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“Our Kids are Going to Live their Future, not our Past”: The Family Language Policies of Three Transnational Families

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In recent decades, the field of family language policy (FLP) has expanded in breadth to reconceptualize the notion of family structure and the rich variety of motivations of transnational families. In an age spotlighted by the blurring of linguistic and cultural borders, the purpose of this study was to examine how transnational parents reconciled the potential compromise of the development of their children’s heritage language (HL) in exchange for increasing their children’s social capital, improving their English language skills, and becoming global citizens. Interviews were conducted with three sets of highly-educated, multilingual middle-class parents who lived abroad to work and to afford their children linguistic, cultural, and economic opportunities. Results indicate that as the parents realized these opportunities, the children’s relationship to the parents’ first language and culture deteriorated; however, the parents took these challenges in stride, not losing sight of the skills their children were developing. Further, owing to their positive outlook, the parents reported considering their children’s heritage language attrition as a temporary outcome that the children could ameliorate down the road, should they so choose.

Introduction

Several pivotal changes have occurred during the brief history of family language policy (FLP). While earlier studies examined which sociolinguistic environments were conducive to learning two or more languages in the family (Lanza, 2020) and attempted to establish causal links across language practices and learning outcomes (King, 2016), these studies largely confined themselves to traditional notions of family and family spaces. In more recent studies, research questions have centered less on language competence as a concrete entity or definable outcome and more as an active, negotiable process through which adults and children define themselves (King, 2016; Lanza, 2020). As Lanza (2020) notes, this shift entails moving away from “a mere focus on developing language competence to a focus on the interrelationship between family, language and post-modern society” (p. 186).

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One facet of post-modern society discussed in FLP research relates to transnational population shifts engendered by contemporary globalization (Lanza, 2021). A prevalent theme that arises for transnational families, or families who are frequently mobile, pertains to their efforts to balance the volatility of maintaining both the heritage language and the majority language. In a broader sense, the implication is that families struggle to manage the attendant stress of accommodating multiple languages and unwillingly compromise or even abandon their endeavors to further develop the children's heritage language (HL) (De Houwer, 2020; Sevinç, 2022).

Yet in the age of neoliberalism, which advocates for economic activity beyond national borders and promotes linguistic and cultural diversification as essential to economic success (Kubota, 2014), some families may see the accommodation of multiple languages as more of an opportunity than a source of tension. In particular, middle-class families who possess both the desire and the means to become participants of a neoliberal society may be able to assuage the struggle of accommodating multiple languages if their transnational experiences reap clear benefits for their children. To this end, the purpose of this study was to examine the lives of three transnational families who actively chose, with little consequential tension or concern, to promote their children's English language skills, become global citizens, and increase cultural capital, all at the expense of the development of the children's HL.

The Emergence and Development of Family Language Policy

Briefly stated, FLP examines explicit and overt language use within the home and among family members (King & Fogle, 2017). Research on FLP, specifically the relationship between language and family, is often categorized into three different realms: what family members think about language (beliefs or ideologies), what they do with language (practices), and what they try to do with language (efforts to effect language change) (Spolsky, 2004). Since its inception in the early 1900's, FLP research has shifted significantly. FLP initially examined potential links between bilingualism and cognitive development as well as differences between monolingual and bilingual development traits (King, 2016); historically, most language policy studies have also investigated language policy in institutional contexts (e.g., state, school, workplace) rather than family settings (King, et al., 2008). More recently, however, FLP studies have concentrated on parental language ideologies, familial interactions, and societal attitudes as well as a variety of family types in different contexts (King, 2016).

Yet even as much research on language policy has shifted to family dynamics, family motivations in conjunction with FLP have come under scrutiny. Hiratsuka and Pennycook (2020), for instance, have called for a critical examination of FLP, namely how each of the three aforementioned terms encumbers FLP itself. They argue that policy, which centers on decision-making and overt forms of language planning of multilingual families, is often at odds with language practice, which stems not from decision-making processes but rather from everyday social activities through which language patterns emerge. Modern FLP studies also embrace the notion of FLP as a malleable and dynamic entity, aligning with King and Fogle's (2017) description of FLP as "implicit, covert, unarticulated, fluid and negotiated moment by moment" (p. 9).

Although FLP does examine the language decision-making practices of translocated families, much of the focus has been on translocated families in general, rather than a consideration of the rich variety of family types and their motivations for migration (Hirsch & Lee, 2018). A more nuanced approach to FLP recognizes that the traditional sense of migration does not capture the complexity of factors that influence family relocation, particularly as views on globalization and migration continue to evolve (Lee, 2021). In short, as the world changes, so do the potential research trajectories of FLP (Higgins, 2018).

Family Language Policy and Middle-Class Parenting

Because FLP is influenced both by language practices within the family as well as forces beyond it, it is viewed as a dynamic system; FLP, therefore, often strives to examine holistically the bottom-up and top-down processes that impact family language practices (Higgins, 2018). Family itself can be seen as the locus of socialization and language transmission (Lee, 2021). Within the family, FLP pertains to the linguistic choices parents make as they raise their children (Schwartz, 2010). Specifically, FLP addresses "child language learning and use as functions of parental ideologies, decision-making and strategies concerning languages and literacies, as well as the broader social and cultural context of family life" (King & Fogle, 2013, p. 172).

