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Chapter 12: Future Prospects and Visions for Family Language Policy Research¹

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Abstract

This chapter takes the current state of the research field of family language policy (FLP) as its point of departure and discusses topics that need further attention in future FLP research in order to give the necessary attention to multilingual family constellations and the conditions that form them as we enter the 2020s. The first part of the chapter starts out with a discussion of the concept of FLP-making as a dynamic enterprise across time and space and then outlines three major themes that need further recognition: taking the perspective of the child, including (non-linguistic) emotions, and including the contemporary mobile digital context in the study of FLP. The second part of the chapter puts forward some practical suggestions as to how these perspectives can be implemented in research: how to define the family as an object of study, what research questions may be asked, and what methodologies can be used. It is concluded that in order to find its future identity, the FLP research field needs to grow, develop and adapt in step with the changing times, and that this can be achieved through cross-disciplinary initiatives and the courage to think outside the box both theoretically and methodologically.

1. Introduction

Although the roots of the field of family language policy (FLP) can be traced about one hundred years back in time, it was after the seminal article by King, Fogle and Logan-Terry

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(2008) – in which the term FLP was introduced and defined – that the FLP research field started to grow exponentially. The idea of combining previous insights from psycholinguistic research on bilingual language acquisition and sociolinguistic studies on family interaction with theory and concepts from the field of language policy and planning (LPP) obviously filled a gap: researchers were provided with conceptual tools to better understand processes of language maintenance and change as a function of explicit (or implicit) language planning within families, and they were able to apply a wider range of methodologies to empirically examine these processes. (For more detailed descriptions of the development of the field, see King and Fogle 2013; King 2016; King and Fogle 2017; Lanza and Lomeau. this volume. Family language policy: An overview; Schwartz 2010; Smith-Christmas 2017).

In the first chapter in this book on the topic area “Family Language Policy”, (Chapter 8), Lanza and Lomeu present an overview of the field. Their conclusion is that much of the current FLP research revolves around making sense of multilingual family language practices and ideologies, often in transnational populations, and covers an ever-increasing range of languages and family types. The following three chapters in the book all provide different current perspectives from the FLP field. Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (Chapter 9) show the importance of understanding the multilayered, complex and dynamic sociopolitical contexts in which individual transnational family language policy-making is situated, whereas Schwartz (Chapter 10) examines family language management at the micro level of the home environment. Finally, Smith-Christmas (Chapter 11) focuses on child agency, and children’s displayed actions of resistance to or compliance with the use of a minority language.

The aim of the current chapter is to envision future research directions within the FLP field. I will discuss topics that need further recognition in future studies, to better understand and do justice to multilingual family constellations and the conditions they are

formed by as we enter the 2020s. I will therefore discuss the inclusion of child perspectives in the research (Section 3) and the role of emotions in family language policy-making (Section 4), as well as point to the need for the study of families in today's mobile digital context (Section 5). The final part of the chapter (Section 6) puts forward some practical suggestions as to how these perspectives can be implemented in research: how to define the family as an object of study, what research questions may be asked, and what methodologies can be used. In the following (Section 2), I will discuss the theoretical argument that runs through the chapter that families, as well as the FLPs they negotiate and develop, are dynamic across time and space.

2. FLP-making across time and space

The “family” is at the core of FLP research, and for this reason it is important for the researcher to clearly establish what exactly this object under study is. As a unit based on kin membership, which can vary in size, the notion sometimes tends to be taken for granted (cf. Lanza and Lomeau. this volume. Family language policy: An overview). The objective of research is often to describe *the* FLP of one or more separate family unit(s). These types of study tend to be based on “snapshot” descriptions rooted in a given point in time.

The argument I put forward in this chapter is the need to see the family as a dynamic and fluid system – rather than a fixed unit – where the individual is residing at the centre of his or her own universe of networks (Stern and Messer 2009). Family systems as such are affected by external factors as well as individual ones (Curdt-Christiansen 2016; Lanigan 2009; Tannenbaum 2012). Rather than mapping one unified FLP of a particular family, I think it is important to acknowledge the “multiple individual policies that include

individual ideologies, management approaches, and practices within a single family unit” (Hirsch and Lee 2018: 890) and as a researcher to assign similar weight to the different individual policy-makers. Together, these agents make up the complex FLP web.

