Fjöltyngdar fjölskyldur og skólastarf

Multilingualism in families and schools

Sept. 21st, 2023
Reykjavik

University of Iceland

ΕΥΡΩΠΗ

''Research on family language policies: Evidence from the Greek context''

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Outline of the presentation

➤Family Language Policy: basic aspects

➤Discussion on family language policies drawing from research on transnational families in Greece (intermarried couples, Albanian immigrants)

The emergence of *Family Language Policy* as a field of study

❑New developments in sociolinguistic thought →

new interdisciplinary field: **Family Language Policy**.

❑Draws upon previously established fields such as **language policy, bilingual child acquisition, language socialization** and **language maintenance and shift** (King, 2016; Lanza & Lomeu Gomes, 2020).

The family becomes the centre of research: how individual families negotiate the complex issues surrounding bilingual/ multilingual language acquisition and use among their members.

Some definitions of FLP

FLP defined as:

''explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home among family members'' (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008:907)

''a deliberate attempt at practicing a particular language use pattern and particular literacy practices within home domains and among family members'' (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009: 352)

A frame for examining...

parental ideologies, reflecting broader societal attitudes and ideologies about both languages

child-caretaker interactions

Child language development

''What beliefs, practices and conditions lead to what child language outcomes?''

The importance of studying family language policies

❑Exponential increase in the number of studies on FLP, number of articles, collective volumes, conferences, etc.

''[…] they shape children's developmental trajectories, connect in significant ways with children's formal school success, and collectively determine the maintenance and future status of minority languages." (King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008:907)

Recent developments (Curdt-Christiansen, 2020; King 2016; Lanza & Lomeu Gomes, 2020) (1/2)

Early approaches to FLP attempted to:

❖ examine what types of practice were best for language transmission outcomes and

❖ draw clear causal links across ideologies, practices and outcomes.

More recent lines of FLP scholarship reframed key questions based on a new conceptualization of 'family'

families are *dynamic systems in which roles and identities are shaped and enacted through language*

Recent developments in FLP (2/2)

Researchers working in this paradigm stress the need

- to include a **more diverse range of family types, languages, and contexts**

- to focus on **globally dispersed, transnational, multilingual** populations

❖ Families can consist of same-sex parents, of a single parent living with one or more children, of families with adopted children, etc.

❖ Transnational contexts increasingly complex in terms of the couples' cultural origins and languages →**Interest in trilingual and multilingual children**

(King, 2016; Lanza & Lomeu Gomes, 2020)

Spolsky 's tripartite model of FLP (2004, 2009, 2012)

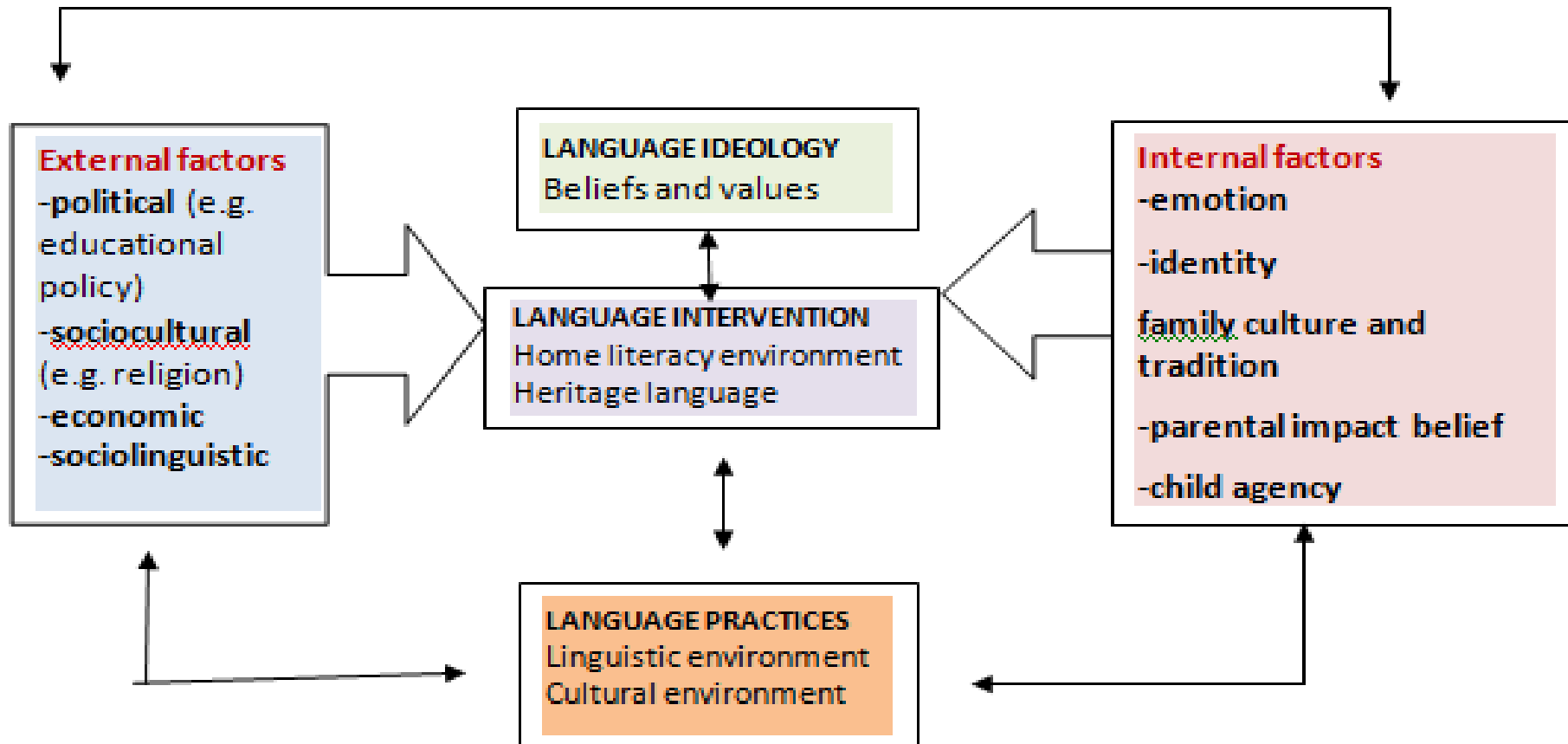| Language practices	Language ideologies	Language management
• *'habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up* [a group's] *linguistic repertoire'* • parents' and children's discourse choices	• *'a set of beliefs about language and language use'* • shaped under the influence of education and the public linguistic space	• *'any specific effort to modify or influence language behaviour'* • The interventional measures used to maintain and develop a particular language

