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Language management in multilingual families: Efforts, measures and challenges

With increased national and transnational migration in Europe in recent years where people move to different cities, cross borders, integrate into new cultural-linguistic landscapes, form intermarriages and create multilingual families, Family Language Policy as a field of study has emerged and is now receiving considerable attention. Caregivers, parents, and society at large are more and more concerned about what language(s) should be used when raising children, what language(s) should be maintained and further developed, what kind of (socio)linguistic environment is conducive to learning more languages, and what literacy practices provide affordances and constraints for multilingual development. The theme and the title for this special issue of *Multilingua* stem from a thematic colloquium that we organized at the 21st Sociolinguistics Symposium in Murcia, Spain, in June 2016. It brings together four papers that respond to the challenges of family language policy as a result of the intensified urban development, socio-political changes and transnational movement that have taken place in different European countries.

Many questions arise concerning language in contemporary multilingual, transnational families: If apparently adequate linguistic inputs are provided and linguistic environments are conducive, can we expect raising children in multiple languages to be an unproblematic endeavour? If literacy resources are rich and various measures are in place, could we not raise children with a desirable bi/multi-lingual outcome? This thematic issue answers these questions by addressing the particular topic of language management, that is, language efforts and measures provided by caregivers as well as the manner in which family members encounter and address challenges related to language learning and use. The notion of language management actually derives from the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle in the 1920s in which language was perceived as a self-contained linguistic production (Jernudd and Neustrupný 1987). According to Jernudd and Neustrupný (1987), language management starts

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when an individual notices his/her language communication problems because of inadequate language use/choice. As a consequence, the individual may produce self-correction or modification without external intervention. The notion has expanded to the current theoretical position that includes a much broader conceptual under-standing of language policy as practice and engagement (Tupas 2009; Hult and Johnsen 2015). Specifically, as King and Lanza (2017) point out concerning the field of family language policy: "Researchers are increasingly interested in how families are constructed through multilingual language practices, and how language func-tions as a resource for this process of family-making and meaning-making in contexts of transmigration, social media and technology saturation, and hypermobility". How families actually make decisions about language use in the family are nonetheless still paramount.

In this Special Issue, we draw on Spolsky's (2009) model of language policy to understand the intricate relationship between language and lan-guage users. While the three established components (*language ideology, language practices* and *language management*), provide a generic theoretical framework, it does not spell out the specific processes or management plan-ning that come into play with internal and external forces (Curdt-Christiansen and LaMorgia, this issue). To complement the theoretical model, we define Family Language Management and planning as "the implicit/explicit and subconscious/deliberate parental involvement and investment in providing linguistic conditions and context for language learning and literacy develop-ment" (Curdt-Christiansen 2012: 57). The deliberate and explicit planning strategies of family language policy highlight caregivers' language manage-ment efforts and language planning activities in home domains (King et al. 2008; Lanza and Wei 2016; Curdt-Christiansen 2013). These efforts are often motivated by parents' past experiences and future aspirations for their chil-dren's language development. They consist of various approaches that par-ents use to enrich their children's language experiences and their linguistic repertoires, including the 'one parent, one language' (OPOL) strategy; one language on certain days; minority language only at home (hot-house approach) and mixed language strategies, or 'translanguaging' (Piller 2002; Lanza 2004, 2007; De Houwer 2009; Schwartz and Verschik 2013). Concomitantly, parents may also provide language resources and literacy-related activities as a means of socialization to enhance the linguistic envir-onment for their children. Research into bilingual heritage language learners' linguistic development, for example, has found that parental support and involvement are the most important factors for bilingual migrant children's heritage language development (Orellana 2016). Parents are reported often to engage their children in a variety of transnational learning activities to

support their children's heritage language development. Studying a group of Korean and Japanese mothers in the US, Kwon (2017) noted that these mothers not only provide literacy resources for their children, they also use transnational media from their home country to teach their children historical, cultural and linguistic knowledge. While these parents use a variety of resources to motivate children's multiple language learning, parents who have limited time to deliberately focus on language transmission and management with their children, or have insufficient linguistic knowledge in a particular language, may seek external language professionals and language learning institutions to counterbalance their inadequacy (Curdt-Christiansen 2012).

