cultures coming together (Clifford, 1988).

Second, in these dialogical encounters participants need to actively organize and manage the meanings that are assigned to them (Hannerz, 1992). In line with Hannerz's ideas around the organization of diversity, we want to highlight that cultural meanings are constantly ascribed to the self and to others and that this does not happen in semiotically empty spaces but depend on what meanings were assigned in the past. The interpretations that are given in the present, bring about the possible range of interpretations of the future. This claim is related to Hannerz' position that the cultural is socially distributed, or happens through the chain of encounters between people, and people and objects throughout time and is not a phenomenon that is (equally) and collectively shared as if culture resides in one homogeneous space. Culture is socially organized at the interfaces, the confrontations, the interpenetrations and the flow-through between clusters of

meaning and ways of managing meaning. The major implication of this idea is that culture flows through the population, seen as a web of relationships, and that culture is 'channeled' and actively socially organized. People must deal with other people's meanings, the meanings that others have a prior claim to, on which one is bound to react. Thus, cultural meanings are not ascribed in a vacuum, they are ascribed in a fully charged semiotic space which calls for particular reactions to claims that are made earlier.

Leaving aside the discussion on the ontological claims of dialogue versus culture as something that exists independently of or simultaneously with these dialogical encounters, the point we want to highlight here is twofold. First, even in the non-dialogical accounts and representations of culture, its dialogical nature as well as the history of former dialogical encounters is part of what these instantiated forms are. Second, these dialogical accounts reflect collective histories of confrontations, management of meaning that are used in new dialogical encounters. In terms of the perspective we are using to analyze the conversations between teachers and (migrant) parents, this has the following consequences. Instead of seeing these conversations as the encounter of individual participants who represent and express particular cultural or ethnic positions, we see these conversations and the cultural meanings expressed in them as happening in semiotically charged spaces, that reflect earlier dialogues and meanings expressed in conversations between members of both (ethnic) groups and that call for (re)action.

2.2 Intercultural communication theory

The second perspective we draw on in this study, in particular with respect to our methodology, is intercultural communication theory which provides us with models of how partners with diverse backgrounds try to bridge perceived differences in terms of discursive strategies. Even if in these theories the nature of 'difference' is more conceptualized as the point of departure rather than as dialogically constructed, the communication strategies these theories describe to bridge difference are useful for our theoretical perspective. According to an intercultural communication perspective, language is a form of joint action, resulting in numerous acts that demand coordination

by the interlocutors. Successful coordination depends on the establishment of common ground, a frame of reference based on shared knowledge, beliefs and assumptions (Clark, 1996). The less ground is shared by conversational partners, the more they have to exert themselves to communicate in a successful manner (Jacobs, 2002). In particular, we borrow notions from Communication Accommodation Theory or CAT (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile & Ota, 1995; Giles & Coupland, 1991; Jones, Gallois, Callan, & Barker, 1999) for studying how common ground is established or fails to be established in teacher-parent conversations.

CAT is a theory of intercultural communication that aims to uncover the links between language, situation and identity. In particular, the theory focuses on the linguistic and discursive means used by interlocutors to express their relationship toward each other and to position themselves as resourceful actors in the situation. According to CAT, cultural differences do not influence conversation from the outside, but they are thematized or purposively neglected by the interlocutors. The partners in a conversation use interactional strategies to move closer to each other, or to do the reverse and emphasize interpersonal or cultural differences. Communication involves a continuous movement towards and away from others. We find this perspective fruitful, amongst other things, to study which aspects of their own or the other person's identity the parents and teachers make salient in the conversations.

Initially, the theory was developed as a theory of speech convergence and divergence (Jones et al, 1999). The interest was in linguistic mechanisms involved in the establishment of approximation or distance in conversations. Researchers looked at verbal and nonverbal communication features such as accent, speech rate, interruptions, smiling while listening, which interlocutors use in creating distance from the other partner or for moving toward the other. Gradually the theory was extended, because it became clear that interlocutors also introduce content strategically in order to move toward the other or to increase differences from them. Researchers became interested in the way the introduction of new topics is used in a conversation: who is allowed to make topic changes, how are topic changes used to reinforce power or status differences? Another interest was in the way the interlocutors manage mutual understanding, for instance by asking questions to check whether the other has understood, and if not, by

providing extra information. The theory has applied successfully to conversations in the context of organizations and institutions (Gardner, Paulsen, Gallois, Callan & Monaghan, 2001) and in multilingual contexts (Sachdev & Bourhis, 2001).

Jones et al (1999) outline four types of strategies which are all part of the creation of distance versus common ground.

(1) Approximation strategies. The partners can adapt to each other by converging on communicative features, such as accent or choice of terminology. On the other hand, partners may diverge by accentuating their differences. Partners may also use discursive means in a complementary fashion, when they do not seek to either converge or diverge, but, in their actions, show that they accept and want to maintain social differences.

(2) Interpretability strategies refer to discursive means used by interlocutors to create shared understanding. Conversations differ to the extent that interlocutors are considerate of their partner's ability to understand. Do they apply clarification checks to find out whether their partner has understood, do they modify the complexity of their speech and use repetitions, if necessary?

(3) Discourse management strategies consist of discursive strategies applied to organize the conversation, for instance deciding about an agenda, the allocation of turns or making topic changes. Part of this category of strategies is the management of communication breakdown.

(4) Interpersonal control strategies focus on the way the social roles of the interlocutors and the relations between these roles are highlighted in the discourse. For instance, do interlocutors refer to their institutional roles, and do they accentuate professional authority or rather minimize it? Interpersonal control can have positive influence, when people feel free to express themselves, or negative, when they feel restrained by the roles given to them in the conversation.

In this chapter we make use of CAT to understand how in an interactive setting convergence and divergence between interlocutors happens through language. Interlocutors might, through language, move closer to the other participant to make the interaction more equal or they might emphasize (the perceived) interpersonal or

intergroup differences between them. In this study, we will make use of these approximation and distancing categories, but will adapt them so that they are more focused on how approximation and distancing happens in institutional settings. First, analogue to the first category but focusing on identity expressions, we will analyze if and how distance and approximation are verbally created in terms of identity. Do interlocutors verbally indicate, directly or indirectly, that they have different identities? And, if they do, (how) do they bridge the distance that is created through the expression of 'difference'? Then, given that these conversations happen in institutional settings, we pay attention to interpersonal control strategies, in particular to how institutional roles are set up and acted out (compare the fourth category above). Finally, we also focus on, given the institutional setting of the conversation studied, how discursive means and strategies are applied to steer the conversation (discourse management strategies) and to create common understanding (interpretability strategies). As the representative of the institution is able to steer the conversation (to set the agenda, to define and develop topics) and is in the position to be considerate of their partner's ability to understand, the conversation is highly asymmetrical. Therefore, we will focus on how teachers use these conversational means on the one hand, and how parents react on these on the other.

We see both the dialogical view on culture and CAT as related as both focus on the active management and construction of diversity. While both support the idea that difference or sameness is actively managed by participants, CAT is more suitable to understand the communicative strategies in situations that have been characterized as a priori 'diverse', while a dialogical view on culture also theorizes how the diversity constructed in one setting also builds on how this was done in former encounters. Moreover, the CAT perspective draws our attention to framing and frame building in the analyses, which moves the analyses of divergence beyond the level of concrete utterances.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research goals and overall methodological approach

Our goal with the empirical study is to gain more insight into how parents and teachers dialogically explain 'school success' in a conversational setting. How do parents and teachers construct accounts for the school results of children interactionally? What accounts do parents and teachers give for the developmental outcomes of children, how these can and should be fostered? What role parents and teachers assign to the child itself, to their own support and to that of the different spheres of the environment (e.g. school versus home)? Moreover, our goal is to gain knowledge of how this is done differently for conversational partners who have a relatively common background (in terms of knowledge based and experience with schooling) as compared to conversational partners who, in particular for the topic at hand, share less common background. Then, as a second focus of the study, we are interested in how conversational partners, while they are dealing with this explanatory process, deal with sameness and difference dialogically. Do they create common ground, and if so, how? Do they create distance and if so, how? And how do these processes differ in conversations between teachers and parents with a more similar background versus when they have a more diverse background? Background here refers in particular to ethnic background as well as schooling history and history in the Dutch society as a whole (see also 'a comparative approach'). Our methodological approach builds on an interpretative approach inspired by discourse analyses (Fairclough, 1992; Bavelas, Kenwood, & Phillips, 2002; Drew & Heritage, 1992).