I further argue for the need to see FLP-making as a process that takes place across time and space (Hirsch and Lee 2018). The temporal aspect is crucial; the negotiation of different aspects of the FLP occurs on multiple time scales and all individual members bring along their own historical bodies (He 2014; Hirsch and Lee 2018; Scollon and Scollon 2004). Introducing a new linguistic variety into a family system, processes of migration, family member re-configurations (such as new siblings, restructured families, transnational adoption), individuals growing and ageing, the introduction of new communication technologies, the start or change of school, and so on, all potentially affect FLP-making, as a function of time. As for space, the concept of home (domain) is often seen as crucial for – or even as equalling – the family (Fishman 1991; Spolsky 2012). Eisenchlas and Schalley (this volume. For lack of a better term: Making sense of the notion of “home language” and related concepts) argue that home does not necessarily imply a (physical) space, but rather serves as a point of reference from which speakers navigate the world and negotiate language use at the micro level. Following this line of interpretation, the points of reference may vary for individual family members as they can experience many different significant “home spaces” and have multiple senses of belonging (Hirsch and Lee 2018; Tyrrell 2015). The traditional conceptualisation of home (domain) is complicated by the fact that in our post-modern society the boundaries between the private and public spheres have become blurred (Zhu Hua and Li Wei 2016). Today’s transglobal family realities, saturated with social media and communication technology, make it necessary to rethink more traditional concepts of space (Hatoss. this volume. Space, autonomy and equity in grassroots language planning: Crossing

national boundaries through the Internet; Lanza and Lomeau. this volume. Family Language Policy: An Overview).

These understandings lead inevitably to a reconsideration of the conceptualisation of FLP. In the original definition put forward by King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry in 2008, the focus was on explicit and overt planning carried out in relation to language use within the home among family members. Gradually this has been extended to include also implicit and covert planning, as well as literacy practices (Curdt-Christiansen 2009; King and Fogle 2013; Spolsky 2012). In order to include the dynamicity of language negotiation over time and space(s) that takes place among individual members of a network who define themselves as of familial significance, FLP is here understood as explicit and overt, as well as implicit and covert, planning among the members in a family network in relation to their language use and literacy practices across time and space. Importantly, literacy practices also then encompass digital practices, not only as an outcome of planning but also as a significant mediational tool.

3. Including child perspectives

The field of FLP has certain epistemological traditions which have also had an effect on how children have been looked at and what methodologies have been applied to research them. Theories of language socialisation, language transmission and early language acquisition tend to see the child as a fairly passive receiver of language(s). From this perspective, parents' (and other [older] socialising agents') language practices, strategies and ideologies serve – in interaction with environmental factors such as the quantity and quality of language input and societal ideologies – as determining factors for language development. Moreover, as a consequence of the fact that the FLP field links studies of child language

acquisition, early second language learning and bilingualism (King and Fogle 2013), the focus has often been on parents and children during their very first years of life (Juvonen, Eisenclas, Roberts and Schalley. this volume. Researching social and affective factors in home language maintenance: A methodology overview).

An increasing number of FLP studies have appeared with a focus on child agency, including those in which the child is recognised as an active co-producer of the FLP with the mandate to shape, reject and change policies (e.g., Bergroth and Palviainen 2017; Fogle 2012; Hua 2008; Kheirkhah 2016; Luykx 2005; Said and Hua Zhu 2019; Smith-Christmas. this volume. Children's agency and caregivers' role in home language maintenance). Acknowledging child agency does not, however, necessarily mean that children's own perspectives are taken into account, for example, in choosing data collection methodologies which give children a voice. Within the field of new sociology (or anthropology) of childhoods (e.g. Prout 2011), childhood is seen as socially constructed and it is argued that children's worlds should be studied in their own right, not in relation to adults. In processes of family migration, children have shown to be key actors in transnational social practices, such as serving as language brokers and contributing to family divisions of labour and relations of care (Orellana 2009). Olwig's (1999) research on Caribbean children who are cared for by relatives rather than parents who have left for work elsewhere (also Madianou and Miller 2012; Parreñas 2014), as well as Tyrrell's (2015) study on the experiences of Spanish migrant children in the UK, are examples where children's voices and experiences are being heard, theoretically as well as methodologically.

