NEGOTIATING FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY: THE INTERPLAY OF ARABIC AND ENGLISH IN MANCHESTER, UK

LA NEGOCIACIÓN DE LA POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA FAMILIAR: LA INTERACCIÓN ENTRE ÁRABE Y INGLÉS EN MANCHESTER, REINO UNIDO

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Abstract

Recent research on family language policy (FLP) has called for critical approaches that capture the interactional nature of language policy, negotiated among parents and children (Palviainen, 2020). This paper presents an ethnographic study on language practices, attitudes and policies in the context of migration, focusing on a Syrian family who arrived in Manchester (UK) as refugees in 2017. The article not only explores how family members manage their multi-layered language repertoires, including forms of English as well as standard and colloquial forms of Arabic, but also describes how linguistic resources are used to negotiate power positions within the family and in the wider diaspora. The article finds that, along with language users, their language ideologies, expectations and policies 'migrate' to the new setting, where they are subject to re-negotiation. Drawing on notions of language policy as inseparable from practice (Spolsky, 2009), this paper proposes an understanding of FLP that emerges and operates within wider interactional regimes

(Blommaert et al., 2005), taking into account explicit as well as implicit (practised) language 'policies', imagined hierarchies of repertoire resources (cf. Karatsareas, 2020), and interpersonal relations of power. Methodologically, long-term ethnographic observation and participation are combined through the researcher's perspective as language learner (Abercrombie, 2020) with family members' self-reports expressed during a 'family focus group' and photographs of 'private' linguistic landscapes. The paper has theoretical as well as methodological implications, addressing gaps in research on family language practices and policy.

Resumen

Investigaciones recientes sobre política lingüística en familias han llamado a la necesidad de estudios críticos que capturen la naturaleza interactiva de la política lingüística, negociada entre padres e hijos (Palviainen, 2020). Este artículo presenta un estudio etnográfico sobre prácticas, actitudes y políticas lingüísticas en el contexto de la emigración, centrado en una familia siria que llegó a Manchester (Reino Unido) como refugiada en 2017. El artículo explora cómo los miembros de la familia gestionan sus repertorios lingüísticos de múltiples niveles, incluyendo formas de inglés, el árabe estándar, así como el árabe coloquial. Explico cómo se utilizan los recursos lingüísticos para negociar posiciones de poder dentro de la familia y en la diáspora en general. Además, el artículo demuestra que, junto con los usuarios del idioma, sus ideologías, expectativas y políticas lingüísticas 'migran' al nuevo entorno, donde están sujetos a renegociación. Basado en nociones de política lingüística como inseparable de la práctica (Spolsky, 2009), se propone un modelo de política lingüística familiar que surge y opera como parte de regímenes interaccionales (Blommaert et al., 2005), teniendo en

cuenta 'políticas' lingüísticas explícitas y implícitas, jerarquías imaginadas de recursos del repertorio (Karatsareas, 2020), y relaciones interpersonales de poder. Metodológicamente, se combinan observaciones etnográficas a largo plazo y participación de la investigadora aprendiendo el idioma (Abercrombie, 2020) con auto-reflexiones de miembros de la familia expresados durante un grupo focal y fotografías de paisajes lingüísticos 'privados'. El artículo tiene implicaciones teóricas y metodológicas, llenando vacíos en la investigación de prácticas y política lingüística de familias.

Palabras clave: política lingüística de familias, régimen interaccional, jerarquías lingüísticas, migración, estudio de caso.

1. Introduction

This paper presents an ethnographic study on language practices, policies and beliefs of a recently arrived Syrian family in Manchester, UK. I introduce a comprehensive approach to exploring the dynamic language policies and linguistic hierarchies that are shaped both by wider ideologies and routines from the family's country of origin, as well as factors in the 'here-and-now' post-migration. I argue that explicit and implicit language policies and practices must be understood in their dynamic inter-relations and as part of wider interactional regimes (Blommaert et al., 2005; Costa, 2019).

As a setting where different generations get together, the family is a rich social domain to investigate language practices, policies, and aspects of identity and belonging in the diaspora (see De Fina, 2012). There has been an increasing interest in family language policy (FLP) (Lanza, 2007; King &

Fogle, 2017), offering valuable insights into heritage language maintenance, language acquisition, as well as parental language ideologies that are often linked to broader societal attitudes and socio-political factors (Li Wei, 2012). Van Mensel (2018) suggests that rules within a family reflect language ideological discourses regarding correctness and the separation of 'languages' and dialects.

The sociolinguistic complexity of Arabic—where different varieties are associated with different levels of prestige or stigma—makes Arabic an interesting case for exploring language practices, beliefs and policies in the bilingual family in the UK. Family members are confronted not simply with a choice of using 'Arabic' versus 'English', as language users' repertoires are characterised by a complexity of resources within and beyond these 'language' categories.

Language as form of 'heritage' has been shown to be ambiguous rather than straightforward, as are the values attached to linguistic resources (Little, 2017). There is a need to further explore the role of the global setting in shaping actors' perceptions of linguistic categories, as well as how they relate to social identification. Furthermore, as De Fina (2012, p. 350) points out, there is a lack of research exploring the ways in which multilingual families negotiate the use of their linguistic resources, the value of different varieties of their heritage language, and how such uses relate to aspects of identity. Palviainen (2020) calls for ethnographic studies on family language practices that include child perspectives and acknowledge the dynamic nature of FLP. This paper intends to address these gaps.