3.3 Participants and corpus

As explained in the introduction, the corpus exists of the parent – teacher conference (or talk) in the final year of primary school, in which the teacher brings forward the primary school's advice for the level of secondary education of the child. From the total of 54 conferences that were included in this part of our study, we randomly selected 34 parent-teacher conferences with the only criteria that the parents had to have either a Moroccan or a Dutch background. Eighteen parents had migrated from Morocco, 14 parents are native Dutch. In one family the mother is Dutch and the father is a migrant from Ecuador; in another family the father is from Morocco, whereas the mother is Dutch. Both groups differed apart from their ethnic background, in their

language skills in Dutch, and in their schooling level. As for the migrant parents Dutch was a second language, their language skills in Dutch were relatively less developed which impacted on their possibilities to participate in the conversation. In five conferences the parent hardly participated in the talk. Furthermore, the parents with a Moroccan background did not attend school in the Netherlands and thus did not have first-hand experience with the Dutch school system. Moreover when they attended school in Morocco, their level of schooling was on average lower as compared to the Dutch parents, which is in accordance with the general distribution of schooling levels in the society as a whole. In 22 conferences two teachers were present, in the remaining 12 conferences there was one teacher. The conferences took on average 16.2 minutes (range 7.1-36.0 minutes).

Five different teachers (4 female and 1 male) were included in the study, all had a high educational background and were native speakers of the Dutch language. All conferences were conducted in Dutch, although parents did differ in the fluency of their Dutch. The schools (four in total) were located in multi-ethnic neighborhoods in Utrecht, one of the four largest cities in the Netherlands. The percentage of ethnic minority children in the classes in these four schools ranged from 39 to 91%, which is fairly common for the urban areas where the immigrant population in the Netherlands is concentrated.

The conversations had a common set-up given the need to fulfil specific institutional procedures. The teacher informed the parent about how the child was going to be assigned a particular advice for a certain school track. Subsequently, the teacher introduced the result of the CITO test and the school's provisional advice for one of the levels and types of secondary education. Then, also given the fact that towards the end of the year, parents and teachers needed to reach agreement about the particular level (in the sense that the parent has to sign the school advice), the school's advice was compared with or weighted against the school type the parents had in mind. In these conversations the issue of how and why the child has reached or will reach a particular level is mostly extensively addressed.

3.3 Analytic approach

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We have used two perspectives in our analyses, one was a content analyses, and had a thematic focus, and the other perspective focused on how difference and approximation is constructed through the dialogues.

Content analyses. How do parents and teacher construct accounts for the child's school success in the course of the conversation interactionally? And, in doing so, to what extent are they able to establish common ground, or do they stress their diverse views while they are constructing accounts for the child's school succes? How are the different accounts or attributions on the child's school success weighted against each other? And how is this related to the dialogical quality of the process? In other words, how can we account for the dialogical nature of the process of explaining school success in terms of particular content categories such as effort and ability of the child?

The construction of diversity and sameness through dialogue.

In this second phase of the analysis we ask the question if 'difference' is interactionally created in the dialogue. Besides, once difference is introduced, what indications are there that the conversational partners work on the repair of the distance that is created? Alternatively, we also will look at attempts of the interlocutors to stress commonality, or common ground.

The way difference is discursively constructed is not independent of the extent to which interlocutors share a common background, a collective or individual common history, a common knowledge base etc. While we look at the discursive and dialogical construction of difference, we are aware that what happens at the discursive level at some point also refers to these (lack of) shared histories and experiences.

In our analysis we pay attention to the following aspects of approximation and distancing strategies in communicative settings:

1) Approximation and distancing strategies as related to identity

How do the interlocutors create distance or common ground during these conversations referring to identity issues? Through the course of the interaction, interlocutors can move closer and take distance and are involved in a continuous movement towards and away from each other. In our analysis of these strategies we looked for those discursive strategies that somehow referred to a either distance or proximity between 'us' and

'them' or 'me' and 'you' in which some party is moved to, or adopts the position of 'the other'.

2) Approximation and distancing strategies as related to interpersonal control strategies
What social roles are taken or assigned by the interlocutors and how are the relations between these roles highlighted in the discourse? For this part of the analysis we have looked at what roles the interlocutors take and how the relationship professional-lay person defined their role taking. Difference or sameness can be constructed while using the different roles parents and teacher have, as is to be expected given the institutional setting of the conversations.

3) Approximation and distancing strategies as related to discourse management and interpretability strategies
What linguistic means do the interlocutors use to create understanding and clarify misunderstanding? What discursive strategies are applied to underscore or rather to relativize the institutional position of the teacher? What initiatives do the interlocutors take to create common ground and to clarify misunderstandings? What efforts do they make to understand their partner's contributions, even if they disagree with the point of view expressed by the other? Does the teacher dominate the agenda of the meeting and to what extent can the parent influence the themes discussed? Is the institutional status a hindrance for creating a joint position with respect to the pupil's future school career?

3.4 Procedure

To answer these questions use was made of software for qualitative analyses MAXQDA. The analysis was carried out by the authors, assisted by a trained research assistant under the supervision of the authors. A discourse analytic approach was adopted aimed at discovering certain patterns and relationships in the interactions, mostly focusing on the verbal aspects of these interactions, and how these possibly differ for both groups of parents.

Content analysis. Taking the transcript with the marked attributions as a point of departure, we looked at the interactive construction of these attributions in the context of the conversation as a whole. For each transcribed conversation, text fragments were labeled focused on how the different attributions were weighted against each other in the

interaction and what function these had in the conversation. Then, as a second step, for each transcript summaries were made paying attention to these focus points and the particular course of action in each conversation. As a third step, conclusions were drawn on general patterns that were characteristic for the sample as a whole using the summaries paying particular attention to possible differences between the two groups (minority versus majority parents).

Discursive construction of diversity. As for the analysis of the dialogical construction of difference and communality, as a first step, we selected all parts in the transcripts in which the interlocutors made clear to each other that they basically share a common perspective or rather that there are differences between them. In the case of differences, we looked at the way the teachers and parents tried to bridge the differences and create a common understanding. Additionally, we marked specific parts of the transcripts related to role taking as well as to interpretability and discourse management strategies. The second and third steps were similar as for the analysis of the attributions.

Each of these steps were, apart from by the research assistant, also coded and discussed by the authors for a small sample of transcripts until a satisfying degree of agreement was reached to guarantee the (inter)reliability of the qualitative coding and analysis.

4. Results

4.1 How school success is accounted for

We report fist on the *what* of the attributional process (to what is school success ascribed?) in the context of the dynamics of the conversations, using a dialogical perspective. It is to be expected that the conversations were impacted by how the parents and the teacher experienced the school results of the child. When the child's school results are disappointing, there is a greater need for an explanation of what had gone wrong and to design a plan with respect to how better results can be reached. Therefore we checked if there were systematic differences between migrant and non-migrant parent-teacher conversation in this respect but this was not the case. In all conversations

there was some form of tension between what had been reached and what both parties wished for the child, even if there was variation in this respect. Moreover, as a rule, parents had an interest in arguing for a higher advice, while the teachers pleaded for 'realism'. As this was an overall underlying pattern, in the analysis we do not distinguish between conversations that were characterized by disappointment versus those characterized by success. Besides, as these conversations happened at the beginning of the school year, school success was, besides something that needed explanation, at the same time something to be achieved.

The conversations between the teachers and parents basically center around two issues. One issue was 'What went wrong?' or 'Why did the child not do better?' and the other issue was 'How can the teacher and the parent make sure that the child is going to do better in the future? In these conversations, one recurring aspect was *how much weight should be place on ability*. Negative attributions on ability (the child is not smart enough) were in all cases addressed with a certain level of cautiousness and seemed overall to be face threatening. Ability was often weighted against effort (the child should work harder) combined with 'external' factors (how the social environment is able to support greater effort) in all cases. However, the issue of *how* this internal-external dynamic should be managed differed considerably between the conversations with minority and majority parents. Whereas for majority parents, a dominant focus of the conversation was the establishment of the right psychological and motivational structure so that the child will take initiative, the discussions with minority parents centered around the extent to which parents or teachers should force the child to work hard, or prohibit other non-school related activities.

