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Naturalism and ideological work: How is family language policy renegotiated as both parents and children learn a threatened minority language?

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Parents who enrol their children to be educated through a threatened minority language frequently do not speak that language themselves and classes in the language are sometimes offered to parents in the expectation that this will help them to support their children's education and to use the minority language in the home. Providing language-learning opportunities for parents with children in minority-language education is understood as good practice in language revitalization, but there is little research on the efficacy of this practice. I will present data from narrative, life-history interviews with mothers who have learned Scottish Gaelic to some level and who have children who attend Gaelic-medium education and I will discuss the difficulties they encounter in establishing new norms of language use in the family and the strategies they use to effect a new language policy in the home. I will show how these mothers work to establish a new norm of Gaelic use in the family in opposition to a common background ideology that understands language as a natural object, and therefore, that it is wrong and bad parenting to 'force' a language on a child.

Keywords: family language policy; language ideologies; immersion education; adult language learners; Scottish Gaelic

Children and parents learning together

The children forced their parents to learn Hebrew [and] brought it into the home. The mothers would take Hebrew evening classes ... and the mother-child language was thus created.

(Feinsod-Sokenick 1929, p. 66; cited in Nahir 1988, p. 349)

In his analysis of the Hebrew language revival, Nahir (1988) argues that childhood immersion education in Hebrew ultimately played a pivotal role in the unprecedented success of the revival, but only after Hebrew educators inspired their young students to take their Hebrew out of the classroom and start using it as an informal social language in the home and the community. When immersion education is deployed as a strategy for reversing language shift (Fishman 1991), it is usually in the hope that children will not only use the minority language in school, but also use it with family and with friends out in the community, thereby restrengthening the language in critical informal domains. However, when a minority language is seriously endangered, and language transmission in the home is failing, it is not uncommon to find that many parents who enrol their children in immersion education are not themselves speakers of that language, and that parents require targeted instruction in the language before they can use it with their children. For instance, Warner (1999) describes how a program of specially-tailored language classes for parents of children in Hawaiian-immersion education facilitates intergenerational use of the language by giving parents the specific language skills they need to engage in habitual parent-child interactions in the home in Hawaiian.

Further, research suggests that children are more successful learning a minority language in school when they have the opportunity to use that language outside of the classroom: in the home and in the community (Murtagh 2007; Oriyama 2011; Zhang & Koda 2011). Cenoz and Valencia (1993) have shown that the presence of Basque speakers in Spanish-speaking secondary students' social networks both directly and indirectly (through motivation and through perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality) contributes to their success in learning Basque as a second language. Therefore, it would seem to make sense both from a language-planning perspective and from a pedagogical perspective (Baker 2000) to encourage parents in these circumstances to learn at least some of the minority language and to support their children's education by using the language in the home to whatever degree possible.

This is certainly how the problem is understood in the case of the Scottish Gaelic Revival.¹ Gaelic-medium education was first established in Glasgow and Inverness in 1985 (Robertson 2008), and has grown slowly but steady over the years to the extent that in 2011-2012, 2,418 primary pupils and 1,104 secondary pupils were being educated through the medium of Gaelic (Galloway n.d.). O'Hanlon, Paterson and McLeod (2012, p. 3) have estimated that, at most, 18% of the children in Gaelic-medium primary education or in Gaelic classes for fluent speakers in secondary education come from homes where Gaelic is the main language. While exact figures are lacking, it is very likely that the majority of children in Gaelic-medium education in Scotland come from homes without a resident Gaelic-speaking caregiver, and adult language classes are often offered alongside Gaelic-medium education with the aim of teaching Gaelic to parents so they can better support their children's bilingual development. Gaelic development organizations support this effort by distributing literature, advising parents about language use in the home, and raising awareness of adult Gaelic learning opportunities. As one example, this excerpt is taken from a short language learning narrative that appears in a booklet distributed by the Gaelic parents' advocacy group, Comann nam Pàrant:

Cameron started a[t] Gaelic nursery in 2004 and it was at that time I decided I had to also learn the language. [...] I now speak, read, and write Gaelic with confidence. I tend to use Gaelic at home more often now. Cameron is happy to use it with me now as he feels I understand him [...] I think it is important for parents to learn with their children.

