# ENDANGERED LANGUAGES IN THE HOME: THE ROLE OF FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICIES IN THE REVITALISATION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

*Arianna Berardi-Wiltshire[1]*

## Abstract

Developed as the result of two invited lectures as part of a postgraduate course in Language Revitalisation at UFRJ (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro), the current article explores the significance of the home domain for the maintenance and revitalisation of minority languages, specifically focusing on the role played by family language policies in supporting the process of intergenerational transmission of language. Beginning with a general overview of recent theoretical developments in the language planning and policy (LPP) field, the article highlights some of the opportunities that emerging conceptual trends can offer for indigenous language revitalisation inquiry and practice. Through a discussion of theory and research associated with a Family Language Policy (FLP) framework, we will highlight some of advantages of this approach in exploring both micro and macro language management processes (and the complex relationships between them) as determining factors for language maintenance and shift. The article concludes with an overview of the benefits of applying the FLP framework to studies of indigenous language contexts as an important a step towards research that might better inform effective revitalisation measures to assist in the maintenance of endangered languages.

Key-words: language policies; family language policy; language maintenance and revitalization.

## Resumo

Desenvolvido como resultado de duas palestras ministradas como parte de um curso de pós-graduação em Revitalização da Língua na UFRJ, o presente artigo explora a importância do domínio doméstico para a manutenção e revitalização das línguas minoritárias, focalizando especificamente no papel desempenhado pelas políticas de uso linguístico no âmbito familiar, que oferecem apoio ao

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1        Massey University

processo de transmissão intergeracional da linguagem. Começando com uma visão geral dos recentes desenvolvimentos teóricos no campo do planejamento e da política de linguagem (LPP), o artigo destaca algumas das oportunidades que essas tendências conceituais emergentes podem oferecer para a pesquisa e para a prática de revitalização de línguas indígenas. Através de uma discussão sobre teoria e pesquisa associada a uma quadro teórico de Política de uso linguístico familiar (PULF), iremos destacar algumas das vantagens dessa abordagem ao explorar os micro e macro processos de gerenciamento linguístico (e as complexas relações entre eles) como fatores determinantes para a manutenção da linguagem e para a mudança. O artigo conclui com uma visão geral dos benefícios da aplicação do quadro de referência PULF para os estudos em contextos de uso de línguas indígenas, como um passo importante para a pesquisa dos fatores que poderiam oferecer  melhor suporte para o desenvolvimento de medidas de revitalização eficazes para ajudar na manutenção de línguas ameaçadas.

Palavras-chave: Políticas linguísticas; Política de uso linguístico familiar; Preservação e revitalização de línguas.

## 1. Introduction

It is now a well-known fact that rates of language extinction have risen dramatically over the last century and that language death is currently occurring with disconcerting frequency. Some of today's top authorities on language believe that over 95% of the world's languages are spoken by only 4% of the population, and that 60 to 90% of the 6,900 languages currently spoken in the world are likely disappear within the next one hundred years (Bernard, 1996; Crystal, 1997, 2000; Dixon, 1997; Krauss, 1998). As overall predictions for the ecology of the world's languages worsen, research on endangered languages has undergone a marked increase, prompting the emergence of language revitalisation as a distinctive area of study and practice. The multidisciplinary nature of language revitalisation, which draws from ideas from linguistics, cognition, anthropology, biodiversity, political activism and many other disciplines, makes it somewhat difficult to classify it as a field of enquiry, however since all revitalisation projects involve some degree of language planning, language revitalisation is often viewed as associated with—if not an actual subfield of—language planning and language policy (henceforth LPP), which in turn can be defined as the portion of applied linguistics concerned with planning and regulations aimed at influencing aspects of language and language use within specific populations.