More specifically, while in the conversations with minority parents the issue centered around how the environment should be acted upon, in the sense of to what extent the child should be monitored, the discussions with majority parents centered around the issue of how to act upon the child's psychology. Besides these differences in content, the process through which these accounts were constructed was different. While the diagnosis on what went wrong was more commonly constructed in case of the conversations with majority parents, they were more characterized by opposition or a passive position by the parent in case of the conversations with minority parents (see also

below on approximation and distancing strategies). An example of the opposition that was typical for the conversations with minority parents is presented below. The effort explanations that were dominant in the conversations with minority parents were not built as a common construct between the teacher and the parents but had a more oppositional character. Typically, teachers worked around contradicting or arguing against effort accounts of migrant parents as the example of Karim's father below shows (Excerpt 1). In this conversation, the teacher introduces his explanation for the disappointing school result. The teacher starts out with his own explanation in turn 1. Karim finds school difficult. And this claim is supported by referring to 'objective' school results in the following turns (up until turn 13). The father does only passively support these accounts with hmm and yes in turn 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14. These accounts of the teacher all seem to support a lack of ability explanation. Then, in turn 15 the teacher combines the lack of ability explanation with arguing against a lack of effort explanation: He does his best, but he just finds it difficult. The father obviously has a hard time arguing against this, as does not directly oppose this view. He does however bring in his own account when he suggests that the school should perhaps help his child. The teacher then extensively makes clear that the child is getting a lot of extra help but still finds learning difficult. As the conversation develops the teacher tries to further sustain the image of an unable child through referring to dyslexia, while the father holds on his plea for more help at school. Towards the end of the conversation, the teacher in turn 20 again anticipates the father's explanation that it is the child's fault because he has not worked hard. While the father seem to oppose this view in line with a 'but…' the teacher continues arguing that the child cannot do better in turn 22. While the father is trying to reformulate in turn 23, the teacher interrupts him in line 24, even if she is hesitant, stating that the child is effortful (he does a lot), but he just finds learning difficult.

Excerpt 1: Karim A0047: not effort explanation by the teacher.

T= Teacher, F = Father

1) T: .. Nou, hij vindt het op school een beetje moeilijk.	1) T: Well, he finds it a bit difficult at school
2) F: ja.	2) F: Yes
3) T En dat zie je ook, maar dat wist u denk ik	3)(T: you can see that, but, I think, you have known that already, isn't it (childish tone)?

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al een beetje he (beetje kinderachtig toontje)?

4) F: mmja

5) T nou als je naar de kruisjes kijkt,

6) F: ja

7) T dan zie je dat hij in z'n kruisjes altijd een beetje beneden zit. Dus met rekenen zit ie beneden

8) F: hmmm

9) T met lezen zit ie beneden en begrijpende lezen,

10) F (heel zacht): ja

11) T: en spelling

12) F (heel zacht): ja

13) T: rekenen, hij vindt eigenlijk die vakken allemaal moeilijk.

14) F: ohh. 't' .. ja..

15) T: Hij doet wel hard zn best, maar hij vindt het gewoon erg lastig.

16) F: ja.

17) T: Dus t, hij, het is niet zo dat hij er niet hard genoeg voor werkt (V: ofzo?) ofzo. ….

18) F (zacht): mja

(...)

19) F: misschien moet helpen. Maar ik nuu, moet niet helpen(/horen?), die vrouw? (??) Ik sta, want ik sta, leraar..

(…)

20) T: Nou, Karim kan er niets aan doen. .. Dus. hij doet heel hard zn best,

21) F: hm, maareuhmm..

22) T: maar….. eigenlijk, beter kan niet, wat

4) F: mmyes

5) T: if you look at the marks

6) F: yes

7) T: you see that his marks are always a bit at the lower side. With arithmetic he is at the lower side

8) F: hmmm

9) T: with reading at the lower side and reading comprehension

10) F: (lowly): yes

11) T: and spelling

12) F: (very lowly): yes

13) T: arithmetic, he finds all these subjects difficult

14) F: ohh, 't' .. yes

15) T: he tries very hard, but he simply finds it very difficult

16) F: yes

17) T: So, it, he, it is not the case that he does not work hard enough (F: or something like that) or something like that

18) F: (lowly): myes

(…)

19) F: perhaps should help. But I now, should not help (hear?), the wife (??). I stand, because I stand, teacher..

(....)

20) T: Well, so, it is not Karim's fault. He really works hard.

21) F: hm, but ehhmmm..

hij [(doet?)..]

23) F:

[Zooooooo]

24) T: dus t-, euh (aarzelend), t ga-, hij doet heel veel, maar hij vindt t supermoeilijk.

25) F: t-t…ja. (beetje teleurgesteld).

22) T: but, in fact..., better is not possible

[cause he does..

23) F:

[Sooooooo..]

24) T: so, ehh (hestitating), he does a lot, but he finds it superdifficult.

25) F: (disappointed) well....

Opposing positions in the conversations with minority parents did not just happen around the issue whether certain explanations for school success were valid, they also evolved around what would be the best remedy to repair the situation. For instance, while parents would claim that disciplining through punishment would be the remedy, together with keeping the child under better 'vigilance', the teacher would contradict such solutions in favor of more child-centered solutions as in the excerpt below. In this conversation, both teachers extensively introduce the problematic nature of the child's behavior in the classroom. They call upon both the mother, and the uncle of the boy, who is present too, to solve this problem together. Then, the mother takes the initiative for a solution, that is opposed by the teachers. While the mother proposes punishment, the teacher pleas for a more balanced measure in which the health of the child is taken into account (see also Excerpts 5, 6 and 7 for how this conversation unfolds further).

Excerpt 2: Ibrahim: Example of opposing views on how to repair a lack of effort.

T1 = Teacher 1, T2 = Teacher 2, M = Mother

1) M: (…) Ibrahim als jij goeie rapport, krijg de telefoon. Krijg je slecht rapport ((Ze klopt erbij op de tafel.)) krijg je geen telefoon. (.) Géén voetbal meer. (..) Maar 't is m-m-mijn-mijn eh-mijn zusje ook, had (??) gehad. Ga je niet meer naar voetbal.

2) T2: Nou moet ik even voor hem in   [de bres

1) M:(...). When you get a good report , you get a mobile phone. You get a bad report ((knocks on the table)) You do not get a mobile phone . (.) No football anymore. He is not going to football anymore.

2) T2:Now, I need to take his side for a

springen als je zegt hij mag een keer een <u>week</u> niet voetballen dan zeg ik ja.

3) M: [Ja. (?)

4) T2: Maar als je 'm <u>helemaal niet</u> laat voetballen dan heeft zijn <u>lijf</u> ook een beetje-

5) M: (*heel hard*) Nee! Mijn manier, is echt een goeie straf voor hem.

6) T1: Ja maar kijk   [hij heeft, nee luister eh. (?)-

7) M: [(??) niet- niet (?). (?)

minute. When you say he is not allowed to play football <u>for one week</u>, I would say yes.

3) M: [Yes

4) T2: [But if you do not let him play football at all, than his body is a little-

5) M: (*very loud*) No! My way, is really a good punishment for him.

6) T1: Yes, but look, he has, listen ehhh-

7) M: [(??) no, not-.

In contrast, as was also revealed in the quantitative analysis, reference to psychological causes of a lack of better school result were dominant in the conversations with majority parents. Teachers referred for instance to a lack of motivation, concentration or attention but also to particular 'disorders' such as performance anxiety. Parents and teachers would discuss the measures that needed to be taken, including professional help such as therapy or organized leisure activities such as sport clubs. In these discussions, overall both parents and teachers co-constructed explanations or measures to be taken, searching for how the right balance of challenges can be reached through a common effort of parents and teachers, such as is the case for Astrid's mother's talk with her teacher shown in Excerpt 3.

<u>Excerpt 3: Astrid, DW_A0057: example of common construction of psychological causes</u>
T = teacher, M = mother

1) M: Ja maar omdat jij ook zegt van dat ze toch <u>heel</u> snel bij jou om hulp komt vragen.

