Family Language Policy: Issues of Practice, Ideology and Management

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Abstract:

Inspired by a range of earlier approaches to language maintenance, this article positions itself against the broad background of the general field of language policy. It examines through the lens of family language policy the interplay between different factors affecting families' intergenerational language transmission. It argues that family language policies are important as they significantly contribute to the maintenance of minority languages. Moreover, this paper reviews research on the role of language ideologies, practices and management in shaping family language policies, which in turn connect in significant ways with children's developmental trajectories and also determine future status of minority languages.

Keywords: family language policy, Language maintenance, language practices, language ideology, language management.

ملخص البحث

مستوحاة من مجموعة من الدراسات السابقة للحفاظ على اللغة على اللغة الأصـل، تضـع هـذه المقالـة نفسـها ضـمن المجـال العام لدراسة السياسات اللغوية. إنها توضـح من خلال عدسة سياسة اللغة العائليـة التفاعـل بـين العوامـل المختلفـة التي تؤثر علـى انتقـال اللغـة بـين الأجيـال. عـلاوة علـى ذلك ، تسـتعرض هـذه الورقـة دور أيـديولوجيات اللغـة وممارساتها وإدارتها في تشكيل السياسة الغوية الأسـرة والتـي بـدورها تـرتبط بمسـارات النمـو اللغـوي للأطفـال وأيضًا تحديد الوضع المستقبلي للغات الأقليات.

الكلمات الإستفتاحية : سياسة اللغة العائلية ،الحفاظ على اللغة ، الممارسات اللغوية ، أيـديولوجيات اللغـة ، إدارة اللغة.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, language policy research has focused mainly on areas that determine which types of policies can effectively support the maintenance of endangered languages, such as Navajo in the USA (McCarty, 2002; McCarty et al., 2008) or Quechua in Andean nations (Hornberger, 1988; King, 2001). In addition to emphasizing a close analysis of other important questions related to family domains, such as whether (and how) family language policies (FLP) successfully enable minority language acquisition and use in the home. Parent's impact on language use is particularly evident in migrant families, where differences between ethnic values and the norms of the new environment where children grow up may lead to intra-familial gaps and negotiations. On the one hand, parents need to negotiate social spaces where their children can use the heritage language while being immersed in the host language. On the other hand, children in these situations tend to be faster at acquiring the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) of the majority and have the potential to actively socialize their parents into the dominant language and culture (Luykx, 2005). The present review sketches a comprehensive framework for understanding FLP by examining its different components, namely, practices, beliefs and management. It also looks at the impact that FLPs may have on minority language maintenance.

2. DEFINING FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY

Over the last decade, the field of research known as family language policy has gained impetus within sociolinguistic literature and has become a field in its own right, arguably due to the efforts of Kendall King and Lyn Fogle (2008) seeking to formally define FLP. According to King et al. (2008) FLP can be defined 'as explicit (Shohamy, 2006) and overt (Schiffman, 1996) planning in relation to language use within the home among family members' (p. 907). This definition has been expanded by Fogle (2013) who went further to claim that parents' decisions about language use within the family are not always overt and explicit, including language learning and literacy practices: 'FLP refers to explicit and overt decisions parents make about language use and language learning as well as implicit processes that legitimize certain language and literacy practices over others in the home' (p. 83). In the same line, the dimension of implicit and covert language policy at home has already been emphasized by Curdt-Christiansen (2009) to include literacy practices in her definition: 'family language policy (FLP) can be defined as a deliberate attempt at practicing a particular language use pattern and particular literacy practices within home domains and among family members.' In any case, FLP is 'shaped by what the family believes will strengthen the family's social standing and best serve and support family members' goals in life' (p. 352). Such empirical developments attest to the continuous efforts to develop a more comprehensive framework of FLP aiming to cover more nuanced and appreciatory approaches, including the analysis

of the factors and processes related to language practices in the home at different levels. Furthermore, these redefinitions have promoted greater awareness about certain issues and contexts that have been overlooked in the past and motivate a closer analysis of the directions in which the field has been going as well as the paths yet to be taken.