(Comann nam Pàrant 2009, p. 19)

In this pamphlet, and in other material like it, parents are encouraged to learn Gaelic and to use it with their children, and while this may be understood as good practice in language planning for language revitalization, there is relatively little research on the efficacy of this practice. Can parents change language use in the home from the majority language to the minority language? It may not be the aim of these classes to facilitate a complete switch to the minority language in the home. The intent may be to provide parents with some limited facility in the minority language so that they can read stories, help with homework or use small bursts of phatic or affective language with their children. But how useful is this limited Gaelic proficiency to parents in supporting their children's bilingual development? And if parents aim at a more substantial shift from the majority language to the minority language in the home, can they realistically hope to succeed, what are the potential pitfalls, and what are some of the strategies they might follow to improve their chances?

To examine some of these questions, I conducted semi-structured narrative interviews with mothers who had enrolled their children in Gaelic medium education and who have learned the Gaelic language to some level themselves. I am particularly interested in how these mothers implemented language policy in the home, how they worked to negotiate new

norms of language use in their families, and also in the ideologies they brought to the task, how they understood parenthood and how they understood the language-learning project, both for their children and for themselves. The following analysis will be in three parts. Drawing on examples from the interviews, I will first examine the task of implementing a new family language policy in this context. I will show that learning Gaelic does not automatically or unproblematically lead to Gaelic use in the home and that some of the mothers in my sample were daunted by the difficulty of establishing and maintaining new norms of language use with their children. Then, I will examine a common ideology of naturalism as it appears in the interview data, and discuss how this ideology can frustrate parents as they deliberately work to encourage the use of a threatened minority language in the home. Finally, I will discuss the implications of this research for pedagogy and for language planning, and specifically for our understanding of language learning as a tactic for language revitalization.

Family language policy and language ideology

Scottish Gaelic is an endangered autochthonous language spoken by less than 2% of the population of Scotland (McLeod 2009; Moseley 2010; Watson & Macleod 2010). All adult speakers of Gaelic are fully bilingual in English, and even in the heartland of the language, the Western Isles of Scotland, Gaelic has all but ceased to function as a language of daily community use (Mac an Tàilleir 2010; Mac an Tàilleir, Rothach & Armstrong 2010; MacKinnon 2011). By and large, Scottish society is now thoroughly structured against the use of Gaelic as both a public and a private language, and increasingly, when Gaelic is used, it is because language activists have purposefully endeavoured to establish and defend structures at the micro level that support that use. Gaelic is so weakened and English is so dominant in Scottish society that it would be very unlikely that Gaelic would be spoken by children in the home to any significant extent without at least some deliberate planning by adult family members. With very little outside support, parents and other care-givers would need to implement a family language policy that included Gaelic in some way.

Groups of all sizes create language policy: families, schools, communities, businesses, voluntary organizations, local governments, state governments and supranational polities (Spolsky 2004, 2012). Language policy has been conventionally studied as a macro-level phenomenon, but researchers have increasingly come to appreciate the importance of micro-level policy (Baldauf 2006) and have also investigated the complex relationship between policy at macro and micro levels (Hornberger & Johnson 2007; McCarty *et al.* 2009; Ricento & Hornberger 1996). Language transmission in the home is an important factor in the vitality of a language (Fishman 2001), and therefore, family language policy is an ever-growing area of research (Curdt-Christiansen 2009, 2013; Edwards & Newcombe 2005; King & Fogle 2006; King, Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008; King & Logan-Terry 2008; Kopeliovich 2010; Piller 2001; Sánchez Torres 2010; Wei 2012) that is of particular interest to those who study language shift and language revival.