2) T: Ja ze is heel onzeker.

(....)

1) M: Yes, but because you are also saying that she asks you for help <u>very</u> easily

2) T: Yes, she is very insecure

(….)

3) M: (laughing). And I heard from Pia that

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3) M: *(lachend)* En van Pia hoorde ik ook terug dat jij had gezegd dat ze soms elke vijf minuten bij je staat met dr rekenwerk.

you had told that she sometimes stands at your desk every five minutes with her arithmetic work

4) T: Ja.

4) T: Yes

5) M: *(hard)* En daar is voor een heel groot deel volgens mij aandacht en concentratie.

5) M: (laughing very loudly): I think it is to a large extent a matter of attention and concentration

6) T: Dat denk ik wel, dat denk wel. [??

6) T: I think that is true, is true

7) M: [En gebrek aan zelfvertrouwen

7) M: and a lack of self assurance

In this excerpt, the teacher and the mother are discussing why the results on math of Astrid are still not satisfying and how her attitude and self-confidence is impacting on that. Both the parent and the teacher bring in various explanations from different perspectives to support the same account: Astrid lacks self-confidence as well as concentration and this hinders her school work. Astrid is a native Dutch child. In the conversations with minority parents, these psychological explanations were brought in, mostly by the teacher, but they were hardly elaborated by the parents in the interaction. Parents would in most cases confirm such explanations, but not extend them.

4.2 The construction of diversity and sameness through dialogue: approximation and distancing

(How) did parents and teacher reach common ground in their accounts of the school success of the child in these conversations? And (how) did they discursively create distance between them?

4.2.1 Approximation and distancing strategies as related to identity

We found that there were basically two strategies which were used in approximation and distance creation that were related to identity. One was the reference to membership of the same or a different ethnic community and the other the opposition

or congruence between particular (cultural) practices. This second strategy was particularly elaborated around the distance or proximity that was assumed between the 'home' and the 'school'.

a) Reference to membership of an ethnic community

As a rule, this first strategy, namely the explicit reference to belonging to 'ethnic' communities was avoided and never used on the initiative of the teacher. However, when it did happen, as in the case of the conversation with the father of Mamoun below, the continuity of the collaboration was seriously hindered. In this conversation the teacher has introduced the possible advice Mamoun is going to get, which will allow him to reach vmbo which is part of the lower educational tracks. This to the disappointment of the father, whose other children all are in the higher educational tracks. While the teacher exerts himself in arguing for a lack of ability explanation, the father develops alternative explanations as the excerpt below shows. Before the start of this piece of the dialogue, the father had given the example of a child who did not do well in the Dutch educational system and had temporarily migrated back to Morocco where he did very well at school.

Excerpt 4. Mamoun DS 10015: taking distance through reference to membership of an ethnic community

F = father, T = teacher.

1) F (onderbreekt T): Ik zie dat, ik zie dat euhh veel scholen euhh, helaas dat ik (t) moet zeggen, buitenlanders proberen dus altijd, (ademhaling) negatieve.. euhh… rapport te krijgen. … Euhhh, dat gevoel had ik eh vroeger niet, maar de laatste periode wel. En ik begrijp niet waarom.

2) T: euhhm... waar doelt u dan precies op? Want ik snap niet helemaal de .. .

3) F: euhh.. ik bedoel daarmee te zeggen.. euhhhmm.. buitenlandse kinderen worden op veel scholen (langzamer tempo en duidelijke

1) F:(interrupts teacher): I see that ehhh many schools, ehh, sorry to say this, always try foreigners, (heavy breathing) get a negative ehhh report ehhh. Ehhh, I did not have this feeling before, but recently I do. And I do not understand why.

2) T: ehhm... What do you mean exactly? Cause I do not understand your .. .

3) : ehhmm.. I mean to say…. ehhhh children from abroad are in many schools, (speaks slowly with clear voice), they have

stem), hebben gezegd, nou, jongens, euh, jullie kunnen bijvoorbeeld in 2 jaar korte opleiding, 2 jaar, 4 jaar, heb je een opleiding en dan ken (kun?) je gaan werken.

said, well, folks, you can do a short education in two years, two years, four years, you have a qualification, and then you can start working.

The father claims here that students with a foreign origin, in general get a low advice, that is, one that involves only a short school career and that prepares directly for the job market, inevitably leading to the lower paid jobs. With this claim the father sustains his position that there is not an objective reason (an ability attribution) to assign his son a lower level than he expected, but that in fact the teacher's advice is grounded in discrimination, or based on the child's membership of the community of 'foreigners'. While making this move, he clearly creates distance between himself, his son on the one hand, and the teachers and the school on the other. This strategy seems to put the discussion raised by the teacher on ability and effort 'between brackets' as the necessary trust relationship is challenged. This is clear from the difficulty they have in the remainder of the conversation to establish a common plan of action. Even if later on this parent tries to repair the gap he has created by offering to help his son with homework, this attempt does not seem to fall into fertile ground and is ignored by the teachers. Even though this happened only in three of the 15 cases, the strategy of some majority parents is an opposite one, namely one that stresses a common ethnic background with the teacher while referring to the fact that most of the secondary schools are populated by 'foreigners' and how this has a negative impact on the quality of education.

b) Boundaries between (cultural)'traditions'
The strategy that was most frequently adopted to either create distance or proximity, was through the positioning of different traditions, in particular through the position of the school versus that of the home. The relationship between the home, as the domain of the family, and the school, as the domain of the teacher, as well as their boundaries are often evoked in the conversation.
These were more explicitly opposed to each other in the case of minority parents as compared to majority parents. Additionally, in the first case, a lot of explicit boundary

work was mentioned, while in the second the transition between home and school seemed more smooth and effortless, even if in both cases the transition between them involved boundary work. In their argumentation on how school results can be explained, both parents and teachers would shift to other contexts, that is away from the (here and now of) school setting. In particular, the home and the school setting were compared, sometimes to argue for contrast, sometimes to argue for continuity between both. For instance, parents would argue that the child does not behave badly at home, after the teacher had introduced the bad behavior of the child at school as the cause for a bad school result, or a parent would claim that other children in the family did have good results and that therefore the home influence was not to be blamed.

Apart from playing an important role in arguing for 'how things are', context shifts, especially between home and school were functional in the dialogical construction of 'difference' or 'sameness'.

In the case of the conversations with **minority parents** the home often became a discursive space that was treated by the teacher as 'different', and which through its incongruence with school was presented as problematic, while the parent would claim that the problem behavior that did occur in the school according to the accounts of the teacher, did not happen in the home. In other cases, teachers would argue for context-dependent behavior of the child, implicitly arguing that the child was confronted with a diversity of pedagogical regimes which lacked bridging.

We will illustrate this boundary creation between 'home' and 'school' using the conversation with the mother and the uncle of a Moroccan boy, Ibrahim, who was earlier mentioned in Excerpt 2. As we will show further on, this is also a case in which the boundary that was created by both the parents and the teacher, was 'repaired' in the same conversation when they agree on a common strategy to support Ibrahim's school results. In this conversation the teacher raises the problematic behavior of Ibrahim inside the classroom. Then she states that the problem for Ibrahim is that he has to move through and manage different environments which represent different normative frames on how to behave. The teacher explicitly addresses the boundary crossing between the home and outside as problematic. She argues that it is the child who is responsible for bridging

these differences when she says that the child has to realize that 'ahh, it (the problem) is inside of me'.

Excerpt 5: Ibrahim DS_10108: The problem of crossing boundaries

T1 = teacher 1, T2 = teacher 2, U = Uncle

1) T2: En [soms denken ze ook wel, ehh, als ik dan vraag. J-je heb 't niet zelf bedacht maar wat <u>thuis</u> niet mag mag op school ook niet.

1) T2: And sometimes they think, ehh, if I ask. You have not found it out yourself, but what you cannot do at home, you cannot do at school either.

2) T1: [Ja?

2) T1: Yes?

3) U: Neej.