Because of its traditional focus on large-scale attempts to manage language often on a national scale, LPP is commonly perceived to concern itself with the type of planning which is done centrally and with language policies that are imposed on societies by governments and national institutions through a linear, top-down process. It is thus not surprising to find that also a large portion of the available literature on language revitalisation deals with contexts and issues relating to the effects of official language policy (or lack thereof) and is particularly concerned with the position of indigenous languages in education (for reviews of relevant literature see Romaine, 2007; Grenoble, 2006; Wilhelm, 2013). That said, especially in recent years, many authors have pointed out that language planning and policies do take place at different levels of society, from the national through governmental or regional regulations,

to the community and familial contexts (Blommaert, 2006; Canagarajah, 2006; Spolsky 2004; 2009; 2012) and as a result LPP research has begun to expand its scope from large-scale, top-down approaches towards investigations of micro-level language policy and management. This shift in perspective, which draws on ecological theories of language and ethnographic approaches to language studies, has opened the way for inquiries into the complex relationships between language planning and policy at the macro and micro level, and for more detailed explorations of the variety factors, contexts, processes and agencies involved in the effectiveness of language revitalisation efforts.

Developed as the result of two invited lectures as part of a postgraduate course in Language Revitalisation at UFRJ (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) the current article begins with a general overview of recent theoretical developments in the field of LPP, which, while not exhaustive in its review of literature in any specific area or discipline, aims to highlight some of the opportunities that emerging conceptual trends within the field can offer for language revitalisation inquiry and practice. In particular, through a discussion of theory and research associated with Family Language Policy as a new area of LPP research, the following sections will delve into the role of the home domain as a key site for intergenerational language transmission, ultimately illustrating some of the ways in which a Family Language Policy approach on indigenous and endangered language research can enhance our understanding of micro-level language management processes, potentially assisting researchers and planners in the development and implementation of language revitalisation measures across a wide range of contexts.

## 2. Changing perspectives on language planning and policy

While current state-of-the-art overviews of the field tend to agree that LPP is a wide ranging area of inquiry that encompasses an extensive range of theoretical frameworks and areas of linguistic and sociolinguistics concerns (Ricento, 2000; 2006), it is clear that, particularly over the last three decades, the field as a whole has gradually shifted in scope to include conceptualisations of LPP that attempt to account for these as complex phenomena that are not limited to overt governmental policies, but that may take unofficial or covert forms and that may occur within and across all layers of society, from the 'macro' level of national policies, to the 'micro' level of language management by small groups and by individuals.

Older students of sociolinguistics will of course also be familiar with more conventional LPP frameworks, which tended to view language LPP as large-scale processes normally comprising of elements of corpus and status planning (Haugen, 1966; Nahir, 1984). This traditional view of LPP as official, top-down processes, which despite the already mentioned paradigm shift continues to endure in a great part of LPP literature, is none other than a by-product of the developmental history of the field, which since its incipience in the post WWII decades, has evolved out of its original positivistic and pragmatic approaches—mostly aimed at addressing the language planning needs of the 'new nations' of the 1960s and 70s—towards a variety of definitions, conceptual frameworks and methodologies encompassing critical, post-modern and multidisciplinary approaches (Ricento, 2006;

Hornberger, 2006).

In an age marked by pervasive globalising processes and massive migratory movements across the globe, one issue that is receiving increasing attention among linguists is the rising incidence of endangerment and disappearance of the world's indigenous languages. Language revitalisation as an emerging subfield of linguistics is a "world-wide, grassroots and interdisciplinary movement" (Hermes, 2012, p. 131) which is closely associated with language policy and planning, and which is specifically concerned with investigating cases of linguistic engenderment in an attempt to halt or reverse the extinction of languages. Since the dynamics involved in the maintenance and loss of a languages tend to depend on processes of a social nature, much like broader LPP, language revitalisation is theoretically grounded in sociolinguistics, with much of its rapidly growing body of literature exploring the dynamics of specific linguistic, often stressing the role that power dynamics and language ideologies play in the outcomes of language contact and the ways in which specific language policies can contribute to the demise or maintenance of minority languages.

