

Family Language Policy: Mobility, Migration, and Multilingualism in the UK

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Abstract:

According to the Department for Education's School Census (DfE, 2019), 33.1% of primary school pupils in the UK come from immigrant-multilingual families. These families are a fundamental component of the UK's ever-changing 'super-diverse' society, providing knowledge and resources and contributing to the economy as a multilingual workforce. Having different migration histories, cultural heritages, social values, economic statuses, political positions and linguistic practices, these families play different roles in the social changes that are happening in the UK today. Family Language Policy (FLP), as a field of enquiry, responds to these changes by asking why and how some migrant families have lost their language. How is it that some children, growing up in a bilingual environment, become monolinguals while other children, growing up in a monolingual environment, become bilinguals? What policies and practices do parents implement to promote or discourage the use and practice of particular languages? How are these policies related to broader ideologies of language and educational policies?

In this talk, I present an on-going ESRC-funded project entitled ***Family Language Policy: A Multi-level Investigation of Multilingual Practices in Transnational Families*** (<https://familylanguagepoli.wixsite.com/familylanguagepolicy>). The project employs a multi-level, multi-community and multi-family-type design to explore what types of Family Language Policy (FLP) exist in the UK at the national level, how FLP is shaped, established, and implemented at the community level, and how the actual practices are managed at the family level. The project has a particular focus on families from three ethnolinguistic communities - Chinese, Polish and Somali. Findings from the national-level survey and family-level ethnography will be presented with data examples.