3) U: No

4) T2: Dus als je zegt van eh als dat thuis gebeurt, wat-wat gebeurt 'r dan? Ja dat mag ik niet! (.) Dan zeg ik ja maar buiten mag 't eigenlijk <u>ook</u> niet. Ja maar das niet thuis! (.) Dus de grens van thuis, naar buiten, is voor hem <u>héél</u>, <u>heel</u> belangrijk eigenlijk. Thuis <u>niet</u>, maar buiten wel. En hij overlapt 't nog <u>niet</u> om te denken van, oh 't zit in <u>mij</u>.

4) T2: So, when you say: if that happens at home, what will happen? Yes, I am forbidden to do that! (.) Then I say: you cannot do that outdoors <u>either</u>. Yes, but that is not at home! (.) So, the boundary between home and outdoors actually is very, <u>very</u> important to him. Not allowed at home, but it is allowed outdoors. And he does <u>not</u> make the overlap by realising: oh, it is inside me.

Throughout the conversation, the need to cross the world of the home and the school plays an important role. The mother and her brother, Ibrahim's uncle take slightly different positions especially with respect to their willingness for bridging. While the mother seems to stay in a position in which she is unable to deal with the proposals the teachers does to bridge both worlds, the uncle starts to mediate for the mother, and finally helps in finding a compromise with respect to an appropriate pedagogical measure to support Ibrahim's school work. For instance, the mother explicitly states that she thinks that all this talking is not meaningfull to her (in Dutch: '…maar dit soort dit di-di-di

(praten?) eh zegt me niks') and that she is ready to take her own measures as Excerpt 2 has shown and which she continues to repeat ('He is not going to play football anymore'). At the same time the mother is arguing how she does everything for her children and that this means they have to obey her and also work hard. The uncle however, is able to reach a compromise with the teachers as Excerpt 6 below shows. While the mother has stated that Ibrahim should not play football anymore, and the teacher had said that this was a too radical punishment, they finally agree to a solution where Ibrahim will go to the weekly football training, does not play outside and is not allowed to play in the competition. In this solution the plea of the teacher for regular exercise, as well as taking privileges away is combined.

Excerpt 6: Ibrahim DS_10108: reaching agreement on punishment

T2= Teacher 2, M = Mothter, U = Unlce

1) T2:   [Maar dan vind ik dat ie ook niet buiten moet voetballen.

1) T2: But I think he should not be allowed to play soccer outdoors

2) M: Nee!

2) M: No

3) T2:   Want daar gaan nog veel meer dingen fout dan op de voetbalclub denk ik.

3) T2: Because outdoors he will meet with yet more difficulties than at his soccer club, I think

4) M: [Neee (?)-

4) M: No

5) U: [Maar 't is voetballen maar 't is gewoon meer eigenlijk eh, bepaalde dingen van, (.) nou je gaat trainen maar je gaat geen wedstrijd spelen   [(?) begrijp je wat ik bedoel?

5) U: It is playing soccer, but actually it is more or less something like (.) well, you go out for the training, but you will not play a match, do you understand what I mean?

6) T2:   [Jajaja.

6) T2: Yes

7) U: 't Is meer wedstrijd dat vinden ze belangrijk van oh! 'k Zit niet in 't team meer ik moet scoren voor   [m'n team.

7) U: They find the match important. Oh, I am no longer a member of the team, but I have to score for my team

8) T2:   [Hmhm. Ja.

8) T2: Hmhm, yes.

9) U: Dan pak je dat <u>net</u> op dat moment [pak je dat van hem af.

9) U: That is something that you take away from him at that moment, you take it away from him

(...)

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10) T2:   [Jaja, ok.   (….)

10) T2: yes, OK.

Somewhat later, as shown in Excerpt 7, the teachers adds to this 'compromise' that Ibrahim could use the time spend at home to prepare for the national test. While she is going along with the home arrest, she 'uses' this disciplinary measure to offer them exercises which Ibrahim can make during his home arrest. However, she also poses a condition: they should not let him do this during the whole day. Thus, in this example, the initially created diversity between the home and the school with respect to disciplinary measures and how to stimulate him to work on school matters, is finally bridged through a commonly supported strategy which includes both elements of the home practice (harsh punishment) and the school practice (support the child's learning within reasonable time frames, that fit the needs of the child).

Excerpt 7: Ibrahim DS_10108: reaching agreement on how to support the child

T1= Teacher 1, M = Mother, U = Uncle

1) T: (...)Ehm, (.). Hoe wij 'm gaan we Ibrahim helpen. Als hij toch twee maanden straf krijgt. Huisarrest. Ehm, (.) geef ik 'm volgende week.

1) T1: (…) Ehm (…) How are we going to help Ibrahim. If he will have a punishment of two months anyway. House arrest. Ehm (.) I will give him next week

2) M: Ja?

2) M: yes?

3) T1: Ik geef dan, de eh, een paar ouder citotoetsen mee. (..)   [Ja?

3) T1: I will give him a few old cito tests (..) Yes?

4) U: [Is goed.

4) U: is all right

5) T1: Laat ie in de kerstvakantie niet eh van, negen tot vijf uur want dan wordt ik heel boos als ik het hoor. (..) Laat ie elke dag, één twee uurtjes zitten en werken. Ik geef, de antwoorden mee. (.) Die krijgt hij niet hou, jij houdt 't bij je. Kijk 't na. (..) En, zeg niet wat ie fout heeft eh w-of een eh wat in die s-som of die vraag fout is zeg.

5) T1: Let him in the Christmas holiday, not, eh, from nine to five, because then I will be very angry, if I hear that. (..) Let him sit down and work every day, one two hours. I give you the right answers. (.) You are not going to give him the answers, you keep them to yourself. Correct his work. (.) and do not tell him what he does wrong eh or what is wrong in that problem or assignment.

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However, not in all cases minority parents and teachers are able to bridge the differences they create in their talk. For instance, in the case of the conversation with the mother of Nordin (M 10102), there is a clear break down in the conversation in which the teacher concludes that they cannot understand each other and need an interpreter. In this conversation the teacher explicitly states that the child might behave well at home, and that the parent wants to see the child as good, as he is her youngest. However, he causes a lot of trouble outside of the home, both in the school and in the neighborhood. When she says 'you have to also look at what happens to him outside', she holds the mother responsible to bridge these different behaviors of the child.

Excerpt 8: Nordin (M 10102), a call upon the parent to bridge the home and the outside
T1 = teacher 1, M = Mother

1) T1:   Thuis wil hij alle aandacht   [en eh
hij wil gewoon eh de-de lieveling van u blijven
2) M: [Jaaa,
(??) ja.
3) T1:   Kan ik me ook alles bij voorstellen.
4) M: Hm.
5) T1:   Want, ja hij is de jongste u wil dat ook.
         Máár, u moet ook kijken wat er buiten
         allemaal   [met hem gebeurt.
6) M: [Ja.
7) T1:   Want hij haalt, zóveel rottigheid uit.
Dat is echt niet goed.

1) T1: At home he wants all attention. He just wants to stay your pet
2) M: Yes? Yes
3) T: I can imagine that very well
4) M: Hm
5) T1: For, yes, he is the youngest one, you want that, too. But, you should also see what happens to him outdoors
6) M: yes
7) T1: For, he causes so much trouble. That is really not good.

Given the language problems, they have to make a new appointment with a translator present. The teacher states explicitly: 'We cannot understand each other, we need a translator'. However, this 'translation' problem is not merely a language problem. As the rest of this transcript shows, the parent and the teacher have complete different accounts on the situation and hold the other person responsible for what they think is the problem. While the teacher thinks the mother should be more attentive to the bad behavior of the

child outside the house, including the school, the mother thinks the child is being unjustly accused of bad behavior as she does not acknowledge or recognize this bad behavior of her child.

In the case of the **majority parents** more coherent across-context behavior was discussed, that is, behavior that was experienced as coherent across the home and the school context by both parties. The home was seen as a place where school behavior or school results could be prepared or further worked on. The continuity between the home and the school is apparent from the fact that teachers are quick to pass on materials to the parents to repair deficiencies or problems and trust the parents in how they carry these out (see also the part on interpersonal control strategies). The following example shows a 'reverse' situation in which the teacher takes on advice from the mother in order to make the transition between home and school fluent. The example makes clear that also in case of the majority parents, this continuity is not self-evident, but involves constant work on both sides. In the example, the parent has agreed to go through a spelling method with her daughter. The parent tells the teacher about the complaint her daughter has that the lessons she gets at school, are not congruent with her teaching at home.

