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This is the normal for us: managing the mobile, multilingual, digital family

Introduction

It is about five o'clock in the afternoon and 4-year-old Mira came home from her Finnish kindergarten an hour ago.[1] She is sitting at the kitchen table having a snack while her mother, Kati, is cooking (see Figure 1). Mira is watching cartoons in Finnish on an iPad directly in front of her. Next to that iPad is another one, on which Mira's Dutch father, Nick, is online on FaceTime. He is at his place of work in Switzerland and is doing some paperwork. Every now and then he initiates a conversation with his daughter, asking her what she has done and how her day went at kindergarten. This conversation is a mixture of English and Dutch. Mira is not especially interested in chatting with him –preferring to watch the cartoons– but she occasionally responds with some words in English and asks her mother in Finnish to translate something. FaceTime is still connected when Mira and Kati sit down to eat dinner. After half an hour or so of this connected presence (Licoppe, 2004), Kati and Nick exchange some phrases in English about Mira's upcoming activities. Kati then switches off the video link.

Figure 1. Mira at the kitchen table watching cartoons on one iPad and connected with her father on another (screenshot from a video recording). The photo is printed with the permission of Mira's parents.

The situation just described illustrates the daily FaceTime routine that Mira and Kati had with Nick. The video-calling practice was of potential significance for Mira's multilingual development and identity in that she got to regularly communicate and interact multimodally with her Dutch- and English-speaking father, who lives elsewhere. The way they use digital tools and multilingual resources to keep in contact with each other over time and space is not unusual in contemporary families. Nor is the dispersed family configuration they represent, in which important family members live in different households, or even in different countries. Despite these facts, digital families like Mira's are rarely studied within the field of family language policy (FLP). Indeed, empirical research that connects digitally-mediated family language practices with early bilingual development, heritage language transmission, and family language management is surprisingly rare (Lanza and Lexander, 2019).

I had the opportunity to follow Mira, Kati, and Nick and how they were 'doing family' (Morgan, 1996) for a period of six months in 2017-2018. This ethnographic case study is situated in the growing sociolinguistic interest in understanding how "hypermobility and transnational migration shape, influence, and in many instances, define family life," and in the roles that multilingual practices and communication technologies play in these processes (King and Lanza, 2019: 718). Taking Mira's family configuration as the point of departure, I focus particularly on the management aspects of *doing* the digital multilingual family. Here, I refer to Kati and Nick's deliberate involvement and investment in their family, as well as their more tacit effort to do what they believe is best for their daughter (cf. Curdt-Christiansen and Lanza, 2018). The active aspects of this co-parenting arrangement were articulated in an interview with Kati: in response to my observation that she "[does] a lot of logistics, planning and arrangements to keep this whole thing going", she replied "yeah, but we've never had it any different. This is the normal for us."

The study was conducted within a nexus analytical framework (Scollon and Scollon, 2004) and aimed to explicate the ways in which the practices of this family configuration were shaped by the historical bodies (the lived experience of the participants), the interaction order (the social arrangements among them), and the discourses in place (the conceptual and material context) (Hult, 2015; Scollon and Scollon, 2004). The analysis of ethnographic data – collected in the context of the FaceTime call routine and in close collaboration with the participants – focuses on the ways in which the three participants managed the three languages in these video calls. I begin by describing the data collection procedures before moving on to discuss the family construct as a function of the mobile-digital age. I also present the previous research on

video-calling as both mediated presence and 'social work' (Ames et al., 2010). This is followed by a detailed analysis of the multilingual mediated language practices in this family constellation.

Co-produced data collection

I first came into contact with Kati after I posted a call for research participants in a Facebook group for "Foreigners in city X." The criteria for participation were being part of a translocal family constellation (members not living in the same household) with at least one child, in which two or more languages and communication technologies (e.g., Skype, WhatsApp, Snapchat) were in daily/weekly use.

Although, as a researcher, I was interested in examining digitally-mediated practices in multilingual families, I was not completely aware of what the focus of analysis would be at the start of the project. According to the principles of mediated discourse analysis, the complexity of the analysis must be preserved without presupposing which actions and discourses are relevant (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). Consequently, the data collection procedures did not follow a pre-established protocol but were, instead, explored and developed along the way. The research process was an act of 'co-production' (Boivin and Cohenmiller, 2018) between me, as the ethnographer, and the research participants, and eventually involved not only Kati but also Mira (daughter) and Nick (Mira's father).

