

# Observing Inclusion

*with examples from Reggio Emilia*

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**Children as leaders: Whose learning is it anyway?**

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[www.child-up.eu](http://www.child-up.eu)

observing **migrant\*** children's participation in communication, shifting the focus from

**linguistic competence** (assessing what they need to do in order to fit) to

**practices** (appreciating what they, and others, in the way they do it)

## Childhood Studies

Childhood and adulthood → outcomes of dynamic intergenerational relationships (Alanen, 2019) children's rights and responsibilities for constructing knowledge in and through interactions (**epistemic authority**) (Hutchby, 2007)

children's rights and responsibilities for constructing knowledge in and *through* interactions (**epistemic authority**) (Hutchby, 2007)

Epistemic authority → limited for *young* children (Farini, 2019)  
further reduced for children who display difficulties in the  
oral production of language (Seele, 2012)

pedagogical literature suggests that improvement of language competence  
should be prioritised (Baraldi, 2014) because **limited language  
knowledge affects migrant children's participation in interactions  
with adults and peers**

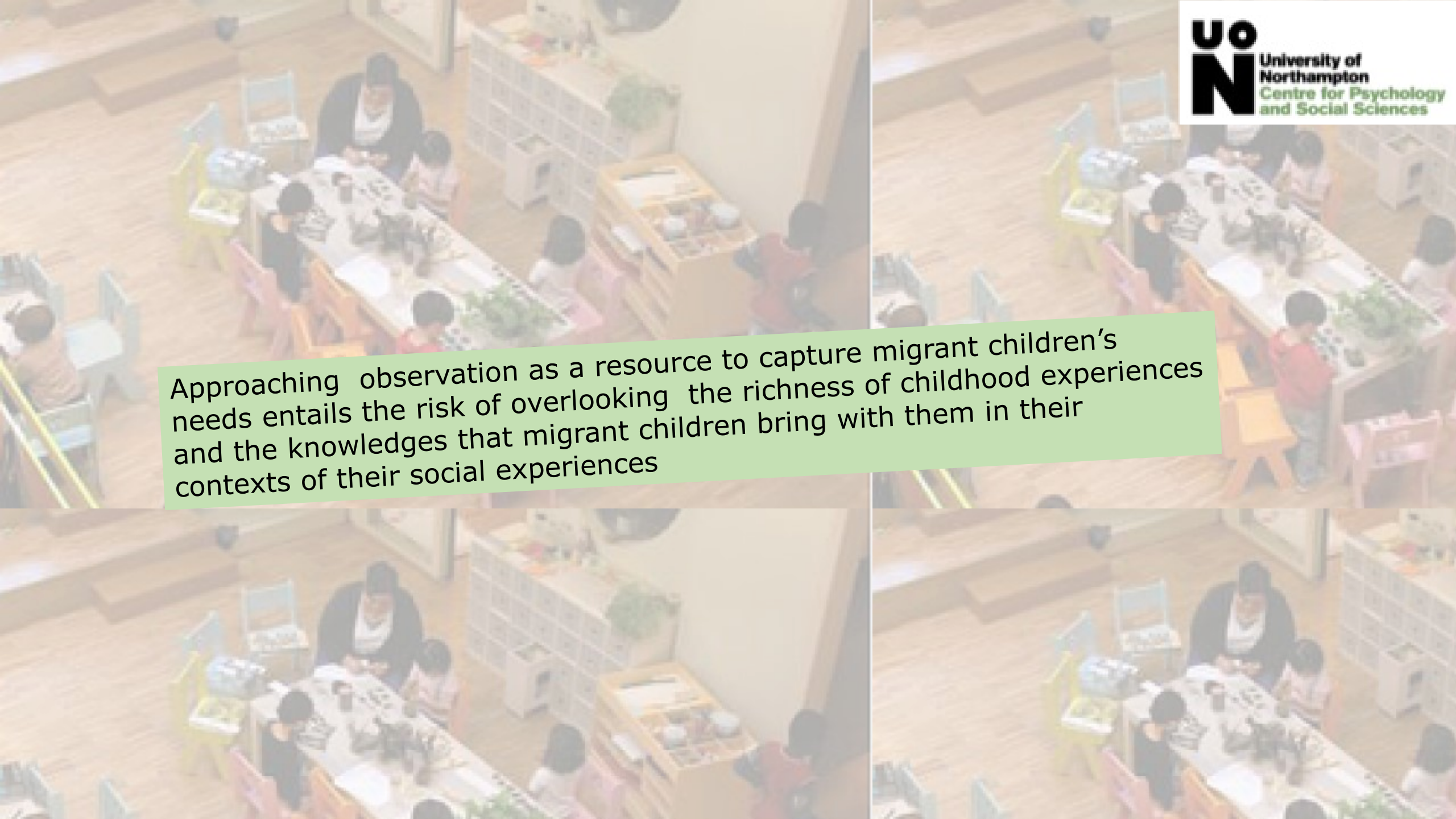
Therefore,  
observation of migrant children mainly focuses on linguistic production