Excerpt 9: Marieke A0060: How continuity between home and school also means 'work'
M = Mother, T = Teacher

1) M: Ik weet niet of je er op school ook wat van merkt of niet, maar tenminste, want z-ze had wel de klacht inderdaad tegen mij van over die spelling dat het op school dan eigenlijk ook helemaal niet aansloot eh [omdat het eigenlijk dingen zijn die ze dan eigenlijk (thuis) al lang gehad heeft.

(…)

2) T: [Oké, nou dat is eh goed ja. Nou, dan zal ik 'er dan ook met taal in de klas meer laten doen, want af en toe dan denk ik

1) M: I don't know if you notice this at school, but, at least, because, towards me, she had this complaint about spelling, that it did not match, because these are things she already had studied (at home) (….)

(…)

2) T: Ok, well, that is ok, yes. Well, then I will let her do more at Dutch language, because sometimes, I think, I could

nou, [ik sla der wel even over..   skip her…

Despite this continuity, majority parents confront the teacher with different opinions which they apparently are able to solve, as for instance, also happens in the example of Excerpt 9 where a complaint of the parent is 'solved' with an offer of the teacher to pay more attention to the needs of this particular child. In the case of the migrant parents, on the contrary, a difference of opinion seems to be experienced as more threatening. This seems to indicate that when interlocutors share a common frame of reference, more conflict and difference of opinion is tolerated by them.

4.2.2 Approximation and distancing: interpersonal control strategies

Overall, we found that institutional role taking differed considerably for both groups. In the case of migrant parents, the institutional role of the teacher is often used by the parents to create a certain amount of distance, mostly in response to extensive explanations the teacher would give on how s/he had reached at a particular conclusion. For instance, a minority parent would say that s/he is not able to contribute to the discussion or that his opinion had a different impact or status in the conversation given his/her layman status. Or through assigning the teacher explicitly an institutional role, the parent often denied responsibility for the school result. An example of such a case is the conversation with Tijani's father. After the teacher has explained why he thinks Tijani has to go to a particular school track, and the father has expressed his disappointment, the father continues:

Excerpt no. 10, Tijani 10016: A parent denies responsibility for the school advise
F = Father, T1 = Teacher 1, T2 = Teacher 2

1) F: ja, ja, kijk eh, wij kunnen bijna niet beslissen, wij zijn geen eh,

1) F: Yes, yes, look, eh, we almost cannot decide, we are no, eh

2) T1: nee, maar

3) F: leermeesters of zo. Jullie weten meer,

2) T1: No, but

jullie ? zitten meer op school

4) T1: Dat klopt, maar het is wel belangrijk dat u het met ons eens bent.

5) F: ja (zucht)

6) T1: Dus dat

7) T2: Voor de steun van Tijani.

3) F: teachers. You know more, you are at school more time

4) T1: that is right, but it is very important that you agree with us

5) F: yes (sighs)

6) T1: so, that

7) T2: in order to support Tijani.

In this excerpt it becomes clear how the father denies partnership in the decision making based on the teachers' professional status while the teacher tries to argue that this is not only a professional decision, but one that has to be based on agreement between the parties so that the school and the parent can work together.

In case of the minority parents, there sometimes was strive with respect to what the professional role of the teacher entailed and to what extent this role should be shared by the parent. This is apparent in the case of Aziza, a Moroccan girl, where the father wants the school to take responsibility for the bad behavior of his daughter, while the school wants to send the child back to the home in case she does behave badly. Also in the case of Abdou, a Moroccan boy, in the conversation, there is a struggle about who is responsible for controlling the behavior of the child. While the older sister of Abdou, who represents the boy's mother, thinks the school should control the behavior of the child, the teacher thinks the family of the child is responsible. In these conversations with minority parents, also partnerships were constructed, even if these involved a complex process of bridging cultural differences such as in the case of the conversation with Omar's parents. In this conversation the parents argue that they are monitoring the child throughout a variety of settings, and not just inside the house. They state that they have learned how to motivate the child with other means than with the use of punishment (which indicates that the teacher had asked them to do so in an earlier conversation.) In this conversation the teacher is telling the parents to do better and not to threaten the child, but rather communicate with the child, to confront the child and have him confess what he has done wrong. The parents seem to partly resist this account as the mother

says: 'I am not angry with her, he is only a child'. However, towards the end of the conversation the father states he has learned not to threaten his child to put her out of the house if her test scores would be bad.

In the case of the majority parents the institutional role of the teacher was also fore grounded at some occasions, but not so much to create distance between the interlocutors. When this was done, it was used to hold the teacher responsible or to plea for certain measures to be taken in the benefit of the child. Parents would make sure that they acknowledge the professional status of the teacher, but were also in the role to evaluate how well it was carried out. For instance, in the case of the conversation with Bram's mother, the mother compliments the teacher with her ability to explain math to him which shows that she is in a position to evaluate her as much as the teacher is in the position to teach him.

Overall, in the conversations with majority parents, (para-) professional knowledge was exchanged back and forth, and used when they constructed a (shared) explanation for the child's school results as well as for a common strategy to tackle the problem in both the home and the school context. Professional knowledge and skills did not create distance between them but were more a common ground for their actions, as it was assumed that the parent had access to most of the professional knowledge relevant for the conversation. Despite the difference in their official roles, parents and teachers regularly positioned themselves in the role of the other party. While parents sometime used the professional language of the teacher, the teacher positioned him or herself often in the position of the parent.

4.2.3 Approximation and distancing: discourse management and interpretability strategies

With respect to discourse management strategies it can be said that the teachers controlled the conversations to a great extent through the a priori set agenda in which the topics were more or less defined but also through their greater knowledge and access to institutional knowledge and tools such as their knowledge of the school system, the test

results and school results in general at their disposal and access to procedures around the transition of the child to secondary education. This asymmetry is clearly reflected in the earlier mentioned dominance of the teacher in the attribution process as was evident from the quantitative analysis. However, parents differed in the extent to which they were able to bring in independent accounts, and thus to manage the conversation topic wisely, see section 4.1.1.

If we ask as next step, given this dominant position of the teacher, how shared understanding is created with discursive means, there were two obvious conditions, next to possible cultural differences between the participants, that are highly relevant to take into account when looking at interpretability in these parent-teacher conversations. One is that the minority parents were second language speakers of Dutch, the language in which the conversations were held. The other is that the minority parents had considerably less knowledge of the Dutch school system, which was key to the decision making in this case. In case of the minority parents, teachers frequently took the initiative to explain the professional terminology or checked if the parent had sufficient knowledge of the school system to understand their arguments. For instance, in one example the teacher called a dyslexia report a 'letter' when the parent did not show any comprehension of the term. At the same time, this limited the scope of their communication, as only a small part of the difference in knowledge could be bridged. Furthermore, many parents did not think it was necessary for them to be aware of the professional knowledge of the teacher, as usually they associated this expert knowledge with the professional identity of the teacher. This was very different in the case of majority parents where parents made an effort to be at equal foot with the teacher in terms of knowledge of the system, measures taken such as particular tests or remediation methods, even if they also did this up to a certain extent.

For instance, in the case of the mother of Naoual, a Moroccan girl, the mother explicitly states she neither has nor wishes to have knowledge about the school or the school system. In the beginning of this conversation the teacher starts to explain that she is thinking to have Naoual tested with an additional test as the national test score seems to leave some ambiguity.

Excerpt 11: Naoual, M 10113: Parent thinks it does not make sense to bridge the difference in knowleged

T1 = Teacher 1, T2 = Teacher 2, M = Mother

1) T1: Ehm, omdat ik het zelf ook niet wist, heb ik- had ik haar opgegeven voor de nieuwe toets en Jenny heeft de voortoetsen allemaal..

2) M: hmm

3) T1: ..gedaan. Alleen de leerachterstand is zo een eh..

4) M: hmm

5) T1: klein dat ze geen nieuwe hoeft te doen, tenminste de eerste ronde niet.

6) M: Oké.

7) T1: En eh, ik hou het aan eh alles wat ze gedaan heeft. Als ze na de eind-CITO, als we zien dat het verschil te groot

8) M: hmm

9) T1: .. is, dan gaan we haar toch nog een keer de nieuwe toets laten doen.

