Family language policy in mixed-language families:
An exploratory study of online parental discourses

Achilleas Kostoulas (The University of Manchester)

Eleni Motsiou (University of Thessaly)

Recommended Citations for the version of record

You can contact the corresponding author at: achilleas[at]kostoulas[dot]com

Family language policy in mixed-language families:
An exploratory study of online parental discourses

Achilleas Kostoulas (The University of Manchester)

Eleni Motsiou (University of Thessaly)

Abstract

This paper reports on an exploratory qualitative investigation of the discourses of plurilingual children's parents, with a view to developing an understanding of their family language policy. Drawing loosely on Spolsky (2004), family language policy was conceptualised as having two components: (a) linguistic ideology, i.e., beliefs and attitudes towards language, linguistic development and plurilingualism, and (b) language transmission and management practices. A data corpus (242,178 words) was generated by drawing data from two online parent communities, focusing on families where Modern Greek was one of the family languages. Thematic analysis was used to explore the parents' stated attitudes, beliefs and practices about language, family and education as they related to plurilingualism and linguistic development. We documented strong positive views about fostering plurilingualism, as well as a range of concerns about balancing different aspects of the children's developing linguistic repertoire. We also noted that established language development and management practices (e.g., "OPOL", "Minority Language at Home") were supplemented with more flexible ones, suggesting adjustment to emerging multilingual norms. The findings suggest that there is scope for developing conceptual models of family language policy that are more responsive to emerging patterns of language contact and plurilingualism.

1 Introduction

This study aims to develop a tentative understanding of the social and ideological processes that influence family language policy against the backdrop of globalisation. We do this by looking into the language policies of mixed-language families, where at least one of the family languages was Modern Greek. The study was prompted by what we perceive as a pressing need to re-assess existing understandings of the linguistic development of plurilingual speakers (Hoff & Core, 2013; Pesco & Crago, 2008), a need that is becoming increasingly salient on account of the intensifying transnational flows that typify the globalised economy (Canagarajah, 2017).

In the Greek-speaking context, there is a heightened urgency to reframe and refine understandings of plurilingual development, which is driven by two ongoing demographic changes (Damanakis, Konstantinidis, & Tamis, 2014). On the one hand, economic austerity policies in Greece have prompted the relocation of many young families in other countries. For these families, striking a balance between facilitating the socialisation of their children in the majority language and preserving their linguistic and

ethnic identity can prove a challenge. At the same time, the political destabilisation of Northern Africa and the Middle East has led to the settlement in Greece of large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers challenging perceptions of Greece as a monolingual, monocultural country, and raising questions about the role, visibility and desirability of plurilingualism.

2   Family Language Policy

This study aims to contribute to a broadening debate on family language policy (Lanza & Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; Lanza & Wei, 2016; Macalister & Mirvahedi, 2016). It is intended to supplement existing research, which – in the Greek context – has tended to study child plurilingualism through the perspective of teachers and in relation to the school setting (see, *inter alia*, Gkaintartzi, Kiliari, & Tsokalidou, 2016; Griva & Stamou, 2014; Skourtou, 2011; Stamou & Dinas, 2009; Tsokalidou, 2005). The role of the family in fostering plurilingual development is gradually receiving empirical attention, as reflected in a growing number of publications (e.g., De Houwer, 1999; Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Chatzidaki & Xenikaki, 2012; Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou, 2012; Lanza, 2007; Worthy & Rodríguez-Galindo, 2006).

The emerging corpus of literature on family language policy suggests that attitudes and practices towards plurilingualism and language management are complicated. Palviainen & Bergroth (2018) report that while 'mother tongues' are central in the discourse of bilingual families in Finland, research participants nevertheless tended to self-identify as monolinguals. Other studies have focused on the diversity of management strategies and language practices that families use (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen & La Morgia, 2018) and on the challenges associated with fostering language maintenance (e.g., Goktolga & Yagmur, 2018; Smith-Christmas, 2016). A key finding is that the positive views regarding plurilingualism do not always translate into effective language practices, because of pervasive fears that exposure to additional languages might compromise school achievement and societal integration (Piller & Gerber, 2018).