The project followed the three steps of nexus analysis (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). Firstly, in engaging in the nexus of practice, the crucial social actions and actors are recognized and identified. Secondly, in navigating it, the discourses, objects, places, and concepts that circulate through it are mapped. Thirdly, in changing it, the links and connections within the social action are opened up and made visible. The overall ethnographic process therefore consisted of identifying the crucial actions (the multilingual and video-calling practices), understanding their employment, and, ultimately, contextualizing and expanding the theoretical understanding of the phenomena. This process can, however, also be deconstructed into several distinct phases or cycles, each of which builds on history and anticipates the future (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). Accordingly, this ethnographic project consisted of three consecutive cycles of collecting and navigating the data (see Figure 2).

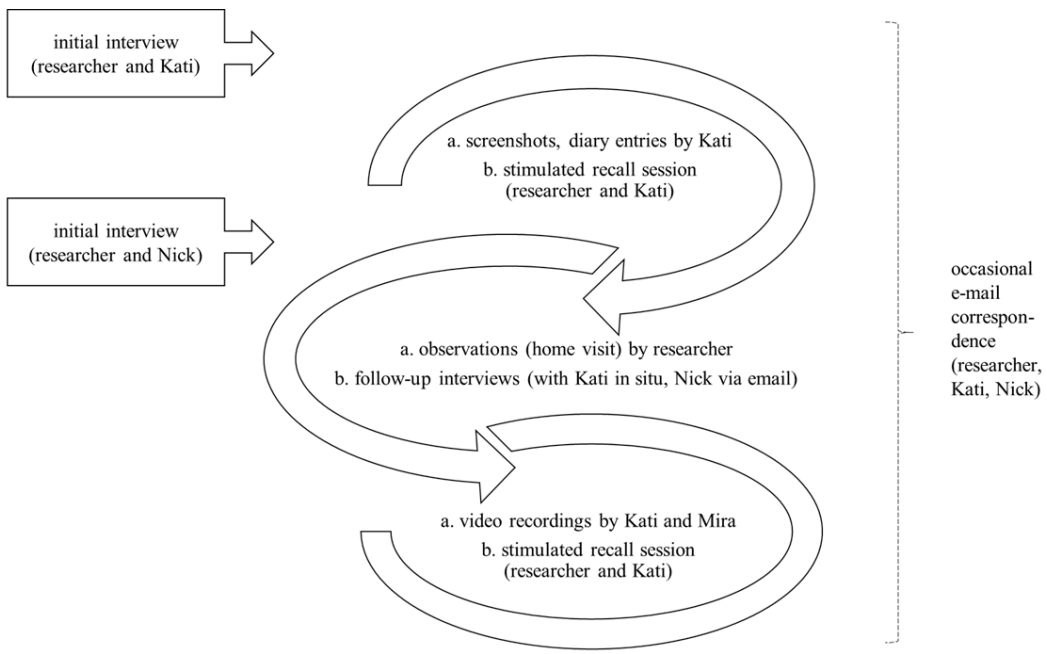

Figure 2. The three data collection cycles in fall 2017 – winter 2018.

In the first cycle, I met Kati for an initial interview, in which I asked her to talk about herself and her family and their media and language practices. Kati had primary custody of Mira after she and Nick had divorced earlier that year. Kati and Mira lived in Finland, whereas Nick lived in Switzerland. For Mira's sake, they tried to meet as often as possible and spend quality time together, either by Nick traveling to Finland or by Kati taking Mira to Nick in Switzerland or the Netherlands. Kati saw Mira and Nick's daily FaceTime contact and Nick's involvement in his daughter's everyday life as essential to their emotional bonding. During the interview, the FaceTime calls emerged as a core activity in the management of the digital multilingual family life and as a nexus of practice that required navigation.

After Kati agreed to continue participating in the research, I asked her how she would like to proceed with the data collection. The suggestion to combine screenshots of the FaceTime calls with contextual diary notes was actually hers. She also asked Nick to give his consent. After one month of data collection, Kati and I met again and discussed the data she had collected. In this video-recorded interview, we discussed language practices, the spatial arrangements of the technological devices, and the effort and organizational aspects – the 'social work' – connected with the videocalls (Ames et al., 2010).

At this point, Kati informed me that Nick would soon be coming to Finland to spend time with Mira. Consequently, the second cycle began with an audio recorded face-to-face

interview with Nick, using a similar question protocol to that used with Kati. This interview complemented the picture gained in the first, in that it provided the father's perspective on the family matters related to the video calls. As the data collection had thus far relied on the parents' accounts of the activities, both Nick and Kati encouraged me to directly observe a FaceTime call at Kati and Mira's home, which I subsequently did once Nick had returned to Switzerland. This is when I met Mira for the first time. I observed a FaceTime call between Mira and Nick, taking field notes throughout. Immediately after the video call, Kati and I sat down to talk about her experience of the FaceTime call I had just observed. I e-mailed a similar set of questions to Nick the next day. The home visit was truly rewarding for me as a researcher and I gained a lot of insight from it. Nevertheless, I was aware that my presence may have had an impact on the authenticity of the situation. Consequently, I suggested that Kati should video record some FaceTime calls when I was not present and I left a small sturdy video camera with Kati and Mira for this purpose.