(....)

10) M: Oh oké, voor mij is alles nieuw, ik weet helemaal niks van. [Ook wat je net

11) T2:

                                [hmm)

12) M: noemt eh, ik begrijp alleen maar 50% want eh, dit is voor mij de eerste keer.

13) T1:

                                [Maar dat geeft niet eh.

1) T1: Ehm, because I did not know what to do myself, I have, I had signed her up for the new test and Jenny has done all the preparatory tests

2) M: hmm

3) T1 Only, the lag in learning is so eh

4) M: hmm

5) T1: small, that she has not to do a new test, at least not in the first round

6) M: OK

7) T1: I compare it to everything she has done. If, after the final CITO test, we see that the difference is too big

8) M: hmm

9) T1 in that case, we will let her do the new test again

(…)

10) M: Oh, OK, for me everything is new, I do not know anything about it. As to what you

11) T2: hmm

12) M: Just told, eh, I only understand 50%, for, eh, for me this is the first time.

13) T1: but that does not matter.

The teacher then searches for her papers and starts to explain the same issue, but then being more explicit, explaining that when you don't know if the child can reach a particular level, you need additional information.

((teacher picks up papers)).

14) T1: Kijk, als je een kind opgeeft- als je niet

15) M: ja

16) T1: weet of een kind een eh theoretische leerweg
       gaat doen, dan moet je een kind laten

17) M: oké

18) LK: toetsen. En dat is een soort

19) M: oké

20) LK: intelligentietoets, ja?

14 T: Look, if you enrol a child, if you do not

15) M: yes

16) T: know if a child will do the theoretical (general) path, you have to let do a child

17) M: OK

18) T: a test. And that is a kind of

19) M: OK

20) T: an intelligence test, yes?

The mother however, does not give any verbal sign that she understands this version other than 'yes'. Finally, she decides that it is better if her daughter is explained this when she says:

(...)

21) M: Ik heb gezegd, ga even juf vragen of ze
      ?? een andere keertje met haar even eh
      eh wat ik niet begreep gaat even
      zeggen tegen haar.

(…)

21) M: I told her, ask miss, if she another time with her, eh eh, explain to her what I did not understand.

As for the majority parents, teachers would also use interpretability strategies, in particular to explain or justify the professional measures they had taken. When knowledge gaps were there, they were usually easier to bridge. Moreover, the more equal knowledge level between the teacher and the majority parent with respect to school matters, made that the parent also was able in the position to access this professional knowledge which made the exchange more equal as in the following example (Excerpt 11). The teacher explains that they had taken a personality test with the child, named Jan, and that the results showed that there were absolutely no problems in this respect (Turn 1, 3 and 5). While they look at the form together for a while, the mother asks the teacher for

the meaning of 'sociabiliteit (sociability)' and suggests an answer herself in Turn 6. The teacher acknowledges that she is not sure herself and then reads the definition of sociability from the form. Then they conclude together that the test score is right as they both consider that the child has good social skills (turn 11 and 12).

Excerpt 11: Jan, DW _0056: Teacher shares professional knowledge

T = teacher, M = Mother

1) T: Wij hebben een AVL, dat is een Apeldoornse Vragenlijst die moeten we afnemen voor het voortgezet onderwijs, dus dat hebben we ook voor Jan gedaan.

2) M: Hmm.

3) T: Hier heb ik hem, die heb ik al een tijdje terug ingevuld, daar krijgen we een eh uitslag uit.

4) M: Hmm

5) T: en bij Jan is het zo dat ehm er geen problemen op welk gebied dan ook, sociaal of eh wat dan ook, te verwachten zijn.

(...)

6) M: Ja. *(while reading the result of the test form)* En eh sociabiliteit? Is dat eh eh sociaal gedrag of zo? Gevoel voor sociaal..?

7) T: Ja, dat denk ik wel.

8) M: Ja.

9) T: Ik moet zeggen dat ik dat eh- ja, sociale vaardigheden wordt het hier onder omschreven,

10) M: ja ja,

11) T: Nou ja die heeft ie wel. (…)   [Ja

1) T: We have a AVL, that is a Apeldoornse Vragenlijst (Questionair of Apeldoorn) that we have to take for Secondary Education, so we did that for Jan too.

2) M: Hmm.

3) T: Here, there it is, I filled this in a while ago, and we get a result from that.

4) M: Hmm.

5) T: and, with Jan it is the case, that there are no problems what so ever, not in any area, social or what to be expected.

(…)

6) M: Yes *(while reading the result of the test form)* And, sociability? Is that social behavior or so? Being sensitive to social…?

7) T: Yes, I think it is that.

8) M: Yes.

9) T: I must say that I ehh, yes, social competence it is called below here.

10) M: Yes, yes.

11) T: Well, yes, he has those [Yes

12) M: [Yes.

13) M: Yes, interesting to see that, yes.

12) M: [Ja.   14) T: Yes, and ehmm, well, let him continue
13) M: Ja, leuk om te zien ja.   like this.
14) T: Ja en ehm, nou ja, laat hem vooral zo
doorgaan.

Overall, the analysis on interpretability in the case of minority parents, showed us that
although interpretability as a strategy was applied by teachers, it was not able to
sufficiently bridge the gaps that were expressed by both sides. Part of the reason why this
is the case, might be the different interpretations of how parents relate to the professional
role of the teacher.
In the conversations with majority parents, interpretability strategies were more
employed to reach a co-constructed account of for instance the action that was needed.
They did not involve the bridging of large knowledge gaps and therefore seemed less
dominant in the conversation as a whole.

5. Discussion

The first goal we set ourselves in this study was to gain insight into how parents
and teachers dialogically explain 'school success' in a conversational setting and how this
is differently done for conversational partners who have a relatively common background
(in terms of knowledge base and experience with schooling) as compared to
conversational partners who share less common background. Then, as a second goal, we
were interested in gaining insight into how conversational partners, while they are
dealing with this explanatory process, deal with sameness and difference dialogically. We
will now come back to both of these issues respectively while also arguing, how these are
related processes. Finally, we will discuss what the practical implications are of this study
for the quality of parent-teacher conversations in multi-ethnic schools.

Differences in attributions between the two groups of parents

The content analyses revealed that there were thematic differences between the two groups of parent-teacher conversations. In the conversations with minority parents the issue of effort was more prominently introduced, whereas in the conversations with majority parents, attitudes and personality as conditional factors were more prominent. These differences can be explained referring to the different explanations for school success the teachers have for minority versus majority children. It is known that teachers generally have lower expectations for minority children than for majority children (Van Ewijk, 2009; Weinstein et al., 2002), although not much is known about differences in how they explain school success of minority students as compared to majority students. The differences could also be explained by referring to different theories parents might have of how they or their children can reach success. Minority parents, and in this case the mostly Moroccan parents, might see effort of the child as the main vehicle to a higher social status and have less eye for how parents and teachers can invest in creating the optimal circumstances for 'success' in line with what was found in earlier studies on these immigrant groups (Douma & De Haan, 2008). Furthermore, it is known that minority parents in the Netherlands, in comparison with majority parents with the same SES background, have higher educational aspirations for their children (Coenen, 2001; Müller & Kerbow, 1993; Pels & de Haan, 2006; Phalet & Schönpflug, 2001). These high expectations could go together with different kinds of attributions, for instance, attributions to controllable factors such as effort. Moreover, research has shown that socio-psychological factors play a large role in the explanation of school success (e.g. Portes, 1999), and it might be that this kind of knowledge on how to stimulate school success is more widely distributed among majority parents as compared to minority parents.

However, rather than putting forward an explanation that sees these thematic differences as referring to knowledge or positions that belong to particular ethnic groups, and also without denying that these play a role, we want to highlight the dialogical nature of how these differences were constructed. This does not rule out the explanations just mentioned, but it does put them in another perspective. Whereas the first explanations conceives diversity in its 'instantiated' form, here we will focus on the dialogical form these explanations take when they are enacted.