More importantly, FLPs are considered to be a basic aspect of children's language development (Spolsky, 2004) because these plans can generate interactions between children and family members and ultimately determine the framework for how children's language learning develops (Kang, 2015; Kaveh, 2018). FLPs lay the foundation for children's heritage language maintenance and enhance parents' efforts to manage and practice this language with their offspring. Similarly, most cross-cultural parents consider bilingualism or multilingualism as a crucial child-rearing goal.

2.1 FLP AND HERITAGE LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

In line with more recent understandings of FLP, researchers have acknowledged that heritage language maintenance requires intergenerational transmission of a language as a process in which families and their policies (family language policies or FLPs) play a critical role (Fishman, 1991/ 2001; Schwartz, 2008; Spolsky, 2004/ 2012). Fishman (1966b) postulates that when populations "differing in language are in contact with each other, such as in the case of immigration, changes in the habitual language use of the immigrant population induces process of language maintenance and shift" (p.424).. When a family is unwilling or unable to transmit the heritage language to the next generation(s) Language shift comes into play with a concomitant increase in the habitual use of the new dominant language. Such processes can ultimately lead to language loss unless proper measures towards language maintenance or reversing language shift are taken (Fishman, 1991/ 2001). These processes take place across generations; in many families the heritage language is lost altogether by the third generation, yet, there are families who successfully maintain their heritage language and promote bilingualism. As Spolsky (2012) notes, "the loss of 'natural intergenerational transmission', as it was called, was recognized as a key marker of language loss, and it occurred within the family. Thus, the family was added to the state as a domain relevant to language policy, though seldom until recently studied independently" (p. 2). By and large, FLP research looks at parents' role in preserving "heritage language by modifying children's language development" (Spolsky, 2012. p. 7). The parents' initial decision on language maintenance or shift may be strongly related to complex emotional processes. As was highlighted by Tannenbaum (2005) and Okita (2002), to the extent that home language maintenance can serve as a powerful tool for cohesion between generations of immigrants, its loss can contribute greatly to creating emotional distance between past and present.

3. SPOLSKY'S FRAMEWORK

FLP is conceived as a relatively newly developed interdisciplinary field of inquiry that draws on theoretical frameworks of language policy, child language acquisition, language socialization, and literacy studies (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009/ 2012; De Houwer, 2009; Gafaranga, 2010; King and Fogle, 2006/ 2013; King et al., 2008). An important shift can be observed in the initial assumptions and paradigms of language policy that, traditionally, were centered around solving "language problems" of newly independent, former colonial nations (Berry, 1968; Fishman et al., 1968; Ray, 1968) toward providing insights into the dynamicity of language policies as part of social, cultural, and ideological systems (Ricento, 2000/ 2006; King 2003). It is within this understanding of the development of language policy that King et al. (2008) adopt Spolsky's (2004) framework, which was historically situated in the development of language planning and considers language policy being made of three components: language practices, language beliefs, and language management. As Schwartz (2010) advocates: 'research on family language policy (FLP) incorporates analysis of language ideology, practice and management, which were classified by Spolsky (2004) as components of the language policy model with respect to the speech community' (p. 172).' Inasmuch as these three components are distinguished, Spolsky (2004) defined language practices as "the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs or ideology – the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management " (p. 5).
Most research in the field of FLP applied Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy at the family level. Spolsky (2009) concurs that family language policy has raised considerable interest and curiosity among researchers in the past ten years, mostly in countries where ethnic minorities are found, especially as researchers seek:

> ... to understand questions such as: why (and how) do members of some transnational families maintain their language while members of other families lose their language? How is it that some children, growing up in a largely monolingual society, become bilinguals while other children, growing up in a bilingual environment, become monolinguals? What policies and practices do parents implement to promote or discourage the use and practice of particular languages? And how are these language policies and practices negotiated in private domains, and concomitantly, related to broader ideologies of language and language education policies? (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013, p.1)

In applying this framework, a number of studies specifically following Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy (for example; King et al., 2008; Altman, et al., 2014; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013) have focused their analysis of families in multilingual settings in

terms of their language beliefs or ideologies (how family members think about language), of language practices (what they do with language), and of efforts to modify or influence those practices through any kind of language intervention, planning, or language management (what they try to do with language). (Spolsky, 2008). A more detailed discussion of each of these components is presented here.