The third data collection cycle thus included participant-produced video recordings of the home setting (cf., Figure 1). When Kati pointed out to me the difficulties of producing these, for example with Mira having asked why she had to be filmed, I suggested that Mira might like to take charge of the camera and recording the calls herself. This spontaneous suggestion turned out to be unexpectedly successful, as Mira enjoyed being empowered as a film-maker (Boivin and Cohenmiller, 2018). As a result, I got the privilege of watching a FaceTime call between Mira and Nick from Mira's visual perspective. This was eye-opening for me as an ethnographer and reminded me of the importance of including children as active research subjects.

The third data collection cycle concluded with an interview with Kati on the topic of the video-recorded data. Throughout the six-month data collection period, I also had occasional e-mail correspondence with both Kati and Nick and they sent me photos and screenshots with comments on the situations they depicted (see Palviainen (2020a) for an analysis of some of these photos).

The family construct in the mobile-digital age

Research on how families connect over long distances with the help of information and communication technology (ICT) has long-been pursued within migration studies, with

particular focus on adult family members (typically mothers) compelled to move abroad to earn a living and on their caring for children and/or ageing parents left behind in the home country (e.g., Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding, 2007; Madianou and Miller, 2012). These family constellations have often been in the forefront of ICT use (Cuban, 2014). However, today's career paths and labor markets, which both allow for and, sometimes, demand international mobility, along with higher education and a neoliberal economy, have also paved the way for middle-class families to choose a hypermobile lifestyle (Baldassar, 2016; Gonçalves, 2019). Indeed, as Nick stated, when talking about managing traveling arrangements with Kati and Mira: "[our situation] is not so much a money constraint problem that maybe other people would have, but rather a time constraint problem because we are busy people."

Kati and Nick's way of 'doing parenting' and managing family life was a natural continuation of the hypermobile way of living that was already familiar to them both. They first met abroad in 2009, before moving around to study or work in different countries in Europe, visiting each other whenever possible. They wrote e-mails and used Skype between seeing each other in person. They eventually got married, Nick got a new job in Switzerland, and, as Mira was about to be born, Kati decided to settle in her home country, Finland. When I got to know them, Kati and Nick had known each other for eight years. By then, their relationship had followed the trajectory of a long-distance romance, marriage, having a child, divorce, and now long-distance co-parenting. During these eight years, they had only spent a total of approximately seven months living together. As such, they represent a relational configuration that has taken on different forms over time and has been shaped by geographical distance, mobility, and the use of ICT (Elliott and Urry, 2010).

A 'transnational family' can be defined as a family (nuclear or extended, or involving other significant kinships) that has living arrangements spread over two or more countries, has an active desire to maintain family relations, and experiences important interconnectivity across and beyond national borders (Hirsch and Lee, 2018: 884; Hua and Wei, 2016). As Kati and Mira spent most of their time in Finland, and Nick – of Dutch origin – resided in Switzerland, they qualified as transnational. However, in 'doing' the mediated digital family, the geographical locations and national borders probably played a subordinated role for Mira: from her perspective, the actual location of her parents, as opposed to their virtual presence, appeared to be of little or no relevance (Gonçalves, 2019: 480). She was either unaware or unconcerned. In the transconnective space (King-O'Riain, 2015) constructed through the FaceTime calls, the emotional connection with Nick, the language varieties Mira and he used

together, and the interpersonal routines they engaged in were likely to be more important to their bonding than their respective physical location. For a mobile-digital family, the home becomes a relational concept rather than being connected to a fixed physical or geographical place (Marchetti-Mercer, 2017).

While it is the members of a family who shape the practices of technology, the technology itself also contributes to shaping the family. Baldassar (2016) studied a middle-class family dispersed over different countries in two continents and explored the ways in which the family created virtual forms of co-presence (mediated by voice calls, text messages, e-mails, and video calls). These practices not only broadened the family network but also served to bring people closer together. Clayton et al. (2018) focused on families with members whose work took them away from home for short or extended periods and found that they made use of ICT in order to re-create a sense of home while away. Gonçalves (2019: 480), who described herself as a "part-time and commuter mom," mentions digital technology as one enabling means (with constraints) of keeping in regular contact with her five-year-old daughter.

