

Toward a theory of positive psychology in supporting child-centred family language policy

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DECLARATION FORM



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I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's effort.

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CONTENTS

DECLARATION FORM	2
CONTENTS	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	5
ACRONYM	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1. The theory of Family Language Policy	12
2.2. Criticism of Family Language Policy theory	15
2.3. Positive psychology theory	17
2.4. Positive psychology and language learning	19
2.5. Positive psychology and Family Language Policy	20
2.5.1. Role of positive psychology in shaping language beliefs and ideology	21
2.5.2. Role of positive psychology in language practices and language management	22
2.6. Conclusion	25
3. METHODOLOGY REVIEW	27
3.1. Introduction and Justification for Methodology	27
3.2. Population and Sample	29
3.3. Data collection	31
3.4. Data analysis	33
3.5. Ethics	34
3.6. Issues of trustworthiness	35
4. RESULTS	38
4.1. Family A: Historical body, discourses in place and language ideology ..	38
4.2. Family A: Interaction order and strategies	42
4.3. Family B: Historical body, discourses in place and language ideology ..	44
4.4. Family B: Interactive order and strategies	47
5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	51
5.1. Research question 1	51
5.2. Research question 2	52
5.3. Research question 3	52
6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	57
7. REFERENCES	60
8. APPENDICES	69
8.1. Appendices 1 Ethics Form	69

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on exploring the role of positive psychology in the design of child-centred family language policy (FLP) to support home language maintenance in transnational bilingual families with young children learning two or more languages simultaneously at home. This study aims to understand and describe how FLP is co-constructed by the members of transnational bilingual families who have sought to build a child-centred FLP and practices to facilitate building a thriving environment for bilingual language maintenance. In doing this, the research aims to understand the role and use of positive psychology in such attempts to develop a theoretical model explaining successful bilingual home language maintenance through positive FLP strategies. The study uses data collected from online blogs in which bilingual families share their experiences and strategies in raising active bilingual children. Based on the literature and the findings of the data, the study develops a theoretical model titled “Positive FLP model for child-centred home language maintenance” which connects the elements of positive psychology, the micro-elements of FLP, as well as macro elements shaping the FLP that form parental language beliefs and ideology based on their personal experiences and considering the societal context in which the family resides. The findings contribute to a psychologically oriented stream of studies on FLP and offer valuable insights for transnational families seeking more effective and meaningful strategies to enhance home language maintenance.

Key words: Family language policy, FLP, OPOL, positive psychology, home language, bilingualism, multilingualism.

ACRONYMS

FLP Family Language Policy

ML@H Minority Language at Home

OPOL One Parent One Language

1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on exploring the role of positive psychology in design of child-centred family language policy (FLP) to support home language maintenance in transnational bilingual families with young children learning two or more languages simultaneously at home. Special focus will be paid to children between 3-5 years old who already are bilingual but who are at risk of losing one of their languages when they begin childcare services or pre-school outside home and thus get more exposure in the majority language of the society (De Houwer, 2009). Such a problem is often faced by transnational families living in contexts where the home language is not a common minority language of that society. Transnational families are typically of immigrant or expatriate origin, and they often maintain close connections with people and culture of their home/heritage countries. They often have a different set of experiences, responses and expectations regarding their children's' language development compared with other types of bilingual families (Moustaoui Srhir, 2020; Wang, 2022). Furthermore, they often lack supportive societal institutions such as bilingual schooling in the home language in their respective societies.

Against this backdrop, the study is motivated by the profound question: Why do some transnational families successfully maintain and pass their home language to their children while some do not? This question has been a focus of researchers for decades, as the practice has shown that many children who grow up in a bilingual family do not necessarily learn to speak their home languages or may stop using the home language at some point and communicate in the societal language with the parents (De Houwer, 2015). This baffling situation has been addressed by previous research focusing on different aspects. Some have focused on the processes of bilingual language development and the role of parental attitudes, beliefs,

interactional strategies, as well as the role of language input in child bilingualism (De Houwer, 2009, 2021; Lee et al., 2015) while other researchers, such as Lanza (2007), and Nakamura (2018) have explored the role of parental discourse strategies and what kind of conversational techniques and behaviour have proven more successful in developing children's language skills in the minority/home language.

Such aspects fall within the broad scope of studies on FLP that aim to understand families' language beliefs, parents' language management efforts and practices, and how they manifest in specific language choices and strategies at home (Surrain, 2021). While FLP can be understood as explicit and overt planning in some families in terms of "*what families actually do with language in day-to-day interactions; their beliefs and ideologies about language and language use; and their goals and efforts to shape language use and learning outcomes*" (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 909), FLP can also include more subtle, invisible laissez-faire practices in other families (Caldas, 2012). Studies on FLP are positioned on the crossroads between child language acquisition and language policy, to understand what kind of policies and practices are considered "successful" in achieving certain family goals with regards to their bilingual children's language development and maintenance (Smith-Christmas, Bergroth and Bezcioglu-Göktolga, 2019). While the term "successful" may have different interpretations, it is generally understood as resulting in active bilingualism in which a child can operate in two or more languages across different language domains (Grosjean, 1985). From a language development perspective, "success" can also be considered part of harmonious bilingual development in which both/all languages develop in parallel (De Houwer, 2015, 2021). Success can also refer to an optimal outcome of "balanced bilingualism" in

which one masters both/all languages equally well and proficiently (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986; Chin and Wigglesworth, 2007; Fishman et al., 1971).

This study aims to understand and describe how FLP is co-constructed by the members of transnational bilingual families who have aimed to build a child-centred FLP and practices to facilitate building a successful environment for bilingual language maintenance. In doing this, the research aims to understand the role and use of positive psychology in such attempts to develop a theoretical model explaining successful bilingual home language maintenance through positive FLP strategies. This topic was selected due to a call for more psychologically-oriented approaches towards FLP to understand this field from a new perspective which has been seen essential for further development of the field (Smith-Christmas, 2016; Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023). The theory and practice of positive psychology has been identified as a new potential area of focus for studies on FLP that aim to understand the role of positive emotions and experiences in facilitating language acquisition in home settings (e.g. Dewaele et al., 2019; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Oxford, et al., 2015). Researchers have recently focused on different aspects underpinning positive psychology, such as the role of affective reactions, positive emotions and well-being in bilingual families (e.g. De Houwer, 2015, 2020; Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023; Juvonen et al., 2020; Sevinç and Mirvahedi, 2022), which signals an interest towards positive psychology and its applications for FLP.

Furthermore, the choice of investigating positive psychology and FLP from a child-centred perspective, with the entire family as a unit of analysis, has been recommended as important for understanding FLP in reality, as FLP is a “*dynamic and jointly constructed enterprise*” (Palviainen and Boyd, 2013, p. 224) in bilingual families. As characterized by Lanza and Gomes (2020, p. 158), the family is “a

community of practice, a social unit that has its norms for speaking, acting and believing, and hence provides a focus on praxis, the cornerstone of language socialization". Therefore, a successful FLP is not merely imposed top-down by parents upon children, but children also pose their own agency which they use in negotiating their own language use in bilingual families (Smith-Christmas, 2016, 2020, 2021), which signals the importance of considering child-centred approaches in the design of effective FLP.

The research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How can elements of positive psychology facilitate the design of effective FLP and practices for child-centred home language maintenance?
2. How have transnational bilingual families transferred such elements into their FLP to support home language maintenance?
3. How do transnational bilingual families co-construct a successful child-centred FLP to support home language maintenance?

To answer the first research question, the research builds a literature review to understand FLP and the elements of positive psychology that can contribute to it. To answer the second and third question, the study uses data from bilingual family online blogs in which bilingual families share their experiences and strategies in raising bilingual children. A blog (short for weblog) refers to narratives on a platform on the Internet that are published regularly, often written in diary-style or around specific topics, which often contain a combination of writing, images, videos and links to other sources (Garden, 2012). Blogs were selected as the primary source of data, as blogs have recently been suggested as rich data sources for studies on FLP as many parents engage in digital storytelling through blogging (Lanza, 2020).

The findings of this study aim to contribute to the stream of research on FLP that focuses on psychologically oriented approaches in understanding effective FLP practices (e.g. De Houwer, 2021; Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023; Juvonen, et al., 2020). The findings are also crucial to transnational families, which constitute a growing global demographic phenomenon due to the increasing mobility of people across borders (Bryceson, 2019). Such families may benefit from practices and behaviours underpinned by positive psychology to support their children to maintain and develop their home languages in meaningful and enjoyable ways, which is expected to contribute to the well-being of the entire family (Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023).