A personal goal of parents is often to provide their children with additive bilingualism, or the opportunity to learn an additional language at a young age (King & Fogle, 2006). One factor that facilitates this goal is the belief that FLP is a vital element of good parenting (Lanza, 2020), particularly for parents who hold a positive attitude towards multilingualism in general and the languages being learned in particular (De Houwer, 1999; King et al., 2008). Another factor is the influential role that parents can play in the development of their children's bilingualism (Van Mensel, 2016). When children are raised in a bilingual context, the environmental factors that accompany such goals are amplified, as children have the opportunity to be regularly exposed to multiple languages that are necessary for socio-communicative purposes (De Houwer, 1999).

Generally speaking, an approach to parenting in which parents embrace opportunities to increase their children's cultural capital or potential for success has been referred to as concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003). In recent decades, a new dimension of parental anxiety has come to the fore, namely parents' investment in language planning in an effort to secure an educational advantage for their children (Piller & Gerber, 2021). Parents' language policies, particularly among well-educated middle-class parents, align with what Piller (2005) refers to as hyper-parenting, in which parents pursue success for their children via practices such as additive bilingualism (King & Fogle, 2006).

As multilingualism continues to play an increasingly important role on the world stage, families with the financial means often strive to introduce an additional language to their young children with the goal of increasing their social capital through bilingualism (King & Logan-Terry, 2008). Successful efforts towards additive bilingualism are seen as both a gift and an economic advantage for children (King & Fogle, 2006). In addition, these efforts not only afford children a wealth of experiences but foster lifelong skills that derive from those experiences (Moustaoui Srhir & Poveda, 2022).

Neoliberalism, the English Language, and Transnational Families

Loosely defined, neoliberalism is an economic ideology in which laissez-faire capitalism and an unregulated market ostensibly function to benefit freewill and the individual (Piller & Cho, 2013). Neoliberalism also pertains to the confluence of macro-level policy shifts, such as the ways in which capitalism benefits transnational corporations, and how an individual's production factors into those shifts (Flores, 2013).

As the world continues to globalize, strong ties between neoliberalism and the English language also continue to develop. Although countries themselves are not necessarily explicitly required to emphasize English, neoliberal ideology places countries (and their citizens) in the precarious position of emphasizing English in order for their populace and economy to become or remain competitive on the world stage (Price, 2014). English also relates to neoliberalism via the privileging of one language over another, as the prestige of English is commonly associated with academic and professional success (Jenks, 2020). Competence in the language is often seen as a conduit, even a requirement, to increased cultural and economic capital (Price, 2014). In short, neoliberalism functions as "a covert language policy pushing the global spread of English" (Piller & Cho, 2013, p. 23). The role of English on the world stage undoubtedly influences parents' desire to immerse their children's lives in English, given the potential economic and cultural incentives that English can provide (Higgins, 2018). The prevalence of neoliberal policy has had a discernible impact on parenting, namely how parents rear their children in conjunction with the development of children's skills and experiences that are perceived to benefit their children's social and economic future (Moustaoui Srhir & Poveda, 2022). In fact, neoliberalism, as it relates to the spread of English, views English less as a language in and of itself but rather how English, as a commodity, fits into the socio-economic order (Piller & Cho, 2013).

If neoliberalism is a machine, then English, as the primary language of global competitiveness, provides the linguistic oil to keep it running. In this regard, English permeates several domains of society, including education. Although countries around the world have adopted English as the preeminent foreign language to be taught in schools, it has become commonplace for families with means, i.e., highly-educated, middle-class families, to integrate themselves into the neoliberal economy by pursuing their careers abroad. Through a review of recent FLP studies, Hirsch and Lee (2018) found that research on transnational moves falls into two camps: educationally motivated transnational family moves and economically motivated transnational family moves. Many of these migrations were voluntary, engendered by a desire on the part of the parents to provide their children multilingual competence in a globalized neoliberal economy (see, for instance, Bae, 2014). By engaging in educational migration or white-collar relocation, these parents can afford their children the kind of linguistic and cultural capital deemed essential to long-term personal and professional growth (Bourdieu, 1986). One repercussion thereof is referred to as “flexible citizenship,” which characterizes the transnational lives of these individuals as well as the post-modern, post-national considerations they engender (Duff, 2015; Ong, 1999). Specifically, flexible citizenship evokes notions of flexible identities “for those who may have homes, assets, close relatives, and associates in many countries either simultaneously or successively, and who may move among them as exigencies or new opportunities require or permit” (Duff, 2015, p. 71).

Study Rationale

When it comes to transnational families, literature understandably tends to spotlight negative facets associated with transnational moves, such as family separation, frequent displacement, cultural adjustment, and challenges related to children’s education and language practices (Hirsch & Lee, 2018; Pérez Báez, 2013; Hua & Wei, 2016). Other consequences include the potential for children’s incomplete acquisition of their mother tongue (Bae, 2013) as well as substantial anxiety and insecurity due to cultural and linguistic adjustment (Bae, 2014). These hardships often culminate in the loss of “natural intergenerational transmission,” or a key factor of language loss within the family (Spolsky, 2012, p. 4).

