

**ROLE OF PARENTS' LANGUAGE POLICY IN MAINTAINING HERITAGE
LANGUAGE: UNDERSTANDING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS
(AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY)**



Oleh:
Alfian
0327098703

**PROGRAM STUDI PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS
FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN
UNIVERSITAS ESA UNGGUL
JAKARTA
2022**

INTRODUCTION

Although parents are the socializing agents of languages at home (Spolsky, 2004) and one of the essential aspects in the preservation of a heritage language is its usage in the family environment (Fishman, 1991), the role of parents' language policy in maintaining heritage language cannot be considered in isolation from internal and external factors. Internal factors such as identity, cultural practice, parental belief, child agency, and external factors such as socio-economic, sociopolitical, socio-cultural, and social-linguistic aspects that contribute to the maintenance of heritage language are important to be taken into account. In other words, linguistic and non-linguistic factors that play important roles in maintaining heritage languages must be considered, as one factor is connected to another. It is in line with Liddicoat (2004) asserting that The micro-level refers to language users, notably families, the macro-level to government, and the meso-level to institutions that reside between the two. Each policy level interacts with language maintenance in a particular way. It is necessary to investigate how the various strata interact to understand family language policy and language maintenance.

Pro and Contra

Zamri and Azman investigated the influence of parents in heritage language preservation (2020). They observed that parents have a substantial and crucial role in sustaining legacy language in a multilingual indigenous household. Although each parent has a legacy language, it is not difficult for their children to use both languages in their daily contacts, perpetuating the language. The findings of this study look to be biased in my view because they only collected data from parents without consulting the children, which is difficult to believe. After all, when discussing family language policy, we refer to the interplay of family members and their responsibilities in heritage language maintenance, including parents, children, and even caretakers.

Another study regarding heritage language maintenance was conducted by Liang and Shin (2021). They performed many case studies investigating Chinese immigrant families' perspectives, behaviours, and obstacles with heritage language maintenance (HLM) in a medium-sized Midwestern American town. They discovered that both parents and children valued HLM for family communication and bilingual education in Chinese and English. Families developed explicit and implicit FLPs and employed a variety of resources for HLM, but outside resources were limited, except a community

Chinese heritage school. The families faced challenges such as a lack of time and energy and their children's inability to maintain a desire to study Chinese.

In comparison to the study done by Zamri and Azman, Liang and Shin's study appears to be more acceptable in my opinion since it assesses not only parents' but also children's perceptions, practices, and obstacles. It is noteworthy that one study may focus solely on the importance of parents' language policy and give greater attention to parents' perspectives. In contrast, another research may seek to address a wide range of topics concerning the significance of parental language policy in heritage language preservation. The researcher's stance will surely have an impact on the results.

Parent's Language policy

Language policy and planning are inextricably linked, and understanding what language policy entails is essential. According to Liddicoat (2004), language policy activity occurs at three levels inside every society: macro, meso, and micro. A thorough comprehension of these many stages is beneficial while studying language maintenance. It highlights the varied, interacting, and sometimes contradictory policy positionings that occur at many social levels when different actors perform them. It is also critical to discuss Family language policy (FLP) when discussing Parent's language policy, as Schwartz and Verschik (2013) asserted that a detailed investigation of FLP provides for a greater understanding of the contrasts (and frequently tensions) that exist in terms of language policy and language use across individuals, families, and communities.

The FLP framework categorizes family members' linguistic preferences and activities into three interconnected components: language ideology, language practice, and language management. (Liang & Shin, 2021). Language ideology is one of the three FLP components that drive language practice and preservation. In linguistic, cultural, economic, and political settings, family members' micro language practices interact with various external elements. As a result, family members' language conceptions and usage are ideologically influenced by the larger social environment (Liang & Shin, 2021).

Given the context, I posit that parents' language policy was not the only key determinant of heritage language maintenance. We need to consider several contributing factors embedded with the three-level of the domain (micro, meso, and macro) in which different actors (parents, children, caretakers, teachers, policymakers) will give different responses. Even if we assume that heritage language maintenance was primarily affected

by the role of parents' language policy, it is too premature to claim that other factors will only contribute if parents have an explicit policy to ask family members to use heritage language only. It is still questionable when parents ask all family members to use only heritage language in the family setting, and heritage language maintenance will be well achieved. I doubt that regardless of good planning, the ideology and belief of related actors surely will contribute to the different results of heritage language maintenance. More importantly, in a different context, parents' language policy needs to be addressed to the policy made in the school, community, even at the country's level.

Internal factors that contribute to HLM

Emotional, identity, cultural practice, parental belief, child agency are internal factors that contribute to HLM. Regarding emotional as a factor that contributes to heritage language preservation, I do agree because it is consistent with Curdt-Christiansen (2020), who asserted that the decision-making process is tied not only to parental views and objectives for their children's multilingual development and scholastic accomplishment but also to emotional and identity needs of family members.

I agree with the idea because utilizing the primary language may elicit strong emotional responses and bring family members closer together in everyday encounters. Concerning the identity, I agree since it is in line with Spolsky (2004), pointing out that Language ideology relates to how family members understand certain languages; language practices refer to what people do with languages, and language management refers to the interventional procedures used to sustain and promote a given language. The identification component is inextricably linked to a person's self-perception as a family member.

