FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY: WHERE ARE WE GOING AND WHY?

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The Road Ahead by Steve Dininno
TALK OVERVIEW

- What has FLP “bought” us?
- Limitations / challenges
- A modest proposal for road ahead
NO INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION = LANGUAGE SHIFT/LOSS
Caretakers’ positions on child language learning

- **Indigenous Saraguro mother:** “Yes, I want them to speak Quichua. Quichua is super important, but later...”

- **Papua New Guinea village father:** “We, all the mothers and fathers, we want our children to speak [Taiap], we want them to. But they won’t. They’re all Tok Pisin people. I don’t know why.” (Kulick, 1992)

- **Bilingual Navajo-English teaching assistant:** “Seeing children not speaking Navajo is a very emotional thing. I wonder why do they speak English more? None were born by Bilagáanas (Whites)...” (McCarty, Romero-Little & Zepeda, 2008)
Family language policy

• how family members think about language;

• what they do with language; and

• what they try to do with language.
Language policy

• language beliefs or ideologies (what people think about language);

• language practices (what people do with language); and

• efforts to modify or influence those practices through any kind of language intervention, planning, or management (what people try to do to language) (Spolsky, 2004).
use of Arabic (more precisely, Judeo-Moroccan) when the family was all together. Most of the knowledge that we have of family language policy derives from anecdotal accounts or from ethnoeclogues of interesting multilingual communities.
"family language policy"
WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT FLP?

• Language use in home influences child development and achievement;

• Primary determinant of individual language maintenance;

• Primary determinant of societal language maintenance.
Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)

Stage 8  most vestigial Xish users are socially isolated and Xish needs to be reassembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically unconcentrated adults

Stage 7  most Xish users are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but are beyond child-bearing age

Stage 6  The attainment of intergenerational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement

Stage 5  Xish literacy in the home, school and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy

Stage 4  Xish in lower education that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws

Stage 3  use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside the Xish neighborhood/community) involving interaction between Xmen and Ymen

Stage 2  Xish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in higher spheres of either

Stage 1  some use of Xish in higher level educational, occupational and media efforts (but without the additional safety provided by political independence).
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Intergenerational transmission?

Out of home support?

Home practices?
Language Policy

Child language acquisition
• How can school language policies effectively support minority language acquisition and use in the home?

• Why do children raised under similar conditions experience different outcomes in language proficiency and preference?
What family language beliefs, practices and policies lead to what child language outcomes?
WHAT DOES FLP BUY US?
WHAT DOES FLP BUY US?

- Amount and types of input needed
- Child agency
- Deep links between FLP and ‘being good’
INPUT?

Kid Start Spanish

Spanish for Kids

DVD system

Just 20 minutes a day

I can speak Spanish!

Give the gift of language
Parental language input patterns and children's bilingual use

ANNICK DE HOUWER

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716407070221 Published online: 11 June 2007

Abstract

This article reports on a study that addresses the following question: why do some children exposed to two languages from early on fail to speak those two languages? Questionnaire data were collected in 1,899 families in which at least one of the parents spoke a language other than the majority language. Each questionnaire asked about the home language use of a family consisting of at least one parent and one child between the ages of 6 and 10 years old. The results show that the children in these families all spoke the majority language, but that minority language use was not universal. Differences in parental language input patterns used at home correlated with differences in child minority language use. Home input patterns where both parents used the minority language and where at most one parent spoke the majority language had a high chance of success. The “one parent–one language” strategy did not provide a necessary nor sufficient input condition. Implications for bilingual families are discussed.
### AMOUNT AND TYPES OF INPUT

#### Table 7. The effect of language input patterns in the parent pair on children’s use of language X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input Pattern</th>
<th>No Child Speaks X</th>
<th>At Least One Child Speaks X</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a: 2× Language X</td>
<td>3.08%</td>
<td>96.92%</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b: (X + Dutch) &amp; X</td>
<td>6.58%</td>
<td>93.42%</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a: 2× (X + Dutch)</td>
<td>20.82%</td>
<td>79.18%</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b: X &amp; Dutch</td>
<td>25.76%</td>
<td>74.24%</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: (X + Dutch) &amp; Dutch</td>
<td>64.30%</td>
<td>35.70%</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All patterns combined</td>
<td>23.85%</td>
<td>76.15%</td>
<td>1,778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: For an explanation of the input patterns, see Table 6.*
AMOUNT AND TYPES OF INPUT
WHAT DOES FLP BUY US?