Kati and Nick had divorced and had never permanently lived in the same household. In this sense, their (hypermobile and translocal) family arrangements did not mirror those of an otherwise nuclear family, in which one or more parent commutes for employment reasons (cf., Clayton et al., 2018; Gonçalves, 2019). Instead, Mira was the center of their hypermobile family constellation, and in Nick and Kati's co-parenting ambitions for her, the daily video-calling practices served as the glue (Baldassar, 2016). In taking Mira as the anchoring point, they formed a 'digital family' (Taipale, 2019: 14); a geographically distributed family consisting of related individuals living in one or more households and who utilize ICT and social media applications to stay connected through daily communication practices, maintaining a sense of unity despite a lack of regular in-person encounters.

Video-calling as mediated presence and work

The expansion and enhancement of ICT have contributed to a new social environment of ubiquitous connectivity, with the proliferation of these environments also challenging the premise that strong relationships require face-to-face interactions (Baldassar, 2016). In fact, video calls make mediated face-to-face contact possible and are fundamentally just another mode of normal interaction (Harper, Watson and Licoppe, 2017).

Video-calling applications, such as Skype and FaceTime, allow for instantaneous and multimodal communication, and they provide powerful means for members in dispersed families to keep in touch with each other. In reviewing research on family video calling as a phenomenon, three major interwoven themes emerge. Firstly, video-calling activity is commonly viewed as creating a connected or mediated presence among the participants, i.e., a sense or illusion of "being there (together)" (Villi and Stocchetti, 2011: 105). Related concepts include, for example, ordinary or virtual co-presence (Cuban, 2014; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016), 'always on' webcam presence (Madianou and Miller, 2012: 121), and shared living (Greenberg and Neustaedter, 2013). The literature shows that video calling is often used as mediated presence in family contexts in the form of lengthy, sometimes day-long, calls that take place while the participants engage in everyday activities (Greenberg and Neustaedter, 2013; Madianou and Miller, 2012; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016).

Secondly, video calls are seen as part of a routine that is interwoven into the rhythms of family life (Harper, Watson and Licoppe, 2017; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016; Parreñas, 2014; Share, Williams and Kerrins, 2018). Video calls typically involve geographically disparate family members in the everyday activities of family life and the re-creation of everyday rituals (Clayton et al., 2018; Taipale, 2019).

Thirdly, many studies on familial video calls focus on the emotional and intimacy aspects of 'doing family' across time and space. King-O'Riain (2014) uses the term emotional streaming for transnational extended families who keep Skype turned on for long periods to reduce the sense of distance. The emotional side of caring for loved ones, such as children or ageing parents, is well-documented (e.g., Cuban, 2017; Madianou and Miller, 2012; Parreñas, 2014). The same is, to some extent, true of the role of shared living in long-distance romantic relationships (Greenberg and Neustaedter, 2013). The instantaneous, multimodal format of video calls is intimate, conducive to a phatic mode of communication, in which the relations between people are of prime importance, and the transmission of explicit and meaningful information is subordinated (Greenberg and Neustaedter, 2013; Madianou and Miller, 2012; Villi and Stocchetti, 2011).

The daily video calls between Mira and her father were both routine and ritualized. In my interviews with Kati and with Nick, they provided detailed and consistent descriptions of the ways in which the routine was usually performed, including the time of day, call length, procedures, locations, the tools and artifacts involved, spatial configurations, the participant

roles, and the range and type of activities and interactions engaged in (the practices have been analyzed in greater detail in Palviainen (2020a,b). For example, Mira could follow her father cooking and eating and they could have a conversation while she was in the bath. They could also be quiet together through a mediated presence, as illustrated by the example at the beginning of this chapter (King-O'Riain, 2014; Share, Williams and Kerrins, 2018). The emotional bonding between Mira and her father was regarded as essential and natural, and Kati made conscious efforts to facilitate it: "It's important that they have a relationship. Of course Nick wants to see her every day. It's hard for him to be at a distance, so I do everything to facilitate this." Nick's active involvement in his daughter's life stands in contrast with, for example, Parreñas' (2014) findings regarding Filipino migrant fathers who did not regularly communicate with their children.