Curdt-Christiansen (2009, 2018)

External factors
-political (e.g. educational policy)
-sociocultural (e.g. religion)
-economic
-sociolinguistic

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY
Beliefs and values

LANGUAGE INTERVENTION
Home literacy environment
Heritage language

Internal factors
-emotion
-identity
family culture and tradition
-parental impact belief
-child agency

LANGUAGE PRACTICES
Linguistic environment
Cultural environment

The Greek context: ethnolinguistic diversity and education

The Greek context: ethnolinguistic diversity and education (1/2)

❑ Greek: official language of the Hellenic Republic.

❑ No ethnic or linguistic minorities are recognized (only the *religious* minority of Muslims in Western Thrace)

❑ Mass immigration since the early 90s: mainly from Albania and the Balkans, also from countries of the former Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent from the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

❑ After the 2009 economic crisis, large numbers of immigrants left the country

→ An important decrease in the numbers and percentages of immigrant-origin children in Greek schools (nowadays about 3% of the total student population).

The Greek context: ethnolinguistic diversity and education (2/2)

❑The Greek educational system: ***ethnocentrism and conformity to the dominant language and religion*** (Frangoudaki & Dragonas, 1997)

❑ Large parts of the Greek society (teachers included) believe in:

❖the superiority of the Greek language and culture and

❖the importance of defending the Christian Orthodox religion against the Islamic danger (cf. reactions to refugees from Muslim countries)

Educational measures and practices regarding immigrant children

❑Educational provisions for these children: *Reception classes* where newcomers are taught Greek as L2 for a few hours per week.

❑**The students' languages and cultures are often 'silenced'** in mainstream schools – emphasis on learning Greek and adapting to the Greek culture (Chatzidaki, 2012; Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2011; Gkaintartzi, Chatzidaki, & Tsokalidou, 2014; Gkaintartzi, Kiliari & Tsokalidou, 2015).

❑ Not uncommon (especially in the past) for teachers to **advise immigrant parents to use only Greek at home** in order not to 'confuse' the child and help him/her learn the majority language (Gogonas, 2009; Mitakidou & Daniilidou, 2007; Sorkos & Magos, 2020; Skourtou 2002).

*«Albanian pupils use exclusively Albanian at home, and **many of the children face problems with the Greek language because they don't speak Greek at home''***
(School principal, Thessaloniki, 2012)

*'**Unfortunately, students seem to use it** [their ethnic language].''* (School Principal, Thessaloniki, 2012)

*''(I told them that) He should pay more attention to spelling. I told them that his older sister could help him […] she is very good and she can help him. **I also told them to speak Greek at home as much as they can, because this will help him a lot. The mother said 'I can't, I don't know'. I told the little one to tell her mum that she should try and learn some Greek. <u>Since they chose to be here, [she should do] what she can for the children's sake</u>**. She seemed to be OK with that.''* (Teacher speaking about a Chinese student, Sorkos & Magos, 2020)

Albanian immigrant families in Greece

❑Albanian immigrants (400,000-500,000 in 2011 census) - Albanian-origin children were more than 75% of foreign nationality students in the early 2000s

❑Initially faced with extreme prejudice and hostility, gradually managed to integrate successfully in economic and educational terms.