In many Western contexts, close family members and home settings play a significant role in the child's life during the preschool years; during the elementary school years the child's independence and access to out-of-home spaces and social networks increase, and the teenager is seen as autonomous in many respects (Lim 2016). Although

there have recently been studies on language practices and policies focusing on older children (e.g. Caldas 2006; De Houwer 2015; Doyle 2013; Fiorentino 2017; Kayam and Hirsch 2014; Kheirkhah 2016), more research is needed to understand the processes of language maintenance and change along life's trajectories (He 2014), including the role of others such as peers and siblings (Parada 2013). As Zhu Hua and Li Wei (2016) show, individuals of different generations within the same transnational family may have very different sociocultural experiences. Moreover, across different cultural contexts there may be other assumptions and expectations about the needs, capacities and appropriate activities of children at different ages, as well as different child-rearing practices (Orellana, Thorne, Chee and Lam 2001). Therefore we need a more thorough understanding of FLP formation as a dynamic process, involving the multiple individuals of the family, and as situated in a certain sociocultural context.

As for methodologies within the FLP field, there is a long tradition of observing parent-child interactions in home settings as well as of collecting data on children's language practices and ideologies by means of sociolinguistic surveys or interviews with the parents (typically the mother). This means that the data on children's language practices are mediated and filtered through the experiences and eyes of a parent, and/or interpreted by an adult researcher (Boivin and Cohenmiller 2018). The (adult) researcher also makes informed (and ideological) decisions on what situations to record and observe, how to formulate question items and categories in a survey, and which questions to ask as part of an interview protocol. It is an inescapable fact that the researcher is a subject (and adult), and in ethnographic research it is important for the researcher to establish his/her own zone of identification (Scollon and Scollon 2004: 11). In her article on how to listen to children's voices in ethnographic fieldwork, Almér (2017: 404) asks the thought-provoking question of "whether anyone who has reached adulthood can ever find out what a child experiences and thus

understand their perspective.” This is a critical question for FLP researchers interested in the perspectives and voices of the young: how do we, for example, avoid asking typically adult questions and mediating adult perceptions of how things are? How do we really explore and examine children’s language practices, ideologies and life experiences in their own terms? How do we reverse perspectives and learn from the young?

4. Making sense of (non-linguistic) emotions

 Tempting as it is for a linguist to rely on language-based models to explain children’s (bilingual) language development and processes of language maintenance and change – a natural consequence of the FLP field’s emergence from the traditions of socio- and psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, language socialisation, language learning, and language planning and policy – we must bear in mind that language is only one of many dimensions affecting family life. There is a risk that we will apply a linguacentrist perspective, i.e., we will exaggerate the role of language(s), in the lives of multilingual families. To date we have a fairly large body of knowledge on the impact of language attitudes, linguistic input, language ideologies, parental language strategies and the ascribed values of different languages in minority/majority/endangered/sociocultural/educational etc. contexts on language learning, transmission and revitalisation. We know less about the impact of other aspects not directly related to language on these processes, aspects such as family communication style, child and parent personality characteristics, or parent-child connectedness (Van den Bulck, Custers and Nelissen 2016).

 The relationships between socio-emotional factors and language developmental outcomes cannot be reduced to simplistic models of cause and effect, simply because the human being is a fairly unpredictable and autonomous subject with emotions and personality

at the same time as (s)he is social and adaptive and part of complex dynamic systems (De Houwer 2015). As Tannenbaum (2012: 58) contends, FLP differs from broader national and societal policies in that it involves emotional issues and psychological dimensions such as a person's "[p]ast and present experiences, hopes and worries about the future, close interactions, attraction, aversion, love, hate, dependency, alienation, closeness." Along similar lines, Hirsch and Lee (2018: 890) explain that a family ideology can be in favour of a certain language practice, but that individual ideologies may differ considerably, depending on "the intricate interplay of past and present experiences, agency, desires, emotions, future plans, personality traits."