Video calls as a means of maintaining family relationships across distance also pose challenges and require work. Share, Williams, and Kerrins (2018) studied Polish families' residing in Ireland who kept Skype contact with grandparents and other family members in Poland. Along with the gains in 'doing family' through such mediated means, many families also found it hard work: video calling required a significant performance element and the cooperation of all participants in order to create meaningful communication. Ames et al. (2010) examined the technology use of twenty-two families in the US with remote family members. Of these families, seven used videochats (Skype or iChat). In their study, the responsibility for managing the videochats lay primarily with the parents, while the grandparents at the other end mainly enjoyed the benefits (see also King-O'Riain, 2014). Ames et al. singled out four types of 'social work' connected with the videochat activity: coordination (e.g., assembling the family), presentation (e.g., ensuring faces can be seen), behavioral (e.g., ensuring small children sit still), and scaffolding work (e.g., engaging children in talk). Examples of these types of work were pointed out by both Kati and Nick during the interviews.

Digital family language practices

Despite an extensive body of research on the ways in which transnational families make use of ICT to maintain connections (cf. above), the role of languages and linguistic practices in these processes has been somewhat neglected. In primarily focusing on the emotional aspects of Skype calls in transnational families, King-O'Riain (2014) provides some examples of mothers managing these calls because they see it as important to maintaining the linguistic and cultural

connections between their children and grandparents living abroad. In summarising the literature on digitally-mediated family language practices, Lanza and Lexander (2019) identify three major areas of research: the possible effects of digital interaction on identity and heritage language use and language choice in transcultural families; the choice of medium implying a choice of spoken or written modality in these families; and digital practices as promoting children's informal language learning. They do, however, conclude that research in these areas is still scarce and that more is required.

To comply with the mediated reality of contemporary multilingual families, I have suggested elsewhere (Palviainen, 2020c) that the classic definitions of family language policy (FLP) (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; King, Fogle and Logan-Terry, 2008; King and Lanza, 2019) should be expanded to include digital practices. Consequently, FLP is to be understood as explicit and overt as well as implicit and covert planning among members in a family network regarding their language use and digital literacy practices.

Kati and Nick had different L1s – Finnish and Dutch – and their joint language had always been English. They had also made efforts to learn each other's L1. It was not until Mira was born, however, that the language question became something to consider further, i.e., what roles the three languages (Finnish, Dutch and English) would play in Mira's life. I will now focus the analysis of the ways in which these languages were managed and used by the participants in this particular digital-family network. In nexus analysis terms, the focus, here, is the playing out of the languages as part of the interaction order (the norms of interaction, role expectations, language varieties and the modalities employed, and Mira, Nick, and Kati's respective orientation to them). Moreover, the discourses in place, such as those associated with use of devices and the physical layout of the space, as well as any personal beliefs and interpretations at play, must also be included in the analysis in order to fully understand the nexus of practice.

Language management in the mediated presence

Kati described Mira as trilingual, with Finnish being her strongest language and English her second strongest; her Dutch skills were described as weaker (see also Palviainen, 2020b). In my first interview with Nick, he reported that, although he and Mira used some Dutch, they mainly used English together (Example 1).

Example 1. Transcript from initial interview with Nick.

Me So how would you describe your own use of languages with her?

Nick Messy ((laughs)). Like I said, I try to go for Dutch, but if she speaks to me in English- I do so much of my life in English that I just automatically switch into it. It's very hard to stop that.

Me Yeah.

Nick Mira understands quite a lot [of Dutch], more then she lets on I think, but she doesn't like to speak it very much so- That's actually interesting because Mira is quite lazy about her languages it seems. If there is somebody who can translate for her, she would get somebody to translate. But if I leave her with my mother whose English is good but not as fluent as mine, whose Finnish is completely non-existent she will switch [into Dutch]. Well, I've noticed that when we're out walking she really tries to talk to me in Dutch but she's struggling to find the words.

Me So there are moments when she's actually trying to speak Dutch?

Nick Yeah, but that's quite recent actually. It didn't use to happen often so much but she tries harder now, which I find very encouraging.

In this excerpt, Nick explicitly says that he wanted to use Dutch with Mira, but also that he gave in easily because she tended to stick to English. He described Mira as being resistant to speaking Dutch (although she understood quite a lot) and as taking the easy way out whenever possible. When the context demanded it, however, such as when spending time with her Dutch-speaking grandmother, this "laziness" was replaced by an active effort to speak Dutch. Nick thus described his daughter in terms of agency: while she avoided using Dutch and asked others to translate for her, she was also "really trying" (and "struggling") with her Dutch and even "trying harder" than before to speak it.

I visited Mira and Kati after my interview with Nick. They lived in an apartment with two rooms and a kitchen. The kitchen and living room were adjacent to each other, creating quite a large open space, which included kitchen furniture, a table with chairs, a couch, and an armchair. An iPad was used for the FaceTime calls with Nick. As the device was portable, it was carried around as necessary, depending on the activities engaged in. During my visit, Mira received a FaceTime call from Nick while she sat on the couch (Example 2).