Regarding cultural practice as a factor that also contributes, I believe that culture, like identity, may be understood and experienced differently from one family member to the next and from generation to generation, as Little (2020) argued. Regarding parental belief, I could not agree more that This is one of the most important aspects of home language preservation. It is intimately tied to parental participation in language acquisition and development. I posit that this notion may lead to a misunderstanding that Parent's language policy has become the only crucial factor contributing to heritage language maintenance. Parental linguistic ideologies are inextricably linked to other parts of parenthood, such as culturally particular ideas about what constitutes a "good" or

"poor" parent, mother, or father. As a result, public debate about parenting (whether 'good' or 'poor') can impact parental attitudes and practices. (King et al., 2008).

Regarding child agency, it is, in my opinion, one of the most difficult variables contributing to heritage language preservation since it is linked to children's active engagement in making decisions regarding patterns of family language usage (Smith-Christmas, 2020). More importantly, reflecting on the globalization era, it is not impossible to let children have the right to choose language to be used in their speech community since other factors will support such as media and technology. It is in line with Smith (2020), asserting that Children are now generally viewed as equal co-participants in determining the various and diverse ways in which a language may (or may not) be perpetuated in the family.

External Factors that Contribute to HLM

Spolsky (2004) pointed out that Families cannot be separated from their greater socio-cultural context. External influences, such as sociolinguistic, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and sociopolitical aspects, constantly impact them. Regarding socio-economic factors as an external element influencing HLM, I agree that economics is one of the reasons why one language appears to be useful to use or not, and it leads the motivation whether or not a language is used in the larger community. Economic factors influence most language policies. FLP decisions on whether to keep developing a home language are typically impacted by the economic benefits that the language may provide (Christiansen, 2020).

Regarding the socio-political factor, I agree that FLP is typically influenced by parents' concerns about their children's education in the societal/mainstream language. In that case, the odds of keeping their home language are limited. Regarding the socio-cultural factor, I agree that languages are considered as cultural expressions in this worldview. As a result, FLP frequently encounters problems and may clash with popular ideology to avoid language loss. In terms of the sociolinguistic element, I agree that because of the prestige and instrumental significance of Mandarin in today's culture, many Chinese parents, for example, opt to teach their children Mandarin rather than their local dialect in immigrant settings. I believe that the internal and external factors may lead to ambiguity since they are not clearly defined. To some extent, one component in the internal factor might be an external factor and vice versa. Because it is usually related

to school culture, peer culture, and mainstream culture, child agency, for example, is a tangled component between internal and external factors.

CONCLUSION

Although, as King et al. (2008) indicated, parents' language policy is critical because it influences children's developmental trajectories and is connected to children's formal school accomplishment, it also determines the maintenance and future position of minority languages, taking it for granted and make it isolated to other factors that contribute seem to be inadequate as the basic notion. It is in line with Seo (2017), pointing out that previous research on HL maintenance has defined a home as a separate unit or linguistic island, neglecting its interdependence with external surroundings. As a result, we overlook the many levels of a social environment that influence parental decisions concerning family language practices in their everyday lives (Seo, 2017).

Since families have preconceived notions about specialized language usage in the home domain, these ideas may be taken for granted as easily and clearly as asking family members to use one language only to maintain heritage language. This notion, however, is utterly interrelated between a family member's identity and the demands of mainstream culture. Therefore, understanding parents' language policy exposes much more than just family language policy and planning. We need to be more exposed to the family interaction, their opinions of their group and mainstream culture, and more importantly, intergenerational language transmission, as Bezcioglu proposed (2019). This language socialization process includes the sociolinguistic, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-political environment into the home sphere, impacting language attitudes, practices, and family management profoundly (Bezcioglu, 2019).

After considering both internal and external factors that contribute to heritage language maintenance, it is critical for those interested in exploring parents' language policy and HLM to consider another possible factor that may contribute, namely digital media, as it may have an increasing influence on parents' FLP decision-making, as Christiansen (2020) proposed.

REFERENCES

- Bezcioglu, G. I. (2019). *Family Language Policy among Second-Generation Turkish Families in the Netherlands*.
- Christiansen, C. (2020). 9 Factors influencing family language policy. *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development: Social and Affective Factors*, 174–193. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-009>
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages: Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages. In *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* (Vol. 4, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.1994.4.1.97>
- King, K. A., Fogle, L., & Logan-Terry, A. (2008). Family language policy. *Linguistics and Language Compass*, 2(5), 907–922. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2008.00076.x>
- Liang, F., & Shin, D. S. (2021). Heritage language maintenance of Chinese immigrant families: Perceptions, practices, and challenges. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 44(1), 23–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2021.1922539>
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2004). *17 Language policy and planning for language maintenance : The macro and meso levels 1 Language policy and planning (LPP) as a field of study*.
- Schwartz, M., & Verschik, A. (2013). *Successful Family Language Policy_ Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction-Springer Netherland.pdf*.
- Seo, Y. (2017). *Early Bilingual Development: Expanding Our Understanding of Family Language Policy in Heritage Language Maintenance*. University of Washington.
- Smith-Christmas, C. (2020). Child agency and home language maintenance. *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development: Social and Affective Factors*, 2016, 218–235. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-011>
- Spolsky, B. (2004). Language policy. *Language Policy*, 1989, 1–250. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615245>
- Zamri, E. S. (2020). *The Role of Parents In Heritage Language Maintenance In Malaysia*. March 2020, 15–32. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.32.05li>