Language revival is a profoundly political project where interest groups work to advance and defend competing language ideologies. A language ideology is a reasonably coherent set of beliefs, attitudes and norms that describes the value of a language and how it should be used (Armstrong 2012; see also: King 2000; Kroskrity 2004; Woolard & Schieffelin 1994; Woolard 1998), often drawing on a connection between language and identity (Edwards 2009; May 2001), and language revival inevitably involves advancing a new ideology about the value and use of a subaltern language in the face of dominant, normalized ideologies that support the hegemonic language(s) in a society. In this way,

language policy can be seen as an instance or an expression of the language ideology of an individual or a group with the power to enforce that policy (cf. Shohamy 2006). In this paper, I use narrative research methods to investigate the language-learning project (Coffey and Street 2008) of parents and children who have been learning Scottish Gaelic, and I pay particular attention to family language policy and the impact of language ideology through the course of parents' and children's learning.

Narrative methods

Narrative, life-history interviews (Bruner 2004; Pavlenko & Lantolf 2000) were conducted with 14 mothers with children in Gaelic-medium education who had also been learning the Gaelic language themselves to some level. Given the planned scope of this study, the decision to interview mothers, rather than fathers or other care-givers, was made based of our current understanding of mothers' particularly important role in establishing language policy in the home (Jones & Morris 2009). Most of the interviews were conducted in English, but one mother specifically requested to be interviewed in Gaelic, and excerpts from that interview appear here in my translation. This set of interviews is a convenience sample of mothers I located through my home institution, the Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and through contacts in the Gaelic Revival.

This sample is entirely opportunistic and can in no way be considered statistically representative; nonetheless, this group of mothers and their families approach what Jensen (2002, p. 238–9) has defined as a maximum-variation sample, in that the group represents a very wide variety of backgrounds and circumstances while still satisfying the basic sampling criteria above. A range of Gaelic abilities and a diversity of learning pathways are represented in the sample, from mothers who had learned a small amount of Gaelic in weekly adult classes attached to Gaelic-medium childcare or primary schools, to mothers who had taken time out for full-time Gaelic courses and who had achieved advanced conversational proficiency in the language. Two of the mothers could be considered heritage learners (Carreira 2004; Van Deusen-Scholl 2003) in that they were exposed to some Gaelic in the home as children, but did not learn to speak Gaelic proficiently, and were re-learning the language as adults.² None of the fathers were fully-proficient native speakers of Gaelic. One father was reported to have been exposed to some Gaelic in the home as a child, but had limited Gaelic proficiently as an adult. Five fathers were reported to have also learned Gaelic to different levels, from a few words to advanced proficiency. Eight pairs of parents were living together and six were separated. At the time of the interviews, none of the families lived in what could be considered core Gaelic-speaking areas (over 60% Gaelic-speaking), and the sample is divided between ten families who lived in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland but in areas where Gaelic would no longer be spoken as a community language, and four families who lived in Scotland's urban Central Belt. When parents plan their children's bilingualism, this is sometimes termed 'elite bilingualism' in the literature, perhaps reflecting that many of the early studies of family language policy were of relatively wealthy international families, often with parents who emigrated for professional reasons; however, several of the interviewees in this study could not fairly be described as 'elite' in this sense. Interviewees ranged from mothers in financially secure professional-class families to single mothers engaged in part-time manual labour.

Interviews were informal and semi-structured, flexibly following an interview schedule of topics related to adult language learning and family language use. Interviewees were encouraged to narrate histories of their own language learning project and accounts of their children's bilingual development, and while no two interviews developed in exactly the

same way, the range of topics covered was broadly similar. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and checked, generating a corpus of 101,370 words of interview data. While interviews were transcribed for intelligibility, some hesitations, false-starts and self-corrections were left in the transcript, particularly where these represent affective content in the narrative. A list of about 25 broad themes was developed during the transcription checking process, and the interviews were coded against these themes in NVivo 9. Illustrative excerpts were selected based on the themes identified.

In the analysis that follows, language learning and language use will be understood, not as separate phenomena, but as an integrated whole (Rajadurai 2010). This is a complex dynamic – children learning and parents learning while negotiating family language policy in the overall context of rapid language shift from Gaelic to English and a fragile language revival movement – but the narrative research methods I used proved particularly well-suited to capturing this complexity and revealing the connections (cf. Schüpbach 2009).