Example 2. Field notes from home visit (observing FaceTime call)

Nick starts to talk to Mira (iPad resting against the back of the couch, Mira lies on her stomach with head up, face towards screen). Nick greets her in English, with some words in Dutch. Mira tells Nick in English that I (the visitor) am sitting "over there" (at the kitchen table) and mum is "over there" (in the kitchen, cooking). She says something to her mother (in Finnish) across the room, wanting her to translate to dad into English. Nick tries to engage Mira in conversation and asks in English: "How was your day?" When Mira wants to relate what happened in kindergarten, she runs to the kitchen to get help from mum: *äiti!* (mummy!). She tells her mother in Finnish what she wants to tell her dad and then Kati translates and explains to Nick, in English. Mira is very engaged and lively, runs around, in and between the living room and kitchen, speaks a lot in Finnish, which her mother translates into English for Nick.

Mira sits on the couch close to the screen and has a clear face-to-face connection with Nick. Mira talks in an English-Finnish mix. She says in Finnish what she ate at kindergarten: *mustamakkara ja salaatti*, Nick picks up on this and makes a guess in English: "Oh! Some salad!".

As I am not a Dutch speaker, I may have missed some exchanges in Dutch, but, according to my observations, the digitally-mediated communication between Nick and Mira was mainly carried out in English and interspersed with quite a lot of Finnish from Mira. When Mira ran into a problem in communicating her message she called for Kati's attention, whereupon Kati translated what Mira wanted to say from Finnish into English. At the end of Example 2, we also find evidence of Nick's active efforts to interpret what Mira said in Finnish. Whereas he failed to grasp the meaning of the word *mustamakkara* (black sausage), he did pick up on *salaatti* (salad), as the words are similar in Finnish and English.

In the situation described in Example 3, the multimodal affordances associated with the video recording and the portability of the device became evident, as they enabled interactive and physical play in the connected space.

Example 3. Field notes from home visit (observing FaceTime call)

Mira is lying on floor on her stomach, the iPad is leaning against the wall. Dad starts to make funny faces and Mira responds with her own. Laughing. "Wait a minute!" Mira says in English, running away to another room to get a blanket. Mira comes back, crawls on floor covered with the blanket, making sounds like a "bad creature." Mother assists in the game, takes the iPad, following Mira's movements so that Nick and Mira are face to

face. Mira is "hunting" daddy and he is whole-heartedly playing along with verbal expressions of pretend fright.

The playful hunting game required collaborative accomplishment by all three participants. Kati also needed to stop what she was doing in the kitchen, take the iPad, and carry it around. Kati was doing presentation work (Ames et al., 2010) in that she had to ensure Mira stayed in frame (because of the limited range of the built-in camera). The visual constraint was evident in the situation described in Example 4, when Mira held the tablet herself and unintentionally swung it away so that her father could hear but not see her anymore.

Example 4. Field notes from home visit (observing FaceTime call)

Mira is lying on her back on the kitchen floor. Kati stands beside her with a spatula in her hand. It is a triadic conversation involving funny tongue-twisters in Finnish, Dutch, and English. Mira holds the iPad in her hands, occasionally twisting it around and upside down, whereupon eye contact is lost.

After the observation, I asked Kati whether she thought the call had been typical. She said that although Mira had been a little bit more engaged than usual due to my presence, it was otherwise typical. She then pointed out three typical characteristics of the daily call routine: "One, I'm there to facilitate communication and translating; two, I'm doing housework at the same time; three, I'm carrying around the iPad."

The following day, I contacted Nick by e-mail and he confirmed that the activity had been fairly normal. I asked him about the situations described in Examples 3 and 4 and whether he was affected by the technical (audio-visual) constraints of the device. It turned out that his lived experience (pre-knowledge of the physical surroundings and of Mira herself) helped him to understand what was going on (Example 5).

Example 5. E-mail exchange between Nick and I the day after the home visit.

Nick: I can reasonably follow what is going on somewhat if they are out of vision, because I know the apartment and I know what Mira tends to do. There are also audio clues that carry even when sight doesn't work. The carry-and-follow is quite common, though sometimes the shaking makes me nauseous. Losing the view on a face does reduce communication for I don't speak Finnish very well so I rely on facial expressions.
Me: Mira (and Kati) were moving around quite a lot during the call; can you hear them all the time? Well enough?

Nick: I can hear Mira well enough, except when she whispers to someone else or goes to another room. She will usually repeat if I ask. The bigger question is language: I get some Finnish but not enough, and Mira refuses to use English when Kati is around even for things she can explain.