The prevalent view among researchers involved with such studies, and one which is gaining momentum as a significant perspective across the LPP field (Ricento, 2006; Hornberger, 2006, Shohamy, 2006) is that of languages as embedded within complex and dynamic sets of historical, social, cultural and ideological circumstances that are specific to the contexts in which they exist. Such view, which in its essence constitutes the core of an ecological approach to language, stresses the link between a language and its environment using the metaphor of a multi-layered ecosystem to capture the complex and fluid nature of linguistic contexts. Within the broader field of LPP, the main implication of adopting an ecological approach is the need to extend the traditional definition of language policy to include much more than just official policy alone, as the language choices and practices within communities of speakers are never the direct result of a linear top-down process, but instead emerge from the complex interaction of agents, contexts, processes, contestations and negotiations of official policy directives, and are often mediated by the existence of covert, micro-level policies and ideologies which can be just as powerful in influencing the linguistic behaviour of individuals and groups. The principle at the root of this perspective is simple: it is only by taking in consideration the whole ecological system within which a language is nestled that one can hope to understand the language policies and the choices, individual and collective, that regulate its form and uses. With regard to language revitalisation, this also means that language endangerment and any eventual attempts at revitalisation can neither be explained nor justified without reference to the local linguistic, social, cultural and historical context within which they exist. It's not a coincidence that the most influential revitalisation framework to date, Fishman's (2001) Reversing Language Shift (RLS) poses a consideration of the local context at the core of any revitalisation attempt. The model, which includes the Graded Intergenerational Disruption scale, describes how languages become endangered and proposes applications and strategies that are general enough to be of use in the widest possible range of world languages, while still allowing for specific modifications according to each language's specific context.

Also firmly rooted in an ecological perspective, and also concerned with understanding the

dynamics by which languages position themselves within specific contexts, Bernard Spolsky's (2007) language management framework focuses on language policy in the widest possible meaning of the term proposing that "language policy is all about choices" and that a theory of language policy should aim to account for "the choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns recognised by the speech communities of which they are part" (p. 1). To achieve this, this framework proposes three main components of the language policy of a speech community, namely 1. the community's language *practices*, defined as the habitual patterns of variety selection that constitute a community's linguistic repertoire, 2. the *ideologies* about language and language use that may have an influence on such practices and on any attempt to modify them, and 3. language *management*, specifically viewed as any specific efforts to influence or modify language practices through intervention. The resulting model is aligned with an ecological approach to language in that it recognises language policies can operate within complex, non-linear systems whereas each domain of a sociolinguistic ecosystem functions according its own variety of language policies and where each domain influences and is influenced by all other domains.

Spolsky's choice to use the term 'domains' where other authors had used 'layers' or 'levels' is conceptually useful in that it describes the non-hierarchical nature of the processes by which language policies work within and across different parts of the same linguistic ecology. The range of domains recognised in the model extends from the supranational to the personal, including the workplace, the neighbourhood, the educational domain, the domain of religion, the media and many others. Each identifiable domain involves typical participants, each influenced by their own beliefs about language and language use, each operating within a particular variety of policies and each with the potential to become a language manager for themselves and for others. The strength of such a model lies in its wide applicability as a framework that can used to explore language policies that fit the traditional stamp, as well as policies and domains that had been overlooked by classic LPP research. Among these, the family occupies a special place as a domain whose significance has been long been acknowledged in theory—particularly in RLS-related literature which identified it as a key site for the loss of natural intergenerational transmission as a precursor of language shift—and yet that until recently has seldom been the subject of focussed research. In order to clarify the role that policy issues within the family domain can play in the revitalisation of languages, the following section will discuss theories and research focusing on the relationship between the family domain and the process of intergenerational language transmission.

## 3. The home domain and intergenerational language transmission

In traditional sociolinguistics the word 'domain' is used to describe the social context of an interaction. The American sociolinguist Joshua Fishman (1965) first proposed that term as a way to describe the ways in which within speech communities language revolves around specific contexts that define and organize each community's social dynamics. Each domain is seen to include a set of distinctive, domain-specific addressees, setting, and topics. In the case of the family domain, the family members are obviously the main addressees, the main setting is the home and common topics would encompass everyday matters. The language of the home domain is characterised by a high