Drawing on longitudinal research in one Syrian family in Manchester, this paper discusses how the multilingual family manages their linguistic and cultural heritage in the diaspora setting, exploring the dynamic negotiation of language policies and hierarchies. The paper links imaginings of language and its perceived relevance, discussing heritage-related functions of Arabic as a symbolic representation of the past, and Arabic and English perceived as skills for the present and the future. Drawing on recent notions of language policy that understand policy as inseparable from practice (Bonacina-Pugh, 2017; Spolsky, 2009), I propose a model of FLP that takes into account explicit as well as implicit (practised) language 'policies', 'private' linguistic landscapes, imagined hierarchies of repertoire resources (cf. Karatsareas, 2020), and how understandings of repertoires shape interpersonal relations of power. I address the following research questions:

1. How do family members in the case study family manage and maintain their multi-layered language repertoires in the diaspora?
2. Which factors shape Arabic language practices and perceived hierarchies of language resources in the family setting?
3. How do family members draw on their linguistic resources to negotiate positionings within and outside the family setting?

Section 2 offers a brief review of relevant literature and Section 3 introduces the methodology. Sections 4 to 6 present the findings of this research, focusing first on the role of Arabic in the home, followed by a discussion of the perceived relevance of English in the wider diaspora setting, before exploring the potential of language as power. Section 7 offers discussions and conclusions.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Family Language Policy

FLP has traditionally been defined as explicit, overt planning and declared policy regarding language use within the home among family members (King & Fogle, 2017). There has since been a broadening of perspective, exploring language practices and engagement among family members as implicit FLP (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009, p. 352; cf. Lanza & Lomeu Gomes, 2020). King & Fogle (2017, pp. 322f.) point out that FLP can be "implicit, covert, unarticulated, fluid and negotiated moment by moment". FLP may thus be interactional, collaborative and co-constructed. There has been an emphasis on children as agents in the process of negotiating policies, affecting parental decisions about language learning and use, and shaping the family language ecology through their practices (see Gafaranga, 2010; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015). Spolsky's (2009) influential tripartite model of language policy, incorporating language attitudes and beliefs, management (i.e. explicit language planning and deliberate attempts to modify language use) and language practices, points to the interplay between processes generated and negotiated through discourse, scripted policies and actual practices (cf. Bonacina-Pugh, 2017). Focusing on Arabic in families in the UK diaspora, Said (2016) discusses the impact of parents' language use patterns on children's dynamic language and identity practices. Said & Zhu (2019) explore how transnational families negotiate multiple varieties of Arabic and English. Accordingly, FLP is rather flexible, as children are aware of their parents' language preferences and are able to manipulate this knowledge, asserting agency through their

linguistic behaviour to achieve their own social and communicative goals.

2.2. The Hierarchisation of Varieties of Arabic

The notion of 'diglossia' (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967) has traditionally been used to describe the functional relationship between different varieties of what is typically perceived as one language. The case of Arabic (and its varieties) is an excellent example of how one abstract and bounded category of a 'language' can hardly describe the sociolinguistically complex reality of language use (Bassiouney, 2020). As Ferguson (1959) pointed out, different varieties of Arabic are used under different conditions and for different functions, within what has generally been understood as a single 'language' or 'speech community'.

Classical Arabic (CA), the traditional language of the Qur'an, is used mainly for religious purposes but not for spoken interaction. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the written standardised variety and language of contemporary literature, journalism, formal education, and politics. In Ferguson's model CA and MSA are the 'High' varieties, juxtaposed with non-standard (or 'Low') varieties, in this case regional varieties of Arabic: the latter are used mainly in informal contexts, e.g. for spontaneous spoken interaction. CA and MSA are not used for informal spoken conversation anywhere in the Arab world and are not naturally acquired by children (cf. Zakharia & Menchaca Bishop, 2013).

There has been widespread criticism of the notion of 'diglossia' (see Jaspers, 2016), typically understood as a "relatively stable language situation" (Ferguson, 1959, p. 336). The notion of 'sociolinguistic

hierarchies' has been proposed for a more flexible understanding of the ideological character of relationships between varieties (Karatsareas, 2020). This concept differs from 'diglossia' in that it describes language users' individual and dynamic perceptions and negotiations, rather than a functional relationship understood as stable over the long-term (cf. Huang, 2020). Karatsareas (2020) discusses the tensions experienced by multilingual and multidialectal speakers in diasporic urban contexts as a result of hierarchisation of language varieties.[1] Accordingly, language users perceive their language resources as hierarchised in terms of how 'good' and 'appropriate' or 'bad' they are as a means of expression and communication, with the standard typically associated with competence and non-standard varieties with incompetence.

2.3. Linguistic Landscapes

Linguistic Landscapes (LL)—written language use in public space—have been understood as an arena for the negotiation of language ideologies (Moriarty, 2014). Shohamy (2006, 2015) understands LL as a way of establishing or questioning existing (macro-level) language policies. Accordingly, LL may indicate negotiations and contestations of ideologies, claims to ownership and preferred meaning of space. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) understand LL as "symbolic construction of the public space", where the construction and representation of identities as well as negotiations of power relations play a role in shaping language use.