Results

From ability to use: The challenge of negotiating a new family language policy

All of the mothers in this sample had young children in Gaelic-medium education, from toddlers to young teenagers, and so their interviews contain synchronic assessments of family language policy made by parents who are in the thick of the task, but the mothers also narrated diachronic accounts of their own and their children's language learning up until the present and of the evolution of their families' language policy over time. The mothers described a wide range of goals for their own learning and for family language use. Some, like this mother, indicated that they hoped to learn enough Gaelic to be able to hold a conversation with their children:

That it is really important that there is a Gaelic speaker within the family somewhere. Or, you know, that the children can – because I think them speaking Gaelic will come from me speaking to them, and encouraging them along. And I – I don't really – I can't hold a conversation yet. And that's what I'm striving for, so that I can kind of keep them going with it. Because I think it's – it doesn't just happen without – without me being involved.

Here, the interviewee explains her understanding of the importance of speaking Gaelic to encourage her children's use of the language, echoing the view expressed in the pamphlet from Comann nam Pàrant, and she explains how this understanding informs her own ambition to learn enough Gaelic to hold a conversation with her children. Other mothers aimed even higher, and reported that they were learning Gaelic in order to effect a partial or complete switch from English to Gaelic as the home language.

Language policy in these families was a moving target; as parents learned Gaelic, as children entered Gaelic-medium education, as parents separated, and as new children were born, the interviewees reported that family language practice continually shifted and that family language policy was adjusted to fit changing circumstances. Mothers reported that their own progress in Gaelic learning, either rapid or uneven, directly influenced Gaelic use in the home. Adult Gaelic learning provision in Scotland is generally patchy and poorly structured and it can be a challenge to find Gaelic courses at an appropriate level, particularly for post-beginner learners. (McLeod, Pollock & MacCaluim 2010) Even when more comprehensive Gaelic learning pathways are available, they can be quite expensive and time-consuming, and some of the mothers reported that they found it difficult to pay for their

Gaelic courses or that, between childcare and work, they found it difficult to find time to study. At the time of the interviews, several of the mothers were between courses and some mothers also reported that Gaelic use in their homes would wax and wane with the progress they were making (or not making) in their own Gaelic learning.

While none of the families in this study lived in core Gaelic speaking communities, some of the mothers reported that their families were embedded in local Gaelic-speaking networks to a greater or lesser extent or that they had Gaelic speakers in the extended family they could draw on to help encourage Gaelic use in the home. It has been shown that among all the factors involved, language use between siblings is a particularly potent determinant of overall family language practice (Obied 2009) and childhood language acquisition in the home (Kim & Starks 2010); however, as the following interviewee explained, mothers found that they had to explicitly encourage children to use Gaelic together:

TCA: Right, excellent, and you said that the oldest girl – it's pretty much in English?

Interviewee: Yes, that's kind of strange. I mean there will be bits and pieces maybe that I will say in Gaelic, but on the whole it's generally English. I don't know why. As I say, I think it's just because we started off like that, but I also pushed onto her that she has to – when she's speaking to the younger ones, that she has to speak in Gaelic and, give her her due, she's kind of kept that up. Again, albeit that they'll still answer her in English, but she'll actually keep speaking to them in Gaelic again just because she knew that I'd get really cross whether – you know, I would really be on top of her, 'Speak Gaelic to them, speak Gaelic to them.'

Also, in common with other mothers, this interviewee explained that her own language use varied from child to child and over time, that as she learned Gaelic, she established different language-use patterns with different children: using more English with her oldest child and more Gaelic with her younger children.