This dissertation consists of six chapters. After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 consists of a literature review of the key topics related to FLP and positive psychology. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological design of the study. Chapter 4 presents the key findings that describe FLP in two transnational families, while Chapter 5 discusses these findings, answers the research questions, and develops a theory of positive psychology in supporting child-centred FLP. Lastly, Chapter 6 provides the concluding statements of the study, recommendations for the practice and theory, and suggests areas for future studies based on the limitations of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The theory of Family Language Policy

Any successful FLP requires awareness and management of motivation toward home language learning (Schwartz, 2010; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013). Thus, motivation significantly predicts children's ability to become proficient bilinguals. Zurer-Pearson (2008) illustrates that one's genes control about 50% of language learning ability, whereas the remaining 50% is explained through the home environment and how parents facilitate home language learning. In language socialisation at home, parents can effectively promote language learning by ensuring sufficient exposure to the language and offering live interaction with the language through active listening, as well as controlling how language is used, including what is being said (Zurer-Pearson, 2008).

As discussed in the Introduction, FLP refers to families' activities and strategies to facilitate effective transmission of the home language to children. In more detail, Spolsky's theoretical model of FLP (Spolsky, 2004) divides FLP into three interrelated dimensions:

- *Language practices* (all activities that people in a family do consistently and customarily with the home language)
- *Language beliefs or ideology* (beliefs guiding language choices and use)
- *Language management* (attempts through which a family aims to manage, intervene, or control language use to achieve desired linguistic outcomes).

The first component refers to various language practices families use to transmit the home language, which is one of the most studied aspects of FLP. As a pre-requisite, it is assumed that the caregivers are proficient speakers of the home language to pass the language to the children through one of the possible strategies (Zurer Pearson, 2008).

One such practice is the One Parent One Language (OPOL) strategy, where one parent or caregiver uses a particular language different from the other parent or caregiver in the household (Venables, Eisenclas and Schalley, 2014). Another typical approach is the Minority Language at Home (ML@H) strategy, which assumes that both parents/caregivers share the same minority language, different from the majority language in that society, and use it at home systematically (Zurer Pearson, 2008). Other methods include, for instance, the “time and place” strategy, where the minority language is used in specific settings, such as on a particular day of the week, or during some time, such as during family dinner time (Zurer Pearson, 2008). Some families also mix these strategies or have developed their own ones. Regardless, all language strategies aim to socialise the child into the target language, expecting the child to learn the language through the selected strategy. The success rate of such methods is highly arbitrary, as reliable statistics on bilingualism do not generally exist. Studies on bilingual development are also somewhat biased, as most studies focus on samples of active bilinguals, whereas other forms of bilingualism, such as reactive bilingualism are not generally captured by studies (Zurer Pearson, 2008).

The second component of Spolsky (2004) on language beliefs or ideology describes underlying attitudes and emotions towards a language and its learning, which influences the other two components. Studies on bilingualism have suggested that two pre-conditions predict children’s early bilingual development; first, the caregivers must have a positive attitude towards the home language (that the home language is valuable and will benefit the child), and second, they must hold an “impact belief” - a belief that the caregivers’ own home language usage and efforts in language socialisation will have an impact on child’s language learning (De Houwer,

2009; Lee et al., 2015; Nakamura, 2019). A bilingual child should also develop a positive attitude and desire to learn the home language and view it as valuable to ensure optimal language learning (Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023; Zurer Pearson, 2008). Furthermore, FLP is also influenced by attitudes and beliefs toward the home language and the majority language(s) held by the society, as well as by other important people and institutions shaping children's life and language learning (Kaveh and Lenz, 2022; Lee et al., 2015; Seo, 2017). In general, when a language is perceived positively, for example, when it is expected to offer some economic, social and/or symbolic gains to an individual, it forms more positive attitudes and supportive ideologies in transmitting and learning that language (Albury, 2020). In contrast, languages with limited instrumental value may hinder the motivation to learn and use it (Edwards, 1994). Society and its attitude towards bilingualism, whether seen as a problem, resource or a right, also profoundly affects bilinguals' identity, language beliefs and practices (Ruiz, 1984).

The third component of Spolsky (2004) refers to attempts to manage the process of home language learning. Families that aim to raise their children bilingually need to decide on how to achieve their aims and adjust their goals and strategies as the child grows older (Piller and Gerber, 2021). Families must decide on their children's ideal language goals across all linguistic competencies and engage in activities to support reaching such goals. First, a child needs to learn to understand and speak in the home language, and later, other linguistic competencies of reading and writing can be developed (Bialystok, Luk and Kwan, 2005). On a micro-level, the family can shape a child's language environment, especially in a child's formative years (Seo, 2017). Families can influence, for example, how much home language is used at home, by interacting with other speakers of the home language, selecting a

school where the child can learn the home language (if such an option exists in their community), and through other means, such as by spending family holidays in settings where the home language is used as societal language or by exposing the child to media and literature in the target language (Zurer Pearson, 2008). However, when bilingual children go to preschool or school and start to socialise more with other people outside the home, their linguistic environments often gravitate towards the majority language of society. A typical outcome of such a scenario is that the child begins to use the majority language more at home, and the home language proficiency declines rapidly unless the family intervenes (De Houwer, 2009). Therefore, families need to revise their FLP as the child grows older to ensure sufficient exposure to the home language and its development to mitigate the pressures of societal language dominance (De Houwer, 2009).

2.2. Criticism of Family Language Policy theory

Having developed an FLP does not necessarily guarantee optimal desired language outcomes. Furthermore, following the components of the FLP model is not necessarily straight-forward. For example, empirical studies on certain language strategies, such as OPOL, have established that a strict use of a particular language transmission strategy is rarely used in practice (Danjo, 2021; Palviainen and Boyd, 2013; Piller and Gerber, 2021; Smith-Christmas, Bergroth, and Bezcioglu-Göktolga, 2019) and rigid use of such a bilingual parenting strategy does not guarantee successful transmission of the home language and may result in unintended consequences, such as anxiety for the child to use the home language (Sevinç, 2020; Sevinç and Dewaele, 2018; Xiao and Wong, 2014), or the child may refuse to speak

the home language even when he/she understands it (Nakamura, 2018) due to various emotional responses to the home language.

Sevinç and Mirvahedi (2022) criticise previous research on FLP for overlooking the role of emotions in language socialisation, as there has been a limited focus on emotions overall, especially on an individual level, and most research has focused on attitudes, and particularly parental and community attitudes towards bilingualism. Previous studies exploring emotions in FLP tend to focus on identifying negative emotions, such as anxiety bilingual children feel in their development (e.g. Sevinç, 2020). In contrast, only a few studies have very recently explored the role of both positive emotions (such as pride and confidence), and negative emotions (such as regret, remorse, guilt, and disappointment) felt by children and parents of bilingual families over their children's bilingual development (Kaveh and Lenz, 2022; Little, 2022; Naborn, Van De Mierop and Zenner, 2022). As Wang (2022) illustrated, negative emotions often predominate in parental discourses on FLP. Such feelings are usually caused by negative sentiments towards their children's resistance to the FLP and due to a child's deteriorating home language proficiency as the child gets older. However, positive emotions attached to the FLP and allowing children to use their own agency in their home language use have been recently suggested as crucial elements resulting in balanced bilingualism and intentions to maintain the home language (Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023). Other studies also indicate the concept of "child agency" as an important element in effective FLP strategies (e.g. Smith-Christmas, 2020, 2021).

One needs to consider various factors in combination to understand the mechanism of positive psychology and how to optimise its strategies in supporting children's bilingual development. Recent studies on FLP (e.g. Jo, Richardson and de

Jong, 2023), therefore, have called for more humanistic and child-centred, positive methods for developing more effective ideologies and practices to facilitate bilingual language learning, which is the focus of the following sections.

2.3. Positive psychology theory

Positive psychology as a concept dates back to 1954 when Abraham Maslow coined the term (Baker, Green and Falecki, 2017), but it was made more popular by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who launched positive psychology as a scientific field of research (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology is understood to differ from the general approach of psychology, which focuses on aspects that distress a person and, instead, positive psychology emphasises well-being and aspects of personal strength rather than weaknesses (Linley et al., 2011; Lopez and Gallagher, 2011). Essentially, positive psychology aims to discover what makes people to thrive by adopting more functional behaviour and greater resilience (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology is interested in finding how certain “positive” behaviours and emotions such as hope, courage, well-being, optimism, resilience, creativity, as well as happiness and positive experiences, facilitate motivation and learning (Dewaele et al., 2019; MacIntyre, 2002). It should not be confused with positive thinking, wishful thinking, or being simply cheerful (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

A central assumption of positive psychology theory is that positive emotions and behaviour are expected to act as strong predictors of motivation. This explains how and why some people thrive, as motivation is often considered a reason for directing a person to engage in a particular behaviour to achieve a goal. While attitudes are also part of positive psychology (Peterson, 2006), attitude is not synonymous with

emotion, but is best understood as part of emotion. Attitude is generally understood to refer to how one evaluates an object, concept, or behaviour of interest, and whether that is perceived as something that one likes or dislikes or perceives as desirable or not desirable (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2000), whereas emotion can be defined as “*a personal feeling derived from one’s current internal status, mood, circumstances, historical context, and external stimuli*” (Wang, 2007, p.2). Emotion, like attitudes, can be either positive or negative, but emotions are understood to be more deeply held values compared to attitudes (Peterson, 2006). Beliefs are stronger and more specific evaluations than attitudes, and they are best understood as strong feelings, which are often supported by certain emotions (Peterson, 2006).