positions migrant children as not-yet-competent because the focus on linguistic needs ignores children's holistic capabilities and knowledges

promotes a discourse of 'children's needs' (Wehmeyer et al., 2017) → demand for more intensive learning, primarily second language learning

The development of specialised education for migrant children validates a focus on their needs rather than their interests which generates distrust in their capabilities

*Incidentally, emphasis on improving language competence as a pre-condition for participation in interactions is ancillary to dominant developmental paradigms*



Approaching observation as a resource to capture migrant children's needs entails the risk of overlooking the richness of childhood experiences and the knowledges that migrant children bring with them in their contexts of their social experiences

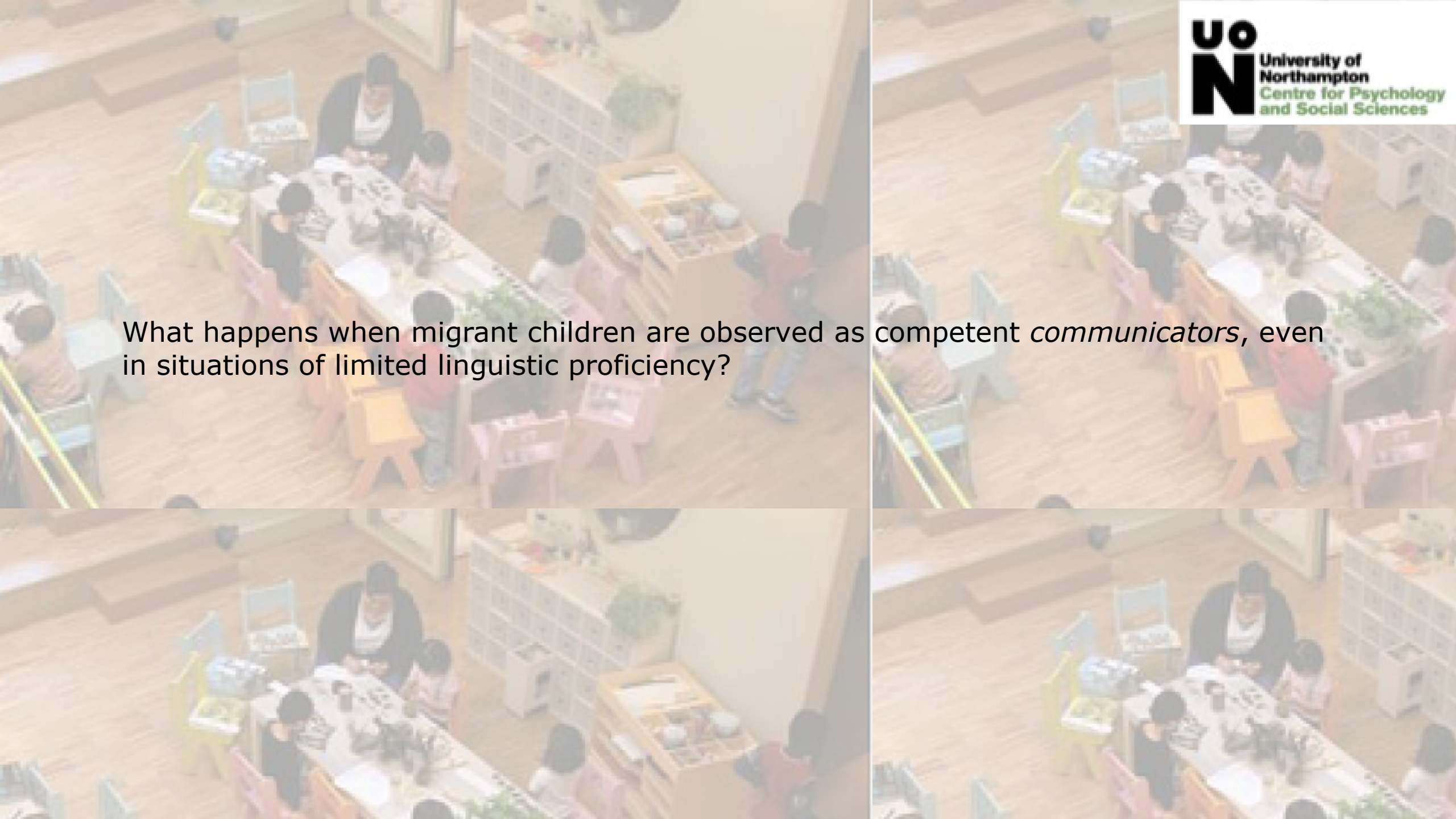


What happens if the focus of observation shifts from needs/linguistic competence to *naturally occurring practices of participation in communication*?

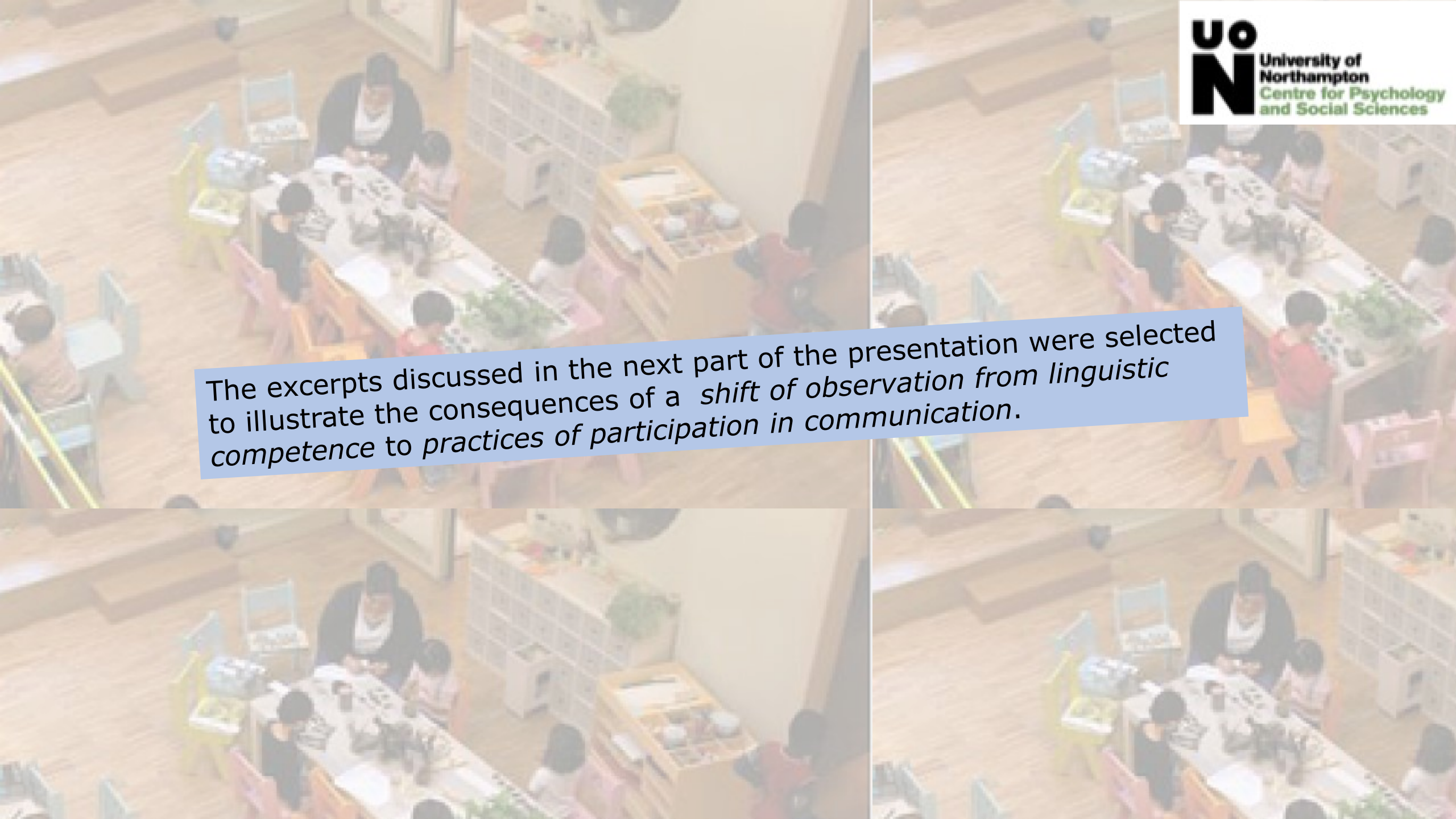
Shift from:

a 'deficit', 'needs', 'filling the gap' model where active social participation, or social competence, depends on linguistic competence, to