In their research on bilingual Spanish/English families in the United States, King and Fogle (2006) found that the new parents in their sample underestimated the challenges of raising children to be fully competent in both a majority and a minority language. Mothers in my sample spoke to the difficulty of learning Gaelic quickly enough to keep up with their children's rapidly developing bilingualism, and they also confirmed the effort required to establish Gaelic use in the home. This next parent had slightly older children at the time of the research, and in her interview, she narrated an account of her evolving understanding of these challenges:

I don't know if I had any hopes but I – it was an assumption more than a hope. I just assumed that [my children would] become fluent Gaelic speakers. It just never really crossed my mind what a struggle it was. [...] Not for the children. Gaelic medium education isn't difficult for the children, but to create a Gaelic atmosphere, to create a Gaelic world, it's incredible hard work, and I think parents should be made aware of that.

In her interview, this parent reported that she started speaking only Gaelic with her youngest child from birth, and tried to learn Gaelic along with her children, but found that her own Gaelic learning was quickly outpaced by her children's acquisition of the language. She reported that the home language rapidly shifted to English when her oldest child started Gaelic-medium primary school. At the time of research, her oldest child was a young teenager in secondary school and this parent was struggling to reverse the language shift in

her home from English back to Gaelic. Whether aiming to use some Gaelic in the home, or aiming to switch languages altogether, these mothers faced the daunting task of negotiating and renegotiating language use as they and their children acquired ever more Gaelic. This next parent was aiming to effect a more-or-less complete switch to Gaelic and explains that language policy in her home was established through a process of continuous renegotiation:

And I think, had we started all being incredibly fluent right from the start, I think I maybe would have learnt that skill right from when I started: 'Oh, I'm a parent!' So I'd learnt being a parent and being a parent in Gaelic at the same time – might have been easier – but to actually make that change or that gradual progression is much harder and we negotiate – all I can say is, it's on-going. We negotiate it all the time.

The overwhelmingly dominant and normalized language ideology in Britain is one of English monolingualism, so if parents wish to use a language other than English with their children, if they wish to use Gaelic with their children, they will have to selfconsciously advance and defend a norm of Gaelic use in the home in direct opposition to this monolingualist Anglophone ideology. As this interviewee explains, this ideological work is particularly challenging for parents who are learning the language, as both their own and their children's language ability will be constantly changing. In the next section, we will examine in more detail the ideological work that parents undertake to support Gaelic use in the family, and discuss one ideology in particular, linguistic naturalism, that can frustrate this effort.

'Yes, but she makes them speak Gaelic' – naturalism and ideological work

It was apparent in the interviews that the mothers were working to establish new norms of language use in the family against a pervasive background ideology of linguistic naturalism: an ideology where language is reified as a natural object and where the authentic speaker is understood as someone who uses language unselfconsciously, who uses language in an apparently natural way (cf. Armstrong 2010; Eckert 2003; Jolly 2000; Woolard 2013). The manifest selfconsciousness of establishing Gaelic as a home language was a common concern in the interviews, and indeed, several of the mothers made explicit reference to naturalism at key points in their narratives, as this parent does in discussing her goals for family language use:

So I suppose that's my attitude is that [Gaelic is] just a normal, natural part of our lives. That's the way I want it to be. I don't want it to feel like an extra special super-duper project, even though it is in a way, but I want it to feel, yes, natural.

Informed by an ideology of naturalism, selfconsciously defending a norm of Gaelic use in the family could be understood as 'forcing' the language on children, and therefore, could be understood as bad parenting. In the interviews, mothers often clearly struggled to reconcile the need to defend Gaelic use in the home on the one hand with the expectation that they should not 'force' their children to speak a particular language on the other:

The one sort of negative comment I got was on [my Gaelic course], and [the students] were discussing how important it is to keep the language going in the home, and someone on [the course] said, 'Yes, but she *makes* them speak Gaelic.'

[...]

I am not – I'm not making – I am not a Gaelic Nazi, you know, but I feel that I have a responsibility to yell, 'Cànan! [language!]' when they are playing together in English sometimes.