While attitudes can explain motivation, there is not necessarily a causal relationship between them (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). For example, a positive attitude towards something, such as home language learning, is not enough to explain whether or how well one learns the language. One can have a positive attitude towards a language, but still choose not to use the language or to learn that language. Emotions, on the other hand, and particularly positive emotions such as joy and love, are closely connected to desires and willingness, which both relate to conscious, deliberate and voluntary action to reach some goals (Wang, 2007), whereas the opposite can be expected for negative emotions. Powerful emotions, often felt during so-called “peak experiences”, effectively connect the benefits of positive emotions and their impact on cognition and learning (Oxford et al., 2015). Emotions are also social constructs and often originate in social relationships as people engage with each other (Gordon, 1981).

One of the most known practical tools of positive psychology is the PERMA model, which focuses on five pillars of positive psychology; *positive emotions*,

feeling of *engagement* in the process, *relationships*, *meaning* (feeling of a purpose in life) and *accomplishment* (Seligman, 2011). Elsewhere, Peterson (2006) has suggested a three-component framework that consists of *positive subjective experiences* (such as happiness, joy and pleasure), *positive individual traits* (character strength, interests, values and talents), and *positive institutions* (such as family, school, and society). It is expected that the latter influences the first two elements (Peterson, 2006). When comparing these two models, they share two common aspects; positive emotions and having positive connections or networks (relationships with other people and institutions providing such connections), but they differ in the other elements as the PERMA model focuses also on feelings of meaning, accomplishment and engagement which are expected to contribute to positive self-concept and making actions more enjoyable. The PERMA model, however, does not consider positive individual traits like the Peterson (2006) framework. However, such aspects can also explain why people thrive and how they can use their inner character strength and personality to their advantage.

2.4. Positive psychology and language learning

Positive psychology applied to learning is best understood as the application of interventions that teach resilience, positive emotions, engagement and meaning (Seligman et al. 2009). The psychology of language learning emphasises the role of positive emotions such as joy, gratitude and happiness and certain positive behaviours that enhance language learning (Dewaele et al., 2019). When positive emotions support learning, it is more likely to support resilience, which is vital in language learning and bilingual development (Oxford et al., 2015). Various empirical studies have explored the use and benefits of positive psychology to enhance learning and to

enhance bilingual language competencies. For example, a study by Arguedas, Daradoumis and Xhafa Xhafa (2016) showed how positive feedback and behaviour, and particularly the existence of positive emotion of joy, had a significant impact on students' learning ability and motivation, while negative emotions such as shame, frustration, fear and anxiety had a strong negative effect on motivation and achievement.

Mortimore (2017), on the other hand, explored the use of mindfulness, another applied form of positive psychology, and its impact on lessening anxiety and increasing attentional skills and emotional awareness amongst foreign language learners in primary school. The findings revealed that the second-year test group showed significant improvement in their speaking, reading, writing and listening skills in the foreign language compared to the control group; however, the findings were not supported by the third-year students (Mortimore, 2017). Overall, the use of approaches underpinned by positive psychology in classrooms and other educational settings can generate a long-lasting impact on learning and increase individual and group well-being and belongingness (Sevinç and Mirvahedi, 2022).

2.5. Positive psychology and Family Language Policy

When viewing FLP through the lens of positive psychology, the previously discussed three-component theory of FLP (Spolsky, 2004) lacks elements that would motivate the child to learn a language as it focuses more on what parents do to transmit the language and how to manage or intervene in children's language development based on their beliefs and language ideologies. However, a successful FLP leading to effective home language transfer and maintenance may benefit from motivational techniques underpinned by positive psychology, according to the principles of

motivation theory applied to language learning (cf. Gardner, Lalonde and Moorcroft, 1985). This section thus aims to synthesise the elements of positive psychology to understand how such elements can contribute towards an effective FLP.

2.5.1. Role of positive psychology in shaping language beliefs and ideology

As discussed previously, beliefs and attitudes are important parts of positive psychology as they form strong ideologies that guide human behaviour. In the context of FLP, the caregivers must believe in their skills, ability and importance of transmitting their language to the children and have a positive attitude towards the language and bilingualism. In reality, many parents may have negative attitudes and beliefs about bilingualism, which are often based on persistent myths about the negative cognitive effects of bilingualism (Baker and Wright, 2021), or may have a negative perception of their own ability to transmit the home language (Surrain, 2021). They may also receive advice from schools or speech therapists to refrain from using the home language to improve a child's community language skills (Zurer Pearson, 2008). Such advice often negatively shapes parents' attitudes, beliefs and emotions, which may change their language management strategies, practices and goals.

Positive psychology, as discussed earlier, places great importance on the community and people surrounding an individual, as relationships and having a feeling of purpose in life and supportive institutions are essential elements shaping one's life and well-being. Such aspects are important for a successful FLP as well. During formative years, a bilingual child's most crucial speech community is the family. Later, it extends to other institutions, such as schools, where a different

language is often used as a means of instruction. Therefore, having a supportive family and other people in the speech community as well as a supportive school environment is considered essential for FLP. Curdt-Christiansen (2022) proposes that the home and school should collaborate to facilitate the well-being of bilingual children and to ensure rich linguistic and supportive environments for bilingual children, which can be best facilitated through positive public discourses on bilingualism. To foster positive attitudes and beliefs, parents, teachers, and policy-makers would also benefit from more awareness of the benefits of bilingualism and the characteristics of bilingual learners, which make them different from monolinguals (Bouko et al., 2020). When the network surrounding a child's linguistic environment is supportive and positive, it can help the child to develop more positive attitudes, beliefs and behaviour towards home language learning and maintenance.

2.5.2. Role of positive psychology in language practices and language management

Studies on FLP that focus on language management have addressed strategies through which caregivers aim to influence their children's home language use, and particularly the way caregivers respond to a child's use of mixed utterances involving multiple languages, the phenomenon known as code-switching and code-mixing (Lanza, 1997, 1998). Code-mixing involves the use of specific word(s) of Language 2 in a sentence formed in Language 1, whereas code code-switching involves a change from one language to another at sentence level (Baker, 2011). Studies particularly on code-switching have demonstrated that the strategy caregivers use in such scenarios where a child switches from the home/minority language to the majority language, and how a parent reacts to that, profoundly affects a child's later bilingual development. When

parents make efforts to insist and encourage children to respond in the home language and to fix their mixed utterances, it gives them a better opportunity to develop the home language. It socialises them into systematic use of the home language, whereas strategies where parents “move on” or switch the language themselves has been found to result in passive child bilingualism (e.g. Lanza, 1998). Language correction is also an essential part of language management (Dodson, 1995). However, language correction may also be perceived negatively by the child, resulting in parent-child conflicts and demotivation for the child to use the home language (Surrain, 2021).

Studies have also addressed how many bilingual families, especially those following the ML@H approach, prefer to insist on the use of the home language at home exclusively to ensure maximal home language exposure (Lee et al., 2015; Surrain, 2021). Parents are also often resourceful with their attempts to manage the language environment and use rich methods of linguistic exposure (Arnaus Gil et al., 2021; Lanza, 1998). Bilingual families use various tools and techniques, such as bilingual children’s literature, cartoons and television shows, and popular culture and social media content to help with home language management (Lee and Gupta, 2020; Lee et al., 2015).

FLP research on language management still largely lacks understanding of different parental behaviours and *how* caregivers can effectively engage with children to achieve their language goals with such intervention techniques. Studies on young children’s language learning in home settings thus are of importance to understand this aspect. Such studies have revealed interesting insights for understanding positive psychology’s role in language learning at home. For example, the findings of Hart and Risley (1992, 1995) established that family environment and the interactional ways how parents engage with their children to enhance language exposure have a

significant effect on children's linguistic development, as well as intellectual growth (measured through Intelligence Quotient [IQ] scores). While bilingual language learning was not the focus of the studies of Hart and Risley (1992, 1995), their findings can nevertheless inform studies on FLP, as young children's language learning at home is similar whether the child learns one or two languages simultaneously. The findings of Hart and Risley (1992, 1995) implied that those children who experienced positive attention (such as parental interest towards the child and their topics of interest) and who received positive feedback from parents (such as praise and responding to child-initiated topics enthusiastically) were able to score systematically higher in their language and IQ scores compared to those children who heard many negative statements and prohibitions. This finding implies that the use of positive psychology by caregivers through positive feedback and engagement methods potentially influences language learning. Furthermore, the results of Hart and Risley (1992) revealed several important parental behaviours towards a child's language learning, which included the following:

- Using frequent verbal encouragement and praise
- Using close physical interaction methods between the caregiver and the child
- Having close interaction with the child even while doing other work
- Joining in the child's activity and responding to the child supportively when the child tries to communicate
- Responding to and expanding child-initiated topics in conversation
- Using exciting materials to support language learning
- Avoiding restriction and punishment

These above listed behaviours can be understood as elements of "positive parental behaviour" that support language learning, and such interactional methods and

behaviours can potentially benefit bilingual families in developing a child-centred FLP. As positive psychology places importance on positive emotions, feeling of engagement in the process, and feelings of accomplishment (Seligman, 2011), such emotions and feelings can be applied to the methods of how home language is used and how the child experiences the language. Furthermore, parents should not hold over-demanding expectations of their child's language development but rather be realistic.