3.1 FAMILY LANGUAGE PRACTICES

Research on FLP vary in terms of the type, situation, and context of the families studied (Lanza, 1992; Romaine, 1995). Moreover, the strategies enacted in each family to promote the transmission of the minority language. The one person- one language (OPOL) approach appear to be the foci in many studies on child bilingual acquisition (Ronjat, 1913; Leopold, 1939/1949; Sondergaard, 1981; Harding and Riley, 1986; Arnberg, 1987; De Houwer, 1990; Döpke, 1992; Kasuya, 1998; Juan-Garau and Perez-Vidal, 2001; Takeuchi, 2006). It concerns parents speaking different native languages, the language of one of them is the majority language spoken in the wider community, and each parent uses their native language to address their children. Other studies focused on what Romaine (1989) terms 'double non-dominant home language without community support', that is, families in which the parents each speaks a different minority language at home (Hoffman, 1985), in addition to the third language being the majority language used outside the home, thus creating a trilingual environment. Other OPOL studies went further to look at families in which one parent uses a minority language that is not their native language at home (Saunders, 1982/ 1988; Fantini, 1985; Döpke, 1992). The overall amount of minority langue input a child receives would be one of the most relevant factors that determine the levels of fluency he may attain in that language. Perhaps not surprisingly, the more minority language input the child receives the more productive he tends to be (Döpke, 1988; De Houwer, 2007; Quiroz, Snow, and Zhao, 2010). For instance, Lyon (1996) and Varro (1998) surmise that usually mothers tend to be children's primary caregivers and thus having a mother who speaks the minority language may be an optimal condition for minority language maintenance.

As such, language practices are the byproduct of conscious and unconscious language preferences (Spolsky, 2004). In the family context, these preferences are translated into practices, affecting children's bilingual development. Parental language beliefs are expected to determine the language practices in the family. De Houwer (2007) asserts that language practices of parents are crucial predictors of their children's language practices. In that sense, transmission of a language to the next generations largely depends on parental use of that language in the family. In other words, reduced exposure to a minority language results in a decrease in the child's minority language use. However, language ideologies and practices in a family are highly influenced by external social forces (Spolsky, 2004) which

often make it difficult to transmit the minority language to the next generations (Tuominen, 1999).

## 3.2 FAMILY LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND PARENTS' IMPACT BELIEF

The role that language ideologies and practices play in heritage language maintenance has been increasingly addressed in the literature particularly within bilingual families in various socio-cultural conditions, such as in immigrant contexts (e.g., Anderson, Kendrick, Rogers, & Smythe, 2005; Martínez & Smith, 2003; Okita, 2002; Zentella, 2005). Parental beliefs about the value of language and multilingualism and parents' own roles in the process of language transmission can shape their language ideology, which, in turn, can have a substantial effect on parents' linguistic behavior (language practice and management) toward their children (De Houwer, 1999; King et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2007). More specifically, these beliefs could impact parents' decisions about the language trajectories of their children and determine the maintenance or loss of the heritage language.

A significant focus of the FLP studies is family language ideologies which, According to Spolsky & Shohamy (2000), are defined using Silverstein's definition (1979) as 'sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure or use' (p.93). Language ideologies can foreground the value of maintaining the heritage language(s), and emphasize the need to control and even exclude the use of the mainstream language at home or, on the contrary, allow bilingual practices (e.g., the use of mainstream and heritage languages). In this case, however, speakers often unconsciously ignore the conversational patterns by which language shift may occur, and therefore unknowingly participate in its advent despite their pro-minority language ideologies (Gafaranga 2010; 242). Dauenhauer (1998) further argues that these pro-minority language ideologies are often in conflict with other deeply embedded language ideologies resulting from the majority/minority asymmetry.

Similarly, Language ideologies can be defined as a set of beliefs and attitudes toward social status of bilingualism and about ways of its development in early childhood. These language ideologies include parents' beliefs and attitudes about the bilingual development of their own child in a specific social-cultural context. De Houwer (1999) draws on a three-tier model from developmental psychology to illustrate the relationship between beliefs, practices, and outcomes (see Figure 1) in child bilingualism. De Houwer (1999) suggests that both parental attitudes and impact beliefs influence their linguistic choices and interaction strategies, which in turn affect children's language development. As such, positive attitudes towards the two languages being acquired by the child and to early child bilingualism are a basic and necessary condition for active bilingualism. Yet, they are an insufficient condition on their own. De Houwer argued that parents need also to have an impact belief regarding their roles in their children's language development. Parents' impact belief provides the necessary support for the development of an active bilingualism.