This paper extends the concept of LL to include writing in the private space. I study the display of written language in the home to explore how such 'private' LL can contribute to establishing and negotiating FLP. With FLP research having largely overlooked written

language practices as forms of policy, I broaden both LL and FLP perspectives.

3. Methodology

This article draws on data collected as part of my doctoral research, an ethnographic study into language practices and reported practices among speakers of Arabic across settings (family, supplementary schools, businesses, and an interpreting and translation service) to explore understandings of 'language' and 'community' in Manchester, UK (Gaiser, 2021). This paper focuses on the family setting.

I use a qualitative research design that combines longitudinal observation and informal interviews with a family focus group, allowing for comparisons between reported language practices versus actual (spoken and written) practices (cf. De Houwer, 2009). I propose the family focus group as a useful qualitative data collection technique that allows for informal interaction with participants as well as negotiations among family members, including interaction between siblings. The family focus group gives voice to children and allows them to reflect on FLP and language practices in the home. This technique thus helps address the gap in research on family-internal dynamics of language practices and beliefs (see Palviainen, 2020; De Fina, 2012), allowing to capture the conversational dynamics between participants.

3.1. Participants

The participant family are first-generation immigrants originally from Syria, who fled their home country in 2012. The parents, Aaya

and Nasri, have four sons and one daughter (Figure 1), who were all born in Syria. After they fled Syria, the family lived in Turkey, where all children at school age (i.e. all sons) attended an Arabic-speaking school.

Figure 1: *Family members participant family*

	Name (Pseudonym)	**Age** (at start of fieldwork, March 2018)	**Participation in focus group discussion?**
Mother	Aaya	Mid 50ies	Yes
Father	Nasri	Mid 50ies	Yes
Son 1	Tareq (joined the family in the UK in August 2019)	23	Yes
Son 2	Faaiz	18	No
Son 3	Yasser	17	Yes
Son 4	Mohammad	15	Yes
Daughter	Farah	10	No

The father, Nasri, was the first family member to arrive in the UK in 2015, and his wife and four children followed in 2017. The eldest son Tareq joined the family in the UK in August 2019, as he was over 18 years old when the parents applied for asylum and was therefore initially not granted refugee status as part of a family reunion. Upon arrival to the UK, family members' English proficiencies were limited, and the Syrian variety of Arabic was the sole language used for interaction among family members. The sons had acquired some

Arabic literacy skills before coming to the UK. The eldest son, Tareq, spent four years studying in Egypt after leaving Turkey, and had acquired high proficiency in spoken and written Arabic before his arrival in the UK. The daughter Farah had hardly received any schooling in Arabic, due to her young age. Both parents are highly educated and worked as doctors in Syria. At present, all adult children have completed or are pursuing Higher Education degrees in the UK.

The use of Arabic in the home is also influenced by transnational links that the family have with relatives living in Turkey and Central Europe, whom they keep in regular contact with and have visited in the past.

3.2. Data Collection

As Hornberger & Cassels Johnson (2007) point out, ethnography can be a fruitful way of investigating the different layers of language policy, offering insights into language practices and the agency of actors at the micro-levels of their specific contexts (2007, p. 510). This paper is based on my longitudinal ethnographic engagement with the case study family, which included regular visits to the family home and interaction with family members between March 2018 and March 2020. While my basic Arabic proficiency was useful, my interaction with actors and observations across fieldwork sites were shaped through my engagement as learner rather than proficient speaker, with interaction with participants being mainly in English (see Abercrombie, 2020 on language learning as an ethnographic method). Contrary to traditional anthropology-based ethnography, where the researcher is expected to have acquired the fieldwork

language prior to data collection as a tool of observation, this research is based on the assumption that the process of language learning itself offers rich fieldwork opportunities. Contacts were made through a local Arabic supplementary school, where I studied Arabic and where the mother, Aaya, was a teacher. She proposed exchanging language lessons, where I helped the family with English and she helped me learn Arabic, which I took as an opportunity for observations and engagement. Having obtained all family members' consent to participate in this study, I visited the family weekly or fortnightly for approximately two to three hours. My face-to-face engagement with the family amounted to around 240 hours.

During my visits, I conducted informal, unstructured interviews (see Copland & Creese, 2015; O'Reilly, 2012) with the parents and adult children. These one-on-one conversations lasted between 10 and 30 minutes. To ensure that participants guided the conversation and discussed what *they* perceived as relevant regarding topics of language practices and policies in the family, I did not use any pre-prepared question guides. I followed the interlocutor's narration, from which my questions emerged. Through such informal interviews, I intended to engage in mutual conversations and avoid hierarchical relationships between 'researcher' and 'researched' (cf. Copland & Creese 2015). Of the seven participants, the mother was interviewed most often, as she was my main contact person throughout the fieldwork and since language maintenance was largely perceived as the responsibility of women (see Gaiser, 2021, p. 125). The eldest son Tareq was interviewed the least, as he lived abroad during part of the fieldwork period.

I carried out one audio-recorded focus group with family members for more targeted data collection and to give participants a dedicated space to reflect on their language repertoires and practices (December 2019). The focus group was a semi-structured group discussion of just under one hour, involving both parents and three sons (see Figure 1). The discussion was based on a topic guide covering the following themes:

– Language biographies: language acquisition over time and current language repertoires
– Language practices, maintenance efforts and language policies
– Language attitudes
– Future aspirations

I gave participants the opportunity to ask questions and encouraged them to raise any issues they perceived as relevant. The focus group discussion was held mainly in English, but I emphasised that participants may use any language or way of expression they were most comfortable with.