Attribution in a re-active context: a dialogic perspective on attribution

The thematic differences between these two groups of conversations must be seen in the light of how the communicative processes developed as well as how these were framed. Attributions made always happened in their interactive context and thus were basically 'reactive' even if this was different for teachers as compared to parents as they had more power to foreground their attributions. The fact that attributions do not only 'belong to' certain parties in the conversation but are at the same time 're-active' in the sense that they are a) shaped by the attributions of the other conversational partner and the course of action and b) based on inferences that are made of the mindset of the other, can be illustrated from the data in the following way. First, the attributions as they were enacted can be seen as a chain of reactions to former attributions and are therefore not independent of what the other person is stating or of the course of the conversation as a whole. For example, as is the case with Karim's father in Excerpt 1, the explanation of a parent that lack of school success might be induced by a lack of help from school, occurs as a reaction to accounts from teacher that the child lacked ability. Second, partners seem to give their attributions based on what they assume the explanations of the other partner is. For instance, the claim of the teacher at the beginning of the conversation in Excerpt 1 that effort is not the problem, is a reaction to a presupposed explanation of the lack of school success by the father that his child should work harder (compare Grossen & Apothéloz, 1998 for a similar finding on how participants in a therapeutic setting anticipate on the presumed explanations of the other conversational partner). Thus, the attributions expressed by the participants cannot be seen as 'direct' representations of their explanations of school success but are formed by the need to react on the (presupposed or expressed) explanations of the other.

Furthermore, the analyses make it plausible that people also act strategically when they account for the school success of the student. They might use face saving strategies, seek opposition, or may be concerned to keep peace with each other. An example of this, is the fact that teachers might avoid to express lack of ability explanations and in stead use 'not effort' explanations as a disguised form of lack of ability explanations. This has been found in other work in which intelligence was a possible explanation for a

phenomena at hand in an institutional setting. In the same study by Grossen, intelligence was avoided both by parents and the professional to explain the child's problem.

Attribution according to particular frame building

However, even if in all cases the attributions were re-active, and constructed dialogically, and dominated by the teacher, the kind of frame, including the relationship that was established between the parties, defined the process of attributing to a large extent. While the conversations with the majority parents were characterized by a partnership relationship, the conversations with the minority parents were characterized either by 'opposition' or by a relatively more passive position of the parent as compared to that of the majority parents. Thus, the communicative frame in which the attributing process happened differed for both groups. While the conversational frame in the case of the minority parents was characterized by an assumption that relatively large differences existed between the teacher and the parents in terms of identity, knowledge of the system, language, pedagogical views, and the view on the professional role of the teacher, this was much less the case for the majority parents. For instance, the effort explanations that were dominating the conversations with minority parents, happened in a dynamics of opposition in which it 'is not effort' explanations and lack of ability were put against (presumed) effort explanations. Thus, while the teachers started to argue that if children would work harder their results would not be better, the parents continued to stress that more effort would help the child do better. These differences seem to shape these conversations right in the beginning of it, and shaped the attribution process as a whole. In contrast, in the case of majority parents the personality and psychological explanations were often, but not exclusively, introduced by the teacher, but then were picked up and further developed by the majority parents together with the teacher. However, as the second part of this analysis also shows, these frames were not constant or rigid but were also subjected to the same dialogical nature of the interaction.

The creation of (a frame of) distance and approximation

If we look back at the results of our analysis of how difference and sameness was created in these two groups, making use of approximation and distancing strategies, we can say that *in terms of identity relationships* the analyses revealed that:

- direct reference to membership of (different) ethnic communities is rare and seems to threaten the continuity of the relationship in these contexts

- difference is mostly created while referring to how 'school' and 'home' are places that are mutually exchangeable, support each other and the extent to which the transition between them provide the child with boundaries.

In the case of the conversations with minority parents, the home is often represented by the teacher as a source of trouble while in the conversations with majority parents the home is seen as a potential resource to sustain school results. However, as we have seen, both parents and teacher also are able to bridge these gaps between the home and the school in their conversations.

In terms of role taking, the analysis made clear that the professional identity of the teacher was differently experienced in both groups. While in the conversations with minority parents, the distance between the teacher as professional and the parent was relatively large, in the case of majority parents, this difference in role was much less pronounced.

In terms of discourse management and interpretability strategies, the analyses shows that in both groups the conversations are asymmetrical in this respect. The teacher is able to steer the attributional process and given the unequal access to relevant knowledge and institutional procedures, interpretability, in the sense of tuning in into the other partners understanding of what you are saying, is an issue of the teacher, and not so much of the parent. However, also given the differences between the two groups of parents in access to this professional knowledge, this asymmetry in conversational means used is differently shaped for both groups. While an interpretability strategy is more needed in case of the minority parents, it seems to work less well. Moreover, minority parents seem much less successful to counter the dominance of the teacher in terms of discourse management strategies, as compared to majority parents.

Thus, with respect to the creation of diversity and common grounding and how this functions in terms of framing the conversation, both groups create a different base for the

attribution process. However, the analyses allows us to state that the difference is more complex than a simple contrast between common grounding in case of the majority parents versus the creation of difference in case of the minority parents. For instance, whereas diversity is interactionally created in case of the conversations minority parents, there are both occasions where it is 'resolved' through reaching a compromise and cases where this hinders the continuation of the interaction. And, the means that are available to either stress difference or bridge them, such as interpretability strategies, and role taking seem to be used especially successfully and skillfully by majority parents in order to stress common grounding, and bridge initially divergent positions, although certainly not exclusively as in conversations with minority parents these means were sometimes also applied successfully.

In Conclusion, the analyses has made clear that differences in school explanations as expressed in these conversations cannot just be explained by referring solely to pre-given positions on how school success should be explained, in the sense that they are mere externalizations of pre-given positions and cultural practices of the participants. However, studying this process while also looking at how frames of diversity or common grounding were build make the conclusion more complex than just stating that school explanations are build according to a dialogical process.

A first conclusion from the analyses is that the attributions made depend on the particular encounter and the interaction as it unfolds. Attributions are constructed 'on site', and were thus 're-active' and therefore bear the traces of the particular dialogical encounters and their process, in line with a dialogical perspective on culture (Manheim & Tedlock, 2005). A second conclusion is that the frame building that happens during the interaction seem to define, shape and limit this process to a large extent. The way in which the positions of the participants are constructed in terms of distance and proximity, defines to a large extent how the explanatory process develops. Relatively large distances, seem to create either more oppositional or more one-side processes, while relatively small distances allow co-creation. The kind of framing allows also certain kinds of explanations and makes others more difficult. For instance, an oppositional frame makes building upon each other's explanations more difficult, while common grounding might lead to a lack of

critical reflection. A third point we want to draw attention to, is that the frames that were introduced, did not stay stable but also changed with as the conversation developed. Some created an 'impasse', such as in the case where the communication needs to be postponed and no further dialogue is possible, but others lead to new positions in which both partners move closer to each other and a common pedagogical practice was invented, that made use of, for instance, the combination of the more strict attitude of the family and the more child-centered approach of the teacher such as was the case in the conversation with the family of Ibrahim.

How does our analysis contribute to the further understanding of how difference operates in multi-ethnic schools?

The distance between the parent (the home) and the teacher (the school) (as created or as perceived) defines the possibilities for both co-constructing explanations for what has been reached, as well as the possibilities to reach common goals in the future. Likewise, how the professional identity of the parent is conceived by the parents, is key to understand the role the parent can play in co-constructing important explanations and the strategic decision making that follows upon these explanations. The implication of this position could be that schools should pay more explicit attention to how diversity operates in strategic decision making processes, and that specific attention should be paid to possible different understandings of the professional status of the teacher and of teacher-parent relationships.

With respect to the longer term implications, we think that these conversations must be seen as part of a longer term processes in which family and school practices interact, come together, are confronted and finally are influenced by each other. Schools are important spaces where migrant cultures and majority cultures are confronted and within these, parent-teacher conversations are strategic sites where differences, in this case with respect to explanations for school success, are enacted, confronted and solved. This means at the same time that schools sites are key opportunities for intercultural learning and for negotiation of meanings. The analysis shows how both teachers and parents alike can give up positions, and are able to formulate new positions that can be considered compromises or new solutions to earlier experienced differences that had

caused tensions. At the same time, school sites are also the place where breakdowns happen, which can cause participants to create more distance and distrust. We hope that our analysis has shed more light on how 'difference' operates in these strategic decision making site, and that these insights enable a more conscious enactment of them by teachers and parents.

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