Both of these excerpts are taken from different points in the same interview. In the first excerpt, the parent narrates how a fellow Gaelic student criticized her family language policy because, in the view of the fellow student, it involved compelling her children to speak Gaelic. In the second excerpt, by contrasting herself with the hyperbolic trope of a 'Gaelic Nazi', i.e., an overzealous Gaelic activist, this parent makes clear reference to the apparent contradiction between the responsibility of enforcing norms of Gaelic use in the family and the expectation that one should not force a language on a child. But of course, parents always make rules for their children, and in this sense, language use could be understood as no different from any other behaviour that parents seek to regulate. These next two excerpts both come from the same interview and exemplify this understanding:

Whereas I have to work at making [Gaelic] a social language, if what in their head they're learning day to day in school is: Gaelic in the class; English in the playground, I've then got an added level of difficulty when they come home.

[...]

You have to wear clothes to go to school; you have to wear a school uniform. You go to a Gaelic school, you have to speak Gaelic, it's just another rule, but it's a mixed message if they're allowed to speak English in the playground.

This interviewee explained her work in establishing Gaelic as the normal social language of the home, and how norms of language use in other sites – in this case in the playground at school – impact that work. In the interview, this parent expressed her disappointment that a norm of English language use was being established between the children on the playground in a nominally Gaelic-language school. In this respect, this parent was narrating a clear example of the circulation of ideology: how an ideology advanced in one site, in the school, impacts language practice in another site, in the home. In this parent's view, the school was not fulfilling its ideological role in advancing and defending Gaelic as a social language between the schoolchildren, and as a result, she then had to work harder to encourage her children to use Gaelic as a social language in the home. These mothers would not be working to renegotiate language policy for their families in isolation, but rather, their families would be embedded in a complex and interconnected ideological environment in which the school functions as a particularly influential site of ideological reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Selleck 2013).

Not all of this ideological work is necessarily censorious. As well as explicitly encouraging, entreating and admonishing their children to speak Gaelic, mothers reported that they also used a wide range of situational tactics to normalize Gaelic use in the family including: designating certain family mealtimes as Gaelic-speaking; watching Gaelic TV programs, reading in Gaelic or singing songs in Gaelic together; and taking part in Gaelic-language activities outside of the home. In the following excerpt, this parent narrates how she used a trip to the museum to normalize Gaelic use with her daughter:

[My daughter] did say, on Saturday, because I was speaking about [the museum exhibit] in Gaelic and she said 'Oh is this all written in Gaelic?' because I was speaking to her in Gaelic, as if she was really interested, excited about the fact that we were in a museum and it was in Gaelic. And there were only a few words in Gaelic and I said, 'No, it's not

written in Gaelic. We'll go and see if they've got anything in Gaelic.' And she said, 'Yes, yes, let's go.' So I knew they didn't, but I made a point of going to see and I said, 'Do you know if you have any information in Gaelic?' and all they have at the National Museum of Scotland is a map and it's not great, no other Gaelic resources at all, even about the history of the Gaels. So I said, 'You do not have anything else?' and they said they had audio tours in many languages, and books in different languages but nothing in Gaelic. So I wrote a note and [my daughter] did too; she said she wanted to do one too, to send one in to say she was sad that they didn't have any more information in Gaelic. [Laughter] It's getting her started early on the old Gaelic campaigning. [Laughter]

Through her own language learning and her involvement in her children's school, this parent has become a dedicated activist for the Gaelic language in her community, and in this narrative vignette we see her socializing her child to Gaelic activism, and at the same time, skilfully capitalizing on this opportunity to normalize Gaelic use with her daughter as they share in advancing an ideology about the proper status of Gaelic in public life in Scotland.

In the interviews, it was clear that, in spite of their hard work and resourcefulness, some of the mothers struggled to encourage Gaelic use in the home to the extent that they had hoped or planned. While there is now a wealth of advice available to parents both in print and on the internet, based on an ever-growing body of research on family bilingualism, most of this advice does not seem to filter down to the young parents who need it (Piller 2001; King & Fogle 2006), and in general, mothers in my sample reported that they learned how to encourage Gaelic in the home mostly through a process of trial-and-error, an approach that led to disappointment in some cases, as this parent with older children explained:

I definitely would, if I could go back in time, I would definitely do things differently, and I would definitely be much stronger, if I could. However, I still don't feel like it would – I don't know. It's such a struggle, it really is.