Language loss also tends to take as its starting point the presumed presence of an unrivaled motivation to maintain the HL. A common occurrence is the children’s gradual loss of the HL, despite parents’ efforts and best intentions to maintain it (see, for instance, Surrain, 2018). Yet not all language loss occurs as families fight in vain against the takeover of a dominant language. For instance, in a study that included in-depth interviews of 63 parents who were first-generation Mexican immigrants who had moved to the United States, Pease-Alvarez (2003) found that some of the parents abandoned the use of Spanish as a means to help their children improve their English language skills, improve their social status, and essentially take steps towards becoming “American.”

Taking this context as a backdrop, this study centers on three highly-educated, middle-class transnational families who attempt to make their children global citizens via the expansion of their children’s linguistic and cultural repertoires. Yet, this study deviates from a focus on the emergence of the detrimental consequences of a transnational lifestyle, illuminating rather the positive attitudes of the parents, in particular their willingness to compromise the development of their children’s heritage language as a tradeoff for multilingual/English development and global citizenship. This study also heeds the call of conducting FLP research that has entered its fourth phase, one element of which is characterized by “globally dispersed, transnational, multilingual populations” (King, 2016, p. 728).

Method

Setting and Participants

This study took place in a medium-sized city in Norway, home to a large national university. The researcher recruited participants through both work and community connections (see Participant Profiles below). Given the nature of these connections, the researcher's role deserves scrutiny. At the time, the researcher and Aidin (one of the participants) worked in the same department and were employed by the same university; the researcher's older daughter, in second grade at the time, was in the same class at the same international school as the younger daughter of Matthias and Kaya (both participants) as well as the lone child (also a daughter) of Aake and Tuula (both participants). The researcher's multiple roles in the study thus included friend, colleague, and researcher. In essence, these roles interacted to inform the researcher's positionality in the study, namely his role as *observer as participant*. In such a role, participants control the level of information that is revealed; although the researcher is privy to a wide range of information, their membership role is peripheral (Merriam, 2009).

Procedures

Prior to the study interviews, participants (see Table 1, separate file) were sent a list of questions to consider for discussion. All interviews were conducted in English. Parental interviews are the primary method in examining parental ideologies (Smith-Christmas, 2016). Qualitative methods, and in particular semi-structured interviews, were adopted to facilitate what Schwartz (2010) considers "a sensitive method for understanding the processes taking place within the family" (p. 185). My aforementioned roles in the study also aligned with the distinction that Talmy (2010) makes between *interview as research instrument* and *research interview as social practice*. Generally speaking, the former designates the interview as a resource for collecting or extracting information, while the latter considers the interview a site for investigation in which participation is dynamic, meaning is negotiated, and knowledge is co-constructed. Another factor regarding the interviews pertained to the problematic notion of voice, namely that "voice suggests the existence of a unitary, coherent, and essential self that the participant 'gives voice to'" (Talmy, 2010, p. 138). In other words, participants' voices have the potential to be multifaceted, dynamic, and co-constructed over the course of the interviews.

All interviews were recorded via Zoom and then transcribed verbatim. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were adopted (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Open coding encompassed reading through data for broad themes. Axial coding entailed determining which of these themes potentially tied to the parents' motivations, beliefs, or practices regarding the transnational aspects of their lives. Finally, selective coding entailed a further categorization of these aspects, in particular aspects that highlighted a balance between what I perceived to be the parents' positive attitudes towards transnationalism in conjunction with the compromise of their children's heritage language.

Participant Profiles

Six participants, or three married couples, agreed to participate in the study. The brief profiles below provide basic information regarding the couples' demographics and backgrounds.

Aidin & Luiza

Aidin and Luiza are native Albanian speakers. Aidin left Kosovo in 2010 for the U.S., and Luiza joined him in 2011. Aidin did a PhD program in Educational Theory and Policy in the U.S. from 2011-2015, while Luiza did her MA in TESOL from 2013-2014. Aidin, upon graduation, worked for six months in the U.S. remotely for the World Bank. He then took a postdoctoral position at a university in Sweden, where the family lived from November 2016 - November 2018. Since then, Aidin has worked as an Associate Professor at a university in Norway. At the time the study was conducted, their daughter, Ava, was 6, and their son, Evan, was 4. Ava was born in 2014 in the U.S. She was in the Norwegian kindergarten system for 1.5 years, and since then has been a student in a Norwegian primary school. Evan was born in 2016 in the U.S. and is currently in the Norwegian kindergarten system. Both children are fluent in English and Norwegian, and are competent in Albanian. Both Albanian and English are spoken in the home, with occasional Norwegian since both children are in the Norwegian school system.