The focus group was intended to encourage parents and their children to reflect, as a family, on their language practices and policies. The focus group contrasts starkly with the more informal data collection methods I used during the rest of the fieldwork. This combination of methods allowed me to compare my observations of practices with how participants themselves reported and reflected on their language behaviour, which offered rich insights into language beliefs and ideologies. I was thus able to study language and language policy as practised (through observation and

participation), and as reported and negotiated (in the focus group and informal interviews).

To maintain an informal atmosphere and establish trust, I did not audio- or video-record in the family home outside the focus group. I took extensive and systematic field notes during my fieldwork visits, whenever appropriate. Following my visits, I expanded my fieldnotes, adding more detail and interpretation while further reflecting on observations and theoretical issues. On three occasions during my fieldwork, I reviewed my notes and observations together with Aaya and Nasri, to avoid any misunderstandings or over-/under-interpretation.

The data collected throughout the fieldwork period comprised more than 50 pages of detailed field notes, as well as the transcript of the focus group. Additionally, my notes taken in the capacity as Arabic learner offered rich data, as they included meta-linguistic comments made and discussed by participants. Apart from spoken language practices, my observations included photos of written language use displayed in the home and notes on the use of media (TV, books, online sources). I continuously reflected on my fieldwork experiences and practices as well as questions that arose during the research, which I recorded in a research diary.

The present article focuses mainly on excerpts from the focus group transcript, which covered only a small portion of the empirical study. However, the discussions and interpretations of the data are informed by my overall engagement with the participant family, drawing on my field notes and the LL data collected.

3.3. Data Analysis

My analyses focused on speakers' self-reflections on their own language practices, the ways they positioned themselves with regards to sociolinguistic variation, and any other themes that emerged from the data. I used Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for identifying, analysing and organising themes and patterns. Thematic Analysis was a suitable method to capture the complexities and richness of the data, for its flexibility and attention to detail in qualitative data: After having familiarised myself with the data, I looked for routines and repeated practices. Based on such patterns, I generated initial codes, identified themes, and related these to my research questions. In light of newly collected data or recent fieldwork experiences across settings, I scrutinised my themes and codes and reviewed previous analyses more than twenty times over the two-year period . My data analysis was thus an ongoing, iterative process that involved refining themes and re-coding throughout and following the fieldwork period. My analyses of 'private' LL were similarly qualitative, focusing on language choice and combination, visual arrangement and multi-modal aspects in order to identify themes. All photos of writing in the family home were analysed in correlation with the other data collected in this setting.

While this study's focus on one case study family means the sample size is small, the in-depth immersion and versatility of data make the method robust. In line with general assumptions in ethnography, observed patterns in practices are believed to offer insights into larger patterns.

The following sections present my findings, addressing the research questions posed above.

4.   Arabic 'Home' in Manchester

According to reports from the parents, Aaya and Nasri, during informal interviews, there is no explicit language policy in the family. However, both my observations throughout the fieldwork and reports from family members during the focus group interview suggest that Arabic is the default and expected language choice in the family home. Both parents and children use Arabic for interaction, and English is hardly used for communication between most family members. Child-initiated interaction with parents or siblings tends to be in Arabic. My research suggests that Arabic is considered an integral part of the family's cultural heritage and sense of self. Throughout the focus group, the participants repeatedly referred to Arabic as "my language", "my first language", or "our language", expressing a sense of ownership, pride, and identification with Arabic. As Mohammad pointed out in the interview, "it's part of our culture".

Family members associated different places and spaces with different patterns of language choice. Arabic was typically associated with family interaction in the home (see Excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1 (Focus group)

Author: *What are the roles of Arabic and English here for you?*
Tareq: *Well, the first rule is, the family. This is the first one. 'Cause when we are together we always speak in Arabic.*

Yasser: *Yeah. We have an Arabic home (..) even here in UK [laughs]*

Responding to my question about the role[2] that Arabic and English played for the family in Manchester, the eldest son, Tareq, suggested that 'the family' was a domain associated with Arabic. Accordingly, 'being together' meant 'speaking Arabic'. The home, "even here in the UK", where the majority language is English, was associated with Arabic. The use of the adverb "even" expresses that the use of Arabic in the UK setting may be unusual or surprising, but among the interviewees the use of Arabic in the home was well accepted. Later on in the interview, the father, Nasri, reported that the family used English outside the home, following my question if they used Arabic also when doing the shopping, for example with any Arabic speaking staff. "So we use English outside. Everywhere. In shops, in schools, in barbers, outside. We use English". Other focus group participants confirmed this.

The "Arabic home", as described by Yasser, is established and maintained in various ways: one of which is written language use in the home.

4.1. Establishing an "Arabic Home"

The visual dominance of Arabic in the family home serves to negotiate language hierarchies. The parents display art that includes Arabic calligraphy in their living room. Written Arabic labels for food jars in the kitchen contribute to establishing Arabic as the default language in the family space (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Arabic labels on food jars

Some of the Arabic food labels are attached to the jars in a way that they cover the original English labels on the jars, negotiating the prominence of languages in the family home. This layering of signs indicates the relevance and validity of visible texts, with Arabic symbolically overriding the status of English. It is not surprising that Aaya is more comfortable with Arabic rather than English terms for food and spices, as the preparation of food is a cultural practice linking back to the life in her country of origin. Yet, the consistent practice of labelling food jars and other items in Arabic is a way of defining the kitchen as an 'Arabic space' (see Gaiser & Matras, 2016).