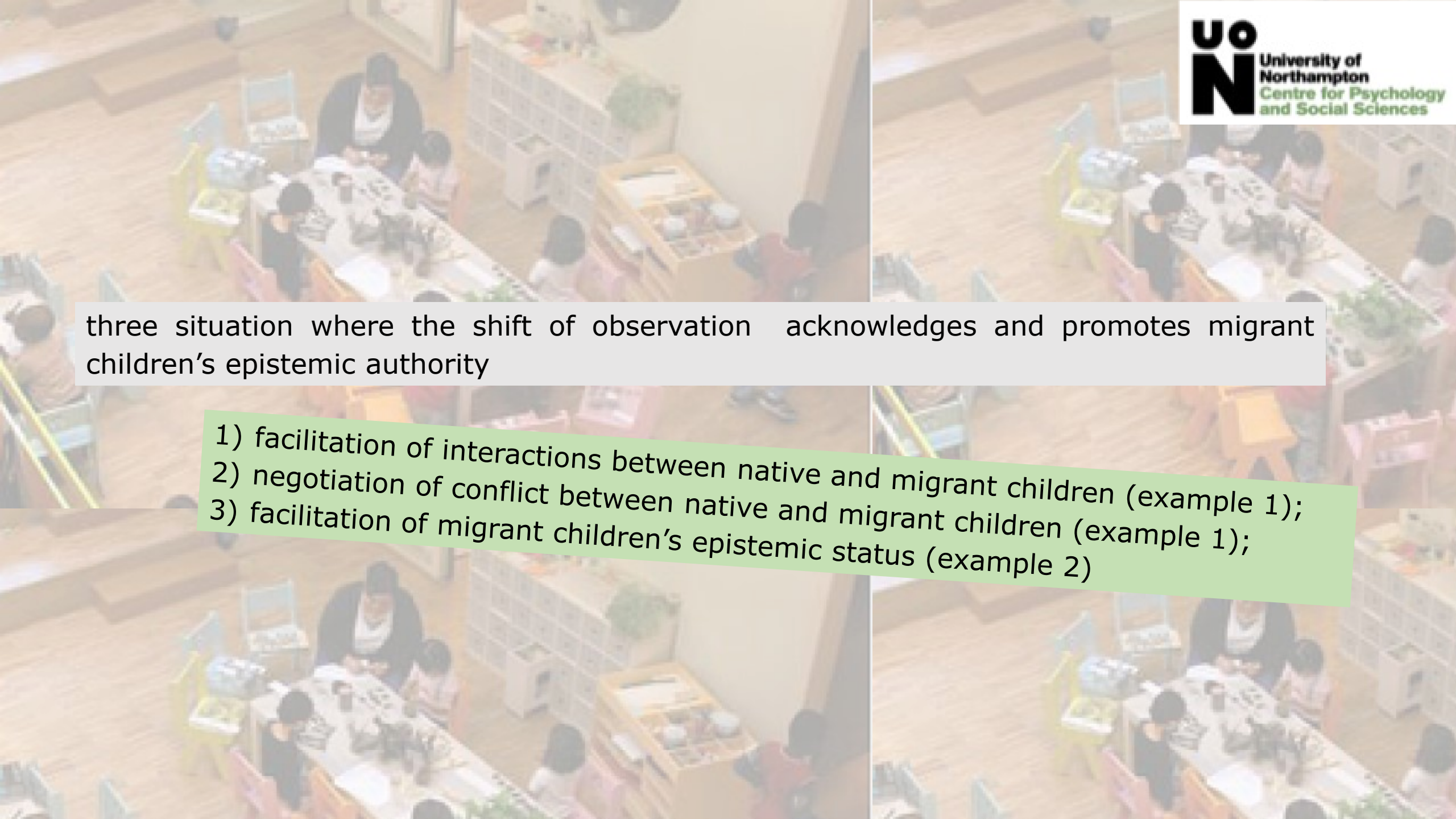
an interest in what children actually *do* as they interact, in many ways they interact, paying attention to the multifaceted nature of children's participation, as celebrated in the Reggio Emilia Approach, the *Hundred Languages of Children* (Filippini and Vecchi, 1997)



What happens when migrant children are observed as competent *communicators*, even in situations of limited linguistic proficiency?