Matthias & Kaya

At the time of the interview, both Matthias and Kaya were 47. Kaya has an MA in teaching, with a focus in French and chemistry. Matthias completed his PhD in Mathematics in Germany, and in 2012 he and Kaya left Germany for Matthias to work in Copenhagen from 2012-2014. Since 2014, Matthias has worked as an Associate Professor at a university in Norway. During that time, however, the family lived in the U.S. for 8 months (2016), and Cambridge, England for 8 months (2018). Maria, the older of their two daughters, was 10 at the time of the study, while Johanna was 7. Maria was born in 2010 and left Germany when she was 2. She started attending a Danish kindergarten in 2013 and learned Danish for a full year. Johanna, 7, was born in 2013 in Copenhagen. Since 2014, both girls have attended the same international kindergarten and school in Norway, where English is both the language of play and medium of instruction. Both German and English are spoken at home.

Aake & Tuula

At the time of the interview, Aake and his wife Tuula were 43. Tuula has a 4-year associate degree in fashion design from a polytechnic institute in Finland. Aake received his PhD in Sociology in 2013 from a university in Finland. Their lone child, a daughter, aged 8, is named Marina. She was born in Finland in 2013 and left with her family in 2014, when Aake took a 6-month postdoctoral research position at Princeton University (USA). The family then moved to Scotland, where Aake worked as a research fellow for 2.5 years, followed by England for 1.5 years, where he was a postdoctoral research associate. While in Scotland, Marina attended a play group (age 2.5) and later a nursery (age 3), where she was surrounded by English. During this time, Aake and Tuula spoke to Marina mostly in Finnish, and she responded in Finnish. Once the family moved to England, however, Marina experienced a change of school systems, and began learning calculation and reading in English. Soon thereafter she began responding in English to her parents. The family arrived in Norway in 2019 for Aake to continue his research. For 1.5

years, Marina attended an international school. In 2021, the family moved to Oslo, where Marina began attending a Norwegian public school. Both Finnish and English are spoken at home.

Methodological Framework

Arguably the most recognized FLP framework is Spolsky's (2004) tripartite model, which conceptualizes how families use language in terms of language ideologies (beliefs about language), language practices (language use), and language management (planning of how language policy can be enacted and practiced). Yet more recent manifestations of FLP, particularly given the ever-changing notion of what "family" is and the contexts in which FLP takes place, look beyond language policy aspects relating to institutional structure and power, and beyond speakers as mere passive implementers of language policy. Rather, these more novel conceptions of FLP place front and center the agency of the actors, namely their efforts to appropriate and resist language policies in their effort to "conceive, interpret and implement" language policies on their own terms and to support their own agendas (Moustaoui Srhir, 2020, p. 108).

Given these conditions, namely the resistance to or appropriation of language policy as a means to support a particular agenda, several factors deserve mention. The participants in this study, for instance, despite their linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, exhibit other traits that are distinctly similar; these include high levels of education, both the ability and motivation to work abroad, and the desire and means to pursue a transnational, multicultural, and multilingual education and life for their children. In this regard, the education and skill set of the parents play a pivotal role: as the parents rely on their own multilingual skills and familiarity with life abroad, coupled with the purposeful exercising of their privilege to pursue a transnational lifestyle for their families, they better position themselves to negotiate potentially detrimental consequences of their decisions. The framework for this study thus aligns with Hirsch and Lee's (2018) proposed expansion to include transitory components of translocation such as "the intended permanency or impermanency of the moves as well as the intent of the move which are critical in understanding the way that families and individuals within them experience and approach language learning and language maintenance or loss" (pp. 891-892).

Findings

Despite the linguistic and cultural variety of the study's participants, the similarities of the participants must be foregrounded. Specifically, the participants are middle-class individuals who are largely highly-educated academics; these attributes have afforded them the opportunity not only to pursue transnational careers and lifestyles, but also to do so multiple times and in countries of their choice. In this section, the findings are organized based on several themes: the goal of developing multilingualism; the goal of becoming global citizens; the families' planning and flexibility; the consequences of transnationalism; and family relationships.

Goal: Development of Multilingualism

All the participants in this study reported that they considered the linguistic development of their children to be part and parcel of their transnational lives. Yet in everyday life, languages other than English often played peripheral roles. For Matthias and Kaya, the use of Norwegian was non-existent at home, as both Maria and Johanna attended an English-medium international school. The same situation applied to Marina, who attended the same international school. Although Aidin and Luiza's children attended Norwegian kindergarten and school, Norwegian factored minimally into their home life. The families' heritage languages figured more prominently into their home lives than Norwegian, but did not always have a commanding presence. Although Aake and Tuula always spoke Finnish to one another and largely to Marina, Marina responded in English. Similarly, while Matthias and Kaya considered German to be their home language, Maria and Johanna, particularly Johanna, often preferred to speak English at home. For Aidin and Luiza, Albanian was spoken at home, but often in passing, as Ava and Evan do not speak fluent Albanian.