From migration studies we have learned how children have been emotionally impacted by growing up with biological parents living elsewhere, at a great geographical distance (Madianou and Miller 2012; Olwig 1999), and about the emotional work and power dynamics involved in family cases where children serve as language experts and language brokers for the parents (Orellana 2009), or when children are sent abroad to study (Hirsch and Lee 2018; Orellana, Thorne, Chee and Lam 2001). Migration can be an emotionally dramatic – or even traumatic – experience and in many cases this forces a shift to a new language and the (re)shaping of the FLP (Revis 2017; Tannenbaum 2012). Other significant changes of condition that have been described in the literature as affecting formulations of FLP are on the adoption of children (Fiorentino 2017; Fogle 2012; Shin 2013), and on coming out as LGBTQ, which was shown to affect bilingual identity and practices (Cashman 2017). Taking into account the large number of reconstituted families nowadays, there are, however, still surprisingly few studies examining how changed family member constellations – e.g., when parents divorce and members live apart (Levin 2004) – affect FLP. When new families are formed, the linguistic ecologies may change, as well as the social and power relationships

within the family systems. Emotional dimensions touching each individual member separately also affect the system as a whole (Tannenbaum 2012).

Tannenbaum (2012) proposes a conceptual framework in which the psychoanalytical concepts of coping and defence mechanisms can be used to understand and explain how family members negotiate their FLP. She criticises FLP research for tending to leave out psycho-emotional dimensions and points out that the literature to a large extent ignores significant contributions, conceptions and methodologies from psychology, psychoanalysis and psychodynamics. Opening up to cross-fertilisation between the disciplines could provide new tools for analysis and create new insights in our understanding of FLP processes and family dynamics, particularly from the point of view of the emotions. Christmas-Smith (2017), in outlining future directions in the FLP field, indeed proposes that explorations of the psychological/affective realm are the next step in the field.

5. Connecting the family

The availability of and easy access to communication technologies have radically transformed ways of keeping contact across time and space (Madianou and Miller 2012), and these changes have direct implications for how contemporary families form and maintain social and emotional relationships (King O'Riain 2014). Whereas research strands such as computer-mediated communication have tended to focus on the linguistic content of online communication (e.g., Lee 2017), others have kept their focus on the emotional consequences of choosing between the plethora of digitally mediated tools now available for keeping in contact within transnational families (Madianou and Miller 2012), and on the complex issue of acting as a parent at a distance (Parreñas 2014). Communication technologies are, however, not only central to transnational multilingual families; they are

also used to mediate, coordinate and synchronise the daily lives of individually networked family members who live in the same household (Christensen 2009). The perspective of the children is particularly crucial. Although parents in contemporary Western families tend to have a more decisive role in the purchasing of media products, in helping children to navigate media use and in setting the rules (Lim 2016), it is the children who are often the key agents and take the lead when it comes to introducing new technologies and changing media practices in families, in the literature known as the child effect (Van den Bulck, Custers and Nelissen 2016). This includes changing the language practices mediated through them.

Despite the significant role technology-mediated communication potentially plays in processes of language transmission and change across generations in multilingual families, research on it is still scarce within the FLP field. One exception is Hirsch (2017), who presents unique longitudinal data over 7 years of one mother who had moved from Great Britain to Israel with her family. Hirsch could follow the (re)formulations of FLP over time by tracking the mother's postings in different groups on social media (Facebook). Social media also turned out to be an important space for the mother to reflect on her evolving language ideologies, management and practices together with other mothers. In another study, Little (2019) examined how parents of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds used digital technology to support their children's language development. It gives examples of explicit parental management strategies for using technology to promote home language maintenance (see also Hatoss. this volume. Space, autonomy and equity in grassroots language planning: Crossing national boundaries through the Internet; Little. this volume. Social media and the use of technology).

In order to get a better picture of how multilingualism, digitally mediated communication and emotional relationships interact in contemporary families across time and space, combined insights from different research disciplines are needed. A notion from

sociology that is potentially helpful for FLP researchers is *the digital family*, by which Taipale (2019: 2-3) refers to everyone – from grandchildren to grandparents – who has at least some basic familiarity with communication technologies and with some social media, and access to basic communication devices (such as a mobile phone and the internet), and uses these to stay in touch with other family and extended family members. A digital family is in these terms defined as a social structure based on the technologically mediated communication practices and routines that take place between its individual members across generations and geographical spaces. Lanigan (2009), in turn, suggests a socio-technological family framework model in which familial, extra-familial and individual characteristics influence how technologies are incorporated within the family context.