The excerpts discussed in the next part of the presentation were selected to illustrate the consequences of a *shift of observation from linguistic competence to practices of participation in communication.*



three situations where the shift of observation acknowledges and promotes migrant children's epistemic authority

- 1) facilitation of interactions between native and migrant children (example 1);
- 2) negotiation of conflict between native and migrant children (example 1);
- 3) facilitation of migrant children's epistemic status (example 2)

example 1



1 Lorenzo E il melone quello bianco, bianco  
*And the melon, the white one, white*

2 Nadja Signore questo?  
*Mister this?*

3 Lorenzo ((moving to another stall)) Quanto quello?  
*How much that one?*

4 Enrico Tre euro, mi devi dare tre euro  
*Three euros, you must give me three euros*

5 Lorenzo ((returns to Nadja's stall)) e il melone bianco  
*And the white melon*

6 Nadja Il mellone bianco  
*The white melon*

7 Lorenzo Quello  
*That one*

8 Nadja Ecco  
*Here it is*

9 Nicola Il melone bianco  
*The white melon*

10 Lorenzo ho finito ho comprato tutto  
*I'm done, I bought everything*

11 Teacher E hai pagato tutto tutto Lore? ((to other children)) dite che ha pagato tutto tutto Lore? Adesso va via ma ha pagato tutto?  
*And have you paid for the whole shopping Lore) ((to other children)) you think he paid for everything everything? Now he's off but has he paid for everything?*

- 12 Nicola Sí  
*Yes*
- 13 Atelierista Ma Nadja, dove sono i soldi del melone bianco?  
*But Nadja, where are the white melon money?*
- 14 Nicola Boh  
*Dunno*
- 15 Teacher Hai pagato la tua spesa Lore? Dico tutta?  
*Have you paid for your shopping Lore? I mean all of it?*
- 16 Atelierista ((to Nicola)) qui dal banco della frutta, dove sono i soldi di Lorenzo?  
*((to Nicola)) here, at the fruit stall, where is Lorenzo's money?*
- 17 Nadja Dammi i soldi Lore, mi dai i soldi?  
*Gimmie the money Lore, do you gimmie money?*

- 18 Enrico Ho scritto qui ((indicates a sheet of paper)) cosa ha comprato  
*I have written here ((indicates a sheet of paper)) what he bought?*
- 19 Lorenzo Ho finito I soldi  
*I have finished my money*
- 20 Nadja Sono 5 eurosoldi 5  
*It's 5 euromoney 5*
- 21 Lorenzo Ho un grosso soldo tieni sono 5  
*I have one big money, take it, it's 5*
- 22 Nadja Un soldo grande, ben, ciao  
*A money big, goo, bye*
- 23 Lorenzo Avevo tanti soldi adesso non ho piú  
*I had lots of money now I have no more*
- 24 Nadja Mi ha dato i soldi!  
*He has given me money!*



example 1



example 2



1 Teacher ((as Nadja takes her hand and taps on her fingernails)) hai visto le mie unghie?

*Have you seen my nails?*

2 Nadja Unghi

*Nail*

3 Teacher Hai visto il colore?

*Have you seen the colour?*

4 Nadja Si blu sorella grandi

*Yes, blue sister bigga*


5 Teacher Sí?

*Yes?*

6 Nadja tanto ((pause)) tanti tila'

*Lot ((pause)) lots of tila'*


- 7 Teacher Oh ((to Mahmood who is standing by)) come é in Italiano? Tanti  
*Oh ((to Mahmood who is standing by)) how's in Italian? Lots of?*
- 8 Aleem tela' ((pause)) tila' azafir  
*tela' ((pause)) tela' azafir*
- 9 Nadja tela' azfr  
*tela' azfr*
- 10 Teacher ((to Mahmood)) e come si chiama in Italiano? Cos'è?  
*((to Mahmood)) and how do you say it in Italian? What is that?*
- 11 Enrico Cos'è?  
*What is that?*
- 12 Teacher ((to Mahmood)) hai sentito Enrico?  
*Did you hear Enrico?*
- 13 Aleem Az a fir  
*Az a fir*
- 14 Nadja Azfr  
*Azfr*