In his research on family language policy in the Gaeltacht (statutory Irish-speaking districts) in the Republic of Ireland, Ó hIfearnáin (2006, 2007) found that Irish-speaking parents often spoke English in the home for fear that their children would not acquire sufficient English in the schools and in the community to succeed in modern Ireland, but much like this parent above, older parents in Ó hIfearnáin's study expressed that if they could start again they would speak more Irish in the home to support their children's bilingual development. Ó hIfearnáin argues that parents in the Gaeltacht are not setting family language policy in the home 'in a fully informed climate' (2007, p. 527), and the results presented here confirm that parents in similar circumstances struggle to achieve their family language planning goals and would benefit from timely advice and support.

Discussion

King, Fogle and Logan-Terry (2008, p. 907) define family language policy as 'explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home among family members' and this present study confirms that King, Fogle and Logan-Terry are correct to emphasize the selfconscious and deliberate nature of establishing minority language use in the home. Mothers narrated accounts of establishing new norms of language use in the home by encouraging, entreating and even admonishing their children to speak Gaelic rather than English with specific interlocutors and under specific conditions. In his interviews with parents raising their children in Irish in Ireland, Ó hIfearnáin (2013) reports that parents frequently observed that 'there are no "accidental" Irish speakers anymore' (p. 356). Ó

hIfearnáin's research shows that, on the whole, children no longer become Irish speakers naturally or unselfconsciously in modern Ireland, even in core Irish-speaking communities, and that it takes deliberate planning by parents, educators and community members to transmit Irish to the next generation. Scottish Gaelic is demographically far weaker than Irish, and so we would expect that deliberate family language planning would also be required to ensure that children use Gaelic in the home, particularly where parents are not native speakers but learners of the language.

While the mothers in this study reported making a very deliberate effort to establish a new language policy in the home, at the same time, in our analysis of family language policy it would be a mistake to import an assumption – common in the analysis of policy and planning at higher levels, in the state and in formal organizations – that language policy and planning is particularly organized, linear or technocratic. This is often not the case for policy and planning even at the state level, but it is particularly inaccurate at the family level. This research demonstrates that family policy often evolves in what could best be described as an 'organic' manner. Families establish language policy over time through a process of research and discussion, but also through experimentation, argument, misjudgements, happenstance and accident. Further, the mothers in this study reported that they continually renegotiated their language policy as parents' and children's bilingual proficiency developed.

Mothers in this sample reported that they did succeed in changing language use in the home from the majority language to the minority language to different degrees, but they also spoke to the difficulty of the task and reported setbacks and re-evaluations in the process. As we narrate our lives, we work to create 'liveable stories', stories that reconcile difficult or disturbing contradictions into coherent, internally-consistent accounts of events and choices (Sinding & Aronson 2003). As parents narrate their efforts to raise their children bilingually in a society in which a monolingualist Anglophone ideology is dominant, they use their own research and experiences to construct accounts of family bilingualism as good parenting (cf. King & Fogle 2006). The data presented in this report show how the interviewees struggled at times to raise their children as Gaelic/English bilinguals in the face of the dominant monolingual Anglophone ideology in Scotland, but also, how the interviewees struggled to reconcile their selfconscious and deliberate family language planning with a background ideology of linguistic naturalism that understands that it is bad parenting to 'force' a child to speak a language.

Parents may understand their own and their children's agency in different ways, but there is nothing natural or inevitable about any of these beliefs, and in other places and times, parental beliefs about what choices they can and cannot make for their children might be very different. The relationship between parents and children is intrinsically not one of equals. Parents are in a power position in relation to their children and they can use that power to enforce family policy on a wide range of behaviours and inculcate their children with their own ideologies about subjects as fundamental and personal as gender roles (Davis & Greenstein 2009) and sexuality (Kuvalanka, Weiner & Russell 2013). Given this clear power dynamic, it is significant that language can be understood as somehow different in this respect, as something children ought to have agency to choose, even from a very young age. Of course, children's actual agency in this context is not really free, but tightly constrained by the structures of language acquisition and use that obtain locally. In other words, in this social context, children do not enjoy an absolute right to choose to speak any language they desire, but a right to 'choose' to speak English specifically, and historically in Scotland, regulating children's language use towards the dominant language, from Gaelic towards English, was not understood as 'forcing' a language on a child or 'bad parenting' in the same way, but as progressive and inevitable (cf. May 2003, 101–4).