Sociological frameworks like Taipale's (2019) and Lanigan's (2009) have great analytical potential. However, they often lack the language dimension, which is where linguists come in. In order to develop “innovative research protocols that can make sense of the mobile multi-screen, multi-app, multi-media and multi-modal environment that surrounds families today,” which Lim (2016: 27) calls for, we need to add issues that come with multilingualism.

6. Topics for future enquiry

In order to expand our knowledge about FLP processes we need further empirical evidence from a wider range of family types, languages, and contexts (Lanza and Lomeau. this volume. Family language policy: An overview). However, simply adding more cases to the cumulative body of FLP data is not enough; we should also have the courage to raise new issues, ask new types of research questions, be open to unconventional research methodologies, and challenge our own conceptual as well as epistemological traditions. In the

following I start by suggesting different perspectives that the researcher can take on what is a family, i.e., the object of study. After that I propose a number of research questions, and methodologies that can be applied to respond to questions like these.

6.1 Who is in the family?

When conducting FLP studies, the researcher needs to define for themselves what is meant by family in that particular study, to identify his/her own position and ideological underpinnings, and determine how family is going to be examined (Wright 2020). This orientation informs the analytical stances and methodological choices, the questions that can be asked as well as the conclusions that can ultimately be drawn from the data.

Family, seen as a fixed unit and defined in terms of the members it consists of, is a common category in FLP research. Hence, in finding his/her research target, the ethnographer may decide to search for a family unit that meets certain pre-set criteria of membership and roles (e.g. a mother, a father and a child under school age in ethnolinguistic community X, speaking languages Y and Z). In administering a survey, a sociolinguist might include boxes to be ticked for family roles (e.g. mother, father), to be used as statistical variables to explain specific language outcomes. These are straightforward and powerful means of conducting research. Yet one needs to be careful with the pre-conceptions that are involved in the procedures: one gets what one asks for. In other words, defining and setting the criteria for what counts as a family beforehand is a deductive and top-down process, including the risk of implementing normative flaws (Ericsson 2017).

A more inductive and bottom-up perspective on what makes a family is to depart from the individual and focus on social and personal relationships and inter-connected individual networks (Pahl and Spencer 2004). The observation of family communities and

examination of their practices and interpersonal ties of different types and strengths can, for example, be done through social network analysis (Milroy and Gordon 2003). Although Western notions of family stress kinship relations, there may be other personal relationships that are significant (Budgeon and Roseneil 2004; Cashman 2017) and represent different types of ties, contacts, choices and commitments (Milroy and Gordon 2003; Pahl and Spencer 2004). It is a challenge to decide where to draw the lines in these webs of relational links and identify not only which these significant relationships are, but also *how* and *why* they are significant. Lanza and Svendsen (2007) have suggested that social network analysis should be supplemented with interpretative and constructivist approaches in order to account for issues of identity and ideology. Moreover, in digital families (Taipale 2019) the networked practices and the use of communication technologies between members need to be mapped. Applying multilingual practices to the digital family adds further dimensions into the complex family web.

A third way of viewing the family is to see the family as an ecological and dynamic system. In this view, we should be able to capture family dynamics and changes over time and space, at the same time taking individual as well as external factors into account. This way of modelling the family is challenging but can be informed by theories in related fields, such as dynamic systems theory in applied linguistics (Larsen-Freeman 2012) or family systems theory in sociology (e.g., Lanigan 2009). In order to examine the family as dynamic, emotional and built on interpersonal relationships, we can learn from different branches of psychology (Tannenbaum 2012). If we see the family as a complex and dynamic ecosystem, we may be informed by theories from the natural sciences or even mathematical modelling. If the focus is on technology-mediated communication and FLP, we can learn from communication theory, computer-mediated communication as well as IT, and so on.