While language management efforts may be conscious and deliberate, family language policy like all language policies can also be "implicit, covert, unarticulated, fluid and negotiated moment by moment" (King and Fogle 2017: 9). Within the context of intergenerational language transmission, it is particularly important to look at how caregivers use interactional strategies implicitly to socialize children into using a desired language, be it a heritage language or an L2 or L3 (Curdt-Christiansen 2016; Lanza 2007; Smith-Christmas, this issue) or even into engaging in translanguaging, the use of multiple linguistic resources in both speaking and writing (García and Li 2014; Song 2016). Moreover, Pavlenko (2004) points out that intimacy, emotions and identity are all constructed in interactions. Therefore, encouragement or disapproval of a particular language use in everyday interactions can act as implicit language planning strategies where caregivers provide affective and emotional linguistic inputs for language development (Luykx 2003; Pavlenko 2004, 2012). Pavlenko (2004) argues that "*emotion discourses* provide a cultural lens through which emotional expression is located, assessed and interpreted" (p. 183), while we argue that "*emotion discourses*" are unarticulated language management efforts that can provide insight into the process of language maintenance and language shift in the everyday social life within families.

In this Special Issue, we thus examine not only explicit/deliberate measures that parents employ, but also implicit/unconscious decisions they make through language- mediated socialisation routines. All of these activities can be subsumed under what is called language management (Spolsky 2009). Using qualitative research approaches and context-dependent ethnographic data, the papers extend the current lines of inquiry from existing research and add three new perspectives. Firstly, as Europe has experienced intensive migration flows during the past several decades, the papers provide powerful analytical 'snapshots' that reflect the on-going socio-political changes in Europe. Placed in the context of shifting political ideologies, the papers explore the dynamic processes of language planning and language choice in

home domains across families in northern and southern European countries, involving both national official languages and migrant home languages. In this regard, the studies in this issue provide an excellent locus for examining the complex relationship between family language management and the wider sociocultural and socio-political forces. These important issues, in return, have also been the concern of many families in other geographical contexts.

Secondly, the contributors illustrate, through their various approaches, how different types of management measures are used in their language planning activities. While past research provided few concrete examples to illustrate how language management works in families, the papers in this Special Issue examine not only the types of management but also the nature of the management (e.g. literacy activities; language games).

Thirdly, the papers illustrate the blurred distinction between the concepts of language practices and language management. Spolsky (2009), in his model of language policy, shows that language management is an observable effort made by caregivers to modify the language behaviours of family members. Language practices are the observable language behaviours and they illustrate what people do with languages. While such distinctions may be visible in macro-level policy planning, in a family language policy context, language practices in everyday social life can also act as language management albeit in a subtle and implicit manner, such as using affective discourse in language socialization with children.

In examining the measures and efforts caregivers make, the papers in this issue focus on the important aspects of intergenerational language transmission and multilingual development, from the ideological factors that shape and influence the processes of decision-making and family language planning to how families manage multiple languages on a daily basis. Each paper in this thematic issue addresses an important matter related to the negotiation of family language policy, in particular language management that indexes family members' ideological positions. Therefore, the Special Issue advances the study of family language policy and contributes to our understanding of the linguistic, communicative, sociocultural and institutional challenges faced by various members of the family in contemporary society. It addresses the impacts of migration and diaspora on the processes of language shift and change. It also sheds light on broader language policy issues with regard to language revitalisation, medium of instruction policies, ethnic/national identity and biliteracy development.

The Special Issue opens with a study conducted by Curdt-Christiansen and LaMorgia in the UK in which they examine three linguistic ethnic communities – Chinese, Italian and Pakistani (Urdu-speaking). Employing a survey and in-depth interviews, the authors explore home environment as measures of

language management. These include home literacy resources and literacy activities in two languages, parental expectations, and family socioeconomic capital. Through the comparative lens of the three linguistically and culturally diverse communities, the authors demonstrate that efforts and measures employed by parents are rich yet different. While parents from all three communities are highly committed to creating additive bilingual environments for their children, the provisions of literacy resources, language practices at home and expectations for heritage language development are nonetheless different because of their varying ideological positions towards the heritage language, as well as their migration history, and the different status of the three languages in the UK. One of the major findings from the study is the extent of the challenges that parents encounter when raising bilingual children. The authors highlight that educational demands from the public education system have 'coerced' the parents to promote English in the family domain and that leaves them little time and energy to keep up with the children's heritage language development.