Additionally, the family display Islamic Dua, texts for supplication as well as other Islamic quotes. These handwritten notes, written in Arabic, can be found attached to walls across the house. As Aaya explained in the focus group interview, "you can't say [them] in English". This statement suggests a perceived distribution of roles of

the linguistic resources in her repertoire, related to the religious significance of Arabic.

When asked about the functions of Arabic signs during the focus group, family members described the display of Arabic writing as a way of remembering the past (Excerpt 2).

Excerpt 2 (Focus group)

Aaya: *Yes, in Syria I did it in that way, it's normal. I get used to write in Arabic. And it's nice to have it in the kitchen here also. Reminds us of our house in Syria. Our home.*

Mohammad: *Yes, it's nice to see the language here.*

The visual presence of Arabic in Manchester is a way of using language to bridge the present with the past, and thus the 'here' and 'there'. The written form of Arabic carries positive memories from their 'home', i.e. Syria. Mohammad agrees that "it's nice to see the language here", i.e. the UK diaspora. The use of Arabic in the 'private LL' thus creates a visual link between the family's home in their country of origin and their present life post-migration.

The use of Arabic across the family home performs various functions. The art displayed in the living room may serve mainly emblematic functions in creating a link to Arab cultural heritage; the Arabic food labels in the kitchen may have primarily practical, communicative functions, in addition to creating a link to the past; the use of Arabic for Islamic Dua is mainly for religious reasons; yet, these instances of written language add to a sense of Arabic identity in the home. The language signs are forms of practised language policy,

reflecting usage patterns and associations with the language resources in the family's repertoire. As Blommaert (2010) argues, space becomes "semiotized space" through written language use. Displaying signs featuring Arabic, the family creates a "language sphere" (Little, 2017) that is specific to the home. As Shohamy (2006) suggests for written language in the public space, LL serves as a mechanism of language policy, as it reflects, cultivates and encourages practice.

Similarly, spoken or audible language use plays a role in creating an Arab sense of identity in the family home, reflecting as well as encouraging practice. During Ramadan, the family use a device that automatically plays the call to prayer at the relevant times of the day, which becomes part of the linguistic soundscapes (Shohamy, 2015) of the home and contributes to an Arabic sense of identity. Of course, religious rather than linguistic practice is the main motivation for using this device; yet, it reinforces the audible dominance of Arabic in the home and invokes memories of living in an Arabic-speaking setting. During an informal interview, Aaya and Nasri pointed out that hearing the Islamic call to prayer in their house made them feel as if they were back in Syria (May 2019).

4.2. Arabic Teaching and Learning

The parents' more explicit language maintenance practices are forms of language management and thus part of the overall FLP. Aaya takes 15 minutes every day to teach Arabic to her daughter Farah, who had received only limited schooling in Arabic before moving to the UK. The lessons focus on reading and writing, based on Arabic children's stories or Qur'an excerpts that Aaya asks her daughter to read and then summarise in writing. Aaya reported during informal interviews that she typically included some

"culture knowledge" in the language lessons, such as culture-specific social rules and politeness norms, gender roles or respect for the elderly. Aaya pointed out that such aspects were often linked to language use and common expressions, allowing her to connect culture with language (September 2018).

Aaya used to teach Arabic in a local Arabic Saturday school, a so-called supplementary school. The following statement from the focus group interview serves to explain Aaya's motivation to be involved in supplementary school teaching: "Because, uh, it's my first language, and it's my culture. It belong my home. It remind me everything about my past". Farah used to attend that same supplementary school to study Arabic in Manchester. Her parents regret that, since the family had moved houses, Farah can no longer attend the Arabic school (Excerpt 3):

Excerpt 3 (Focus group)

Aaya: *It would be better to send [Farah] to an Arabic school. To not forget their language. And the children also spend a good time with their language and culture. Because this school give not only language. Give culture also. So that the children don't forget their culture.*

Nasri: *To keep children a bond with their culture. Home, origin, home country.*

As Aaya's and Nasri's statements suggest, the supplementary school is seen as a way to maintain and promote the culture and identity of their home country. Learning Arabic serves to create a link with the family's life before migrating to the UK. The supplementary

school as such is perceived as offering benefits that go beyond language teaching, as it allows children to meet others from Arabic-speaking backgrounds, and it makes "their culture" relevant in the diaspora setting.

Another way through which the parents aim to ensure that Farah maintains bonds with Arabic, and the family's origin country and its people is encouraging frequent interaction between Farah and family members in Syria, as well as with an orphan child in Syria whose education Aaya and Nasri have sponsored. Aaya and Nasri encourage Farah to speak to the sponsored child on a regular basis via video phone, providing an opportunity for her to make friends with Syrian children at her age, to stay connected with the situation back home, and not least to get an opportunity to use Arabic with peers from the family's country of origin. This is a way of establishing and maintaining transnational links and shows that 'living in the diaspora' does not mean a cut from the homeland or the heritage language.

I argue that explicit and implicit language maintenance practices both in and outside the family home contribute to FLP, negotiating the role of Arabic in the Manchester setting. Furthermore, participants capitalise on transnational connections to reinforce language policies in the diaspora.