- 
- 15 Teacher Assaf?  
*Assaf?*
- 16 Aleem Az a fir  
*Az a fir*
- 17 Teacher Azafer  
*Azafer*
- 18 Aleem Si ((laughs))  
*Yes ((laughs))*
- 19 Nadja ((to Mahmood, very quietly)) tel zafr  
*((to Mahmood, very quietly)) tel zafr*
- 20 Mahmood Cosa?  
*What?*
- 21 Nadja Tel tela' azafir  
*Tel tela' azfir*
- 22 Aleem Cosí (imitates the gesture of varnishing fingernails)  
Like that ((imitates the gesture of varnishing fingernails))
- 23 Teacher Ah, tagliaunghie  
*Ah, nail clipping*
- 24 Nadja no taglia, é ((pause) é  
*No clipping, is ((pause)) is*
- 25 Teacher Lima fa le unghie belle  
*Nail file makes nails nice*
- 26 Nadja No blu fa blu  
*No blue makes blue*

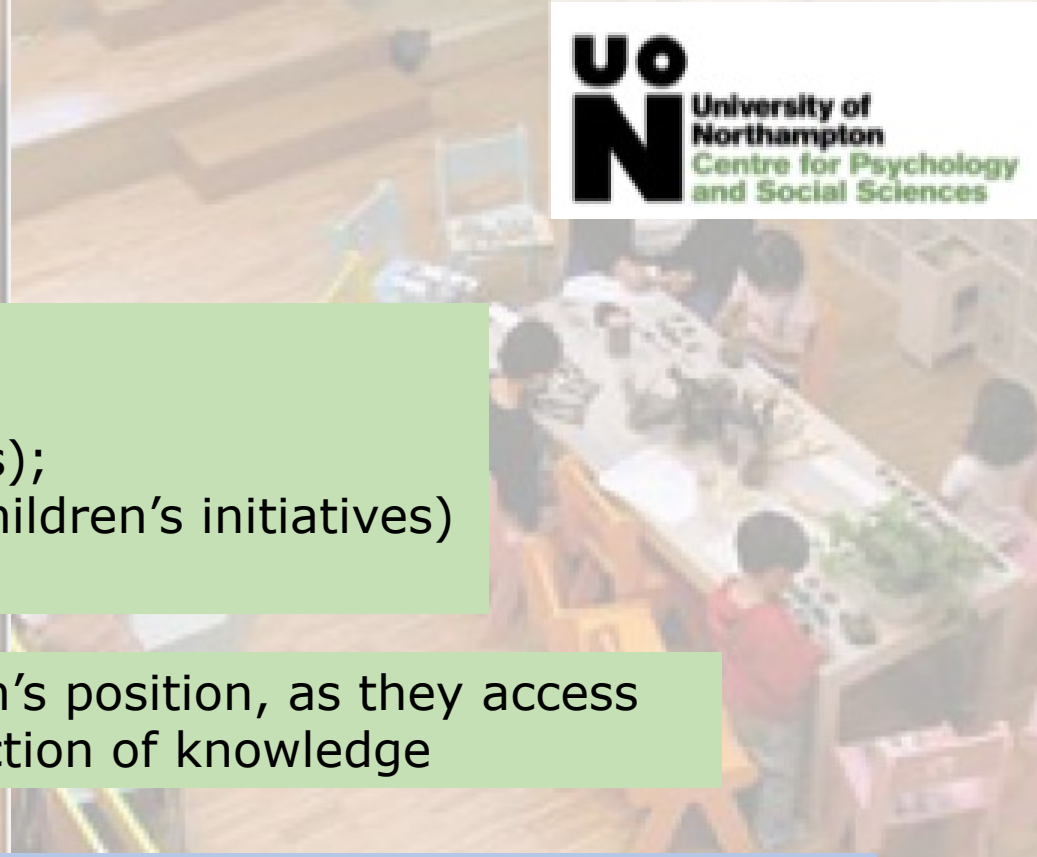
- 27 Teacher Azafer? ((to Mahmood)) ma tu sai che cosa vuole dire?  
*Azafer? ((to Mahmood)) do you know what that means?*
- 28 Mahmood Lo so  
*I know it*
- 29 Teacher Cosa?  
*What?*
- 30 Mahmood Azfr é, sí, é eeee, si dice unghia s tela', si dice  
*Azfr is, yeah, isssss, you say nail s tela', you say*
- 31 Teacher Unghie lunghe?  
*Long nails?*
- 32 Mahmood No comeeee  
*No liiike*
- 33 Nadja Il colore unghi!  
*The nail colours!*
- 34 Teachers Ecco! Il colore delle unghie, lo smalto, smalto per le unghie!  
*Here it is! The nails' colour, the varnish, fingernails polish!*