Although other languages did not always figure significantly into the families' day-to-day lives, they did figure positively into the families' conceptions of transnationalism down the road. For example, Aidin and Luiza were initially against their children learning Norwegian because they feared a third language would burden them, but they later had a change of heart, as both their children are enrolled in Norwegian-medium education. Aake, similarly, was quick to note the value of English in his life, but also remarked that an arsenal of languages had paid dividends for him, Scandinavian languages in particular. When I asked Aake about the roles that English and Norwegian might play in Marina's future, he first spoke about Norwegian, noting that an advanced level would likely be necessary should she stay in Norway. Yet he also discussed the value of Norwegian beyond the country's borders; specifically, he talked about the similarity of Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish, and how the acquisition of one would aid her in communicating in all three. In short, the learning of Norwegian is not a means to an end; it is another bow in Marina's linguistic quiver, or what Aake referred to as "a good investment in her future."

Aidin and Luiza had also begun to help their children maintain their Albanian, as they would like to return to Kosovo for one year so the children can pick up the language and be close to family. They also want their children to maintain Albanian as a form of linguistic capital. As Aidin noted, "If they have the Albanian, Kosovo could be an opportunity destination. They would need the language for that, and then we want to give it to them." Matthias and Kaya also anticipate returning to Germany someday, and therefore give their daughters German homework. In principle, Aake and Tuula would consider returning to Britain, for which the continuous development of Marina's English would be a boon. Yet this mindset only applies to English; Tuula remarked that she hadn't given much thought to the development of Marina's Finnish, in part because they had moved around so much in recent years. If they were to return to Finland, she added, Marina would learn Finnish then.

Not surprisingly, English often took center stage in the development of the families' transnational lives. In Kosovo for example, it is common for families to read to their children in English and send them to English-language after-school tutoring programs. As Luiza noted, "In Kosovo, we are in that highly-educated group of people that lives in the capital and puts a lot of value into English because we know English would open all doors for you." Aidin seconded this opinion, stating aptly that "English is the ticket out of Kosovo." Kaya also spoke of the presence of English in their daughters' lives, noting that she and Matthias understood the benefits of exposing their children to English and the vital role it would play in their future. Kaya also mentioned that the family's transnational experiences were incredibly rewarding, but the focus of those experiences often centered on English. As she recounted, "It's really enriching to be able to speak two languages that well at that young age, and I really appreciate that it's English."

Participants also spoke of how a transnational lifestyle could help their children develop their English skills when the parents felt they themselves could be of little assistance. The most thematic example pertained to pronunciation, or the children's opportunity to "sound like a native." Aake explicitly stated that he did not mind that Marina's pronunciation was slightly incorrect, in part because her friends were Norwegian and she spent little time with native speakers, but he nonetheless possessed the ability to recognize it as such. Both Luiza and Aidin and Matthias and Kaya understood the "opportunities for nativeness" that transnationalism afforded their children. Luiza, for instance, alluded to pronunciation as she discussed their children's U.S. citizenship. "We are so happy our kids are American citizens, and we just wanted to build on that. So if they have that, at least they learn English from the start, and they don't sound…" Similarly, while Kaya and Matthias both declared that they tried to correct their children's mistakes - in both English and German - Matthias conceded that perhaps they shouldn't be the ones to correct their children's English pronunciation, as "our sounds are not good enough… we always have this German norm, this background sound, whenever we speak, and I'd rather the girls not get that too."

As a consequence, English could smother the potential influence of the development of other languages. One reason for this was the concern of moving again in the near future. For instance, when Matthias and Kaya moved to Norway in 2014, they enrolled Maria in an international kindergarten because they suspected a return to the U.S. in the near future. They also questioned why their children would need to learn Norwegian. Kaya put this aptly: "Putting in a third language, which internationally has no significance at all, is why we put it aside." In sum, although the prestige of English monopolized the role of language in the families' lives, multilingualism in a broader sense was hugely appreciated. Combined, these elements factored into the future economic positioning and opportunity for the children.

Goal: Global Citizens

A first distinction in the quest to become global citizens is the families' recognition that they are abroad by choice, which thus renders their transnational lifestyles unique, particularly since the families can move with relative ease to a variety of countries to pursue their goals. In attempting to raise their children as world citizens, Aidin asserted that his family's situation was different from that of a "typical" immigrant family: "I would say there's more fluidity in the sense that, well, our boundaries are open, the possibilities are different."

Open boundaries were not only a reality but an ambition. In fact, the families relied on the privilege of their voluntary transience to help develop their children's exposure to the greater world. Kaya and Matthias mentioned this explicitly, noting that by raising their children as multilingual world citizens, they would be able to travel and live with ease throughout much of the world. Matthias also alluded to the benefit of their daughters' cultivation of critical awareness of the world. As he stated:

> [Our children] don't have a fixed lens with which to perceive and describe the world, but they can somehow switch… there is something out there that is somehow independent of the language that you would use to think about or speak about it. I think that's one of the gains.

Another benefit of transnationalism in conjunction with becoming global citizens was the opportunity for the children to learn how to navigate with ease the passage from one culture or language to another. Kaya spoke of this as we discussed her family's travels to and from England and Germany: "[The girls] can dive into these worlds, and I think it empowers them to really be part of these two worlds that open up through language for them." Cultural or linguistic navigation could also occur within the same context. Because Aake and Tuula might remain in Norway for some time, they decided to enroll Marina in a Norwegian-medium school in Oslo rather than an international one. Yet because of the location of Marina's school – in metropolitan Oslo – it is already quite international. This reality affords Marina the opportunity to utilize her linguistic fluidity as she relies on English and other English-speaking students to improve her burgeoning Norwegian language skills.