Fig.1. Relationship between parental beliefs/attitudes and children's language development

Parental beliefs and attitudes

Parental linguistic choices and interaction strategies

Children's language development
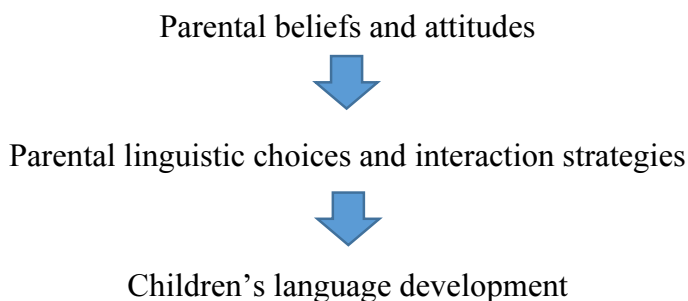
Source: De Houwer (1999, p. 86)

The figure shows that parents' attitudes toward languages and their beliefs about children's language acquisition have an impact on their communication strategies with their children. The choice of parents eventually affects the styles, variety, and language use of their children (De Houwer, 1999). Hence, parents' beliefs and attitudes play an important role in forming the language input environment for bilingual children (De Houwer, 1999/ 2017). Likewise, Curdt-Christiansen (2009/ 2012/ 2018) maintains that the decision-making process for children's multilingual development and educational achievement is connected to parental beliefs and goals. Besides, it is worth noting that language ideologies are often considered as the hidden power or strength in language practices and policy, and they are accordingly "the mediating link between language use and social organization" (King, 2000, p. 169). This is the process whereby language ideologies are negotiated within a family or community and reflected via language practices.

In fact, language ideologies are key to heritage language development given that they inform FLPs, which in turn shape the language use patterns of parents. Nevertheless, parents must have an impact belief regarding their roles in their children's language development. Without an impact belief, there would be insufficient support for the development of active bilingualism.

The disparity between language ideology and language practice may be attributed to the parents' lack of 'impact belief'. A concept introduced by De Houwer (1999, p.83) to describe the parents' conviction of their ability to 'exercise some sort of control over their children's linguistic functioning'. Parents undoubtedly affect children's language development intentionally or without any deliberate intention. Nevertheless, parents' interaction strategies may contribute effectively to their children's acquisition of the heritage language when they are deliberate and explicit; particularly in migrant contexts

where the heritage language typically receives less support (De Houwer, 1999; Pérez Báez, 2013). A strong impact belief demonstrates parents' awareness of the active role they play in their children's bilingual development. As well as, their caution about their language use as they know that it has a direct effect on what their children will learn to say. Conversely, weak impact beliefs reflect parents' conviction that they have little control over their children's language development. Chumak-Horbatsch (2008) argues that a parental impact belief "is accompanied by strategies such as home language rules and praising/punishing children's language behaviour" (p. 5). Kulick (1993), for instance, describes how parents in Papua New Guinea explain their children's monolingualism as an outcome of the children's own will and innate personality, placing 'blame' for language shift on the children themselves rather than family and community language practices . In her research on first-generation Russian parents and their second-generation Russian-Hebrew bilingual children in Israel, Schwartz (2008) found that parents' beliefs did not have an effect on Russian language skills of their children. Instead, how children position themselves towards language maintenance influenced their actual performances.
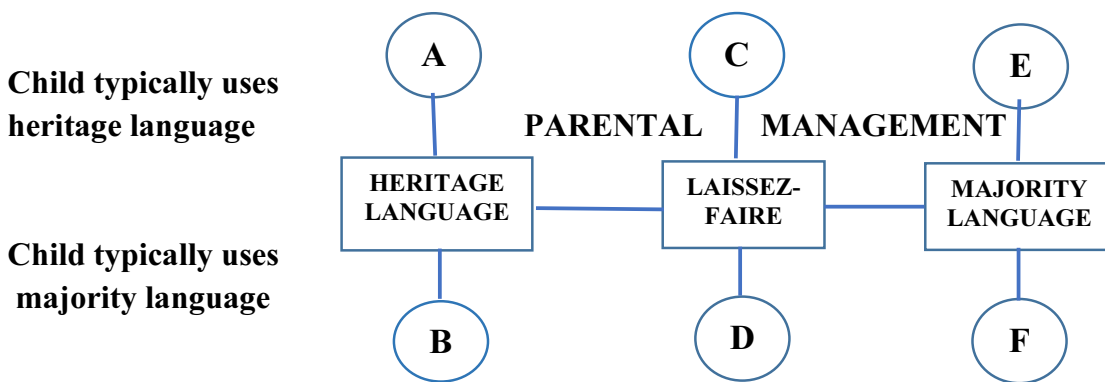
3.3 FAMILY LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT

Family language management refers to "efforts to control the language of family members, especially children" (Spolsky, 2007, p. 430). It involves parents/caregivers' attempts to determine what language the children should use in order to enhance their language learning. Such efforts include travels to the country of origin, enrolling children in home language classes, visiting heritage language speakers (e.g., relatives) and, importantly, using the target language in interactions with children (Spolsky, 2004, p. 8). Three major tendencies can be distinguished in the data on family language management in different contexts: explicit management, implicit management and laissez-faire policies.

First, explicit management that Spolsky (2009: 25) defines as verbal requests or interventions commanding the use of a particular language. Such strategy has proven quite fruitful in the transmission of the heritage language (Kasuya, 1998; King et al., 2008). For example, Kasuya (1998) carried out a study on families living in the USA who wanted to raise their children acquiring both Japanese and English through the OPOL strategy. Replicating Lanza's (1997) study, Kasuya sought to examine the efficiency of parental discourse strategies by looking closely into the relationship between parental response types and children's subsequent choice of language. Her study reported that explicit strategies (i.e., those explicitly requiring the child to use Japanese such as the use of instruction or correction) are more effective in eliciting the children's appropriate use of Japanese compared with implicit strategies (i.e., those which do not strongly require the child to produce Japanese such as repetition or moving on). Then, explicit strategies are likely to be associated with implicit management, i.e. child-directed activities supporting this management. Moreover, controlling the home language environment, selecting children's

peers, allowing or forbidding TV and computers are examples of explicit language management strategies (Spolsky 2009, p. 24). In situations where a family member dislikes the language use of another member, they might initiate organized language management by, for instance, consciously discouraging specific language use patterns or by giving explicit instructions (Spolsky, 2009, p. 16).

Fig.2. Model for categorising management-practice scenarios in family language policy

Child typically uses heritage language

Child typically uses majority language

A   C   E

PARENTAL   MANAGEMENT

HERITAGE LANGUAGE   LAISSEZ-FAIRE   MAJORITY LANGUAGE

B   D   F

Source: Revis (2017, p. 55)

According to the above model, parental management strategies and the children's language practices are grouped together into six different scenarios. Language management is set on an axis extending from explicit management to use the heritage language, via a laissez-faire policy to explicit management to use the majority language. In terms of practices, the two categories are the children's typical use of either to heritage language or the majority language. For example, Scenario D applies to families implementing a laissez-faire policy in which the children typically speak the majority language. Scenario A, on the other hand, represents what may be called a success scenario where caregivers apply management promoting the use of heritage language and the child typically follows this management.

Since the model aimed to describe management and practice scenarios of families within ethnic communities, it needed to provide a way to show how often a scenario was implemented within a community. Accordingly, it had to integrate quantitative information. To achieve this, luminosity of colours was used, with darker colours for a scenario revealing a higher incidence of this scenario in the community.