- Amount and types of input needed
- Child agency
- Deep links between FLP and ‘being good’
CHILD AGENCY

Parental beliefs and attitudes

Parental linguistic choices and interaction strategies

Children’s language development

De Houwer, 1999
CHILD AGENCY 2.0

Parental beliefs and attitudes

Parental linguistic choices and interaction strategies

Children’s language development

Parental beliefs and attitudes

Parental linguistic choices and interaction strategies

Children’s language development
Excerpt 4

1 Seumas so the- the Gaelic (.) to me I speak less Gaelic now than what I did seven years ago (0.4) but the only reason I was speaking it was to encourage David to speak it (1.2) if the children had (1.2) or like Jacob for example was- was speaking Gaelic I would converse to him in Gaelic

2 Researcher mhm

3 Seumas but he just point blank refuses (0.9) maybe it’s my fault I should’ve just maybe spoken to him more in Gaelic and ignored him (.) if he replied back in English but ach that doesn’t really work either (.) @
From family language practices to family language policies: Children as socializing agents

Kheirkhah, Mina
Linköping University, The Tema Institute, Department of Child Studies. Linköping University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

2016 (English)
Doctoral thesis, comprehensive summary (Other academic)

Sally Boyd* and Leena Huss
Young children as language policy-makers: studies of interaction in preschools in Finland and Sweden
WHAT DOES FLP BUY US?

- Amount and types of input needed
- Child agency
- Deep links between FLP and ‘being good’
FLP AND BEING A GOOD....

- parent
- wife / mother / daughter-in-law...
- community member
- person
WHAT DOES FLP BUY US?

- Amount and types of input needed (*a lot!*)
- Child agency
- Links between FLP and ‘being good’
EVANS (1996)

Compared
Spanish-language transmission families
Spanish-language non-transmission families

Identical
age of child
socio-economic status
family size
stated advantages for bilingualism and Spanish

Differed?
non-transmission parents were much more likely to report perceived prejudice or perceived language prejudice
“If you are a White person and you know both languages, then it’s a great, great advantage. But knowing Spanish, being a Spanish person, marks a child as someone who can be discriminated against.”

(Evans, 1996)
Decision on DACA opens a new period of worry and uncertainty for Dreamers

Carlos Esteban, 31, of Woodbridge, Va., a nursing student and a Dreamer, rallies with others in support of DACA outside the White House on Sept. 5, 2017. (Jacquelyn Martin / Associated Press)
LIMITATIONS

- Methods
- Participants
- Theory-building
METHODS

๏ what parents do vs. what they tell us they do
๏ few mixed methods studies
๏ few longitudinal studies
OVER-RELIANCE ON INTERVIEWS

The Interview as Collaborative Achievement: Interaction, Identity, and Ideology in a Speech Event

Steven Talmy

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amq027
Published: 24 September 2010

interview as social practice vs.
interview as research instrument
METHODS

- what parents do vs. what they tell us they do
- few mixed methods studies
- few longitudinal studies
PARTICIPANTS: IS FLP WEIRD?