The Secret Behind the Success: Planning and Flexibility

All three families suggested that planning was critical to the success of their transnational lives. On one hand, the planning could occur early on in the families' adventures. Aidin and Luiza had long since wanted "to give their children the gift of another language," and working abroad had enabled them to fulfill this goal. On the other, the planning occurred concomitantly with the consideration of future migrations. Matthias and Kaya favored English to Norwegian, in part because of the possibility that the family would return to the U.K. or the U.S. for a lengthy period. Similarly, because Aidin and Luiza would like to return to the U.S. in the long run, teaching their children English is thus, according to Aidin, a "forward-looking perspective" to help their children transition more smoothly should they return.

A flexible mindset on the part of the families has also been central to their transnationalism. Because the families were "in the moment" of their transnational lives, and their children were inundated with language-learning opportunities, the parents largely adopted a hands-off approach, one in which their children's language learning unfolded organically. For Aidin and Luiza, an almost playful attitude regarding language emerged. For instance, Aidin referred to their life abroad as engendered by a series of "coincidences" and "serendipitous moments," and whether their plans had failed or been successfully executed. "English became a language of the family, and we just kept playing along," he noted.

Although Matthias and Kaya didn't explicitly try to integrate English into their lives, they came to be very accepting of its commanding presence. As Kaya noted, she and Matthias simply "opened up and let it sneak into our everyday life." Matthias elaborated on this flexibility, explaining that "the entire situation doesn't feel problematic at all. I mean of course there are difficulties, but the children are really happy with it, and we are really happy with it, and we're trying to support them in all opportunities." Aake and Tuula also alluded to the connection between the family's linguistic flexibility imparted by their transnational lifestyles and its effect on Marina's language development. In short, they remarked that Marina's mother tongue was now English because she had experienced several international moves, but also because they, as her parents, had been accepting of Marina's English developing into a mother tongue and the gradual loss of her Finnish. Aake drew parallels between the family's language learning and the privilege of transnationalism. "We are in a luxury situation, an academic situation where you already use foreign language," he explained. "As a researcher, a large part of my working language is English. So it's these professionals who can move around, and then keep languages that all persons in the family share. It makes things a lot easier, I think."

Method: Actions, Reification of Goals

One of the more salient factors in furthering the children's language development and becoming world citizens, not surprisingly, was the families' presence abroad. Transnationalism, neoliberalism, and English as a lingua franca enabled parents to enroll and immerse their children in English-medium education. However, although living abroad set the tone for language development, more explicit efforts were facilitated by the parents, whose English language skills specifically, and foreign language learning skills and knowledge generally, were quite advanced.

To aid their children, all of the parents thus applied their education and language skills, which manifested in manifold ways. One common example was illustrated in the parents' ability to speak to their children in English, and to toggle easily between English and their mother tongue. For the six months his family was at Princeton University, Aake began speaking a bit of English to Marina because he wanted her to learn it. As Marina began to pick up more English during their time in Scotland (in a playgroup and nursery, around age 2.5), Aake began speaking increasingly more English to Marina because, as he noted, "I was interested, I guess I mean whether she knows the language or not."

When Ava and Evan were young, Luiza spoke mostly Albanian, but still spoke in English to her children on occasion. Aidin, however, spoke 90% English from the get go. Upon arriving in California, Kaya and Matthias gradually began teaching their older daughter, Johanna, English at home to make it possible for her to participate in conversations with neighbors and the greater community. Johanna, who was 3 when she lived in California, stayed home with Kaya, during which time Kaya taught her English.

The parents also reported facilitating their children's English language development by reading to them in English and exposing them to English-language media. While living in the US, Aidin and Luiza never read Albanian children's books to their children. Similarly, Aake and Tuula took no Finnish children's books with them when they moved abroad. These two sets of parents chose rather to read to their children in English, as English acquisition was the goal. As Aake recalls, "I remember when she was one year old, I was already trying to read English to her, so the direction was always I would rather want her to live learning English than keep on using Finnish."

A final noteworthy example of how the parents recounted aiding their children's language development extended beyond the typical realm of linguistic competence. Aidin and Luiza, for instance, both trained teachers, could tap into their pedagogical skills when educating their own children. These skills often applied to both languages. As Kaya asserted,

> Whenever we hear a mistake, no matter if it is English or German, we correct them right away and do this a million times until it really, until we 'Ah, they've got it now.' So we have to repeat some corrections over and over again, and it doesn't depend on the language. There are some mistakes in English where we clearly recognize the influence, and the other way around as well.

Matthias also drew on his advanced English skills; since his work language as a mathematics professor is English, he used English at home when Maria and Johanna did math homework. He explained, "We know they would be thinking about these things in English, and maybe sometimes also I would think about these things in English, and it's somehow more convenient to do that."