degree of intimacy and, in the case of communities that include dominant and minority varieties, it is the most likely context for the use of the minority language. Since the most effective way to acquire a language is to learn it from birth (Rowland, 2014; Chambers, 2014) and this is generally more difficult if the language is not spoken in the home, the family domain is also a crucial domain for first language acquisition. In immigrant and indigenous contexts heritage languages are usually confined to a few intimate domains and tend to lack prestigious and powerful domains such as those associated with work, higher education, mass media and government (Fishman, 2001). In these cases, especially in the absence of mother-tongue education, the duty and the efforts of ensuring heritage language maintenance falls onto the families, whose role in such cases is all the more important, as without a safe place for the heritage language in the home domain, not even institutional heritage language education can warrant its future (Fishman 1991, 2001; Spolsky, 2004; Schwartz, 2008). With specific regard to stigmatised language varieties, the use of these languages in the home provides precious opportunities to normalise their use while at the same time supporting intergenerational language transmission (Norris, 2004; Fishman, 1990), which in turn is generally recognised as a key factor in language maintenance and in the continuation of culture. Children acquire culture-specific worldviews as they acquire language and it is through interactions with parents and more competent members of their community that children learn the beliefs and behaviours that are culturally appropriate in their community (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). Because of this, a break in the intergenerational chain of language transmission may compromise both the linguistic and the cultural competence of the new generation, which in turn has consequences for the long-term maintenance of both the language and the specific cultural worldview associated with it. To reverse the process, Noori (2009) argues, "the language must be returned to the children and the home" (p. 13). Ultimately, however, the benefits of effective intergenerational transmission of minority languages in the home are not limited to this domain only. Exposure to the heritage language in the home teaches children to value their language as an ordinary feature of home and community life (Chrisp, 2005), therefore also encouraging and supporting consistent use across other domains (Pauwels, 2005).

## 4. Family language policy

Given the role played by the family in both language acquisition and socialisation, micro-level investigations of language practices within the family and around childrearing in general have long been the focus of sociolinguistic enquiry. However it was only relatively recently that researchers turned to the family as a key domain for studies relating to minority language maintenance. Most recently, the exploration of such issues has mostly occurred within a Family Language Policy (FLP) framework, and has given rise to a rapidly developing body of literature that gives consideration to the institutional character of the family as a site of language policy by bringing together two previously distinct areas of enquiry, child language acquisition and language policy (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry, 2008).

Research on family language policy defined as "a deliberate attempt at practicing a particular language use pattern and particular literacy practices within home domains and among family members" (Curdt-Christiansen 2009, p. 352) involves explorations of the home domain through an analysis of language beliefs or ideologies, language practices and language management, which were identified

by Spolsky (2004) as the three core components of his original language policy model. As part of that framework, Spolsky defined the language practices of a speech community as "the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire", its language beliefs or ideology as "the beliefs about language and language use", and language management as any specific effort to modify or influence practices "by any kind of language intervention, planning or management" (p. 5). These three components are strongly interrelated in that language practices are influenced by ideologies and sometimes they lead to language management. In addition, the ecological perspective inherent to the framework highlights the existence of interconnections between what happens within the family and in the surrounding domains. Family language policy does not happen in a vacuum, and family language practices and children's language acquisition are necessarily influenced by larger societal ideologies and discourses. For this reason FLP research often involves the investigation not only of the families' actual linguistic patterns, but also the exploration of the role played by external forces such as the socio-political and cultural context and the parents' own background and beliefs, which ultimately shape both language management within the family and the transmission of specific language ideologies to the younger generations of speakers (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Lanza, 2007).

Although applications of the FLP framework are by no means limited to studying bilingual or multilingual contexts, its descriptive potential is particularly useful in the description of sociocultural environments that include more than one language, as in these cases researchers can study specific choices to do with language and gain useful insights into the antecedents of such choices. It is not a coincidence that most FLP research to date is based on contexts involving migrant and/or transnational families. Compared to the wealth of FLP studies already available on migrant minority languages, the amount of research utilising a FLP framework to study of indigenous language settings is much smaller. Overall, while FLP can still be considered a relatively new area of study, existing work in this area has already made a significant contribution to our understanding of FLP and established a solid basis for the future research. The next three sections offer a general overview of existing FLP research organised according to to three main themes, namely 1. family language ideologies, 2. home language practices and management, and 3. FLP implications for education.