4.3. Language Variation, Hierarchisation and the Migration of Ideologies

As mentioned above, Arabic is spoken and written in different varieties, and the different values associated with these varieties complicate language maintenance practices and language policy decisions in the diaspora. My observations in the case study

family show that there is a discrepancy between the variety of Arabic used and accepted for spoken interaction in the home, with family abroad or the sponsored child, and the variety of Arabic defined as the target language for the daily Arabic lessons with Farah. MSA and CA are the focus during the lessons, depending on the source text used. When I had an opportunity to observe one of these short lessons (March 2019), it became evident that Aaya corrected Farah's spoken Arabic when using expressions or vocabulary that, outside these formal lessons, would be accepted in the family setting and even used by Aaya herself. Furthermore, Aaya made an effort to avoid Syrian Arabic dialect elements in her own speech as a teacher[3]. She thus adapted her own language practices in order to promote desired linguistic competencies in her child (see Luykx, 2003). However, Aaya's frequent self-corrections indicated that the avoidance of forms perceived as non-standard was not how she interacted with her family members outside such lessons.

When I addressed my observations to Aaya, she did not see any issue with this perceived discrepancy. For her, the fact that MSA is not used for spontaneous conversation did not contradict the aim to teach Farah standard Arabic forms during the time dedicated to focusing on Arabic maintenance. She suggested that the Arabic she and her family spoke was "not the real Arabic", comparing it to the Manchester variety of English. "It's not right". Aaya also argued that "it's good for her [Farah]" to speak "correct Arabic", suggesting she could use MSA but not the Syrian variety to enhance her job opportunities (March 2019), and that speaking MSA was important for Farah if she wanted to go to university in the Arab world (April 2019). In the focus group

interview, Aaya explained: "If we give uh some academic lesson, we teach in formal language. But if I say in daily life, I say in informal. I use informal. Yes". Her distinction between a "formal" and "informal" variety of Arabic reflects differences in perceived prestige and value: the "informal" vernacular variety is seen as inappropriate for education contexts and restricted to daily interaction in private contexts, while the "formal" variety is perceived as the "good" and "correct" form of Arabic. This suggests a hierarchisation of repertoire resources within what is commonly categorised as Arabic, with the MSA variety being perceived as more "correct" than the form of Arabic used for natural communication. Trans-local ideologies, related to the fact that MSA is taught in educational settings in the Arab world and the prestige values related to CA, are made relevant in the diaspora post-migration (see Gaiser & Matras, 2020).

The following section discusses how, in addition to ensuring the maintenance of Arabic, family members make active efforts to acquire and improve English.

5. English: Recognition in the Diaspora

While Arabic (i.e. the Syrian Arabic variety and MSA) is the family's default and preferred language in the home, family members' active efforts to improve their English while maintaining Arabic indicates how the surrounding language ecology plays a role in the way that participants evaluate and maintain their language resources. Particularly for the children, English plays an increasingly important role for everyday communication outside the home. As Tareq suggested during the focus group, English "opens new doors" and enhances job opportunities. Similarly, the parents see English as an important

resource, as "without English you can't do anything here" (Aaya, informal interview, May 2018). Aaya and Nasri perceive fluency in English as essential for attaining recognition from others in the UK setting. For example, the couple have made conscious choices not to involve professional interpreters for interaction with public services, even though they are entitled to request such support as their limited English proficiencies may create communication difficulties. Aaya has suggested that "We can do without!". This attitude is based on negative experiences at their local doctor's surgery: Both Nasri and Aaya reported how they felt their medical knowledge and experience as doctors was not taken seriously by other medical professionals, due to their limited English proficiency. Thus, their general professional skills outside language are (perceived to be) downgraded due to a lack of (English) language skills.

The reverse situation occurred in a court hearing that was part of the family's efforts to bring their eldest son Tareq to the UK. During the hearing in May 2019, both parents were required to make a statement to support their application. Aaya and Nasri had agreed it was best to book an interpreter in case they needed language support on the day. Yet, as they explained during an informal interview prior to the hearing, both were determined to try and make their statements in English, without much help from the interpreter, to prove their English skills. Following the court hearing, Aaya and Nasri reported with pride that they hardly needed any support from the interpreter (June 2019). Aaya suggested that speaking English had helped impress the judges, showing they were dedicated and hardworking people who had invested time and made effort to study English and learn about life in the UK. As Nasri reported, the judge commented on how he was

positively surprised by their English proficiency and remarked how this could be seen as a reflection of their active efforts to integrate. Accordingly, a report following the hearing included a remark about their English skills.

This reflects that English proficiency may be perceived as a positive sign of 'integration' or willingness to integrate into British society; lower levels of English, by implication, are seen as problematic. This reflects wider media and policy debates (see Szczepek Reed et al., 2020), as well as the fact that learners of English are aware of such discourses and pressures. Even though limited English proficiency may have hampered Aaya and Nasri's abilities to express their thoughts and emotions in their full complexity, they chose to speak in English rather than the language they are most comfortable with. The participants recognise the values their English skills are associated with in the local context. Thus, wider societal ideologies and perceived pressures from public authorities or the wider majority society in the diaspora setting contribute to re-negotiating linguistic hierarchies. While MSA and CA are perceived as the prestigious resources in the family home, and colloquial Arabic is preferred over English for informal communication, outside the home English plays a key role for interaction and social positioning.