By taking a focussed look at the language policies of mixed-language families (i.e., families that reported using more than one language; e.g., families with heritage language or migration background, or elite bilingualism aspirations), we aim to supplement existing theory in two ways. Existing work on bilingualism (e.g., Romaine, 1995) usefully distinguishes between different types of bilingual speakers, but recent social developments, such as language deterritoralisation (Higgins, 2011), linguistic superdiversity (Blommaert, 2013), the spread of English as a global lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2011) and translanguaging (Wei, 2011) pose novel analytical needs. Furthermore, the rapid demographic and linguistic changes may limit the theoretical utility of static typologies; rather, a perspective that highlights plurilingual development as a process, including the thinking and rationales that sustain it and the practices that foster it, may yield analytical affordances. Lastly, we were interested in studying plurilingualism as a situated phenomenon, and therefore we focussed on families where the same language functioned a minority language (Greek-speaking expats) or a majority language (speakers of other languages resident in Greece and Cyprus). In doing so, we hoped to contribute to the emerging understanding of how families develop as "dynamic system[s] in a changing world" (Higgins, 2018, p. 306).

Although our theoretical lens was deliberately open-ended (see *Methods*), the study draws loosely on the language policy model put forward by Spolsky (2004, 2009), where language policy is described as consisting of three components: ideology, management and practices. Spolsky defines language ideology as a set of "beliefs about language and language use" (2004, p. 5) that impact linguistic practices and

dictate policy choices. These beliefs may be implicit, especially when thinking about family language policy (Foyle & King, 2013), but they can be deduced through discourse (Määta & Pietikäinen, 2014). In Spolsky's model, language management refers to "any specific effort to modify or influence" linguistic behaviour (2004, p. 5). In the family context, this might refer to actions such as creating an input-rich linguistic environment, applying linguistic criteria to the selection of schools, encouraging children to join evening / weekend courses in a minority language, etc. The third component of Spolsky's model, i.e., practices, refers to the "habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up [a group's] linguistic repertoire (2004, p. 5). This component comprises parental discourse strategies (Lanza, 2004, 2007), as well as the children's linguistic choices. In the context of this study, which mostly included families with children at very early stages of linguistic development, a distinction between parental discourse strategies and language management proved hard to sustain. We have therefore merged the two constructs under the category of Language Transmission and Management practices and strategies (LTM), a term that encompasses "practiced language policy" (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012), or *de facto* language policy (Shohamy, 2006), and which provides a counterpoint to the ideological component of the model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Overview of Family Language Policy

To that end, our study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the linguistic ideology expressed by parents in mixed-language families regarding the plurilingual development of their children?
2. What are the preferred Language Transmission and Management practices of said parents?

3   Methods

Given the exploratory nature of this study, we opted for a qualitative research orientation, which is well suited to developing phenomenologically valid understandings that are grounded on the experiences of our research participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Isari & Pourkos, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data were drawn from two Facebook-based communities of parents/caregivers (hence, "parents") who self-identified as being members of mixed-language families, and reported using Modern Greek as one of their family languages. These communities included families living outside and inside Greece and Cyprus, where Greek was a minority and community language, respectively. Using a criterion sampling strategy, which only included posts and comments that (a) focused on plurilingual development; and (b) had been posted in 2018, we generated a data corpus comprising 230 posts plus associated comments, spanning 242,178 words (Table 1).

Table 1 Overview of online communities and data corpus

Online community	Members (as of 3/3/19)	Description	Posts (Comments per post)	Words
Community A	40,315	Plurilingual families outside Greece and Cyprus (only including comments about situations that involved Modern Greek)	64 (1-52)	112,184
Community B	1,253	Mixed composition: Greek-speaking families outside Greece & Cyprus, & families in Greece or Cyprus with at least one non-Greek-speaking parent	166 (0-128)	129,994
Total			230	242,178

The data were analysed using thematic analysis procedures, which are theoretically flexible, as they synthesise inductive and deductive perspectives, and can generate theoretically rigorous descriptions (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). The analysis involved four stages, as follows:

1) Pre-analytical procedures: These included applying chronological and thematic inclusion criteria, creating a data index, anonymisation, and familiarization with the dataset. Each post or comment was assigned a unique identifier consisting of two or three elements: a letter indicating the community from where the data item had been drawn, a number indicating the chronological order of the post, and – for comments – a number indicating its order of appearance, ignoring nestedness.

2) Open coding: This involved close, line-by-line reading of the data, during which we independently assigned a descriptive code to each thematic unit (i.e., post, comment or shorter stretch of text). Codes were compared regularly to ensure intercoder agreement.