### 4.1 Family language ideologies

As Caldas (2012) notes, research has so far highlighted that in the vast majority of cases, family language policies are not consciously planned and/or articulated, but that they establish themselves as default options having essentially been pre-determined by historical and cultural circumstances beyond the family's control. In fact, regardless of what kind of language policies might be operating in the home and of whether they might be accompanied by explicit language management measures, all choices relating to the use of language in the home are bound to be influenced by parental beliefs about language and by elements of the specific linguistic ecology of which the home is a part. As part of its focus on the complex interrelations across different layers of the linguistic ecological "onion" (McCarty, 2011, Hornberger and Johnson, 2007), the FLP framework explores the types of agency involved in a particular policy situation. Because of this, a great amount of FLP research investigates the role that language ideologies play in the language-related decision-making processes

of bi/multilingual families, and on how the resulting choices manifest themselves in actual language use (for examples see de Houwer, 1998; King and Fogle, 2006; Kirsch, 2012; Kopeliovich, 2010; Li, 1999; Ó hIfearnáin, 2007, 2013; Yamamoto, 1995). This body research illustrates the wide range of ideologies that might come into play in the establishment of FLP. King et al. (2008) propose three main categories of parental beliefs that can influence language practices in bilingual families: the choice of particular languages for particular purposes, specific beliefs about language such as code-switching, and attitudes about language acquisition. Parents' general attitudes about the value and/or usefulness of a languages can be critical to home language policies and in this regard, some beliefs might be tightly interwoven with complex emotional processes (see for example Okita, 2002). Some parents might think of their heritage language as valuable gift to be passed on to the children as a means to imbue them with the cultural knowledge it 'contains'; others might see it as a potential advantage for the children's future career opportunities (King and Fogle, 2006), or even as a form of "social-political-linguistic capital for social advancement" (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009, p. 371). On the other hand, some parents might think that there is little to gained by learning the heritage language, that such language might be useless due to its geographical or social restrictions (Schüpbach, 2009), or might even think of it as an undesirable symbol of ethnicity tied to negative personal experiences (Okita, 2002). Whatever the specific beliefs, parental language ideologies are always shaped by a host of factors, which may include official policies on minority language teaching and learning (Portes and Hao, 1998; Spolsky, 2012), the dominant discourses of mono/bi/multilingualism reflected in official sources and the media (Curdt-Christiansen 2009; King and Fogle 2006) and of course the parents' own personal experiences and sociocultural and educational background (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Kirsch, 2012). If societal discourses favour quick assimilation through fluency in the majority language, for example, some parents may develop the belief that the minority languages is of no use and choose to discard it altogether.

In the vast majority of cases, however, the relationship between parents beliefs and home language management is not this straightforward. King (2000) discusses evidence of the fact that even where pro-minority language ideologies are present, these might co-exist with conflicting ideologies arising from long-standing asymmetries of power between the majority and minority groups, leading to situations where even very positive parental beliefs about a minority language might not result in management measures that support its maintenance. In fact, research on family language policies has often shown misalignments between beliefs about one's heritage language and home language practices (de Houver, 1999; Goodz, 1994; King, 2000; Kopeliovich, 2010; Schwartz, 2008). What remains certain, even in the face of the complex ideological synergies at play in some of these contexts, is that an in-depth investigation of the relationship between ideologies and parental decisions to do with language use in the home is critical to an understanding of any case of language maintenance and shift. The encompassing nature and methodological flexibility of the FLP framework makes it possible to conduct such investigations within an ecological perspective that can account for the interrelations of macro and micro contexts and processes at play in each sociolinguistic milieu, potentially achieving descriptions which may in turn be useful in informing intervention paths in support of minority language maintenance.

### 4.2 Language practices and management

In alignment with Fishman's definition of intergenerational transmission as the primary focus of theory and practice aimed at reversing language shift, Spolsky (2012) refers to the family as the 'critical domain' as it is here that language practices are established with the power to make or break a language's chances for lasting language maintenance. As already discussed, societal and parental ideologies can have a significant influence on the direction and speed of processes associated with language shift and maintenance; the actual means through which such influence is exerted are a family's language practices and management.