Consequences of Transnationalism

Not surprisingly, the benefits resulting from the families' transnational lives were accompanied by consequences, most notably the compromise of the development of their children's heritage language. Yet the parents took these consequences in stride, without ceremony; in short, they regarded these consequences almost as foregone conclusions of their international journeys.

The parents warranted their decisions quite candidly: there was an advantageous trade off, and the compromise of the children's HL development, though unintentional, simply came with the territory of a life abroad in which the parents strove to develop their children's linguistic skills and mold them into world citizens. Kaya summarized this judiciously: "It was never a question to replace our native language… this is just how it unfolded by itself, and the circumstances we lived in." Tuula, although initially somewhat despondent about Marina's gradual loss of Finnish, seemed to accept her family's circumstances as Kaya did, eventually deciding that "there's really no point of stressing about it." Aake was even lighthearted about their circumstances, noting that he and Tuula never really tried to get Marina to speak Finnish, only "as a little bit of a joke," and that he had never given much thought to the idea of Marina gradually losing her Finnish. When I asked Aidin and Luiza whether they might have spoken more Albanian at home had there been a large Albanian community where they lived, Luiza answered, "Probably not. From the beginning, we put a lot of value in English, and we had that as a goal."

However, the parents' compromise is too complex to be considered simply as a tradeoff, because the parents also reported viewing this compromise as something that can be negotiated by their children down the road. Put another way, just as the children are now becoming active members of new languages and cultures by living abroad, they can likewise return "home" when they are older and experience a similar negotiation process of learning/relearning the language of their roots. Although Luiza remarked it would bother her if her children completely lost their Albanian, she also conceded that fluency in Albanian was not their goal. "We would be happy if they kept it to some degree," she said. "We don't want them to be professional and advanced. We just want them to be able to communicate and to learn about the families, and a little bit about the history, to know where their parents come from." Keeping this linguistic door open, in other words, would maximize their children's opportunities in the future.

Aake also looked at Marina's linguistic development as a malleable process, one in which Marina's future would be contingent upon the options she would have at her disposal. "Marina is within that language window," Aake said, adding, "so if she ever moves back to Finland, she will still learn it." Even in the long run, Aake expressed no concern regarding Marina's future, as most everyone in Finland can speak English. If Marina returned one day to Finland and struggled with the language, "she would kind of be in the same situation as some of the immigrants in Finland," Aake joked.

Family Relationships

Family relationships back home were also affected as the families pursued transnational lives. The most salient tensions pertained to the children's ability to communicate in their HL, as well as the perception of some family members back home that a transnational lifestyle would have a ruinous effect on their future lives. Tuula mentioned that her father and grandparents don't really speak English, so they find it a bit sad that they can't communicate, especially the grandmother. Similarly, Matthias's mother becomes agitated and feels left out when Johanna and Maria speak only English. Matthias's sister also disapproves, feeling that Matthias and Kaya have not provided their girls with any roots or a stable life, and they will therefore struggle to succeed in life. Luiza commented that most of her family's reactions are "kind of in the middle," but most of the criticism comes from the parents. "They don't really have this international experience and they cannot think of a different way of living than the way that they have lived. So for them, a person who doesn't speak Albanian is not a complete person," Aidin explained. "Somehow they will just get lost in the world."

Yet not all family members were critical of the family decisions, and several benefits emanated from their choices as well. Tuula's family, particularly members of older generations, are accepting of Aake and Tuula's lifestyle despite their struggles to communicate with Marina. As well, both grandmothers of Johanna and Maria are, according to Kaya, supportive of their "internationally mobile life." Aidin also mentioned that their families in Kosovo respect their decisions.

The families' transnational lives have also opened up new avenues of communication. Because of the popularity of English in Kosovo, families with the financial means pay for English lessons for their children or send them to international schools. Consequently, when Aidin and Luiza visit Kosovo, the younger generation is eager to practice their English with Ava and Evan. During visits to Finland, Aake mentioned that age factors into communication efforts across languages. Most of the younger generation speak English, which eases any communication barriers for Marina. Further, Marina's cousins often speak to Marina in Finnish and she responds in English, which reflects the household linguistic practice that Marina has experienced with her parents for years.

Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the motivations of three transnational families' efforts to provide their children with ample opportunity to become multilingual, increase their cultural capital, and become global citizens. What resulted embodies a paradox: despite the parents' high levels of education, multilingual skills, and transnational experience, it was exactly these pursuits for their children that facilitated the deterioration of their children's heritage language. The privilege of cultural and linguistic capital thus has the potential to hinder children's heritage language development as families' visions of education and achievement diverge from clear-cut language skills or competencies and begin to shift towards abstract notions of potential for success.

These findings are a telling example of the rapidly changing nature of the field. Neoliberal policy is a particularly relevant factor in this regard, given its advocacy for economic activity on the international stage, as well as its promotion of linguistic and cultural diversification as keys to economic success (Kubota, 2014). Neoliberalism undoubtedly factors into the discernible shift away from a focus on the development of language competence and towards the connections between family, language, and post-modern society (Lanza, 2020). The findings also spotlight the dynamic and shifting role of language within the family, such as the role of language at home, which is constantly redefined through family language actions and practices (Moustaoui Srhir & Poveda, 2022) as well as the role of language as resource, particularly in "contexts of transmigration, social media and technology saturation, and hypermobility" (King & Lanza, 2019, p. 718). A final connection of these findings relates to heritage language maintenance; as Hiratsuka and Pennycook (2020) note, families may pay less attention to HL maintenance or developing language competence "but rather to the sustenance of translingual family life as an embodied experience" (Hiratsuka & Pennycook, 2020, pp. 1-2).