Parents should also be cautious of the possible negative emotions children feel with strict language imposition through OPOL or ML@H, or the negative impact of parents overly correcting their children's language use; for example, grammatical mistakes (Zurer Pearson, 2008). While not correcting a child's grammatical errors can result in language fossilisation in which the child makes many grammatical mistakes consistently, due to limited skills in the target language (Dodson, 1995), it is essential for parents to consider when and how to correct a child's language use. Also, when correcting language use, parents should explore ways which make language learning enjoyable, engaging, rewarding and offer a sense of feeling of accomplishment for the child. Furthermore, as suggested by positive psychology, parents could draw from their children's individual traits and characteristics to discover what kind of methods the children would prefer to help them learn the language enjoyably.

2.6. Conclusion

The previous sections discussed different thematic areas that can help to understand effective FLP through the role of positive psychology. The table below summarises the key concepts behind the theories and their linkages. These key concepts further guided the research design discussed in the next chapter.

Table 1. Summary and linkage of the theories on FLP, positive psychology and positive parental behaviours supporting language learning

Elements of FLP	Elements of positive psychology	Elements of positive parental behaviours
Language practices	Positive emotions and subjective experiences, accomplishment	Encouragement and praise, child-initiated topics and activities, using interesting materials to support language learning
Language beliefs and ideology	Positive individual traits, positive institutions	Positive language beliefs and ideology guiding their actions and behaviour
Language management	Feeling of engagement, relationships, meaning	Close interaction between parent and child, avoiding restriction and punishment

3. METHODOLOGY REVIEW

3.1. Introduction and Justification for Methodology

To understand how transnational bilingual families with young bilingual children have transferred elements of positive psychology into their strategies in home language maintenance and approaches underpinning their FLP, this study obtained data from transnational families' online blogs to understand this phenomenon through real-life applications. Such data offer intimate and rich data sources of bilingual families' encounters with the challenges and successes in transmitting and maintaining the home language; therefore, such data sources are suggested as essential for contemporary studies on FLP (Lanza, 2020). Furthermore, such data provide an opportunity to understand how bilingual family members negotiate their identities, agency and expertise (Lanza, 2020), which can offer important insights for other bilingual families.

The increasing influence and abundance of online environments offer a versatile source of data for researchers in different areas of social sciences (Kurtz et al., 2017; Eastham, 2011). Virtual texts, in the form of discussion boards, blogs and vlogs, offer rich sources of data for qualitative analysis, and content on platforms such as blogs can even be considered forms of online ethnographic research as the content creators often share detailed accounts of their observations and experiences, which then can be used by researchers for their own purposes (Kurtz et al., 2017).

Methodologically, studies using online content such as blogs pose multiple opportunities and challenges for research (Kurtz et al., 2017; Lanza, 2020). A benefit of such a data source is its non-intrusive nature as the researcher does not have to intervene in families' private lives (Eastham, 2011; Lanza, 2020). Thus, the narrative data obtained through blogs is not biased by the research process, unlike in most

primary data collection methods in which the subjects may give pleasing answers to the researcher (Jones and Alony, 2008). An additional benefit of blog-based data is the availability of longitudinal content as many blogs may be generated over several years (Jones and Alony, 2008), whereas studies with cross-sectional data collection methods are typically limited to shorter time spans.

Regarding FLP content, the strategies in raising bilingual children generated and shared by bloggers are also typically genuine and candid, and such blogs often also feature comments from other parents who have tested similar methods with positive results. Hence, the methods suggested by bloggers can be considered potentially more reliable than ones observed in natural settings by observing families' interaction in private homes, where the observation time is limited, or data collected through parent interviews, as parents may not be able to articulate precisely "what works and why" in their family. However, one needs to be cautious of the reliability and validity of blog data, as the blog content can also be fictitious, and some bloggers may decidedly post content that is aimed to please its intended target audience, and the researcher has no means to verify or validate the data (Jones and Alony, 2008).

Blogs have been suggested as essential tools for studies on FLP as blogging and video blogging (vlogging) have become the mainstream activities of many families (Lanza, 2020). Users of such tools thus intentionally blur the boundaries of private and public life, as one documents and publishes personal life experiences on publicly available platforms to share it with others (Eastham, 2011) and often also invites others to participate in the discussions by enabling them to comment on the posts (Rettberg, 2008), with as many as 90% of bloggers allowing comments on their posts (Eastham, 2011, p. 355). Thus, bilingual families publishing content on blogs have decided to make the family a public space (Lanza, 2020).

3.2. Population and Sample

As blogging is a significant phenomenon around multiple topics of interest, a plethora of blogs can be found online that constitute the population. The initial methodological challenge with using blogs as data sources is identifying relevant content for the study and defining a proper sample. Studies utilising internet content as a data source recommend a staged approach to finding the right content and for selecting the sample (Kurtz et al., 2017). The present study thus followed a similar approach. In the initial screening (stage 1), the search engine Google was used with keywords “bilingual family blog” and “multilingual family blog”. The initial searches on Google rendered 14,800,000 and 6,870,000 results, respectively (as of January 6, 2023). These websites were then scrutinised in more detail (stage 2) to identify blogs with the right content.

While determining a reliable sample size a priori is difficult if not impossible in qualitative research, qualitative researchers should use established principles in deciding on an appropriate sample, such as looking for average sample sizes used by other researchers on the given topic and/or with similar analytical approaches (Sim et al., 2018). Empirical studies on FLP often focus on a small number of families, with some studies focusing on a single family (e.g. Little, 2022), while less typically exceeding samples of 10 families (e.g. Wang, 2022). Studies on FLP that have utilised the nexus analysis approach, which is the analytical approach of the present study, have used small sample sizes, typically not exceeding three families (Palviainen and Boyd, 2013; Smith-Christmas, Bergroth and Bezcioglu-Göktolga, 2019). The present study focused on two families to align the sample size with other empirical studies in

the domain. While the sample size is relatively small, it can be considered sufficient for theory-building with qualitative research approaches (Gustafsson, 2017).

Screening for relevant blogs began with filtering blogs generated through Google search results with relevant content. As a result, the initial screening revealed 23 blogs, which were further scrutinised. As suggested by studies with blog-based data sources, researchers must filter identified blogs based on their types (e.g. personal, corporate, educational and team blogs) to identify the best source for the study (Eastham, 2011; Jones and Alony, 2008). Thus, all 23 blogs were explored to categorise different types and to identify a set with more personal content focusing on family language policy and practices to maintain the home language. In this process, most blogs were excluded from the sample, as some were, for example, platform blogs (such as ones listing websites recommended for families raising multilingual children, or platforms where parents share their ideas and activities). Also, those that had a narrow focus (for example, websites promoting specific ideas, such as the role of books and literacy to support bilingualism), or very limited content with only a few posts on bilingualism (often found in generic parenting blogs, blogs for expatriates, or in “mommy blogs¹”) were discarded. Those that primarily aimed to spread knowledge on bilingualism without any personal reporting of parent-child engagement on bilingual development were also excluded, as the focus was on identifying blogs in which families share their personal beliefs and practices. Furthermore, commercial websites/blogs primarily set up for selling particular services, such as family language consulting services, or those that required site registration and/or payment to access content, were excluded. Lastly, blogs that focused on non-native bilingual parenting (where parents aim to transmit one of the

¹ A particular type of blogging where mothers post content on motherhood and other topics of their interest (Lopez, 2009).

languages they have learnt as a foreign language) were disregarded as well. This step narrowed the potential sample to 11.

The 11 blogs were analysed further to identify those with the richest set of data available for the present study, and where the families used languages that the researcher also understands. Thus, the sampling method applied is best described as purposive sampling (Mason, 2002). In this process, blogs with limited postings and information were excluded. After evaluating the remaining blogs, two with the richest data set were selected as the resultant sample. Data richness was assessed through the quantity and quality of the blog posts and other content posted on social media. Selected bloggers had comprehensive websites or social media sites where content on bilingualism and their bilingual family life was shared openly. Besides raising their children as active bilinguals, the bloggers also offered paid services, such as consultancy, public speaking, or had published books on bilingualism, making them credible data sources.

3.3. Data collection

Data collection focused on written text and video content found on the blogs or the bloggers' other social media platforms (Facebook and Youtube). Data collection focused on the most recent years, or on the years when the bloggers' children were between 3-5 years old. As discussed earlier, this timeframe was selected as it is considered a critical time for maintaining the home language, as the children often begin formal daycare or preschool/school at that age and, therefore, attempts to maintain the home language become crucial (De Houwer, 2009).