Spolsky (2004) defines language practices as "the sum of the sound, word and grammatical choices that an individual speaker makes, sometimes consciously and sometime less consciously, that make up the conventional unmarked pattern of a variety of language" (p. 9). Thus, the term 'family language practices' refers to the patterns of language choice and preference within a family and in different contexts. Investigations of this component of FLP are key to understanding the language dynamics that operate within the home domain in the absence of any explicit language policy or management measures, and can offer insights into the family members' preferences to do with the available languages and/or language varieties, the factors and processes shaping these preferences, and the ways in which preferences and practices can vary over time as a result of changes in the local sociocultural environment. Caldas and Caron-Caldas (2002) highlighted, for example, how bilingual children's preferences for either of their two languages is heavily influenced by specific elements of their environmental context. They specifically highlighted the powerful influence of peer interactions outside the family on the language practices within the home domain, thus illuminating the social dynamics behind a phenomenon commonly observed in bilingual families, where the heritage language is often abandoned by children upon entering the teenage years.

Family language management refers to "the formulation and proclamation of an explicit plan or policy usually but not necessarily written in a formal document" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 11) In the family, this begins with the parents' decision about which language to be used with the children, which in itself is considered to be key to heritage language retention (Fishman 1991; Spolsky 2007). With regard to research on this component of FLP, one of the main contributions of studies based on immigrant contexts has been the identification of family management strategies that may contribute to ethnic language maintenance. Schwartz (2010) highlights two overall general tendencies among the types of management strategies commonly adopted by families in bilingual contexts, the first relating to efforts to control aspects of the socio-linguistic environment (e.g. cultivating ties with the broader heritage language community or with heritage language speakers outside the family), the second focused on controlling the home language environment by establishing regimes, rituals and traditions associated with the heritage language and culture, as well as, in some cases, systems of rewards and punishments for using specific languages in the home. Specific strategies for the maintenance of minority languages within the family as highlighted by relevant research include, for example, the perusal of printed material and media in the heritage language (Borland 2006; Clyne 1991; Wright and Kurtoğlu-Hooton 2006; Yagmur and Akinci 2003), regular contacts with heritage language speakers, particularly via

Internet technology (Borland 2006; Clyne 1991; Yagmur and Akinci 2003) and frequent visits to the country of origin (Clyne 1991; Luo and Wiseman 2000; Pauwels 2005; Wright and Kurtoğlu-Hooton 2006). Overall, language management studies stress the role of parental input for language maintenance, highlighting the importance of family heritage language practices based on persistence and consistency, and of parental use of specific teaching/learning techniques such as modelling, rehearsing, elicitation and word games (Pauwels 2005). In establishing successful examples of language management, parents are often observed to utilise their agency and authority in achieving the children's compliance to particular language management measures, even when the maintenance of such measures overtime and in the face of opposing pressures both within and outside the family is often a difficult and frustrating task (Okita, 2002; Pease-Alvarez, 2003; Caldas and Caron-Caldas, 2000; 2002). By focusing on the specific ways in which parents and families act as language managers within the cultural, historical and ideological circumstances posed by different sociolinguistic ecologies, research in FLP can illuminate the kind of otherwise 'invisible work' (Pease-Alvarez, 2003; Caldas and Carol-Caldas, 2002) and invested in raising children in bi/multilingual settings highlighting challenges and opportunities inherent to specific contexts, overall contributing to a wider understanding of micro-level policy processes that are crucial for the maintenance of minority languages.

### 4.3 FLP and implications for education

In stark contrast with discourses of deficit that used to pervade discussions of minority languages and their speakers in the past, more recent literature strongly underscores the value of minority languages and the associated cultural systems even in settings vastly dominated by a majority language (de Abreu and Cline, 2005; Moll et al., 1992), firmly establishing these as positive resources both form a societal perspective and for the individual development of children's academic, cognitive and linguistic functioning (Cummings, 2000). Strong evidence in support of this point has emerged from a fruitful avenue of FLP research which explores the connections between minority language polices in the home and their implications for the children's formal education, and which has consistently shown family language practices to be closely tied to educational issues. Studies focusing on such connections show that the implications of both family language practices and policies often extends well beyond the home into the educational domain and that in particular, explicit family language policies tend to be associated with higher quality and degree of parental involvement in the children's learning at school (Cho, 2000; Park and Sarkar, 2007). Regular use of the heritage language in the home supporting intergenerational communication has also been shown to have important emotional implications: given that the loss of heritage language can contribute to loss of cohesion within the family (Tseng and Fuligni, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 2000), and that academic resilience is enhanced when the students can rely on the support of cohesive social and familial networks (Hersi, 2011), language practices within the family emerge as an important influencing factor in how well children from minority language backgrounds do at school.