As FLP researchers – whether individuals or a community – we need to make clear how we conceptually understand family and what the consequences are of this understanding in terms of theorising, the questions we ask, the factors, targets or phenomena we choose to examine, and the methodologies we apply. Some researchers have argued that reliance on a family-based model of intergenerational language transmission is a dominant narrative within sociolinguistics that needs to be challenged (Cashman 2017). The ultimate critical question will be whether we need a concept of family at all, challenging the validity of the construct. This in turn will have important epistemological implications for the research field of FLP.

6.2 Potential research questions

Based on the discussion in this chapter, I will suggest some research issues that could be further explored as part of the FLP field. In Table 1 a number of potential research questions are formulated. The list is neither exhaustive – there are many important aspects I have not been able to address in this chapter (see e.g. Lanza and Lomeau. this volume. Family language policy: An overview for further topics) – nor does it necessarily present entirely new or unexplored issues. Rather, the list presents a collection of issues that deserve further attention and that I propose could inform future studies.

Table 1: Suggestions for research questions that may be asked and explored further as part of FLP research

Research questions

- How is “family” understood and researched by other related scientific disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, communication studies, or the natural sciences, and to what extent can (and should?) FLP be informed by multidisciplinary approaches, bringing in new epistemologies, perspectives and interpretations?

- How is family conceptualised, politicised, brought into the ideology and realised in practice, in and by different states, and in different political, religious and community contexts across the globe? How do these facts affect the way we pose research issues and understand our objects of study?
- How do divorce and reconstituted family configurations affect a child's (language) world? How do changes in emotional landscapes and relationships in connection with reconstituted family settings affect language practices and FLP?
- How do single-parent families navigate in multilingual contexts and how is family multilingualism managed in sociocultural contexts where family membership is more fluid or non-normative?
- How do we, as (adult) researchers, cross age barriers and mediate true perspectives of the young and their experiences? How can we learn from the young and their life worlds and collaborate with them in the development of appropriate data collection methodologies? How do we capture phenomena such as the child-effect (Van den Bulck, Custers and Nelissen 2016), reverse questions and examine FLP processes as multi-way interactions?
- How is child agency perceived in family contexts in different parts of the world, in different ideological, socio-economic, educational and religious contexts, and what are its consequences for FLP? What is the impact of different cultural (or individual) practices of child-rearing on processes of language transmission, change and transmission?
- In the negotiation and formation of FLPs, what is the role of inter-personal emotions and power relations that are not necessarily linguistically encoded? How do we refrain from being "linguacentric" (cf. discussion above) in our explanatory models of multilingual families?
- How do flight from war, experiencing a split family, and emotional turmoil affect different members of the family and aspects of their FLP, and over time?

- What is the role of languages in emotional endeavours such as digitally mediated parenting (Rudi, Dworkin and Doty 2015), emotional streaming (King O'Riain 2014), and intimate labour parenting (Parreñas 2014)?
 - How do family members use different modes of technological communication to maintain their networks (cf., Madianou and Miller 2012; Rudi, Dworkin and Doty 2015; Stern and Messer 2009), over time and space, and as mediated by language(s)?
 - How can we, in Lim's (2016: 27) wording, "develop innovative research protocols that can make sense of the mobile multi-screen, multi-app, multi-media and multi-modal environment that surrounds families today", and add multilingualism to these protocols?
 - How do technology-mediated communicative affordances serve to empower and transmit home languages and identities within families, across (and within) generations? Do they hinder language transmission in any way and if so, how and why?
-

In each of these cases we need to critically examine to what extent they are relevant to the key issues of FLP research (such as how home languages are transmitted, learned, or changed in a family context, and the implications for policymaking (cf. King 2016: 731) and (re)formulate our questions accordingly. Still we should be able to pose questions in new ways too, not limited to a certain paradigm of questions.

6.3 Methodological approaches

The FLP field has always been defined by methodological and interdisciplinary diversity (King 2016) and this diversity has become even more significant in recent years, along with new research interests. Curdt-Christiansen (2018) divides the methods used in FLP into three broad categories: quantitative approaches (such as survey studies), qualitative and

interpretative approaches (e.g. interview, narrative and ethnographic data), and sociolinguistic ethnography (including audio- and video-recorded family interactional data). In the following I will suggest some methodological and analytical (primarily qualitative and interpretative) approaches that might be helpful in understanding and examining the sort of issues discussed in the previous sections.