3) Axial coding: At this stage, the coded data were grouped in thematic axes (i.e., categories and subcategories). Constant comparison was used to ensure thematic coherence, and analytical writing procedures were employed to summarise the content of each category. This stage was reiterated multiple times, until a stable theoretical frame was generated.

4) Theory generation and refinement: Finally, connections were drawn among the elements in the inductively generated theoretical frame, and between them and the literature.

During all stages of the data analysis, the original language (typically Modern Greek or English) and spelling conventions of the data were preserved for reasons of authenticity (for examples, see Authors, in press), but in this article the data have been translated into English, and language and punctuation have been standardised for readability. In a few instances, the original language has been retained, accompanied by a translation in [square brackets] because its use was communicatively or theoretically significant.

We designated the socio-political status of each language with the terms *majority/non-majority* (ML/NML), and used the term *global* for languages that enjoy a privileged status internationally. In addition, languages were designated *dominant/non-dominant* (DL/NDL) depending on the children's

relative linguistic proficiency (i.e., the child's 'best language'), as perceived by the parents. These terminological choices are summarised in Table 2. (For additional discussion, see also Romaine, 2013).

Table 2 Terminological conventions

Term	Code	Definition
Majority Language	ML	The language by most members of the community, which typically enjoys a privileged status (e.g., Modern Greek in Greece/Cyprus)
Non-Majority Language(s)	NML	Language(s) in the repertoire of a mixed-language family other than the ML, cf. minority, heritage languages (e.g., Albanian or French in Greece)
Global Language	GL	A non-majority language with salient international presence and high status, often used as a lingua franca (e.g., English globally)
Dominant Language	DL	A child's 'best language' at a given time, as perceived by the parents
Non-Dominant Language(s)	NDL	All languages in a child's repertoire excluding the DL

4 Parental beliefs about plurilingualism

The parents' linguistic ideology encompasses a broad set of beliefs, attitudes and concerns, which can be deduced from their discourses about language and plurilingualism (P. García, 2008). In line with relevant literature (e.g., Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; De Houwer, 1999; Gkaintartzi, Chatzidaki, & Tsokalidou, 2014; Moin, 2013; Spolsky, 2004), our definition includes psychological and social aspects of plurilingual development, but it does not examine whether such beliefs align to corresponding linguistic practices or not.

Working inductively, we identified three major areas of discourse in our data-set: language-focussed discourses, family-focused discourses, and education-focused discourses (Figure 2). Language-focused discourses, which are most directly relevant to the present study (see RQ1), include all references to language development, reinforcement and preservation, as well as their psycholinguistic and social particularities.
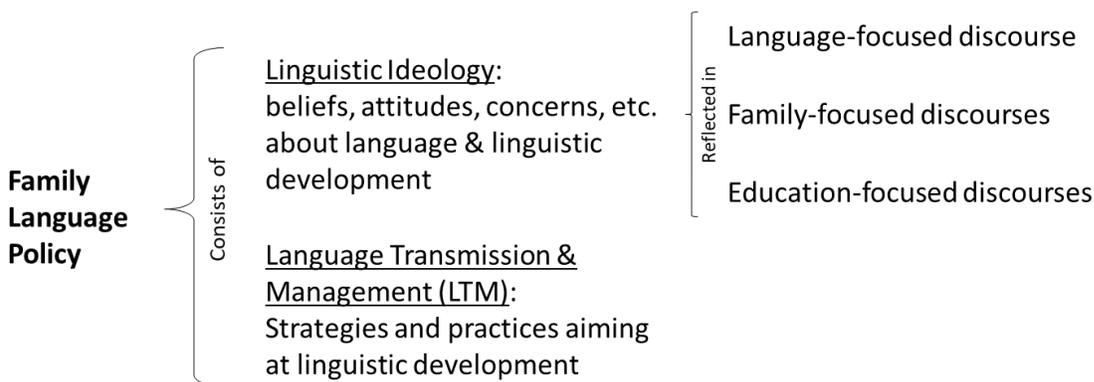
Figure 2. Expanded outline of Family Language Policy

5

4.1 Language development, reinforcement and preservation

One overarching theme in the parents' linguistic ideology (Figure 1) comprises beliefs about the development of the children's linguistic repertoire (for similar discussions, see also De Houwer, 1999; Lanza, 2007; Okita, 2002; Piller, 2002). The parents in the communities we examined tended to discuss this aspect of family policy with reference to two main themes: the need to reinforce or preserve a specific language (typically an NML), and their beliefs about plurilingualism in general.

