

Family Language Policies in Five Syrian Families in the UK

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Abstract

This study contributes to the field of Arabic language maintenance by focusing on how members of the Syrian communities deal with language maintenance and shift issues in forced migration context. The study particularly explores family language policies in five Syrian families in the UK in light of Spolsky (2004) influential model of language policy which incorporates the analysis of ideologies, practices, and management. Using semi-structured interviews, this study focuses on exploring the various language ideologies that exist in the Syrian community about the minority and the majority language(s), how these ideologies are enacted into language practices and the management efforts within the community? The findings of this research suggest that the Syrian community face particular challenges related to their lack of experience in language maintenance issues. Furthermore, it shows that this community, despite its attachment to the Arabic language, is not immune to language shift and needs to take conscious measures to transmit the language to the next generation.

1. Introduction

Immigration has become one of the characteristics of the 21st century that contributes to increasing the national, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in numerous countries and regions. The UK continues to receive immigrants from all over the world and has thus become a “home - temporary, permanent or one among many - to people from practically every country in the world” (Vertovec 2006: 6). As a result of geographical relocations, new immigrants who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds face more or less the same challenges especially in their early stages of settlement in the host country. Unlike migrants, refugees and asylum seekers often face a different type of challenges depending on the nature of their refugee trajectory (Cassarino 2004: 254).

A key challenge faced by all immigrants who come to the UK from a language background other than English is related to the maintenance of their mother tongue (Pauwels 2005). In many cases, immigrants face the dilemma of continuing to use their language or adopting the language of the host country. The situation in which immigrants decide to keep using their language despite the assimilative power of the mainstream language is referred to as language maintenance. Mesthrie (1999: 42) defines language maintenance as ‘the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially powerful or numerically stronger language’. Conversely, the situation where immigrants gradually cease to use their language in particular domains and adopt the language of the host country is called language shift (Clyne 2003). Language maintenance, according to Fishman (1971), is not concerned with language use within one generation, rather it concerns the intergenerational transmission of language. The phenomena of language maintenance and shift are, thus, concerned with the extent to which a language is continued to be used over successive generations. Conversely, language shift occurs when the language is not maintained among younger generations.

Language shift runs counter to the vast body of research providing evidence of the cognitive, academic, and social advantages of language maintenance (Bialystok, Craik, and Luk 2008). Language shift has negative consequences at family, community and society levels. The loss of intergenerational links between parents and their children can lead to alienation and hinder the fluid communication within the family, and thus weaken family ties (Kouritzin 1999). Conversely, the maintenance of language can retain a strong family cohesion, ensures a healthy development of the child (Portes & Hao 2002), and provides

cognitive and educational advantages for children (Bialystok, Craik, and Luk 2008). At the societal level, language maintenance contributes to the cultural and linguistic richness of the host country (Garcia 2009).

Despite the many benefits of language maintenance and the consequences of language shift, achieving language maintenance may be challenging under the strong influence of the external force of language domination from the mainstream language and culture (Fishman 1991). Hence, crucial to understanding the prospects of language maintenance is understanding the influence of the internal and external forces.

This study is situated within the newly emerging field of Family language policy. Family Language Policy (henceforth FLP) is a novel area of research that aims to develop an interdisciplinary perspective on the topic of language maintenance and shift in the family by investigating three components put forward by Spolsky (2004): language ideologies in the family, its language practices, and its language management, i.e. the efforts undertaken by families to regulate language use in the home. Research on FLP aims to investigate these components as they are situated within the wider language ecology in which families live in. In other words, the FLP framework offers a valuable opportunity to study ‘the interactions between any given language and its environment’ (Haugen 1972: 325).

By applying the framework of FLP, this article aims to explore family language ideologies, practices and management efforts in five Syrian families residing in Leeds. I particularly focus on the recent wave of immigrants who came to the UK as a result of forced migration. The recent influx of Syrian immigrants has not received much attention in the literature concerning language maintenance.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Family Language Policy

In its early conceptualization, language policy originally described political decisions made at the level of a nation state to influence and change language practices in different domains such as the media and workplace. These decisions are characterized by top-down policies, which are carried out by powerful organizations i.e. governments, who implement language related decisions for the nation. However, the actual use of language by people is not a simple result of top-down policies (Spolsky 2007). On the contrary, language practices emerge from the

complex interaction between linguistic and non-linguistic factors including political, social, religious, and so on (Shohamy 2006; Spolsky 2004, 2012).