Nick noted the importance of actually seeing Mira when she speaks Finnish: as his own Finnish skills were limited, visual, non-verbal cues made a big difference. Importantly, rather than the audio-visual constraints, Nick himself foregrounded the question of language(s). In his opinion and his experience, the fact that Kati was physically present impacted on Mira's language practices. He said that Mira did not use English because it was easier for her to ask Kati to translate for her. This led me to ask him a follow-up question (Example 6).

Example 6. Email exchange between Nick and I the day after the home visit.

Me: One clarifying question: If the two of you are engaged in a conversation/interaction and Kati is not around, does Mira speak (only) English with you?
Nick: She tries much more. She tells everyone that I live in Switzerland and don't speak Finnish, and she speaks to me in person in a mix of English, Finnish and Dutch. Even then she will get stuck, especially when I've been away for a while. She improves quickly if I am alone with her for a couple of days, but then also hits a ceiling and has trouble expressing herself (searching for words).

Hence, according to Nick, the extent of Mira's efforts to speak English and Dutch was governed by speaker context, especially the non-presence of Kati. Spending longer stretches of time together was also conducive to language development. It was not necessarily the digitally-mediated video calls as such that reduced or hindered Mira's use of English or Dutch, but rather the presence of a third person who could serve as a translator (cf. Example 1). This was, to some extent, a built-in, unavoidable component of the FaceTime call routine itself: the physical presence of the mother was essential, given that Mira was only 4 years old and could not entirely independently operate the technology and manage and arrange the calls.

The final example comes from the third data collection cycle, when Mira was doing the filming. The setup was similar to that presented in Figure 1, except that only one iPad was being used. In this case, Nick was on FaceTime and cooking in his kitchen in Switzerland, and Mira, sitting at her own kitchen table, was excited about the fact that she was filming him herself.[2] Nick and Mira were face-to-face. Eventually, Kati came and sat at the table, next to

the screen, facing Mira but out of sight of Nick. The excerpt (Example 7) concerns a discussion about an imaginary house, which then evolved into talk about colors. The exchange started with Mira's Finnish utterance and Kati's exact translation of it into English.

Example 7. Transcript of a video recorded by Mira; FaceTime call between Mira and Nick at the kitchen table, Kati sitting next to the screen, facing Mira.[3]

01	Mira	*on vain YKSI talo* (there is only ONE house)
02	Kati	there is only ONE house
03	Nick	what COLOR does the house have?
04		(.)
05	Kati	*minkä värinen (.) minkä värinen talo?* ((low voice)) (what's the color? what color does the house have?)
06	Mira	*äiti, miksi kysyt värejä?* ((low voice)) (mum, why do you ask about colors?)
07	Kati	*no isi kysy sitä* ((low voice)) (well, dad is asking that)
08		(.)
09	Mira	BLUE
10	Nick	BLUE house? that sounds nice!
11	Mira	WHAT'S YOUR (.) FAVOR[ITE COLOR]?
12	Nick	[/I should/]
13	Mira	what is your favorite color?
14	Nick	/…/ oh that's hard to say /…/ bright orange
15		(.)
16	Kati	*kuulitsä mitä isi vastasi?* ((low voice)) (did you hear what daddy answered?)
17	Mira	bright orange

18	Kati	right (.) what is YOUR favorite color? ((low voice))
19	Mira	[*kaikki*] (all)
20	Nick	[what's your] favorite?
21	Mira	*KAIKKI* ALL the colors! (all)
22	Nick	ah!
23	Mira	*äiti mikä se* bright orange *on suomeksi?* ((low voice)) (mum what is this bright orange in Finnish?)
24	Kati	*kirkkaan oranssi* ((low voice)) (bright orange)
25	Mira	*eli ihan kirkkaan oranssi!* ((low voice)) (so just this bright orange)
26	Nick	it's a warm/…/ color I like it because it's very summery

A closer look at the interaction shows two concurrent, alternating types of exchange, with different aims and different participant roles: the main discussion between Mira and Nick (lines 01-03, 9-14; 20-22) and a contingent one between Mira and Kati (lines 05-07, 16-19, 23-25). The main discussion between Nick and Mira was carried out in English. When a brief pause occurred after Nick had a turn (04, 15), Kati joined the conversation and checked that Mira had understood and heard (05, 16), scaffolding Mira to continue and contribute to the discussion with Nick. Mira also used Kati as a resource when she was unsure about a word (23). There were, thus, parallel conversations taking place: one in English between Nick and Mira, in normal or slightly raised voices, and another between Mira and her mother, mainly in Finnish and in normal or slightly lower voices. The latter conversation was not directed primarily at Nick, but took place in order to facilitate the conversation with him. Kati was invisibly present: active and passive at the same time.