To connect with the issue of how the notion of family is understood across different sociocultural, political or disciplinary contexts, critical discourse analysis (e.g., Wodak and Meyer 2009) is helpful. The analysis of linguistic landscapes (Gorter 2006), e.g., how family is reflected in public signage, may yield enlightening results. Linguistic-oriented approaches are also possible, such as corpus analysis, concept, or the lexical analysis (Litosseliti 2010) of, for example, official (policy) texts. If the focus is rather on the individual and his/her perceived family and relationships, an informant can be asked, “Who is in your family? Could you make a list?” or “Could you place your family on this sheet of paper according to closeness and distance to you?” (Levin 2004: 229). Prieto-Blanco (2016) has used photographs to elicit members’ “circle of reference” in transnational families and Ericsson (2017) developed an app to elicit discursive constructions of cisnormativity in interactions between parents and 5-8-year-old children.

If families are looked at in terms what members come together and *do* (rather than who they *are*), mediated discourse analysis (Scollon 2001), nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2004) or Moment Analysis (Zhu Hua and Li Wei 2016) can be useful. The point of departure in mediated discourse analysis and nexus analysis is social action, i.e., “any social action taken by an individual with reference to a social network, also called a mediated action” (Scollon and Scollon 2004: 11). All social actions are mediated; this means that all practices – linguistically encoded or not – are shaped by and filtered through subjective and collective experiences, beliefs, ideologies, interaction orders, expectations, and physical

environments. Moment Analysis focuses on frequent and regular patterns of linguistic behaviour and creative actions that have immediate as well as long-term consequences (Zhu Hua and Li Wei 2016). In mediated discourse analysis terms, these moments of repeated actions are called nexus of practice. The researcher cannot presuppose which actions, discourses and data are relevant and need closer study. It is therefore up to the (FLP) researcher to identify and recognise the relevant components of and agents in the nexus of practice.

Mediated discourse analysis is particularly powerful in unpacking multilayered and complex social phenomena and understanding FLP-making processes on different scales of time and space (see Curdt-Christiansen and Huang. this volume. Factors influencing on family language policy: a multi-scalar perspective), and in describing FLP processes and discourses in single families (Palviainen and Boyd 2013; Palviainen and Bergroth 2018). When the conceptual and analytical perspective is social action – rather than a fixed social unit, interconnected personal networks, or space – the analysis of e.g. digitally mediated relationships in multilingual, transnational or reconstituted family configurations becomes particularly fruitful. Applying linguistic analyses of digitally mediated messages (e.g., Lexander 2018) or multimodal conversational analysis (Mondada 2016) to video call interactions can give us information about processes of language transmission across time and space.

A strong argument throughout this chapter has been that we should see FLP as a dynamic phenomenon and analysis should take into account that family configurations, language ecologies, and significant relationships and memberships change over time. The calls for true longitudinal studies of families (e.g., King and Fogle 2017) are challenging time-wise, as they might require the researcher to follow one or more families for several years (see Smith-Christmas. this volume. Children’s agency and caregivers’ role in home

language maintenance for an example). The time aspect can, however, also be captured through, for example, retrospective interviews (Palviainen and Bergroth 2018), or life cycle analysis (He 2014), or by tracing FLP changes in social media (Hirsch 2017). Olwig's (1999) study on the life stories of four adults who reflected on their experiences of growing up in the Caribbean without one or both parents focuses particularly on emotions and memories as a function of time.

In the technologically saturated world of today, where time and space are conflated, we need to try to understand the role of technical mediation in contemporary family life, emotions and communication. As FLP researchers, we should particularly aim to understand the role of languages in these digitally mediated processes, as they carry the potential for language transmission and learning (Little. this volume. Social media and the use of technology). As has been strongly urged in this chapter, every member of the family should have their voice heard from their own perspective, including children of all ages. Taking part, as FLP researchers do, in sociolinguistic ethnography and qualitative and interpretative inquiries (Curdt-Christiansen 2018), we want to know what individuals do with language and also what they think about what they do. The data collection can be researcher-led, participant-led or co-constructed combinations of these. Methods include shadowing or mobile ethnography (Czarniawska 2007), visual methods and visual ethnography (Kalaja and Pitkänen-Huhta 2018; Pauwels 2015; Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjorth, Lewis and Tacchi 2016), mixtures of observations, chatlogs and interviews (Androutsopoulos 2008), online ethnographies (Markham and Baym 2009), and participant-generated videos/recordings/diaries (Boivin and Cohenmiller 2018).