Recent conceptualization of language policy, as a result, emphasizes the dynamic nature of language policies by including bottom-up forces which influence and are influenced by top-down forces (Schwartz 2010). Bottom-up forces in language policy include a number of domains (school, workplace. etc.). With regard to language maintenance, and in alignment with Fishman model of *reversing language shift*, the family was added as an independent domain in the field of language policy for its ‘critical’ role in natural intergenerational transmission (Spolsky 2004). The use of the word domain is of a particular importance here; as it describes the social context in which the family is situated, and thus highlights the existence interconnections between what happens in the family and the surrounding environment (Spolsky 2009). Building on Fishman’s model of reversing language shift, Spolsky (2004: 45) argues that, crucial to understanding the prospects of language maintenance, is understanding how external forces can influence the family decision and beliefs regarding their language use and ultimately language maintenance.

By applying Spolsky’s (2004) original language policy model to the family domain, family language policy can be studied by exploring the relationship between three main components put forward by Spolsky; Language ideologies which he defines as ‘the beliefs about language and language use’ language practices which refers to “the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire”, and language management which describes parental efforts to influence their children linguistic development “by any kind of language intervention, planning or management” (p. 5).

2.1.1. Language Ideologies

A central focus of FLP is on the crucial role of language ideologies in influencing language practices and management efforts in the family. Researchers within this field of study regard language ideologies as ‘the driving force’ underlying the formation of FLP (Curdt-Christiansen 2009). Language ideologies reflect ‘the values and statuses’ people assign to different languages in their environment (Spolsky 2004: 4). In the context of language maintenance, these values can be assigned minority and majority languages in a society, and often result in the existence of more than one ideology which, in return, coexist and interact with each other (Shohamy 2006).

I conceptualize language ideologies in this study, as defined by Irvine (1989: 255), to be ‘cultural systems of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests’. This definition is particularly important for the study of family language policy in immigrant families, as it offers a framework for understanding beliefs about the minority language (in this case Arabic) which are crucial to language maintenance, but also reflects how parents view bilingualism from a socio-political perspectives, and thus reflects their perception of the broader social structures which, in return, influence and shape family language practices and management (Curdt-Christiansen 2009; King et al 2008).

Family language policy, therefore, aims to explore how language ideologies and beliefs inform family language policies. Crucial to understanding how language ideologies influence language-related decisions in the family, it is important to understand how these ideologies are formed in the first place. On this discussion, Spolsky (2009) distinguishes micro-sources and macro-sources that play a role in the formation of parent’s beliefs about language(s). At the micro-level, he discusses sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors. The former refers to beliefs about the appropriateness of language use in certain contexts; whereas the latter, refers to the symbolic & cultural values parents attach to their languages, and are often attached to the minority language (Curdt-Christiansen 2009), in that they can be viewed as manifestations of social experiences, culture, religious rituals, and emotions (Tannenbaum 2012). At the macro-level, Spolsky discusses socioeconomic values which can be seen as a potential tool for economic advancement (Ruiz 1984) or vice versa.

Finally, there are the socio-political factors which are believed to influence, to a great extent, language beliefs and practices in the family. The influence of socio-political forces is particularly evident in the language policy of the host country at the nation-state such as the monolingual nature of schooling (King 2000). Thus, FLP offers a unique opportunity to understand how families’ perceive social structures and reflect on them, it can also help understand how the broader societal ideologies that operate at the macro-level afford or constraint language maintenance (Curdt-Christiansen 2009; King et al. 2008).

At the micro level, parent’s positive beliefs and cultural values about their language are considered crucial in the transmission of language and culture (Guardado 2002,172). Smolicz’s (1992) theory of core values is particularly significant in this discussion. Smolicz argues that when a language is regarded by its speakers as a ‘core value’ which he defines as

‘the most essential factors in forming a group’s identity and culture’; the transmission of language becomes essential for the successive generations. He further discusses the notion of core values in light of the group’s ‘ethnic tenacity’, which reflects the group’s higher or lower distance from the major group.