The discourse available on the blogs and bloggers' other platforms offered insightful information on the families and their FLP (especially information related to

caregivers' attitudes and beliefs on bilingualism and FLP). Textual data available on the blogs were collected and transferred to Microsoft Word for coding and data analysis. When such information was in audio or video format, the content was recorded on a voice recording device, transcribed and coded. Furthermore, video material that showed caregivers' interaction methods with the children was searched to analyse how discourses were used in the family. Therefore, video files were selected from each blogger that best showed family interaction, and notes were taken to capture the essence of such interactions. One blogger included some transcriptions of the family conversations in English, but when a translation was not provided, the researcher's linguistic background with a basic understanding of the spoken family languages was an advantage. On occasions when the researcher's language comprehension of the video content was not sufficient, the audio was recorded and transcribed with Airgram transcription software (<https://www.airgram.io/>), which transcribes audio or text in eight different languages (English, Spanish, German, French, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese), including the languages used by the sample families.

Data coding followed the principles of the discourse analysis method (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007); first, the data was decontextualised from the original context and codes were assigned to units of meaning in discourse, (codes for different emotions such as "hope", "resilience", "anxiety", and various experiences such as "success"). This was followed by re-contextualisation in which the coded data was examined to identify patterns and central relationships and connections between underlying categories (such as positive emotions and successful interaction strategies). In this step, the nexus analysis method, which is discussed in the next section, was used to guide the analysis.

3.4. Data analysis

Discourse analysis is considered a suitable data analysis approach for blog-based data (Jones and Alony, 2008). Discourse analysis refers to a set of qualitative, interpretive, and analytical methods that aim to discover how individuals achieve desired goals, whether individual, social or political, through the strategic use of language (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). The present study used a specific discourse analysis technique known as the nexus analysis method (Scollon and Scollon, 2004) to report the data through the theory and concepts of positive psychology to develop a framework for understanding the mechanism in the construction of child-centred family language policy and practices for supportive home language maintenance.

The nexus analysis method focuses on identifying “social actions” and crucial “actors” involved in such actions to observe the methods of interaction between the actors and what kind of significant discourses, shaped by their past experiences, habits and identity, guide their actions (Palviainen and Boyd, 2013). Such an approach was deemed suitable for the present study in which the unit of analysis was the bilingual family forming the nexus, and the family members of the particular family constituted the actors. The discourses, on the other hand, focused on explicit discourse strategies of bilingual families regarding positive strategies they use as part of their FLP and the beliefs guiding such practices.

Thus, the nexus analysis technique can be powerful as it facilitates understanding of how ideas or objects are linked together (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). The method draws from considering three aspects that constitute social action: the *discourses in place* (i.e. in some social arrangement individuals form a social group), the *interaction order* (how actors in that social group interact with each other) and the *historical body* (which focuses on the life experiences of the individual social actors

guiding their behaviour) (Scollon and Scollon, 2004). These three aspects are thus used as the analytical framework for reporting the blog data in the present study. In doing this, the historical body focused on identifying how the parent-bloggers' prior experiences and beliefs about language transmission have shaped their FLP and discourses in place (what kind of discourses are produced by the blogger). The discourses in place and historical body are expected to capture the language beliefs and ideology guiding language practices and language management (Spolsky, 2004), while the interaction order can reveal the dynamics of how language is being used in bilingual families (Smith-Christmas, Bergroth and Bezcioglu-Göktolga, 2019), and whether and how the elements of positive psychology were used in such family interactions.

3.5. Ethics

There are certainly ethical considerations with the use of blogs as data sources. While the nature of the blogs is making the family a public space, the content may be often highly personal, although the blogger decides which content to post and whether to make the content publicly available (Eastham, 2011). The researcher must also choose whether to use pseudonyms when reporting blog-based content or use bloggers' actual names (or identifying the blog's name). The researcher must also consider whether the consent of the blogger is needed for the study. Eastham (2011) suggests that when a researcher uses data from publicly available blogs that are indexed for search engines and when there is no interaction with the blogger (such as through interviews), consent is not required. However, some level of privacy is still required in data reporting. Bruckman's (2002) levels of disguise for studying human subjects in an online environment are recommended for such purposes. Furthermore, if a

researcher wishes to use content (such as direct quotes from a blog or any other blogger-generated material, such as imagery), the researcher must seek permission from the copyright owner (Eastham, 2011). Even when using pseudonyms, the blogger's identity may be revealed through direct quotes (Eastham, 2011). Therefore, the present study refrained from using direct quotes or other content that would have revealed bloggers' identity.

In reporting the research data, ethical principles of qualitative research were followed to ensure the anonymity of the individuals (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016). While many bloggers use a pseudonym or avatar² to retain a certain level of anonymity (Eastham, 2011), the bloggers in the sample of this study disclosed their names rather than using a pseudonym or avatar. However, they were given code names used in reporting the findings to avoid any ethical issues in reporting blog-based narrative data (Kurtz et al., 2017). Furthermore, as suggested by Bruckman (2002), any information that may have identified the blog author was changed or not disclosed when reporting the data to disguise the data sources further. For this purpose, in reporting the data, the personal pronoun "she" was used with reference to the blogger, regardless of the actual gender. Also, if the family used more than two languages at home, a full list of the languages used was not disclosed to ensure the blogger remained anonymous.

3.6. Issues of trustworthiness

As discourse analysis, as well as other qualitative methods in general, aims at "understanding" the research topic rather than testing a theory through quantitative techniques, the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability are problematic to

² Avatar refers to an electronic image that represents the user (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/avatar>).

demonstrate objectively (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Ontologically, the use of qualitative techniques requires researcher's interpretation and perception of the phenomenon under study when constructing reality. Thus, qualitative methods following interpretative approaches do not offer objective construction of the phenomenon under investigation, but the researcher may be biased (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Sekaran and Bougie (2010, p. 157) recommend that when assessing the validity and reliability of the findings of qualitative research, the researcher should be careful to report all relevant information as well as use personal experiences of the phenomenon and critically assess the "goodness" of the measures used to study the phenomenon. In addition, strategies such as triangulation of data sources and methods and a thick description of the subjects of the study are necessary to add credibility, which constitutes one of the crucial elements of the study's trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The present study adopted such measures, as the data sources combined literature from three thematic areas; FLP, language learning, and positive psychology, and aimed for a thick description of the lived experiences of the bloggers through the selected nexus analysis method that required the building of rich descriptions in which the historical body, discourses in place and interaction order guided data analysis. When analysing the bloggers' data, multiple data sources were combined (written text and video) to understand their beliefs and actual practices.

Rather than using the concept of "validation", which is used in quantitative studies, Eisner (1991, p. 110) discusses how qualitative researchers seek credibility and trustworthiness through the systematic collection of evidence to offer a sense of confidence to form their interpretations and conclusions through recurring observations or behaviours, which are systematically investigated in the data to create a "compelling whole". The researcher must also be transparent and detailed in

describing the research methods, sampling, and reporting how the data was collected and analysed (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016).

Furthermore, to increase the trustworthiness of the findings, Eisner (1991) recommends the procedure of consensual validation, in which opinions of other subject experts are sought, to validate the findings and conclusions. In this process, the researcher may either find supportive evidence of consensus of the results or consider disconfirming evidence and contrary interpretations (Eisner, 1991). The present study used a topic expert to validate the model created by the study. The dissertation was sent to the expert for obtaining feedback during this process. The feedback received on the findings and the theoretical model were supported by the topic expert.

Lastly, while qualitative research findings are not expected to be generalisable to other settings in the same manner as quantitative research, the results are nevertheless expected to be somewhat transferable (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016). Similarly, Bassey (1981) discusses this through the concept of “relatability”, which refers to the idea that rigorously conducted case studies, while focusing on a limited number of cases, can offer a basis for relatability, as other researchers or audiences can relate to such findings, making such results valuable. This, in Bassey’s opinion, makes relatability as important as generalizability (Bassey, 1981). Since the present study collected data from two families, both of which resided in Western countries and where the parents’ historical body had significant exposure to Western value systems, the findings of the present study are, arguably, expected to benefit other transnational families of Western origin with young bilingual children. However, the findings may not be transferable or relatable to other types of bilingual families.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Family A: Historical body, discourses in place and language ideology

Family A consists of parents and two trilingual children. Example languages used in the family were Spanish and German. The blogger was raised as a bilingual in a multilingual environment where Spanish and German were used by her parents at home, and she became a simultaneous bilingual in these two languages. Later, she attended a bilingual school in English and Spanish, where she learnt English. Later, blogger A became a foreign language teacher. Her spouse is also bilingual, and they share one common heritage language. The family lives in a country where multiple languages are used as official languages at the state level. Hence, the society is understood to support bilingualism, which forms a fertile background for bilingual families supporting positive language ideology.