The question of how ideology and social structure interact, reinforce and reproduce each other is a central concern in the social sciences (Bourdieu 1989). The results presented in this study concretely demonstrate how a dominant ideology reinforces and reproduces social structure at the micro level. Scottish society is thoroughly structured for the reproduction of the dominant language, for the reproduction of English monolingual proficiency in children. Parents and other Gaelic-language activists seek to alter local social space from the bottom up and create structures in the home and in the school that support Gaelic/English bilingualism, but here we see how they are frustrated by a linguistic ideology of naturalism that effectively normalizes and legitimizes the continued dominance of the English language in Scotland. As we saw above, this ideology of naturalism is so pervasive and powerful that even a fellow Gaelic learner might take it upon themselves to publicly censor a parent for enforcing a policy of Gaelic use in the family.

Teaching an endangered minority language like Gaelic to parents with children in minority-language immersion education should help these parents to positively engage with their children's bilingual development, and at the same time, should serve as an effective tactic for language revitalization. However, to succeed on both counts, parents need to learn not only how to speak the language, but also how to use the language outside of the classroom, and specifically, how to encourage the use of the language with their children in the home. In this respect, parents' and children's language learning should be understood, not simply as acquiring an abstract code, but also as learning a situated social practice, including learning the skills required to negotiate minority language use (Armstrong 2013; O'Rourke 2011, p. 249). To succeed in implementing a family language policy that includes the use of a low-status, subaltern language like Gaelic, parents will need to acquire a 'critical awareness' (Crisp 2005, p. 173–177) of their agency in establishing new norms of language use in the home, and of the choices that they can make for themselves and for their children as active and legitimate users of the language. As this research demonstrates, parents may need reassurance that implementing such a policy will not feel 'natural', at least not all the time or at first, and this is an area where relevant social research and targeted interventions by language planning professionals could make a real contribution towards assisting parents in achieving their family language policy goals (see, for example, Edwards & Newcombe 2005; Ó hÍfearnáin 2013, p. 362–364).

I would argue that teaching a threatened language as a social practice, rather than simply an abstracted code, is a key to successful language learning for language revitalization, both for children and for adults. In Scotland, adopting such an approach would require a complete re-evaluation of how Gaelic is currently taught to adults (see Smith-Christmas & Armstrong 2014), but in purely material terms and in comparison to other language planning interventions currently underway in Scotland (e.g. a Gaelic-language TV channel, statutory Gaelic language plans for government bodies), this change in approach would be relatively inexpensive to implement where Gaelic was already taught and might have a profound effect on the success of the Scottish Gaelic Revival in general.

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Notes

¹ In 2010, the lead Gaelic-language development body in Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, published an interim policy and strategy document, *Ginealach ùr na Gàidhlig*, in which they identified "support for parents" as the first of five priority action areas, supported by the specific action: "Development and promotion of immersion programs as a route to functional fluency for parents, with ongoing mentoring from fluent speakers," and evaluated by the key performance indicators: "200 additional parents using Gaelic in the home and in the community [and] 25% of parents of GM [Gaelic-Medium] pupils learning Gaelic in order to support their children," with both targets to be delivered by 31-3-2011 (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2010: 3,9).

² These two interviews are shared with a corpus of 17 interviews with heritage learners of Gaelic. (see Armstrong 2013; Smith-Christmas & Armstrong 2014) These two specific heritage learners acquired some passive proficiency as children, but very limited productive proficiency, and started learning Gaelic as adults at a beginner level.

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