4.1.1 *Emphasis on one language*, depending on socio-political status or dominance. A large number of posts and comments appeared to focus on preserving and reinforcing NMLs; others described a wish for early development of the ML in order to facilitate the children's socialisation, particularly in those cases when an NML was dominant. It was frequently suggested that family language policy is ultimately a question of balancing ML acquisition and NML preservation (cf. Tannenbaum, 2012).

Broadly speaking, parents wished to preserve NMLs, which seems in line with recurring observations in the literature (Cavallaro, 2005; De Houwer, 1999; Fishman, 1985; Gkaintartzi et al., 2014; Gkaintartzi et al., 2016; Schwartz, 2008; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Parents frequently argued that this was necessary for the preservation and transmission of ethnic identities (e.g., *"I struggled maintaining Greek at home as English took slowly over but I did. It was way more important to me than anything else. I cannot accept my kids not to speak my language"* [A24.7]). Some parents also seemed to take a cue from the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1989, 1996), which posits that a plurilingual speakers' languages draw on common underlying linguistic proficiency. The following comment typifies this belief:

> No need to use English with your son. Crazy logic but the better his Greek, the better he'll take English on board. . . . If he knows Greek colours and shapes, for example, he'll just relabel them in English later on. Children have to learn the conceptual aspects of language, which can be accomplished in the first language. [A28.9]

Lastly, some parents suggested that preserving NMLs would enhance the children's multicultural communication skills (cf. M. García, 2003).

Despite the value attached to fostering NMLs, many parents stated that they prioritised early ML development. Many of them were reportedly concerned about possible challenges with integrating into the official school system, or deficits in socialisation caused by inadequate command of MLs and global languages (e.g., *"Our little boy's speech (4 y.o.) has always been exceptional in Greek. His English is still very poor, and we're getting a bit concerned, as he can't communicate properly in occasional play dates with English children"* [A17]). Others stated that they were unsure how dominant NMLs and non-dominant MLs or global languages could be most effectively combined. The language transmission and management practices and strategies that parents deployed are discussed in following sections.

4.1.2 *Fostering plurilingualism*. For other parents, language policy was grounded on strong positive attitudes towards plurilingualism in general, which was perceived as a new, inescapable linguistic reality (e.g., *"Also, many people use a common/third language at home so don't worry. He will grow up thinking it is normal for everyone. What an amazing gift for him to have three languages without trying!"* [B89.6]). Such beliefs tended to be expressed in the context of discussions regarding the benefits of intra-familial lingua francas, typically global languages like English. In such cases, beliefs tended to be generally positive, even if parents were not fully proficient in the global language.

These broadly positive beliefs were moderated by concerns regarding when and how to introduce a new language, or how many languages might comfortably coexist in a child's linguistic repertoire:

> I would have said that at [age] 3, it's enough to be fluent in four languages! :) but I agree, if he can associate a 5th language with his uncle and he is willing and doesn't get confused, I guess no harm will be done? [A50.16]

Similar reservations were raised regarding the possibility of linguistic confusion and the purported cognitive load that plurilingualism might have on overall linguistic development. In a typical remark, a couple was reprimanded because: *"you were both speaking Greek to her, it's possible you just confused her now that you want to switch to Russian"* [A3.2].

4.2   Particularities of plurilingual development

A second overarching theme of linguistic ideology (Figure 1) related to the ways in which plurilingual development differs from monolingualism. The most salient beliefs that were expressed in the data were the following:

4.2.1   *Developmental stages and hallmarks*. Our data revealed a great degree of uncertainty, expressed in questions and requests for advice about plurilingual development. Such questions tended to focus on what is to be expected at each developmental stage (e.g., when do plurilingual children start talking? Is their rate of development the same as with monolinguals?), and how the repertoire of plurilingual children differs from monolinguals (e.g., how extensive should vocabulary be at each age?). The following extract is a typical example:

> Our boy is 23m old. From me he hears only Greek and from his father only Spanish. To each other we speak in Italian. Right now, he understands everything in all 3 languages. But he doesn't speak at all. A few words like grandma and grandpa in Greek, *mama papà* in Italian, water in Spanish. Do you think it's better to use 2 instead of 3 languages just to help him? Or it's normal at his age? [A58]

Although such discourses might be interpreted as reservations about plurilingual development, it is also likely that they index a need for affirmation. Such affirmation was typically provided by the communities, as shown below:

> My experience is that child language acquisition in multilingual settings, especially L2, is not extremely predictable. We use the controllable monolingual models, but for young multilinguals, we only have case studies. Even the large-scale research has to generalise on a number of factors, as often it is not possible to find enough children brought up with similar exposure patterns to similar language combinations. [A17.23]

In other words, parents appeared to view plurilingual development as a 'special case of normal'.

4.2.2   *Code-mixing & code-switching:* Some parents expressed uncertainty about whether code-mixing is an expected stage of development, how often it should appear in the output of the children, when it should stop, if parents should be allowed to engage in such behaviour, if it might occur in writing, etc.

> So, mixing up languages is healthy and normal but I wonder when my older will ever stop? [A10.5]

My daughter is bilingual: Greek/English. She used to do the same and when she was speaking, she was mixing both languages, i.e., "τα boys στο school με κάνουν chase αλλά εγώ έχω καινούργια shoes" [boys at school chase me but I've got new shoes]. [A18.3]

As hinted by the extracts above, the parents' views seemed to be in line with existing literature which treats code-switching as a non-conscious, spontaneous form of linguistic behaviours, as well as a multi-level communicative strategy (Adendoroff, 1996; Auer, 2013; Coupland & Giles, 1988; Tsokalidou, 2012; Wei, 2000).

4.3.3   *Possible impact on development and literacy*. Lastly, some parents expressed concerns about possible connections between plurilingualism and delays in linguistic development, stuttering, autism spectrum disorders and the like. These concerns were expressed in two main ways: Sometimes parents registered dismay regarding what they perceived as linguistic or developmental deficits, and they speculated that these might have resulted from the plurilingual input in their families, or the use of inappropriate LTM practices. On other occasions, they channelled the views of teachers or health professionals, who reportedly harboured reservations or even negativity towards plurilingualism:

Before Christmas I went into school to collect my daughter's βαθμός [grade; report card] where I was told that my daughter's problems at school (I should explain that she is dyslexic) all stem from me speaking English to her. Both the Special Ed[ucation] teacher and her class teacher firmly believe that she thinks in English and it's hindering her learning. [B11.0]

Some of the comments in this category echo dated stereotypical beliefs regarding the negative impact of plurilingualism (for additional discussion see, e.g., Skourtou, 2011; Tsokalidou, 2012).

Despite the sporadic appearance of such concerns, the prevailing view among parents was that any link between plurilingualism and linguistic and cognitive deficits is spurious. In fact, they were keen to support their beliefs both anecdotally and with reference to online and published sources, which suggests a high level of awareness among our participants regarding the connections between plurilingualism and overall development.

5   Language transmission and management

Moving on to RQ2, this section focusses on the linguistic transmission and management (LTM) practices and strategies mentioned by our participants. This thematic category broadly corresponds to what Spolsky (2004, 2009) described as "language practices" and "language management". In the section that follows, we describe our rationale for fusing the constructs before moving on to their presentation.

5.1   Defining the LTM theme

The LTM category includes all the described practices and strategies that aimed at linguistic development, whether they pertained to reinforcement of NMLs or socialisation in the non-dominant ML(s). During our analysis, we decided to merge language practices and management under a single category, because the way they were represented in our data did not perfectly match Spolsky's definitions.

To begin with, Spolsky's "management" category includes education and legal aspects of policy, which are not of immediate relevance to family language policy. In fact, we almost exclusively encountered linguistic practices and strategies in our data (a very small number of exceptions included references to creating an "appropriate linguistic environment" by facilitating access to NML input, and the diagnoses and management of developmental problems). Other than that, most references to

management pertained to parent-child communication as a means for developing language. We also noted that most of our participants were parents of children at very early stages of linguistic development, for whom parental discourse strategies were both linguistic practices and efforts to influence linguistic development. As a result, a distinction between management and practices did not appear meaningful and it was not retained.

5.2   Overview of LTM strategies and practices

Drawing on our data, we identified the following LTM practices and strategies, which broadly overlap with Piller's (2001) typology.