The blogger shares her language ideology on the blog as she believes bilingualism is a significant advantage for children and that it is easy and natural for a child to acquire as many as five languages at a young age. She believes that a parent should always use his/her strongest language when communicating with a child and be consistent with language use. The dominant discourse shaping the family's attitudes, beliefs and actions is the OPOL method, which the blogger identifies as their language strategy. Before the couple had their first child, they communicated with each other in English, but after the child was born, they consciously decided to start using one of their shared heritage languages with each other and as a family language. The parents speak two languages with the children; each speaks one of their native languages and the shared heritage language. However, they use these languages in a manner where the languages are used separately and not mixed. The blogger describes how they are consistent and intentional with their language use. She uses precise

vocabulary such as “strict” and “never switch” to highlight her belief that language mixing in discourse between the child and caregiver is not optimal and that the parent should use one language at a time in communication. This strategy aligns with the theory of language mode (Grosjean, 1985), which considers language processing differences when a bilingual is in a “monolingual mode” using only Language A, or whether in a “bilingual mode” where two or more languages are used in a conversation and where code-mixing or code switching are often a natural part of the conversation (Dunn and Fox Tree, 2014).

The blogger highlights certain positive practices and behaviours to support bilingualism, such as the need for caregivers to be intentional in their home language usage and the importance of setting goals for language development, but being flexible and supportive when it comes to achieving the goals. She discusses how setting long-term goals for children’s bilingual development is important; such plans should be flexible and adapt to the child’s needs or changing circumstances of the family. According to her experience, goal-setting for FLP is also essential for the parents to give them a sense of motivation and confidence to continue with language socialisation when facing difficulties. Another aspect related to goals is ensuring that the child gets sufficient quality exposure to the home language. She calls for patience as it takes years before parents see the results of the strategies of how they aim to transfer the language and, therefore, it requires a lot of determination and resilience.

Another dominant discourse of the blogger focuses on empowering the child to use multiple languages and feel confident with imperfect language skills. She discusses how lack of proficiency often causes bilingual children to develop mixed emotions towards home language use. They may want to speak the home language but be scared to use it when they feel a lack of competence or support. Thus, the child

may not use the language to avoid anxiety or fear of being ridiculed. Such negative experiences and beliefs can result in the child internalising a feeling of not being competent in that language, which further develops negative experiences and attitudes. The blogger explains how the family plays a central role in turning such a potential negative spiral into a supporting one. The family should be aware of the importance of creating positive experiences with the language by practising it in supportive ways that include a lot of encouragement and a sense of pride and achievement. She continues to highlight the importance of letting a child understand that he/she is not expected to master the language perfectly and that making mistakes is natural and necessary to help him/her improve. She also explains how the child needs to feel comfortable sharing negative feelings and experiences with the language so that the family can help and support the child to handle and overcome such negative emotions.

Another central theme in her discourse is the importance of creating positive experiences with the language. She associates positive experiences with playfulness and having fun together in meaningful ways. She believes that creating a positive environment and mindset, translated into the interactional strategies inside the family, is central to any FLP success. She describes how having fun and being natural and relaxed in parent-child encounters is necessary. In contrast, she views deliberate attempts of a parent to “teach the language” as less effective. Furthermore, she believes that every time a child gains a positive experience through his/her language use makes him/her more confident and more resilient, which in turn facilitates a child to become and remain an active bilingual.

She further discusses how extended family members and friends of the target language can be used as a resource to support parents’ efforts to pass and maintain

their language, and how immersion in the language is essential. Family A also visits extended family members abroad for several weeks to ensure lengthy exposure and immersion in the language and culture.

She also discusses how she makes explicit attempts to assist the children by visualising to help them understand which language is used when by using some visual cues, such as wearing a hat or another symbol when they switch from one language to another. In addition, she believes that children learn the language best when the family spends time together having fun, such as by singing songs and watching cartoons or music videos together. An essential component of these strategies involves both the child and the parent, so close physical interaction is maintained. She further describes how she believes real human interaction to be the most efficient way for a child to learn and develop a language. At the same time, she considers passive ways, such as when a child watches TV or listens to the radio alone, less effective. However, she acknowledges that once a child has a good command of the target language, such passive language learning strategies can be complementary to support further language learning.

The blogger discusses several beliefs guiding her family's language usage that draw from an awareness of the emotional responses that families encounter when following their FLP. For example, in one of the posts, she discusses whether and when a parent should correct a child's language and how best to intervene when the language is corrected, as language correction often triggers negative emotions in the parent and the child. She believes that linguistic mistakes should not be corrected at all times, but the parent should divide the time according to when the language is corrected and when it is not. This encourages the child to speak more than an approach where the child is always corrected. Her strategy is to focus on what the

child is saying (content) instead of how the child says it (grammar). Her approach is similar to what Dodson (1995) refers to as “message-oriented” and “medium-oriented” language, respectively. She also uses visualisation methods to further make it clear to her children when their language correctness is being observed. For example, she has printed a policeman figure, which is being used in those situations where she wants to correct the language, and the child is then aware of what is happening. Once the policeman is put away after about 15 minutes or so, it acts as a cue for the child to speak freely without worrying about being corrected in language use. This method aligns with the principles of positive psychology by offering a sense of security in guiding action, and associating any negative feelings stemming from being corrected with the policeman figure instead of the parent. Thus, she can turn the potentially negative experience of language correction into a more positive experience. This approach, therefore, offers a more positive strategy for tackling the problem of language fossilisation (Dodson, 1995) compared to strict strategies with over-correcting language use. Thus, it balances caregivers’ desire for maximal minority language use while also ensuring that a child gets an opportunity to learn the correct use of language.

4.2. Family A: Interaction order and strategies

Several videos showed the interaction between the blogger and the child when the child was 3 years old. In one of the interactions, the child uses fluent Spanish with the blogger while building a puzzle together. The interactional strategy used by the parent includes several questions to the child, which requires the child to respond in Spanish. The conversation is thus maintained actively. She uses questions to inquire whether the child needs help with the puzzle and gives helpful hints to the child to guide the

action. Through such a conversational technique, the child can decide whether she needs assistance or can complete the task, giving a sense of ownership of the action and agency. Also, the blogger often repeats phrases that the child communicates and, in doing so, occasionally makes slight corrections to the grammar. She does not point out that the child made a mistake in grammar but uses the word or sentence structure correctly herself when responding to the child. Thus, the parent supports the activity while giving agency for the child to guide the activity and using language correcting in non-intrusive ways through play. She also gives frequent positive encouragement as the child successfully connects the puzzle pieces.

In another video, the parent and the child play a game that involves sorting different shapes and colours, recognising animals, and matching them to the food they eat. They use German in this activity. First, the child aims to find the correct shape and colour and, in doing so, intentionally uses humour to get them in the wrong order. The child giggles and the parent responds enthusiastically, acknowledging the child's humour in this activity. Both the child and parent laugh together and the parent encourages the child to continue the activity. In the next activity, the child is expected to name animals in German. The first image is a tortoise, which the child does not remember initially. When the parent realises the child is struggling to name the animal, she gives the word to the child and asks her to repeat it. The child repeats the word and then correctly connects it to the type of food (lettuce) the tortoise eats and uses the right word in German. The parent again uses praise as the child successfully made the connection. They also form additional sentences from the scenes, in which the terminology gets used in context, which can be expected to strengthen language learning. While doing this activity, the child suddenly hears an approaching aircraft and asks questions about it, to which the parent responds, and they chat for a while

about aeroplanes and airports. This child-initiated conversation serves as an additional language learning opportunity, as the discussion is maintained in the target language (German) in that situation and expands the vocabulary beyond the scope of the task.

4.3. Family B: Historical body, discourses in place and language ideology

Family B consists of parents with four multilingual children who use five languages. English and French are two examples of languages used in the family. The blogger was raised to be multilingual in three languages in a transnational context, and she had moved across continents in her early childhood. She describes herself as being a polyglot and passionate about language learning. She explains how heritage language acquisition and maintenance is essential for both parents as they want to enable the children to communicate with extended family members living in their country of birth who do not share the societal languages of the children in their country. In her blog, she discusses several aspects that have shaped her language ideologies and which have further guided language use inside the family.

The language method that they use is a combination of ML@H and OPOL. Each parent uses primarily a different minority language to address the children at home, but they also understand and can speak each other's languages. In addition, they have strategically involved au pairs to add another minority language to the family. In addition to these three languages, the children are exposed to two societal languages through school, friends and hobbies, and the parents are competent speakers of the societal languages. Like Blogger A, she believes that family interactions play a central role in children's language development and that parents create the need for a child to acquire the language. She uses the word "acquire" specifically and distinguishes it from the term "learning", as she believes that the heritage language is not something

that should be taught to the child by the parent but something that the child will acquire naturally through family interactions. Thus, she holds a strong impact belief on the role of family members in bilingual development and the importance of parents making informed decisions regarding a child's language exposure to the target languages. The family involves extended family members in their life by visiting them back in the home country every year. They always spend lengthy periods in each of the parents' home countries to ensure the children get a rich, immersive experience in the heritage languages. During their extended holidays, the children are enrolled in local summer schools or camps with native speaker children, offering them a chance to learn the language naturally.