❑However, the 'stigma' attached to their nationality in the first years seems to have influenced their FLP-→

❑*Language shift among second-generation speakers* (Albanian-origin children and youth demonstrate **higher competence in Greek** in comparison to Albanian; the **development of literacy skills** and the systematic **study of the language are quite rare**)

Language practices

❑The ethnic language is used *to a **certain extent*** in the family alongside Greek.

❑Younger speakers **prefer speaking Greek with all interlocutors.**

❑Parents usually **accommodate to their child's preference/language dominance.**

❑ **The Kindergarten: a turning-point:** parents change their language practices when children start ''bringing the Greek language home'' and act as 'agents of change' (Spolsky, 2004)

❑ Often parents and children try to **avoid using their language in public.**

(Chatzidaki, 2005; Chatzidaki & Xenikaki, 2012; Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Gkaintartzi et al., 2014; Gogonas, 2009; Gogonas & Michail, 2015; Maligkoudi, 2010, etc)

Language management

❑A minority of families take **concrete measures** to ensure the development of biliteracy and further development of the language:

❖ story-telling or shared book reading,

❖teaching the child literacy skills and providing reading material

❖ensuring s/he takes Heritage Language Classes

❖ frequent trips to Albania and contact with older relatives,

❖use of the Albanian language for entertainment and social media to connect with peers and relatives (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Mattheoudakis, Chatzidaki, & Maligkoudi, 2017; Gkaintartzi et al. 2014).

Language ideologies (1/2)

❑Parents and children acknowledge the **low prestige attached to the Albanian language** in Greece (avoidance strategies, abandonment of the language)

❑ Diverse positions held by parents:

(a) **indifferent**

(b) *positive* **towards heritage language maintenance** (important for maintaining ties with relatives or as a marker of ethnic identity)

(c) ***committed* to heritage language maintenance** (additional reasons: cognitive benefits of bilingualism, instrumental value of knowing other languages)

(Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Gkaintartzi et al., 2014; Kyriazis & Chatzidaki, 2005).

Language ideologies (2/2)

❑Parents acknowledge the **paramount importance of Greek** for their children (both the major language of socialization, and for its instrumental value)

❑**Expectations of academic success and social mobility often prevail over their desire to maintain their cultural heritage** and lead them to take no systematic action.

❑In other words, **they adopt the dominant ideology**: *emphasis should be given to Greek, Albanian is redundant if you stay in Greece*

❑A minority **challenge the hegemonic discourse** and **argue for the emotional, cognitive and academic benefits** of bilingualism and biliteracy.

(Gogonas, 2009; Matheoudakis et al., 2017).

FLP and mixed marriages; a very different story (1/3)

Small but growing number of studies on families from mixed marriages, e.g. between a Greek and a partner from:

-English-speaking countries (Mattheoudakis & Maligkoudi, 2016)
-Italy (Maligkoudi, 2018)
- Germany, Denmark, Austria (Michelakaki & Fonia, 2016)
- the Czech Republic (Gogonas & Maligkoudi, 2020).

FLP and mixed marriages; a very different story (2/3)

- Usually mothers with a high socioeconomic and educational background
- Multilingual , aware of the benefits of bilingualism
- hold strong *parental impact beliefs ('bilingual upbringing as ''good mothering'', offering an additional asset to their children)*
- adopt a variety of language management practices

(speaking the L1 with their L1 since birth, providing a home environment rich in stimuli in this language, exposing the child to literacy-related activities, teaching him/her their L1 themselves or making sure s/he takes organized language courses in the form of community schools)

FLP and mixed marriages; a very different story (3/3)

❑In most cases, these practices go unchallenged by their husband's family and social environment.

❑**Their children, as Greek nationals, are not perceived by the school authorities or the teachers as 'bilingual' in the same sense as immigrant-background students -→** no concern about the potentially harmful effect of the use of another language at home, no advice on avoiding speaking the 'other' language.

❑ **Successful cases of bilingual and bicultural upbringing** which concur with scientific literature (e.g. Bylund & Diaz, 2012; Mattheoudakis & Maligkoudi, 2016; Nguyen, Shin & Krashen, 2001; Schwartz, 2008; Shibata, 2004 etc.)

To sum up,

❑ **Transnational parents'** high socio-economic status as well as the prestige attached to their nationality and language usually allows them to challenge hegemonic societal and educational discourses which promote monolingualism (or bilingualism in Greek and English) and cultural assimilation.

❖ **Immigrant parents** whose nationality and language are far less prestigious often embace the dominant discourse on which languages are useful and have a legitimate presence at school.

❖ Despite their attachment to their heritage language, they often perceive a dilemma between heritage language maintenance and social mobility → sacrifice the former to achieve the latter.

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