While this attachment to language at the micro-level seems to be a prerequisite to successful language maintenance, in many cases, a gap exists between beliefs about one’s native language and home language practices (King 2000; Schwartz 2010). Of particular interest to Family language policy research is, hence, to account for the disparity between expressed language beliefs and the actual language practices. Recent research on this relationship focuses on how language ideologies compete with mainstream ideologies and macro influences at the nation-state such as government policies (Curdt-Christiansen 2014b) immigration pressure (Canagarajah 2008) and educational policies in the host country (King 2000).

Hence, in considering the complex nature of language ideology formation, some researchers suggested a less direct link between parental expressed beliefs and actual maintenance outcomes, pointing out that other important factors need to exist in the family, namely is the notion of impact belief. The notion of impact belief proposed by what De Houwer (1999) is believed to support language maintenance within the home in resisting the influence of societal pressure. The notion of impact belief refers to the parent's belief that they can "exercise some sort of control over their children's linguistic functioning" (p.83). In other words, parents who utilize their agency to confirm or modify their children linguistic behaviours seem to be more successful in raising bilingual children (Curdt-Christiansen 2009). The strong impact beliefs as suggested by Curdt-Christiansen (2009) are linked with parent’s positive perceptions of multilingualism and their aspirations for their children’s success in multilingual development. On other hand, parents who hold weak impact beliefs, i.e. they don’t see themselves as capable or responsible for their children language development, are less likely to succeed in raising bilingual children, leading to unsuccessful FLPs and language shift (Pérez Báez 2013). Parental impact beliefs are most salient in the daily language interactions between parents and children. In other words, parents who believe their language choices at home could exert influence on their children language development are more likely to pay attention to the choices they make in socializing with their children (Lanza 2007: 52).

The role of impact belief becomes crucial to understanding language practices and management within the family which is presented in the next section.

2.1.2. Language Management and Practices

Within the framework of FLP, language practices refer to the extent to which a language is used in everyday interactions between parents and their children. These practices can be explicit, i.e. come from conscious and deliberate decisions or can be implicit or overt i.e. are not based on conscious decisions but rather manifested in de facto practices (Shohamy 2006: 50). Conversely, language management refers to explicit and observable efforts parents take to modify their children's linguistic behaviors which are primarily informed by their language ideologies and impact beliefs. The distinction between language management and language practices, however, is not straightforward. In many cases language practices can overlap with management efforts; thus contribute to the formation of a language policy in the family (Fogle & King 2013).

As Spolsky (2004) argues that language policy “exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority,” yet it can be inferred from people's language ideologies which give rise to implicit language practices that shape and negotiate the family language policies (p. 8). He further suggests that the real language policies in communities are “more likely to be found in its practices than in the management” (2004: 222). Therefore, crucial to understanding how families implement their family language policies, implicit and covert language practices need to be considered (Shohamy 2006: 46).

In general, language practices whether implicit or explicit, although they operate at micro level i.e., in-home settings, they are influenced by wider societal factors at the macro level (Caldas 2012: 372). Therefore, King et al (2008) suggest that child language acquisition is best viewed within the framework of FLP; to broaden our understanding of how language ideologies manifest themselves into language practices, and ultimately “determining the maintenance and future status of minority languages” (King et al. 2008: 907).

In order to understand the influence of parental language practices on language maintenance, Caldas (2012) captures language practices on a continuum ranging from “the highly planned and orchestrated, to the invisible, laissez-faire practices” (as cited in Curdt-Christiansen 2013a). These practices are instantiated into interactional strategies parents adopt in their daily interactions. Lanza (2004, 2007) attempts to examine the relationship

between language choices and children bilingual development by identifying five interactional strategies parents use to socialize their children into a particular linguistic behavior, these interactional strategies negotiate a context for interaction which can be monolingual or bilingual. A monolingual context for interaction occurs, for example, when parents adopt a minimal grasp strategy which involves parental insistence on the child to repeat the utterance in the minority language. On the other hand, some interactional strategies set a bilingual context for interaction through the use of code-switching or complete laissez-faire practices (Curdt-Christiansen 2013a). These strategies are crucial for understanding how family language policies are constructed and negotiated with regard to language maintenance. It is believed that parents who explicitly negotiate the language choices of their children, i.e. by correcting or modifying their choices are more likely to succeed in raising them bilingually (Lanza 2004: 26). Overall, research on FLP suggests that language practices are crucial sites for language negotiating in the family (Dopke 1992; Curdt-Christiansen 2013a).