Boivin and Cohenmiller (2018: 589) encourage ethnographic researchers to move away from the use of technology only as a simple data collection device and propose “moving into a greater co-constructed dialogue between participants, observers, researchers,

teachers, and community members with the use of digital technology used by participants during ethnographic observations.” A good example of this type of research is the study by Noppari, Uusitalo and Kumpulainen (2017). In their study, the researchers carried out activity-oriented interviewing (an approach in which materials prepared by the participants and clues found in the home environment guide the interviews) with children aged 5, 8 and 11 years, wherever they chose in their homes, about their media use. When data are co-constructed and participants become researchers and choose their data, unexpected results, insights and developments are made possible. In this way we can advance and develop the FLP field methodologically by asking: What can we as professional researchers learn from young informants in whose lives digital media is deeply integrated? What happens when we put lab coats on children, empowering them as researchers? Engaging with even younger, pre-school and pre-literate children can be challenging, but for example Crump and Phipps (2013) and Almér (2017) have provided some methodological ideas, and Ericsson and Boyd (2017) reflect on how to engage such children in research in an ethically appropriate way.

Other possible methodologies include quantitative surveys (e.g., De Houwer 2007; Kayam and Hirsch 2012) and experimental designs. One ethical as well as methodological challenge is how to examine the relationships between non-linguistic personal and emotional characteristics, such as shyness, introversion/extroversion or self-confidence, and language practices. As De Houwer (2015) points out, it is in practice impossible for third persons, such as researchers, to decide on subjective well-being – including affective information about how one feels – in a particular situation, but it ought to be of significance. In this sense we can probably learn from psychoanalytical and psychodynamic protocols, as pointed out by Tannenbaum (2012).

7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to map topics that I consider need further attention in future FLP research, I have suggested research questions to be posed and offered ideas on how to empirically conduct the studies. I have also put forward a conceptual understanding of the family context as dynamic and the family as comprised of individuals who each have their own (changing) emotions, agency and ideologies. In order to research and understand these complexities, cross-disciplinary initiatives and the courage to think outside the box theoretically as well as methodologically are required.

The question is whether the application of too diverse approaches, cross-disciplinary initiatives and methodologies will lead to the FLP field losing its foundation, its identity and its *raison d'être*, and a risk of being subsumed into other fields (cf. King and Fogle 2017). King (2016: 731) argues for the need for a shared body of central research questions and methodologies to be able to definitively and collectively answer the questions and move the field forward. King (2016) further identifies as a problem the fact that a research focus on meaning-making in families rather than outcomes tends not to provide findings that are productive or responsive to policymaking. Consequently, Lanza and Lomeu (this volume. Family language policy: An overview) predict that the FLP field will return to a language outcome focus in the future. In the context of the current book, it is worth remembering home language transmission and including that in the research issues. As Hirsch and Lee (2018: 885) conclude, “[a]lthough FLP examines relationships with all languages in the life of a family, FLP regarding HLs [=Heritage Languages] is particularly important to understand as it bears lasting influences on identity development, self-esteem, and academic achievement on children.”

The concerns raised are relevant and as FLP researchers we need to acknowledge and discuss them. I do, however, think that in order for the field to advance it is

necessary to allow for a stage characterised by diversity and experimentation, and to be ready to approach the topic with new ideas and in innovative ways. As Smith-Christmas (2017: 25) puts it: "...there is much at stake in FLP research, and it is our job as researchers to see that we move the field forward." As for future prospects and visions for FLP, despite the risks and challenges associated with a fast-expanding and diverse field, I am confident that FLP as an academic field is here to stay. Regardless of how families are defined, language policy and practices within multilingual families across time and space will continue to be important for our understanding of the processes of language transmission and change. However, as with all academic fields, in order to find its future identity FLP needs to grow, develop and adapt in step with the changing times.

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