With regard to the position of minority language in formal education, language and education experts have long known about the key role that early minority language programmes can play in the maintenance and intergenerational transmission of minority languages (Fishman 1991; Spolsky 2007),

and many have advocated the importance of bilingual education in preserving endangered minority languages (Saxena 2008; Skutnubb-Kangas, 2008). From a FLP perspective, parental choices relating to the children's formal education are seen as one of the ways in which FLP manifest itself in the form of control over the language environment external to the family (King and Fogle 2006; Schwartz, 2010). In fact, as noted in Caldas (2012), formal schooling may be considered the most important influence on a family's strategy to raise multilingual children. Baker (2001) distinguishes two forms of early education for children of immigrant families: weak forms, in which education occurs through the medium of the majority language, and strong forms, that provide significant support for the children' maintenance of their heritage language. A bilingual schooling option that offers instruction in both the majority and the minority language is probably the most effective educational option for raising bilingual/biliterate children (Baker, 2001), and indeed according to King and Fogle (2006), in Western nations bilingual parenting has, become synonymous with good parenting. Unfortunately, bilingual language programmes are not always available, and it is reasonable to assume that in the majority of cases parents will enrol their children in mainstream monolingual schools where they might find themselves under pressure to conform to the linguistic and cultural norms associated with the local monolingual majority in ways that can and often do threaten minority language maintenance both at school and in the home. That said, even when bilingual education is not available there might exist other educational channels in support of the minority language. In some communities Saturday schooling in the home language might be a viable option and one that in some cases has been proven to be an effective tool in support of bilingualism in children from minority language backgrounds (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009).

Whatever the educational options available in each particular setting, parental decisions relating to the place of the minority language in the children's education can be crucial to its maintenance, thus underscoring the ecological nature of family languages policies, which are never developed or practiced in a vacuum, but rather are specifically tailored in response to elements of a specific setting and work in synergy with language policies operating within other levels or domains. Exploring the interrelation between FLP and education in different sociolinguistic settings can enlighten researchers and policy makers about the challenges and opportunities inherent to different systems and approaches, potentially contributing to educational choices, programmes and policies that may effectively support language maintenance.

## 5. Family language policy and indigenous languages

Over the last four to five decades many indigenous groups around the world have embarked on the process of reclaiming and revitalising their ancestral languages and cultures. Among these groups some have reached considerable levels of sophistication in their revitalisation approaches, achieving various degrees of success. Most of today's body of literature around indigenous language revitalisation has emerged as a record and commentary of the journeys of these languages. What we learn from such literature is that the processes by which speakers of migrant backgrounds abandon their language in order to 'assimilate' and/or avoid the stigmatisation associated with their status as members of particular ethnic groups are the same that lead indigenous populations to shift towards external languages in the pursuit of increased social and cultural capital and as a way to

avoid discrimination (for examples see Dorian, 1981; Hill, 1983; Schmidt, 1985; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, 1998; McCarty, Romero-Little, and Zepeda, 2008; Fishman, 1991). However in the case of many indigenous communities, the factors and processes underpinning language shift "may have been in place for centuries rather than generations" (Smith-Christmas, 2014, p. 8). A second important difference is of course the fact that in the case of indigenous languages, researchers may deal with settings where languages are highly endangered, often with limited documentation and very low numbers of speakers, making revitalisation so much more complex. With its primary focus on describing and discussing examples of language revitalisation through the establishment of educational policies and programs in support of indigenous languages, most existent literature on language revitalisation has contributed to current understandings of the implications of language policy as a top-down process influencing the state of health of endangered languages. As the field increasingly moves towards ecological perspectives on language shift and maintenance as elements of an expanded model of language policy, more attention is being invested in understanding the micro-level processes at the basis of language endangerment and revitalisation and in exploring what affects parents and children's language choices on an individual basis.