In general, the implementation of a successful Family language policy focuses on the creation of an 'explicit' (Shohamy 2006) and overt (Schiffman 1996) language management. Thus, the third component of FLP is language management which is concerned with the conscious decisions and explicit efforts parents take in relation to their children's language development (Spolsky 2004). Explicit management efforts require the attention to language use at home, where parents negotiate their children into a particular language context; and controlling the sociolinguistic environment by, for instance, providing children with linguistic resources in the minority language, or enrol them in weekend language school to teach them the minority language, i.e. complementary schools (Spolsky 2004: 8).

Taken together, the framework of Family language policy aims to broaden our understanding of the best means in language maintenance, as well as, ways in which it does not result in successful maintenance. Based on this literature review, I present my research questions in the following section.

2.2. Research Questions

Informed by Spolsky's model of language policy, I aim to explore the relationship between language ideologies, practices and management efforts in Five Syrian families in Leeds. I seek to answer the following questions:

- 1) What language ideologies do Syrian mothers hold about the minority and the majority language(s)?
- 2) How are these Ideologies enacted into language practices and management efforts in the family?
- 3) What are the key challenges affecting the implementation of a successful FLP?

3. Methodology

3.1. Qualitative Research Paradigm

The adoption of a qualitative inquiry is appropriate in response to the nature of this research which aims to gain insights into people's beliefs, practices, and behaviors in relation to Arabic language maintenance. In this study, I used semi-structured, primarily for their flexibility, in that they don't include a predetermined set of questions, but rather they allow participants to reflect more on their answers, which in return, enhance the richness of the data. The interview questions were developed based on the three components put forward in Spolsky's model of FLP. For data analysis, I adopted the three-stage procedure for qualitative data as suggested in the literature (Creswell 2007).

3.2. Participants

Five Syrian families who are residing in Leeds were selected for this study using Purposeful criterion sampling which is defined by Patton (2002) as 'strategic and purposeful selection of information-rich cases'. The selection criteria for participation were: (1) first-generation (born in the home country) mothers from Syria, (2) have one or more children who are above age 6, (3) have resided in the UK for a minimum of two years. The decision to recruit mothers only, rather than fathers, was made based on the highlighted role of mothers in establishing language policy in the home (Tannenbaum 2012). Especially in the context of language maintenance, mothers are considered to be 'guardians of the minority language' (Piller & Pavlenko 2004: 496).

To address ethical concerns, a number of issues were also taken into account. First, the study involved minority language speakers from a war-torn country, in this case, Syria. A potential risk, hence, is that the topic could bring some negative memories or pain for participants. To avoid this risk, I explained to the families that their contribution was entirely

voluntary and that they have the freedom to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. In addition, all mothers who agreed to take part in the study signed and received a copy of informed consent form which includes a description of the research objectives which were also explained by the researcher verbally. Finally, mothers were assured that their anonymity would be protected through the use of pseudonyms and removal of identifying details.

4. Data and Discussion

4.1. Language Ideologies

Based on our understanding that parental language ideologies are shaped by an integrated set of linguistic and non-linguistic factors, I discuss the beliefs my participants hold at the micro-level which includes cultural factors influencing language ideologies; and at the macro-level which includes: economic and political forces.

4.1.1. The Formation of Language Ideologies

Arabic as a core value (Smolicz 1992): All mothers in my study regarded Arabic as a core value that is related to their religion and identity. The religious status of Arabic was seen by all mothers as the most important factor in language maintenance. Mona, for example, answered my question by posing a rhetorical question to stress on the importance of Arabic for religious purposes: *'it is the language of the Quran and Islam if they don't speak it how will they understand the Quran?'* This supports Fishman (1991) claim that Arabic religious status provides a strong incentive for language maintenance among Arab communities, as it 'maintains the boundaries between the host culture and the minority culture' (p.360). Besides the religious attachment to Arabic, some mothers regarded Arabic as a tool for cultural identification (Fishman 1991).

Example (1)

We are rooted in the language. This is our roots and one always clings and holds on to their roots and origin. One day it will return to your home country.

Another source in the formation of language ideologies at the macro-level was influenced by socioeconomic factors (Spolsky 2004). Some mothers regarded Arabic as a useful resource for their children's future (Ruiz 1984), and they acknowledged that learning another language could be an 'extra bonus' for their children.