The next article is a longitudinal (nine-year) ethnographic study, conducted by Cassie Smith-Christmas, with focus on the role of *input management* in a Scottish family concerned with the maintenance of Gaelic language. The study centres, in particular, on how the grandmother, Nana, transforms everyday events into child-centred interactions. Using recordings collected over the years, Smith-Christmas explores the detailed interactional patterns that lead to positive Gaelic learning experiences of the granddaughter, Maggie. The author's analysis demonstrates that the 'high involvement' (*cf*. Tannen 2006; Chevalier 2012) interactional style used by Nana creates "an active and stimulating learning environment" for encouraging Gaelic development and maintenance. While such an interactional style allows children to engage in playful, meaningful, and implicit language learning that not only encourages language development but also builds emotional attachments between two generations, she reveals that not all children would react to the same style of interactions. Jacob, Maggie's little brother, showed less positive engagement with the style, which is caused by different socialization patterns employed by other caregivers in the same family.

The subsequent contribution by Claudine Kirsch Nikos Gogonas and reports on a case study of two Greek families who have recently migrated to Luxembourg. Facing the challenge of learning three new languages (Luxembourgish, German and French) and, at the same time, maintaining their heritage Greek, the families employed different management strategies from doing homework together to using transnational media (TV programmes in German and Greek), from controlling interactional strategies to engagement in literacy activities, in order to facilitate their children's multiple language development. The rich data, collected through collaborative ethnographic methods, including interviews, observations

and emails, demonstrate that the management commitment of caregivers largely aligns with their language ideologies. While both families emphasised the importance of Greek for their cultural identity, they managed the children's learning of Greek language differently. Family A adapted a 'multilingual language policy' by embracing multilingual and multicultural practices, but delaying the learning of Greek literacy in order to give more space for developing Luxembourg's other languages. Family B viewed the Greek language as the most important tie that links the family together. The emotional attachment to Greek has motivated the parents and grandparent to place much more emphasis on developing the children's Greek language.

The Special Issue closes with an article by Anik Nandi who situates his study in the bilingual (Castilian/Galician) Autonomous Community in the northwest of Spain. His research project developed against the backdrop of the current sociolinguistic landscape and political context in which a heated discussion is taking place as to whether the family or the state is responsible for Galician language maintenance. Nandi presents parental accounts of the difficulties and challenges the parents encounter and initiatives they take to fight the battle against language shift. The author draws on Foucault's (1991) theory of "language governmentality" and "biopower" to understand how parents act as agents and stakeholders to "assume the role of custodians over their children's language practices" and manage family language planning. Through a WhatsApp group, he recruited ten participating families who belong to a pro-Galician Parental Association. The study demonstrates how a group of determined parents provides various language learning opportunities to facilitate their children's Galician development. This includes both individual family language management and collective group language management. The latter involves a group of like-minded parents who, by claiming their language governmentality, have formed a socialization and learning group for their children to interact in Galician. These parents strongly believe that their biopower and linguistic commitment can provide a fertile ground for the Galician language.

Taken together, the Special Issue illustrates that family language policy is a critical domain for multilingual development, language maintenance and cultural continuity (Curdt-Christiansen 2013; King and Lanza 2017; Spolsky 2012). The studies in this issue, however, also show that families alone cannot produce multilingual speakers and multicultural individuals. It is evidenced from the rich data in this thematic issue that family language management measures often encounter obstacles from public educational systems where parents are forced to prioritise school languages and academic matters. While research into bilingual education has demonstrated that multilingualism can have both instrumental values and cognitive benefits, the public educational system has not

taken into consideration that the multiple languages of minority language children can be further developed with the support of both school programmes and family language management. There is an urgent need for schools to recognise the family language resources and to work together with families to create a conducive language-learning environment for multilingual children.

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