Research that focuses on the family language policies of families where one or more of the parents are speakers of a minority indigenous/autochthonous language, especially where such language is stigmatised by a dominant language group  (for examples see Armstrong, 2014; Garrett 2005; Fellin, 2002; Friedman, 2012; Kulick 1992; McCubbin, 2010; Makihara 2005; Meek 2007; Morris and Jones 2007; Patrick, Budach and Muckpaloo, 2013;Ó hIfearnáin 2007; Paugh 2005; Smalugova 2008) represent an important contribution to understandings of family multilingualism in that they help gain insights into how ideologies and practices that differ from those associated with the mainstream culture can impact children's socialisation processes and outcomes, but also because they can offer insights into the ways language shift occurs within the family domain. Given the family's role in the maintenance and reproduction of language and the centrality of intergenerational transmission for language revitalisation  (Fishman, 1991; Spolsky, 2004; Schwartz, 2008), a micro-level FLP approach to studies of indigenous language contexts can be useful in exploring the interruption of intergenerational transmission by inquiring in the reasons and processes by which parents and children respond to societal pressures by abandoning the linguistic and cultural practices associated with their indigenous ancestry, as well as providing fresh ways of describing how families find ways to  engage with and utilise indigenous resources to establish, develop and maintain heritage language practices at home. In addition, by expanding its scope to beyond the family alone, the ecological approach inherent to the FLP framework can also inquire into the complex connections between FLP and the language ideologies of a group or community, and so potentially shed light on the connections between the experiences and beliefs of indigenous individuals and populations and specific revitalisation practices and/or programmes. Investigations of the role that ideologies play in the relationships between the family and the other levels of linguistic ecologies are particularly important in cases where tensions exist between grassroots language policies and beliefs enacted in families and top-down educational policies for language and literacy programs, as in these cases researchers can gain insights into the roles that power relationships inherent in different sociolinguistic settings play in shaping language practices (and thus shift/maintenance) in sometimes complex, non-linear ways. As Curdt-Christiansen

(2013) notes, "untangling the complexities of the relationships among language policies at various levels can help us understand how power is represented and reflected in and through language" (p. 5). Ethnographically- informed FLP studies of indigenous languages, in particular, are well equipped to investigate the interdependent relationship between the micro and macro dimensions of complex linguistic ecologies, highlighting ideology-driven language choices and practices. Ultimately, the micro perspective afforded by a FLP approach offers the opportunity to uncover previously neglected details of the influencing forces behind individual choices that can impact maintenance, including culture-specific beliefs that may assist or hinder intergeneration transmission and may account for the differences in language trends from one community to another.

## 6. Concluding remarks

Recent developments in the related fields of bi/multilingualism, child language acquisition and language policy and planning have seen the emergence of a new field of enquiry focussing on the family as a critical domain for intergenerational transmission of minority languages "because of its critical role in forming the child's linguistic environment" (Schwartz 2010, p. 172), and on family language policy as key to "determin[ing] the maintenance and future status of minority languages" (King et al. 2008, p. 907). While compared to the amount of FLP studies already available on immigrant minority language settings, FLP research in indigenous settings is still relatively underdeveloped, however existing studies already point to the value of adopting such a perspective in explorations of the complex inner workings of sociocultural contexts involving indigenous and/or endangered languages. Through a discussion of FLP theory and research into both migrant and indigenous languages, the paper has outlined the theoretical principles at the basis of the FLP framework, highlighting in particular how inquiries into family languages ideologies, practices and management can offer important insights into the factors, processes and relationships involved in the intergenerational transmission of languages, as well as into the less commonly explored relationship between FLP and ideologies and practices in other layers of a sociolinguistic ecology. With regard to indigenous language revitalisation, the paper has advocated the adoption of the family as one of the major players in the transmission of endangered linguistic and cultural heritages, and of the FLP framework as a template for research that might further our understanding of factors which assist or prevent language revitalisation, and present researchers with examples of good practice that may serve to support language maintenance and help reverse language shift among indigenous populations.

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