Example (2)

I think even if you're not Arabic lots of people looking for extra language. Why not?

It is an extra bonus.

With respect to the ideologies expressed at the micro-level and macro-level, it's evident that all mothers seem to hold very positive beliefs towards the transmission of Arabic to their children for cultural, social and religious purposes. However, such beliefs do not always turn into successful language maintenance outcomes (De Houwer 1999; Canagarajah 2008; King 2000). For this reason, King (2000: 169) argues that language ideologies are best viewed as “the mediating link between language use and social organization”. In other words, parental beliefs are influenced by external forces such as the educational policies in the host country. Similarly, Shohamy (2006) views language policy as “a manipulative tool in the continuous battle between ideologies” (p.450). In this study, the formation of language ideologies in relation to the majority language was greatly influenced by the overwhelmingly monolingual language ideology in Britain. This battle of ideologies (Shohamy 2006) has been clearly articulated in Samar's discourse, who despite her expressed desire to transmit Arabic, considers English more important for her children.

Example (3)

But for them, it [English] should be their first language... Because they live here they're gonna work here... They're gonna go to universities.

This supports Curdt-Christiansen (2014b) study investigating the influence of government policies on Chinese immigrant family language decisions. She suggests that the pressure of the socio-political and educational realities in Singapore forced parents to place English and Chinese into a ‘dichotomous position’ resulting in adjustment of expectations regarding their children's proficiency in Chinese.

The analysis of language ideologies, hence, highlights the existence of interconnections between micro and macro levels. While beliefs about the minority language are often positive and reflect cultural values; they are, nonetheless, in constant interaction with broader societal ideologies at the macro-level (Schwartz 2010; King 2000). This suggests that the family unit, as described by King (2008) is a ‘site in which language ideologies are both formed and enacted through caregiver-interactions’. The following section discusses how language

ideologies about the minority and the majority language(s) are enacted into language practices and management efforts in the families.

4.2. Language Management Efforts and Practices

The language ideologies reported in the previous section are manifested in the family's language practices and management efforts. In this section, I view language ideologies as the rationale behind language practices and management endeavours (Smith-Christmas 2014).

I first discuss language use at home as reported by mothers. Next, I discuss the explicit (Shohamy 2006) and overt (Schiffman 1996) efforts undertaken by mothers to modify or influence their children's linguistic behavior. It is important to point out, however, that there is no clear-cut distinction between management and language practices (Fogle & King 2013). Therefore, both are viewed under the language management efforts.

4.2.1. Language Management Efforts

To my question what language(s) do you use with your children at home? Mother's responses can be divided into three categories: implicit Arabic-only Policy, Explicit Arabic-only policy and complete laissez-faire (Curdt-Christiansen 2009). An example of implicit or unplanned language practice was reported by Suha who stated that her lack of proficiency in English necessitates the use of Arabic at home: *'They have no choice but to speak with us in Arabic'*.

Lack of proficiency in the majority language can be seen as a predictor for successful language maintenance. As noted by Clyne (2003) in his study of Turkish immigrant families in Australia "In families where the parental generation has a limited knowledge of English, home use of the language in the second generation is a matter of need. Where the parents have a high competence in English, it is a matter of will." (Clyne 2003: 37). Therefore, it must also be noted that lack of proficiency in the majority language is not a determining factor in successful language maintenance; as it could backfire in the long term in response to changes in the sociocultural environment (Fillmore 1991: 338). Therefore, a distinction needs to be made between competence-related language choices and ideology-backed choices (Torrás & Gafaranga 2002).

Against this effortlessly implemented Arabic-only rules, Mona imposed explicit rules for language use at home, primarily triggered by their children's linguistic development.

Example (4)

When we first arrived here it was hard for my daughters to accept the English language but then... They started to integrate into the society and then their English becomes even better than Arabic...Then we said STOP we started a new stage where we have to go back to Arabic now

Similarly, Sofy implemented an explicit rule for language use at home. Her decision was in response to her child decreasing proficiency in Arabic and increasing preference to use English when he entered kindergarten. This age is very critical to the child's linguistic development as researchers have documented cases where children language skills in the home language drop significantly leading to a passive knowledge of the heritage language (Fillmore 1991; Nesteruk 2010).