- Western
- Educated, and from
- Industrialized,
- Rich, and
- Democratic countries

Beyond WEIRD: Towards a broad-based behavioral science

Joseph Henrich (a1) (a2), Steven J. Heine (a1) and Ara Norenzayan (a1)
PARTICIPANTS
PARTICIPANTS

Early FLP
middle-class, educated two parent, heteronormative families, learning 2(+) high status, well supported European lgs.
WHAT ABOUT SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES?
PARTICIPANTS

Early FLP
middle-class, educated two parent, heteronormative families, learning 2(+) high status European lgs.
LIMITATIONS

- Methods
- Participants
- Theory-building
NEED FOR EMPIRICALLY-BASED THEORY BUILDING
THEORY-BUILDING
MODEST PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY AHEAD
MODEST PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY AHEAD

- **Wider range of participants**
- Greater consideration of technology
- Political engagement (without over-promising)
- Phases of LP: towards more theoretically driven research questions
Early FLP
middle-class, two
parent,
heteronormative,
families, learning 2(+) 
European lgs.

Current / future FLP
‘Non-traditional’ families, 3+ non-
European lgs. or lgs. not 
commonly used as school media, 
in wide range of transnational, 
diasporic settings
PARTICIPANTS 2.0

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*Mi Padre*

*Mexican Immigrant Fathers and Their Children’s Education*

Sarah Gallo

Foreword by Gundalplo Vidal

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*Journal of Sociolinguistics 18/3, 2014: 319–344*

Socialization into single-parent-by-choice family life

David Poveda, a María Isabel Jociles b and Ana María Rivas b

a Quito; b Caracas

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*Talk in Two Languages*

Joseph Gafranga

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*Family Language Policy: Introducing an Ethnomethodological Approach in the English Language Classroom*

Cassie Smith-Christmas
Part I: Challenges in Family Language Policy

2. Family Language Policy: New Directions Cassie Smith-Christmas

3. Family Language Policy for Deaf Children and the Vitality of New Zealand Sign Language Rachel McKee & Kirsten Smiler


5. Exploring Family Language policies Among Azerbaijani-Speaking Families in the City of Tabriz, Iran Seyed Hadi Mirvahedi

6. The Role of the Zapotec Language from Lozoga in the Californian Migrant Community Daisy Berriel Lorenzo

7. Adrift in an Anglophone World: Refugee Families’ Language Policy Challenges Diego Navarro & John Macalister

Part II: Opportunities in Family Language Policy


9. "I speak all of the language!": Engaging in Family Language Policy Research with Multilingual Children in Montreal Alison Crump

10. Dynamic Family Language Policy: Heritage Language Socialization and Strategic Accommodation in the Home Corinne Seals

11. Language Ideologies, Social Capital, and Interaction Strategies: AN ethnographic Case Study of Family Language Policy in Singapore Guangwei Hu & Li Ren

Part III: Consequences for Family Language Policy

“Family”

"As gay people we get to choose our own family" - RuPaul
MODEST PROPOSAL FOR
THE WAY AHEAD

- Wider range of participants
- **Greater consideration of technology**
- Political engagement (without over-promising)
- Phases of LP: towards more theoretically driven research questions
TECHNOLOGY IN FAMILY LIFE & LG

7 HOURS PER DAY?
The American Pediatric Academy recommends *no television at all* for children under the age of two.

Children don’t learn much language through television or other edutainment.

**Talking at Home**

In order to be effective, language exposure must be with a real human being.
Baby FaceTime: can toddlers learn from online video chat?

Myers LJ, LeWitt RB, Gallo RE, Maselli NM.

Author information
TECHNOLOGY FOR LG. REVITALIZATION

OJIBWE LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION, MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY, AND FAMILY LANGUAGE LEARNING

Mary Hermes, University of Minnesota
Kendall A. King, University of Minnesota
MODEST PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY AHEAD

- Wider range of participants
- Greater consideration of technology
- Political engagement
- Phases of LP: towards more theoretically driven research questions
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Lots of ‘how to’ guides
What about impact of oppressive LP?
MODEST PROPOSALS FOR THE WAY AHEAD

- Wider range of participants
- Greater consideration of technology
- Political engagement (without over-promising)
- Towards more theoretically driven research questions
How are families constructed through multilingual language practices, and how does language function as a resource for this process of family making and meaning-making in contexts of transmigration, social media and technology saturation, and hypermobility (King & Lanza, 2017, p. 2)?
THANK YOU

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