In the following section I explore how language practices and proficiencies shape power relations within the family and the dynamics between parents and children in terms of their positioning.

6. Language as Power and Changing Hierarchies

My observations showed that family members occasionally correct each other's language use in interaction when speaking Arabic,

suggesting that they are conscious of everyday language practices. During the focus group discussion, the participants confirmed my observations. Tareq suggested that between family members "I correct every error I see". Language forms may be perceived as "mistakes" when they are salient deviations from MSA, such as certain vernacular lexical items. Such practices indicate an understanding that there is one "correct" way of using a language, which is the preferred way of using it.

Excerpt 4 indicates the dynamics between family members as they negotiate their roles in the family, based on asymmetries in individual family members' proficiency levels across the two languages, Arabic and English (cf. Smith-Christmas, 2020).

Excerpt 4 (Focus group)

Aaya:	*I correct many words for Mohammad. In Arabic. But Mohammad was upset if I correct him [laughs]. I don't know why. He said "always you correct me. Why?"*
Mohammad:	*But then I correct your English.*
Aaya:	*[laughs] Yes, always. And Farah always corrects me. Always Farah laughs at me. "Don't speak that, don't speak this word like that".*
Mohammad:	*I sometimes correct teachers at college, in Arabic. We were learning about Islam. Some people don't know how to say Arabic words, so sometimes I correct them.*

Aaya reported that she corrected her children's Arabic, again reflecting the understanding that there is one correct way of using the language, and that her children should be aware of it. Mohammad

then interjected that he, in turn, corrected her English, as well as correcting his teachers' pronunciation of Arabic words. The described dynamics indicate how power relations may be negotiated on the basis of language proficiencies. Depending on language choice (Arabic or English) or the topic of conversation (e.g. Islam at a Manchester college), sets of language skill are assessed as 'proficient', 'correct', 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'. While there is a perception that Mohammad's and Farah's use of Arabic occasionally requires correcting from the parents or older brother, their proficiencies in English mean that, in other s ituations, they correct their family members' use of English. As Luykx (2003, p. 41) argues, language socialisation in the family is a dynamic process that cannot be viewed "as a one-way process, but as a dynamic network of mutual family influences". Such dynamic negotiations may occur particularly in families where adult members have limited proficiency in the majority language, and children may have limited fluency in the heritage language. In the school context, English as the majority language is used by default, and Mohammad's limited English proficiency may be seen as a disadvantage in this setting as compared to others who are more comfortable in English; in certain situations, however, Mohammad's Arabic skills put him in a position to correct the teacher.

As mentioned above, Aaya spends fifteen minutes every day teaching Arabic to Farah. In addition, they spend one hour to focus on the English language during the weekend. In the latter classes, teacher and learner roles are reversed: The daughter assumes the role of the teacher, claiming authority in the learning context and thus the position to set the rules (Excerpt 5).

Excerpt 5 (Focus group)

Aaya:	*[laughs] Farah is very strict teacher. And give me punishment. You know the punishment who. Uhm the punishment she gives me? Because I don't write my homework, then the my punishment to take her to Primark to buy many of clothes, about 60 pounds.*
Nasri:	*and lipstick*
Aaya:	*And when she says I will start my lesson, she wears lipstick, rouge, and she wears a red blouse the match to lipstick. And high uhm*
Author:	*High heels?*
Aaya:	*Yes, high heels, and he wear my bag on her shoulder. I said "why you do that?" She said "Like my teacher!". And she is very strict. "Don't use your mobile, don't drink, don't use uh gum". Strict, very strict.*

The 10-year-old girl negotiates her position in the family through assuming the role of an authority figure during English lesson, as Farah disciplines her mother when she does not fulfil the tasks expected from her. Based on her advanced proficiency in English, a resource recognised as the majority language in the UK setting, Farah re-negotiates the relationship between herself and her mother and appropriates a position of authority. Farah fully embraces the adult teacher role, wearing a blouse and makeup, and using her mother's handbag. This is an example of how children engage in negotiations of what counts as appropriate language choice and negotiate agency through multilingualism. During the one-hour long English

lesson, Farah perceives herself in the power position, i.e. superior to her mother's. As Gafaranga (2010, p. 233) shows, agency is afforded to children in negotiations of language use in the home through the status of the majority language (cf. Said & Zhu, 2019).

Manchester as a multilingual setting gives value to language skills (see Matras & Robertson, 2017). The diverse diaspora setting shapes the perceived values of languages and their recognition as skills, in addition to their sentimental and cultural value. This becomes clear when Aaya emphasises the importance of maintaining heritage languages, as these skills can offer valuable advantages in a setting like the UK (Excerpt 6):

Excerpt 6 (Focus group)

Aaya: *Any language is like power. If you have, for example, five language, it's powerful. […] It can help you contact with many people. Because here in the UK many many culture, Multiculture in the UK, in Manchester. Arab, French, Italian, Pakistan. Yes. So, language, any language is power. So people should not lost any language he can learn.*

As Aaya pointed out, in the diverse context, "any language is like power". Multilingual repertoires put language users in power positions, which emphasises the relevance of the surrounding language ecology in assessing language repertoires. Manchester is seen as a setting where multilingualism, in this case Arabic proficiency, grants power.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

This article aimed to offer insights into language practices and policies, negotiations of power relations and changing language hierarchies, drawing on a case study of an English-Arabic speaking family in Manchester, UK. My long-term engagement and a focus group interview have shown how the multilingual family manages their linguistic and cultural heritage in the diaspora setting, making resources, beliefs and ideologies from the origin country relevant in the Manchester setting.