example 2

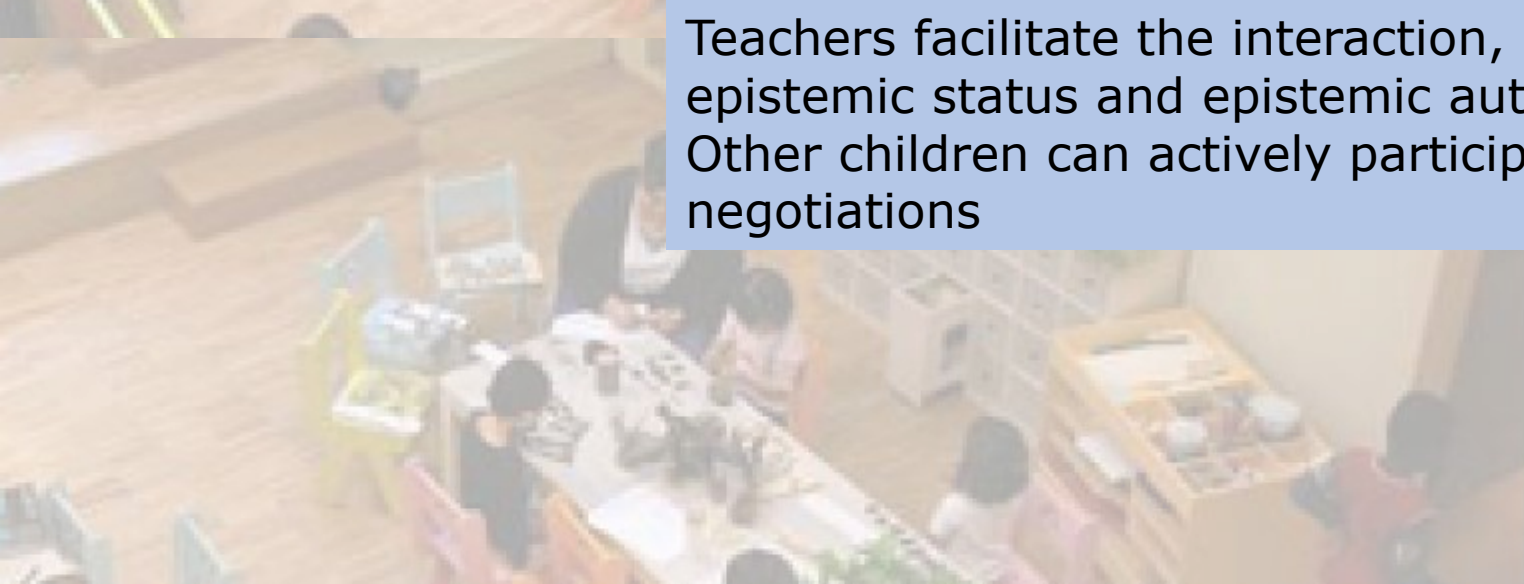




Our two examples illustrate how facilitation (enhanced by teachers' initiatives); coordination (enhanced by children's initiatives); negotiation (enhanced by both teachers and children's initiatives)



can produce a change in migrant children's position, as they access rights and responsibilities in the construction of knowledge



Teachers facilitate the interaction, promoting migrant children's epistemic status and epistemic authority  
Other children can actively participate in coordinated interactions and negotiations



If observation focuses on children's ability to participate in interactions in unique ways, observation becomes a form of *authentic listening* (Scollan, 2021)

authentic listening facilitates inclusion as the promotion of agency **(inclusion from children, for children and adults)**, as an alternative to

a philosophy inclusion as the outcome of intervention for migrant children, who are positioned within an ontology of *troubled childhood in deficit* **(inclusion for children, from adults)**

This invites reflection and further research on the impact that different approaches to observation can have on the experiences of migrant children



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*Thank you!*