While mothers reported that they predominantly use Arabic for different purposes, Samar, on the other hand, reported a complete *laissez-faire*' policy (Curdt-Christiansen 2013a). She reported that she uses a mix of Arabic and English without paying much attention to her language choice. This strategy, however, is less effective in language maintenance because it neglects the language issue (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008: 11). However, the use of such policy can also infer into the implicit language beliefs she holds in relation to the majority language, i.e. her perceptions of the social structures, which are enacted in her choice of the language for interaction between her and her children (Curdt-Christiansen 2013a).

Beside language use at home, some mothers also utilized different language resources outside the home to control the sociolinguistic environment of their children. Language resources outside the home were mainly utilized by mothers who reported strict language use policies inside the home, thus reflecting their strong impact belief in relation to the minority language (Curdt-Christiansen 2013a). The majority of mothers in my study reported that they send their children to complementary school mainly to learn how to read the holy Quran '*but the main thing for me was reading the Holy Quran*'. A sentiment that was echoed by other mothers. Another motivation to send children to Arabic school according to some mothers was the sense of commitment and consistency in these school offer; which is not easy to achieve in the home environment.

At the same time, mothers were aware that the complementary school is not a '*magical stick*' as Suha described it. Hence, a number of challenges were pointed out by mothers

regarding these language schools; among which is the limited learning time which is two-hour a week and the lack of institutional support for minority languages in the UK.

In an attempt to shield herself from the societal push towards language shift, Sofy decided to control the sociolinguistic environment inside the home:

Example (5)

Kids cartoons are all in Arabic. I have bought the tv shows they repeat it over and over again. That's alright. This makes them even better exposed to the language.

Clearly, Sofy's strict language policies are strongly influenced by her ideologies, as well as her strong impact belief. Nonetheless, despite her commitment to transmit the language to her children, she was faced by the pressure to balance competing demands between childrearing, on one hand, and teaching the minority language on the other. Okita (2002: 227) uses the term 'simultaneous accommodation' to capture this extraordinarily demanding tasks associated with motherhood and multilingual development.

Hence, it can be concluded that the success or failure of the ideologies-backed language management efforts is not limited to the existence of impact belief. Rather, in the face of the strong societal pressure, mothers are coerced to adjust and negotiate their family language policies, and sometimes expecting less from their children development in Arabic.

Example (6)

..but if you want the reality you have to compromise. when you speak both languages there has to be one which is better. ...Unless as a parent you have 100% percent commitment and I mean by commitment having the time and the effort ...

5. Conclusion

The findings of my study confirm previous theories in the study of FLP (King , Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008; Curdt-Christiansen 2009; Spolsky 2004). With respect to language ideologies, the mothers in my study expressed various beliefs in relation to the minority and the majority language which seem to co-exist in a conflictual relationship. These language ideologies, as a result, give rise to different language practices and management efforts within the family. Mothers who were strict about their language use at home exerted more effort outside the home and held high expectations for their children bilingual development. Yet, in facing the social and political realities, as well as emotional and psychological aspects of

childrearing (Okita 2002), family language policies were adjusted and negotiated, and hence resulting in a more flexible language policy.

The findings also suggest that explicit language management is more efficient in promoting successful language maintenance outcomes (King et al 2008). In this study, mothers who reported explicit language management efforts were more confident about their children's bilingual development.

The counteractive forces to language maintenance in society, however, can overshadow parent's language management efforts. As Fishman (2000) points out, the responsibility of successful maintenance depends not only on "family-home-neighbourhood-community" (p.424) but also on institutional domains such as mainstream schools, the mass media, the language policy of the host country. A major implication for educational policies and educator is to promote language maintenance for the minority languages in mainstream schools. As Cummins (1981) suggests that schools need to communicate positive messages to students about the value of their language even in monolingual school systems (pp. 25-26).

A specific limitation of the findings, however, results from the design and the scope of this study. The focus of this paper was on parents' own narrations of how their family language policies are constructed and negotiated. It does not, however, focus on the actual outcomes and the role of children in negotiating their FLPs.

Recent research on family language policy acknowledges the role of children, not as passive recipient, but as "active and creative social agents" (Lanza 2007: 47) and as "socializing agents" themselves (Luykx 2005). Therefore, in order to develop a multifaceted perspective on this topic, children's perspectives and their role in everyday interactions can provide valuable information on the dynamic nature of FLPs.

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