5.2.1 *One Parent One Language* and variants. As suggested by its name, One Parent One Language (OPOL) involves the exclusive use of a particular language by each parent, most commonly their L1 (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004; Döpke, 1992; Piller, 2001). OPOL appeared to be the most widespread practice in the online communities we studied. In fact, many parents insisted on its strict implementation, as seen below:

> You should not use any language other than your mother language with the child, because they will learn it wrong. Each person [should use] their language. If the father speaks Urdu and you [speak] Greek, the child will learn German at the kindergarten and will speak three languages. [B66.10, translated]

Although the view was expressed, often and strongly, that OPOL must be practiced without deviations, we also noted several instances of adjustment to communicative exigency. For example, some parents mentioned that they would systematically switch between ML in social encounters and OPOL in the family context. This deviation might stem from a desire to include all participants in the conversation (e.g., *"I'm Serbian, I've got a little boy . . . at home I only speak Serbian, when we're with Greek friends I speak Greek"* [B82.43, translated]). Other examples of occasional deviation from the strict enforcement of OPOL seemed to be motivated by considerations such as the reluctance of some children to use an NDL, or the exceptional use of the ML when helping children with homework (see also Sect. 4.2.3).

5.2.2 *Reinforcing NMLs*. A second set of practices involved the preferential use of NMLs (see also, De Houwer, 2004). For example, some parents mentioned that they only used NMLs in the family context:

> I live in Denmark; I've got a 16-month old little bug who goes to playschool and is in contact with the Danish language on a daily basis. At home [he/she?] hears Greek from me and [his/her?] father. [B116, translated]

This practice, which participants described as *Minority Language at Home*, probably relates to aspirations of preserving ethnic identity (cf. Fishman, 1991). A similar practice involved the exclusive use of NMLs in all communicative contexts, which parents sometimes described as *Minority Language Everywhere*). As shown below, this was grounded on the belief that children would have adequate exposure to the ML at school and in social settings (e.g., "*Since you* [pl.] *live in Greece, you* [pl.] *needn't speak Greek to her – she will hear that from everyone else. Personally, if I were you* [pl.]*, I'd only speak Italian*" [B8.75, translated]). Judging by the confidence with which practices like Minority Language Everywhere were advocated by parents with a western background and the lack of similar discourses in other cases, it is possible that this practice reflects societal beliefs regarding the relative status of the ML and NMLs, although the limited evidence at our disposal precludes generalisations.

5.2.3 *Situational selection of languages*. Other parents described their LTM as a systematic accommodation to communicative exigencies (for similar examples, see De Houwer, 1999; Schwarz, 2008). This kind of rule-based code-mixing was variously described by parents as *Two Parents Two Languages* (2P2L), *Situational switching* or *One Situation One Language*.

> We choose 2P2L for our family, in which both parents speak both languages and the use is dictated by the situation. This method fares very well in studies for passing on bilingualism, even just slightly more than OPOL. We chose this method because I need to use my Arabic (L2) or I will lose it, lol! I also love that we are modeling to our daughter how to be confidently, and comfortably bilingual <3. [A46.23]

As seen in the extract above, these practices tended to be associated with beliefs about multilingualism as a skill that involved selecting situationally appropriate codes from a wide linguistic repertoire.

5.2.4 *Ad hoc use of multiple languages*. Although most LTM practices and strategies in our dataset involved systematic choice of a language and its consistent use, there was also widespread reference to more flexible approaches.

> There's no such thing as a must in communication; just choose the languages that come naturally to you [B43.5, translated]

> OPOL was helpful at the beginning for us but soon it became very hard to follow; betw[een] 5 languages, we decided to make our own fusion system. [A45.7]

In addition, the use of translanguaging (Wei, 2011) also appeared quite prevalent.

> From my personal experience, having been raised as a bilingual, when I was a child, I used to make my own words: honk your corn (=κόρνα [horn]) and things like that. I've never had a problem. I think it's absolutely normal. [B40.17, translated]

In some instances, concerns were voiced regarding the potential confusion of children and the social acceptability of translanguaging (e.g., *"are you sure this is not worrying for the future? . . . What if tomorrow my little girl uses such words in Greece?"* [B40.15, translated]). However, it seems that translanguaging occurred extensively in the family context, either for ludic purposes, or as a means for scaffolding linguistic development (see also Sect. 3.3.3).