The data show that Kati's roles took many forms in this nexus. Even if the main participants in the FaceTime calls were Nick and Mira, with Kati occupying a peripheral role, Kati served as facilitator, language interpreter and broker, communication scaffolder and motivator, device holder, and technical operator. Facilitating successful family video-calling

routines demands a lot of this 'social work' (Ames et al., 2010; Share, Williams and Kerrins, 2018), and we can now add to this the active work that comes with managing different languages in mediated interactions. As a single parent for most of the time, Kati pointed out that she also had to do all the "meta work" (such as ordinary housework) on top of managing the calls, commenting that she was "looking forward to the time when [Mira] is big enough to call her father herself, so that I don't have to be there to facilitate." While she sometimes felt overwhelmed by the work, she was also aware of the strength of her position: "It's a matter of power too, I'm the mediator, I'm in power." In terms of the politics of space (Villi and Stocchetti, 2011: 104), Kati's role as mediator strongly affected her capacity to influence the distribution of social distance and proximity in the family's social triad.

Concluding remarks

Technologies shape new forms of familial sociality, redefine notions of distance and family models, and allow people to develop a sense of closeness and togetherness even without face-to-face interaction and local proximity (Baldassar, 2016; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016). Mira's family model was formed by her divorced parents' co-parenting ambitions for her and enabled by their socio-economic situation, hypermobile history, and present lifestyle.

In terms of the role and practices of the three languages at play, Mira's daily life was dominated by Finnish: it was her strongest language and the language she shared and used with her mother Kati. The dominance of Finnish was reflected in the FaceTime calls. Although Nick used English with Mira and she also spoke some English, she preferred to speak Finnish and to make use of Kati as an interpreter. According to Nick's reports, his daughter's English (and to some extent her Dutch) skills developed most when the two of them spent longer periods of time together on their own. Mira's skills in Dutch were further stimulated by spending time with her Dutch-speaking grandmother (Ruby, 2012). It would appear, then, that contextual factors, such as who was or was not involved, which language varieties were viable in a certain context (Chevalier, 2012), and which strategies and investments of effort Mira herself found worthwhile, played the most decisive role in terms of the enactment of the language practices. These were the guiding principles, irrespective of whether the communication was being mediated through video calls or took place directly, in person. As for parental language management strategies, both Nick and Kati seemed to find the phatic and emotional function of meaningful communication with Mira more important (Villi and Stocchetti, 2011) than

deliberately pushing and 'forcing' her to speak any particular language in order to develop her proficiency (cf., Armstrong, 2014).

The video calls meant that Nick and Mira got to meet and interact in a transconnective space on a daily basis, and also that Mira was exposed to regular, meaningful, and considerable amounts of linguistic input in English and Dutch (De Houwer, 2007; Lanza, 1997), which she would not otherwise have been exposed to. Although it can be challenging to have children collaborate (Ames et al., 2010; Share, Williams and Kerrins, 2018), video calls are a convenient way of maintaining contact when children are small and do not yet know how to read or write. In the present study, the multimodal features of the video calls allowed for shared living (Greenberg and Neustaedter, 2013) and for Mira and Nick to literally see each other every day. The audio-visual mode helped Nick to interpret Mira when she spoke Finnish by reading her body language. Nevertheless, while video calls make face-to-face contact possible and share many features with normal human interaction (Harper, Watson and Licoppe, 2017), the interaction remains mediated and different. It is 2D rather than 3D, it does not communicate scents, and it is non-tactile. Further research is required before we fully understand the exact connections between interaction mediated by video calling and the processes of language development.

Communication media such as FaceTime have become "so profoundly embedded in people's everyday life" that they permeate "a plethora of daily routines, practices, and social interactions" (Kaufmann and Peil, 2019: 2). This has important implications for the field of FLP: digitally-mediated communication must be included in research protocols. Only then can a fuller understanding of the dynamic ecology of contemporary multilingual families be achieved. In Mira's case, FaceTime calls formed a significant part of her normal daily rhythm of language mediated activities, which also consisted of attending kindergarten, watching cartoons on her iPad, seeing friends and extended family, and travelling.

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[2] She exclaimed delightedly to her father: "Daddy, look I'm handling it!"

[3] Transcription symbols:

italics	Finnish
( )	translation from Finnish
(.)	noticeable pause
[	brackets indicate overlapping speech
CAPS	emphatic stress
/…/	unintelligible word or phrase
(( ))	comment by analyst
?	at end of utterance rising intonation, not necessarily a question

!	at end of utterance animated intonation, not necessarily exclamation