Addressing the first research question, this research has shown how various forms of spoken and written language practices, as well as implicit and explicit language maintenance efforts serve to negotiate the role and relevance of linguistic resources in the family. The 'private' LL, soundscapes, correction practices and explicit language teaching are forms of language policy that help manage the family's complex linguistic repertoire. Arabic plays an important role in the home environment, regarded as integral part of the family's cultural heritage and as symbolic representation of the past. In this sense, promoting Arabic in the family means affirming their identity as Syrians. The display of Arabic writing for communicative, emblematic and religious functions serves to establish and maintain an "Arabic home" in the diaspora. The use of Arabic provides a sense of belonging and stability in linking back to the past, expressing a sense of nostalgia for their life back in Syria. Arabic provides a transnational link with the home country, allowing for interaction with family members and recently developed contacts (e.g. the sponsored child in Syria). At the same time, the parents' dedication to improving their English reflects a recognition of Manchester as the setting of their present lives and a

positive orientation to a future in the UK. English proficiency is perceived as a sign for 'integration', recognition and overcoming barriers in the UK. English is understood as a form of social and cultural capital, facilitating access to services, economic development through education and employment (see Bourdieu, 1991) and thus central in the negotiation of power relations and recognition in the UK. The parents' recognition of English as a link to the majority society contributes to the negotiation of FLP.

Answering the second research question, this study has shown how language hierarchies are shaped situationally by perceived expectations regarding language use, in interaction with family members (parents' expectations; Farah's expectations during the English lessons), as well as individuals outside the family (judges in the court hearing). The described dynamics—a constantly changing focus and a balancing of needs and desires across family members—result in a dynamic assessment and valorisation of linguistic resources. This study contributes to previous research in showing how linguistic hierarchies are negotiated and re-negotiated dynamically: language ideologies change with migration, yet past beliefs and routines remain relevant in the diaspora. Sociolinguistic hierarchies may change in terms of the valorisation of Arabic as compared to English, as well as within the category of 'Arabic', i.e. elements perceived as non-standard vs. standard, when comparing interaction during and outside the Arabic lessons with Farah. The 'private LL' serves to reinforce expectations of language use in the home.

This has practical and theoretical implications for language maintenance in the diaspora (see Gaiser & Matras, 2020: 74). Family members negotiate what is understood as 'proficiencies' in language, as

they re-assess resources across space and time. Local and trans-local factors shape attitudes and hierarchies, with both the origin country and diaspora being central factor. A heritage language may be understood as a problem or resource (cf. Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Matras & Robertson, 2017; Ruiz, 1984). Perceptions of specific repertoire components as 'deficient' or 'proficient' may differ across settings, as actors and practices continuously define and re-define the values associated with standard vs. non-standard varieties, and majority vs 'heritage' languages.

To address the third research question, I have shown how the participant family is faced with the challenge to balance different needs and to solve a dilemma where two languages in their repertoire play central roles in communication and positioning in the diaspora setting. Unequal language skills in the majority language (in this case English) and in the heritage language (in this case Arabic) across speakers have an impact on perceived power relations. By making certain sets of language skills relevant in a given situation—e.g. Farah's proficiency in English during English lessons with her mother, or Aaya's knowledge of MSA and CA during Arabic lessons for Farah—a re-positioning of family members and re-shaping of family dynamics and roles takes place. In the wider diaspora, participants experience a sense of disempowerment if their English is perceived as limited or devalued, or if they are seen as dependent on interpreters.

Along with language users, their language ideologies, expectations and policies 'migrate' to the new setting. However, the diaspora prompts actors to negotiate and re-define beliefs and practices relating to 'language' (cf. Gaiser & Matras, 2020). Therefore, I argue

that changing linguistic hierarchies and the wider setting must be taken into account when studying FLP. I propose an understanding of FLP that emerges and operates within wider interactional regimes (cf. Blommaert et al., 2005; cf. Costa, 2019), where norms and expectations regarding language use are established and shaped by spoken or written language practices, inter-personal relations of power, and changing dynamics of how language resources are assessed. Furthermore, interactional regimes encompass the dynamics outside the family home and thus wider ideologies held in the diaspora setting and beyond. I argue that such dynamics are relevant to understanding FLP, as they condition how language resources are used and maintained, in private and public spaces.

More research is needed to investigate the exact ways in which language policies are negotiated in interaction and positioned within interactional regimes, in family settings and beyond. This will help offer insights into decision-making processes regarding language maintenance and wider aspects of language and identity in the diaspora.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Karatsareas (2020) draws on the example of standard and Cypriot Greek in their relationship with standard and Birmingham English.

2 The fact that Tareq speaks about a "rule" may be due to a potential misunderstanding, following my question about "roles". This does, however, not make his statement less meaningful.

3 This was the case mainly at the lexical level, e.g. the Syrian *ee* instead of the formal *na3am* to mean 'yes', or *mnih/mniha* instead of the formal *bikheir* for 'fine' in 'I am fine'.

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