5.2.5. *Reinforcement strategies*. In addition to the abovementioned linguistic practices, reference was also made to a number of improvisational reinforcement strategies. For example, some parents discussed the parallel translation or repetition of words in both languages:

> – So, when I say "come and sit here with mommy" I should immediately repeat «έλα να κάτσεις εδώ με τη μαμά»? [come and sit here with mommy] . . .
> – First in the foreign language once or twice, and then in Greek, and always repeat words, like "sit"-«κάτσε» [sit] and point. That's what I did with my children and they are trilingual now [B64.9 & .10]

Other parents recommended feigning inability to understand the children's DL, in order to force communication in a NDL (cf. Lanza 2007). Another suggestion involved the gradual increase in input

exposure in an additional language (e.g. *"if [your daughter] watches cartoons, you should gradually start making her watch only in German"* [B77.25]).

6   Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that language ideologies are relatively more complex than what has been described in the literature to date. Similar to other studies of Greek-speaking communities (e.g., Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Gogonas, 2012) our participants seemed to place high value on preserving their linguistic and ethnic identity. But, while some research has highlighted the conflicting nature of language maintenance and integration (e.g., Goktolga & Yagmur, 2018; Piller & Gerber, 2018), in our data these goals seemed to coexist in a non-antagonistic way. Drawing on the typology put forward by Ruiz (1984), the parents' views strongly echoed views of language as a right and as a resource, and not so much as a possible problem. This finding could be attributed to the broadly positive perceptions about the Greek language and culture, both in host communities in the Western world, and in the Greek-speaking communities.

A common theme in the literature on plurilingual development relates to the social status of NMLs (e.g., Armon-Lotem, Joffe, Abutbul-Oz, Altman, & Walters, 2014; Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Gkaintartzi et al., 2016; Sella-Mazi, 2001). We therefore expected to find stronger differences between the Greek-speaking communities and communities outside the Greek-speaking world, depending on the status of Modern Greek as a ML and NML respectively. However, the status of Modern Greek was an NML did not seem to adversely affect language preservation, and interest in LTM strategies was high outside Greece and Cyprus. For mixed-language families in Greece and Cyprus, attitudes towards plurilingualism appeared to reflect whether their NML enjoyed high or low prestige (e.g., Western European vs. Eastern European or Arabic languages, respectively). Eastern European and Asian languages, i.e., languages that were associated with low status, were only infrequently mentioned in the data from Greece and Cyprus, and they tended to appear in the context of discourses that highlighted cognitive and linguistic risks, as well as challenges to social integration. The limitations of the dataset preclude the confident statement of generalisable findings, but we believe that additional research that takes the social status of the language into account would likely yield interesting insights.

Turning our attention to the LTM practices and strategies, these seemed to relate to the particularities of a complex linguistic environment. We note, in our data, a marked shift of attitudes towards phenomena such as translanguaging: Older literature tended to recommend parental discourse strategies for limiting such phenomena (e.g., Lanza, 2007), and empirical work has documented strong preference for consecutive bilingualism and strategies like OPOL (e.g., Piller & Gerber, 2018). In our data, however, translanguaging was positively appraised as a natural aspect of plurilingual development. Another observation was the development of novel LTM practices and strategies, which complemented established ones like OPOL and Minority Language at Home. These included flexibility in selecting the language used in parent-child communication, and references to the use of intrafamily lingua francas (typically English). It is likely that the development of online communities, where societal attitudes, challenges and affordances of plurilingualism are discussed is a factor that supports the language policies of the plurilingual families.

The development of complex linguistic ecosystems, and the broadening of the LTM repertoire may well necessitate a reappraisal of existing plurilingual children typologies. For example, Hoffmann's (1991) taxonomy, which categorises bilinguals as elites, majority language speakers, bilingual family speakers,

11

and minority language speakers etc., might be descriptively inadequate to the challenges of extensive plurilingualism. Likewise, the categories put forward in Romaine (1995), which classify bilingual children based on parental, community and family languages, may be extended to better reflect phenomena such as sequential plurilingualism (which is on the increase due to translational flows), or the role of global languages (such as English), which are increasingly taught to enrich the children's linguistic capital or to facilitate intra-family communication.