The parents of transnational families in this study, in their pursuit of opportunities that they themselves may not have had, remarked that they still longed for their children to maintain a strong connection to their language and culture. Yet one consequence of a transnational existence is a wide range of accompanying stresses, particularly in conjunction with children's HL attrition or HL incomplete acquisition (Bae, 2013). To this end, two points of departure from previous studies illuminate the findings of this study. First, the participants reported that they were willing to accept a compromised development of their children's HL in return for English language or multilingual development and world citizenship; and second, the realization of this compromise did not necessarily create tension, either with nuclear or extended family. In brief, even as it became clear that the children's development of their HL would be compromised, the parents remarked that they found minimal liability in their decisions and had a positive outlook for their children both in the moment and down the road.

De Houwer (2020) notes that parents often feel upset or ashamed when their children do not speak the HL; this phenomenon is often referred to as conflictive bilingualism. At the opposite end of the spectrum is harmonious bilingual development, which occurs "when families with young children in a language contact setting do not generally experience any problems because of that bilingual situation, or have a positive subjective experience with bilingualism" (De Houwer, 2020, p. 63). For the participants in this study, the navigation of multiple languages was a harmonious affair. Though challenges did arise, the parents considered them integral components of a transnational existence.

What stands out in this regard is an additional layer of harmonious bilingual development; specifically, while the families did indeed have a positive experience with bilingualism, part of that positive experience allegedly included a gradual decline in the children's development of the HL. Yet this circumstance was reported to cause little to no stress, as the larger agenda of their children becoming world citizens and developing multilingualism (in particular, English-language competence) was coming to fruition, and any decline of the children's HL was simply viewed as a predicament that could be addressed in due time. Relatedly, previous studies have reported on the socio-emotional outcomes of FLP (Hollebeke, et al., 2020). In particular, homes in which the HL is maintained or its development is fostered may, for instance, help to form stronger emotional connections to the heritage language and culture (Kopeliovich, 2010) or improve family cohesion (Tannenbaum & Berkovich, 2005). While the participants in this study reported experiencing positive socio-emotional outcomes, these outcomes emerged not because of efforts to maintain the HL, but despite the absence or limited use of the HL.

One repercussion of children's HL compromise or loss is backlash from other family members. For instance, family members may consider it bad parenting if the heritage language does not develop before, or in tandem with, the dominant language (King & Fogle, 2006). This was definitely the case for this study's participants, some of whose family members expressed disapproval or sadness at the children's limited ability to speak the heritage language to family members back "home." Several studies have addressed this dilemma; for instance, Guardado and

Becker (2014) found that helping children maintain relationships with family in their native land served as motivation for the children to embrace their parents' efforts at HL maintenance and development.

Yet the participants in this study seemed largely able to circumvent such an impasse, as several family members back home also embraced the participants' decisions to pursue a transnational existence. In fact, family members also benefited directly at times from this transnational existence; the younger generation, for instance, had genuine opportunities, often out of necessity, to practice their English. In short, the linguistic tension that often accompanies family gatherings was reportedly assuaged not by transnational children exerting themselves to speak the heritage language, but by other family members trying to speak English in order to accommodate the children.

The participants in this study desired to push beyond the idea of belonging to any one culture or country; they sought membership within the more transcendental concept of global citizenship. One consequence in accomplishing this goal occurred as the parents knowingly compromised the children's HL. In general, the motivations of the transnational families in this study seemed to be led by a modern vision of multilingualism and world citizenship. As Hua and Wei (2016) note, "Rather than looking back in a nostalgic effort of recovering or maintaining their identity, [families] discover or construct notions of who they are and where and what home is by essentially looking forward" (p. 657). For the participants in this study, the essence of "looking forward," particularly in their transnational quests, necessitates accepting change and the blurring of linguistic and cultural lines.

Several limitations of this study deserve mention. One limitation pertains to the children of the participants in this study, who were not interviewed. On multiple occasions the parents alluded to the considerable sway their children held over the language choices within the family (such as their exercising of control over how they used the languages they were exposed to), a phenomenon supported by the potential of children to exercise their agency via the influence, reproduction, or shifting of established cultural and linguistic practices (Moustaoui Srhir & Poveda, 2020). In this regard, a more prominent role of the participants' children would likely provide more detail regarding the children's experiences. Further, the participants in this study may not have been as forthright or detailed in their responses due to the nature of the study, namely the study's one-time interviews, as participants are more likely to speak fully and frankly over time (Glesne, 2011). Shifting dynamics of family language policy must also be taken into consideration. Finally, the participants in this study were middle-class professionals working in higher education at the same university in Norway, and also represented few heritages; these participant characteristics thus limit the generalizability of the findings of this study.

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