In one of the posts, she discusses her strategy of writing down the main discussion topics with each child daily in an Excel spreadsheet. That way she develops a good understanding of which topics have been introduced to which child, and to ensure that the conversations go beyond typical daily activities in which the family engages. This way, she has been able to be not only intentional in her language use, but also to ensure that each child has an opportunity to learn the language in a diverse range of topics, including more philosophical issues, future plans, feelings as well as specific topics, such as money and finance, which she considers essential for any child to understand. She also discusses that she believes one-on-one conversations between the parent and the child are necessary for bonding and building a deeper relationship. The method also supports language learning as the child develops a richer set of vocabulary this way, which is expected to further develop heritage language maintenance when the child can use the language in multiple domains.

Another discourse guiding her language ideology focuses on managing experiences in language acquisition, and how negative and positive experiences can

be managed. She discusses how parents and other people in contact with the child should avoid language shaming, which means associating negative feelings with a language that a person speaks, which is other than the societal language. She also highlights that parents should have a solid understanding of what one can expect from bilingual development so that the expectations are not set unrealistically high, which would demotivate the child to use the language. As part of setting expectations for a child's bilingual development, she discusses how parents should also have realistic goals and plans across different language skills they would like the child to develop. Since the family uses five languages, they have set relatively flexible goals for the children's language development. She describes how oracy skills are the "must have" skills they expect their children to acquire and use, while certain literacy skills in some languages are "nice to have" but not necessary to develop.

She also discusses how establishing a positive language environment is essential for language learning and maintenance. She believes language learning should be fun and enjoyable, and children should never be forced to use a language. She highlights how each child has a different personality and how the language exposure techniques should match the personality and focus on things that the child enjoys the most. For example, the three-year-old child enjoys singing, and multiple videos portray different singing activities through which the child uses the heritage languages. As part of her idea of a positive language environment, this should also involve a lot of strategic use of media and mobile applications. In contrast to Blogger A, who was sceptical of the use of TV in language learning, Blogger B relies on TV, and the children watch a lot of TV in their target languages. The blogger says that TV shows have been a significant reason why their children have learned one of the languages, as they regularly watch popular children's shows in that language. In addition to TV, the

family uses different mobile games and mobile applications that involve language learning, often played interactively with an adult. She believes that gamification (games that involve competition mode) works very well to support language learning, as such games engage children and make the learning entertaining, and because games exist in multiple genres to suit a child's personality and support language learning to achieve different language-related goals, such as the ability to categorise things, to expand vocabulary, as well as to learn to read and write.

4.4. Family B: Interactive order and strategies

The blogger shares several videos to show how the children use their five languages at home in different situations and with other people. In addition, the family relies on several online tools to engage the children with more speakers of their heritage languages to contribute to their language exposure. One of the children is three years old, while two are a few years older and the youngest one is still an infant. The children often engage in conversations using multiple languages, selecting the language based on which language the interlocutor uses. When the children play together without other people involved, they mainly use their heritage languages, especially the mother's heritage language. The blogger feels that this language is the children's language of the heart through which they can best express their inner thoughts. The family supports the idea that the children use multiple languages at home and that the dominating language will change as the children get older. The family views language mixing also as something positive, and as a sign that multiple languages are developing, and that code-mixing or switching are not signs of confusion, but an attempt to use all linguistic resources in communication.

In one of the videos, the child uses the italki platform (<https://www.italki.com/>), a platform for language learning that connects language learners with a teacher, who is typically a native speaker of that language. The platform offers teachers with language profiles from more than 150 countries, and many of the teachers are professional educators by their profession. The blogger has used this platform for the children to engage in natural conversations in their home languages to expose the children to other speakers of those languages. When choosing a tutor on the platform, they have emphasised finding a teacher who connects well with the child's personality and can be on their level. The video shows the interaction between the teacher and the child. The teacher uses props such as puppets and superhero characters to play with the child in this virtual environment, and the child uses her own toy. After the play, they switch to another activity: dancing to a song played in the heritage language.

The blogger describes these methods as fun and engaging for the child, and how such a method built around something that the child enjoys offers a more meaningful way to use the language than traditional language teaching that often emphasises grammar development. Moreover, she believes that any deliberate act of the parent to influence the child's language exposure should be planned so that it is sustainable to continue actively. The activities in the target language can be brief in duration, but it is more important to ensure that such activities are done often. This technique is expected to keep the child keener to use the language and not get bored.

In another video, the blogger shows how the family uses other online interactive strategies to connect the children with extended family members and former au pairs who use their respective native languages when communicating with the children. A dialogue between the child and the former au pair involves conversation about the child's daily activities. They also play a game together online, which the child seems

to enjoy. The blogger further explains that they have deliberately wanted to keep the former au pair still in contact with the children as they shared several years together and the children are still attached to the au pair, and that such a deep bonding is also fruitful for maintaining one of the languages, as the child feels a need to keep using the language with the au pair during their calls.

The blogger also shows other creative solutions for supporting all five languages daily. In one of the videos, two children and both parents engage in a game in which the children are given two cards at a time with animals on them, and they are then expected to identify which animal is missing from the other card. The family uses this game to practice all five languages as the children compete in one language at a time when naming the animals. The children seemed excited and enthusiastic to play the game and win each round. While many of the animal names are very different across the languages, both children remember the names remarkably well and can differentiate between the languages. Only once, the younger child names an animal in the wrong language, which she notices herself and then laughs when she realises her error. This signals that the child is at ease with language mixing. While naming the animals, the parents give supportive comments and cheer for them. For example, the mother praises by remarking how surprised she was that the child remembered the word, which seems to make the child very proud of her achievement, and thus creates positive experiences concerning her language skills.

Another video shows how the child, who was four years old at the time, builds a railroad with other children and four adults. Each adult uses a different language in the scene, and the child responds to each interlocutor in the target language and translates expressions between the languages. Thus, contrary to the recommendation

of the language mode theory, the family intentionally encourages the use of all languages and not keeping the languages separate.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The aim of this study was to understand and describe how FLP is co-constructed by the members of transnational bilingual families forming the nexus, and families have aimed to build a child-centred FLP and practices to facilitate building a thriving environment for bilingual language maintenance. The role and use of positive psychology in such attempts was identified as a key element guiding the actions of the individuals in the nexus. This section answers the research questions and develops a theoretical model based on the findings to illustrate how positive psychology can influence the co-creation of a child-centred FLP and strategies to support home language maintenance.

5.1. Research question 1

The first research question aimed to understand how elements of positive psychology can facilitate the design of an effective FLP and practices for child-centred home language maintenance. To answer the question, the literature review suggested that while positive psychology has been widely studied for different purposes, its potential role in supporting FLP has not been well understood. However, studies in related aspects, such as those focusing on the role of positive psychology in language learning (e.g. Oxford et al., 2015) as well as the language learning of children at home (Hart and Risley, 1992, 1995) demonstrated that elements of positive psychology can also be used to guide FLP. Themes such as hope, resilience, and creating positive experiences and emotions were witnessed in the two families' FLP under study.

5.2. Research question 2

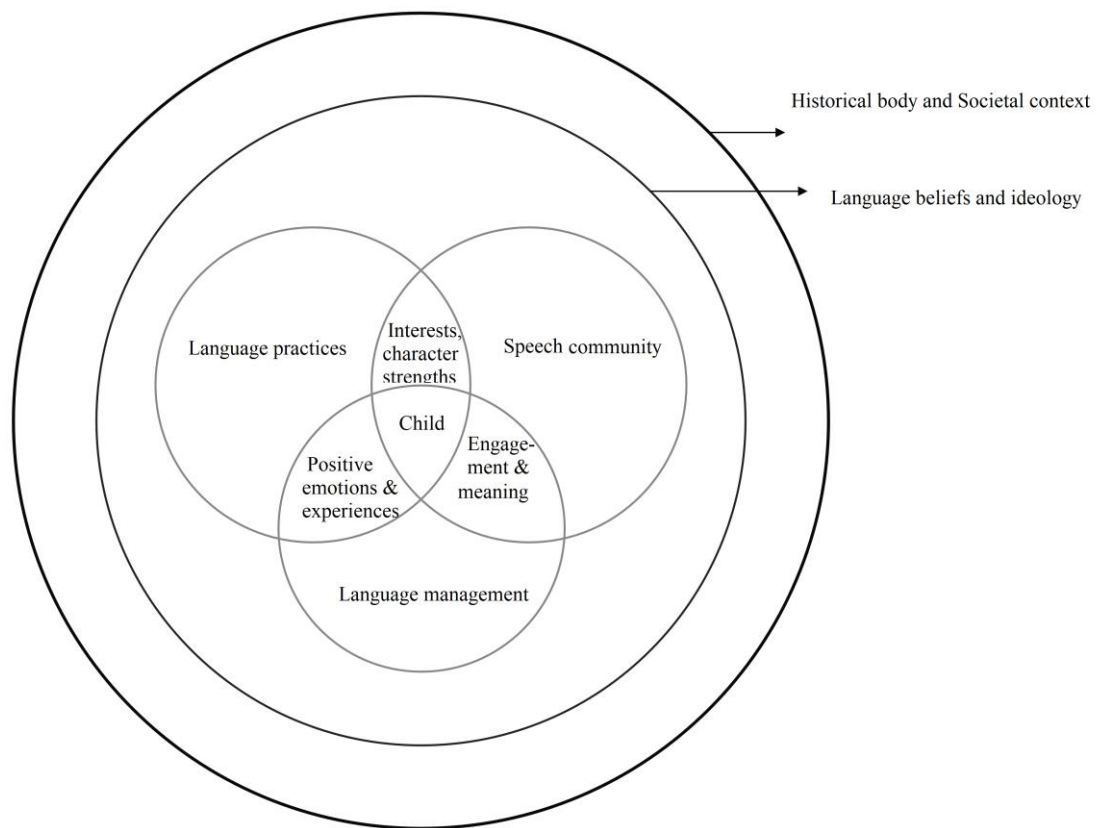
The second research question aimed to understand how transnational bilingual families have transferred elements of positive psychology into their FLP to support home language maintenance. The transnational families studied here served as illustrative cases of how they have transferred elements of positive psychology into their FLP and home language maintenance. While the families did not explicitly claim to use positive psychology, the underlying discourses that guided their strategies in home language maintenance aligned with components of positive psychology theory; namely the importance of positive emotions and experiences in the use of the home language, developing a sense of meaning in the speech community through close, meaningful interactions, as well as using frequent praise for accomplishments. Positive psychology was thus understood as the key philosophy underlying their FLP and the strategies and practices used with children encourage the maintenance of the home language in the family.