Unlike the explicit types of management and the implicit types that nevertheless intentionally favour the use of a particular language are what Curdt-Christiansen (2013) refers to as 'laissez-faire policies'. In her research on Singaporean Chinese families, Curdt-Christiansen (2013) ascribed the term laissez-faire attitude to mothers who did not interfere with their children's language choice while providing routine homework support, their children, as a result, predominantly spoke English, a potential hegemonic language in Singapore. To a certain extent, this can be generalized when linking it to the wider context, the majority of parents do not strategically plan a policy and in reality most families lack conscious language management because it is the families' embeddedness in "history and circumstances" (Caldas 2012, p.351) that predetermines language choice. That this unsystematic language use by caregivers may not lead the children to actively take up their minority language is supported by Curdt-Christiansen's (2016, p.11) observation, supporting arguments brought forth by Ó hIdearnáin (2013), that in her data "habitual linguistic practice […] failed to build a 'language reproduction' line". These studies show that explicit management is not always the rule as some language practices may, instead, arise out of an "unmanaged" situation (Spolsky, 2004, p. 8). Overall, descriptions of the ways in which families adopt these different management types produce diverse pictures of family language policies which:

> lie along a continuum ranging from the highly planned and orchestrated, to the invisible, laissez-faire practices of most families. Somewhere in between are found the pragmatically inspired language strategies employed by families in sociolinguistic contexts that confront them with real choices that have real consequences for their children. (Caldas 2012, p. 352).

4. CHILD AGENCY IN FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY

One of the recent shifts in the research agenda of FLP to date addresses children role in the language socialization of their parents - this focus has been initiated by Luyks (2005) who highlights "children's role in the language socialization of adult family members" (p. 1408). Language socialization studies consider children to be agents who actively act in the processes of their own socialization and who themselves socialize parents and other members into particular language practices (Duranti, Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011; Fogle & King, 2013; Gafaranga, 2010; Kyratzis, 2004; Luykx, 2005). To underline the direct influence of children on adults' linguistic development, Luykx (2005) used the metaphor of children as "family language brokers" (p.1409). In this context, Valdés has documented parents' and children's perceptions of such brokering activities and emphasized how children gain valuable skills through such undertakings and related mostly to the children's role in the introduction of new, socially-valued and dominant language into the immigrant or indigenous language speaking family's daily language behavior or life (Valdés 2003).

These may range from answering the phone in the home context for their virtually monolingual parents to transmitting medical diagnoses or carrying out financial business. In a similar vein, Lanza (2007) maintains that the child is not:

> Something that needs to be molded and guided by society in order to become a fully-fledged member", but should to be seen as "active and creative social agents who produce their own unique children's cultures, all the while contributing to the production of adult society" (p. 47).

As demonstrated by several ethnographic language studies such as (Kulick, 1992; Lanza, 1997; Okita, 2001; Cruz-Ferreira, 2006; Gafaranga, 2010/ 2011; Fogle, 2012), FLP is not necessarily a top-down process i.e., parent to child, but instead is a dialogical process and a constantly evolving co-construction, which is in turn shaped by the dynamic relationship of the family to the wider society (Smith- Christmas, 2016). Children's peer talk and peer culture can constitute a major factor in family language maintenance or shift (Gafaranga, 2010; Kulick, 1997). Children's peer groups provide a site for negotiations and exploitations of multiple languages, for example, in a study of children's language practices in Dominica, Paugh (2005) shows how young children can contribute to the maintenance of their heritage language particularly during time for out-of school peer play. The latter created possibilities for children to use Patwa (heritage language) for entertaining purposes, despite their parents pressure to use English (the dominant language). Thus, Children can reject parents' efforts and the family can become a site for conflictual understandings of what constitutes family members' appropriate language choices (Spolsky, 2008, p. 18).

5. CONCLUSION

Our review presents consistent and strong evidence across the studies to show the importance of FLP in explaining outcomes related child language development and minority language transmission. It examined a number of longitudinal and quantitative approaches by comparing different FLPs and their respective (long-term) outcomes in a larger section of multilingual families. When tracing the processes of child language development and minority language maintenance, researchers have shown that language ideology is often the underlying force in family language planning and decisions on what language to practice and what measures to employ in order to influence or control family. FLP is, thus, a key prerequisite for maintaining and preserving minority languages. We recommend future studies to further explore the relation between FLPs and their socio-emotional outcomes on children minority language acquisition, preferably in a large body of families with young children. Considering how family relations and wellbeing in a language contact situation might, in turn, influence FLP and language use and proficiency, an extension of research on

socio-emotional results seems essential and could help discover ways to counteract negative outcomes in multilingual families.

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