5.3. Research question 3

The last research question aimed to understand how transnational bilingual families co-constructed a successful child-centred family language policy to support home language maintenance. The families studied in the present study had co-constructed their FLP with the members in the nexus by using child-centred approaches underpinned by positive psychology to support home language maintenance. This finding implies that successful FLP in the context of transnational families requires the involvement of various actors in the nexus, as well as the support of other essential people to maintain the language. Transnational families typically cannot rely on supportive institutions such as schools to maintain the language, as such

institutions are often absent in their contexts. Thus, depending on others and being resourceful through strategic media use were witnessed as important strategies to support the FLP. The following image represents the theoretical model based on the findings to illustrate how positive psychology can influence the co-creation of an effective, child-centred FLP and strategies to support home language maintenance.

Figure 1. Positive FLP model for child-centred home language maintenance



The model proposes that FLP is influenced by macro-level aspects that constitute caregivers' historical body (their personal experiences of bilingualism) and the societal context in which the family raises its children. Both aspects have been suggested to explain parental reasons for raising their children bilingually (Lee et al., 2015). Society can either support bilingualism or see it more as a problem (Ruiz,

1984). The status of minority languages within the society is also an essential element of the societal setting that affects bilingualism (MacLeod et al., 2010). Such aspects have an impact on how parents perceive the potential benefits of bilingualism and influence their own level of motivation in raising their children bilingually. These aspects then define the next layer of the model, constituting the language beliefs and ideology of the caregivers and other speech community members around the child. As described by the literature on FLP, parents that successfully raise bilingual children must have a positive attitude and supportive belief in their impact and success in transferring the language to the children and their ability to support their bilingual development (Lee et al., 2015).

The inner circles of the model focus on the elements of child-centred FLP that constitute language practices, language management and the actors in the speech community (family, other caregivers, and other people affecting the child's home language development and maintenance). Positive psychology should underpin such strategies and interactions. First, the speech community plays a vital role as a source of the language but also as an element that offers a sense of meaning and engagement so that the child feels a valuable part of a larger community and heritage. This way, the child can maintain the development of a positive and healthy identity as well as develop a strong support network. Especially in families following the OPOL method, the role of other home language speakers cannot be underestimated, as language is a social phenomenon, and language development benefits from having access to multiple speakers of the language. Having such a network may also motivate the child to develop his/her language skills to maintain connection in this speech community. The speech community can also support the child's language development by engaging in activities to promote language practices that build on his/her interests and

character strengths. Hence, effective FLP is essentially customised for each child rather than using similar practices with all children in the family. Such customised interaction strategies, underpinned by positive psychology, can make learning more meaningful, enjoyable and motivating for the child. They also give room for child agency to shape how language is used.

The second element, the language practices and how the language community systematically engages in home language use, should also be underpinned by positive psychology elements that emphasise positive emotions and experiences. As the literature on language learning at home settings and through the analysed blogs revealed, families that have aimed to develop positive methods to engage in home language learning and maintenance have experienced good results with such practices. While families should develop language goals, flexibility and child-supportive practices offer more beneficial results compared to strategies that aim for language perfection and rigid use of the home language. Instead, families may benefit from child-centric language practices that offer more meaningful interaction and creation of positive experiences and memories through a positive family environment and interactional strategies.

Thirdly, the language management strategies (through which the caregivers and other speech community members aim to manage, intervene, or control language use to achieve desired linguistic outcomes), would also benefit from the elements of positive psychology. As language management always involves emotive aspects (such as feelings of pride, shame, and guilt), it is important that the child and the speech community members are self-aware of their emotions attached to language development and management and can discuss their language-related feelings. As discussed by the bloggers, when it comes to correcting language use, parents should

be cautious of the negative implications of such well-meaning actions to maintain positive experiences for the child to use the language, not to correct the language extensively. When caregivers place more importance on the message and communication rather than on grammar, the child is encouraged to use the language more frequently, which may help correct the language naturally over time. This is seen as a gentle approach to minimising language fossilisation (Dodson, 1995). Child-centred language management practices should also consider child agency, and involving the child in language management should be done in a productive and meaningful way. For example, Blogger A's use of the policeman figure when correcting the language was an innovative example of how negative aspects of language correcting can result in a positive feeling. The speech community can also support language management so that multiple people can contribute to language management, language exposure and intervention when the target language is not used actively. Such support is especially important for families following the OPOL method so that the burden of the parent as the primary home language transmitter is lessened. This is expected to contribute positively to family well-being, particularly the parent-child relationship.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key finding of the study was that the elements of positive psychology can be applied to the effective design of FLP, which enables a child-centric approach. Such an approach was witnessed in the two families studied through their blog postings. The study developed a model titled “Positive FLP model for child-centred home language maintenance” based on the findings and the literature used to form the model’s foundation. The results are of importance to both the practice as well as to the theory on FLP.

First, the findings are expected to be relatable (Bassey, 1981) for other Western transnational bilingual families, which may lack supportive institutions in the societal setting that could facilitate the transmission and maintenance of the home language. Such families would benefit from the positive strategies and methods suggested by the present study to understand how different forces shaping their language beliefs and ideologies affect their FLP strategies, and how the elements of positive psychology can support FLP in ways that make home language learning more effective, meaningful and engaging. The existing practices and advice often given to bilingual families tend to focus on encouraging the use of specific language exposure methods (such as the OPOL and ML@H). Yet, they often lack strategies concerning *how* to use their home language meaningfully. Language exposure is not a sufficient predictor of children’s bilingual development. Positive psychology suggests that the interactional methods and ways caregivers engage with their children play a more significant role in language learning. Successful attempts at using positive psychology in home language acquisition and maintenance is important for bilingual families, as it not only results in child bilingualism, but also has been found to improve the entire

family's well-being when the child learns the home language proficiently (Wang, 2022).

Secondly, the findings contribute to the literature on FLP, and especially to the recent stream of psychologically oriented approaches on effective FLP practices (e.g. De Houwer, 2021; Jo, Richardson and de Jong, 2023; Juvonen, et al., 2020). The developed model (Figure 1) contributes to this stream of research as it connects different theoretical discussions that belong to various academic disciplines; studies on FLP that typically come from linguistic or sociological backgrounds, language learning theories that are often dominated by scholars with education background, as well as positive psychology, which stems from psychology. Thus, the model offers a new theoretical approach to FLP, and it also considers both macro- as well as micro-level aspects affecting language strategies and practices. The findings are also of interest to studies on FLP with particular emphasis on emotions (e.g. Kaveh and Lanz, 2022; Little, 2022) as well as those that focus on child agency (Smith-Christmas, 2020, 2021) as the model considers both aspects as crucial elements of child-centred language policy in transnational families.

The study naturally has several limitations. The main limitation was the use of online blog-based data from a limited number of families. First, while the method used can be seen to benefit from less researcher bias, the model requires further validation through naturalistic observation. Second, regarding the sample selection, while the two selected families were residing in different parts of the world, both lived in the Western world, which may bias the findings. Thus, the results are not suggested to be representative of the total population of transnational families worldwide. These limitations, therefore, offer areas for future studies.

Future studies can seek further evidence on whether and to what extent the model is valid and reliable in different family settings. Furthermore, future studies would also benefit from longitudinal approaches in documenting how families navigate through different developmental phases of their bilingual children, and how positive psychology can be used to negotiate child agency when the children may show signs of negative behaviour towards the home language. Future studies would also benefit from quantitative approaches to understand the magnitude of the use of positive FLP strategies and to what extent families use such strategies, what benefits they have witnessed, and whether there are culturally nuanced strategies that have been found beneficial in their creation of child-centred FLP.

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8. APPENDICES

8.1. Appendices 1 Ethics Form