One final noteworthy observation regarding LTM relates to the strong evaluative comments that were expressed regarding specific strategies and practices. Discourses were frequently encountered in the dataset favouring the inflexible use of practices such as OPOL and Minority Language at Home/Everywhere, which were grounded on the belief that this would minimise perceived risks of confusing children. These discourses also indexed beliefs regarding the value of standard ("correct") language, and about native speakers as ideal language models (e.g., "Each parent should only speak their *madrelingua* [mother language] *so that children acquire the correct articulation and pronunciation"* [B50.9, translated]). One might speculate that the strength with which such opinions were voiced might connect with the feelings of anxiety, guilt and inadequacy which many parents voiced when describing the practical challenges that they faced with implementing rigid practices in a complex linguistic environment.

In summary, this study recorded some initial insights regarding how parents in mixed-language families think regarding their children's plurilingual development, about the ways in which they endeavour to foster their children's linguistic development, and about how they manage the plurilingual reality in which they are embedded. Broadly, we observed that their discourses indicate an accommodation to an increasingly complex linguistic environment. That said, the uncertainties caused by a fluid linguistic environment also appear to connect to the resilience of linguistic beliefs and practices of which the continuing relevance is now questionable. These findings should be appraised in the context of the parameters that frame this inquiry. The scale of the study and the qualitative methodology obviously preclude the uncritical generalisation of these observations, but the latter do offer some initial directions for further work that might explore family ideology and LTM in greater depth and with sufficient statistical generalisablilty. Keeping their exploratory nature in mind, these findings suggestive ample scope for developing more comprehensive understandings of the ways in which mixed-language families face the challenges of a fluid, complex linguistic reality, and for complementing the theoretical instruments with which the language policies of these families are studied.

References

Adendoroff, R. (1996). The functions of code switching among high school teachers and students in KwaZulu and implications for teacher education. In K. Bailey, & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in L2 education* (pp. 388–406). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Armon-Lotem, S., Joffe, S., Abutbul-Oz, H., Altman, C. & Walters, J. (2014). Language exposure, ethnolinguistic identity and attitudes in the acquisition of Hebrew as a second language among bilingual preschool children from Russian-and English-speaking backgrounds. In Th. Grüter, & J. Paradis (Eds.), *Input and experience in bilingual development* (pp. 77–98). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Auer, P. (Ed.). (2013). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. London: Routledge.

Barron-Hauwaert, S. (2004). *Language strategies for bilingual families: The one-parent-one-language approach*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Bezcioglu-Goktolga, I., & Yagmur, K. (2018). Home language policy of second-generation Turkish families in the Netherlands. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 39*(1), 44–59.

Blommaert, J. (2013). *Ethnography, superdiversity and linguistic landscapes: Chronicles of complexity.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Bonacina-Pugh, F. (2012). Researching 'practiced language policies': Insights from conversation analysis. *Language Policy, 11*(3), 213–234

Canagarajah, S. (Ed.) (2017). *The Routledge handbook of migration and language.* London: Routledge.

Cavallaro, F. (2005). Language maintenance revisited: An Australian perspective. *Bilingual Research Journal, 29*(3), 561–582.

Chatzidaki, A., & Maligkoudi, C. (2013). Family language policies among Albanian immigrants in Greece. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 16*(6), 675–689.

Chatzidaki, A., & Xenikaki, I. (2012). Language choice among Albanian immigrant adolescents in Greece: The effect of the interlocutor's generation. *Menon: Journal of Educational Research, 1*(1), 4–16.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd Edn.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Coupland, N. & Giles, H. (1988). Introduction: The communicative contexts of accommodation. *Language and Communication, 8*(3–4), 175–182.

Cummins, J. (1989). *Empowering minority students*. Sacramento, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.

Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society.* Sacramento, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.

Curdt-Christiansen, X. L., & La Morgia, F. (2018). Managing heritage language development: Opportunities and challenges for Chinese, Italian and Pakistani Urdu-speaking families in the UK. *Multilingua, 37*(2), 177–200.

Damanakis, M., Konstantinidis, S., & Tamis, A. (Eds.). (2014). *Νέα μετανάστευση από και προς την Ελλάδα* [New Immigration to and from Greece]. Athens: Alexandreia / University of Crete Research & Studies Centre.

De Houwer, A. (1999). Environmental factors in early bilingual development: The role of parental beliefs and attitudes. In G. Extra, & L. Verhoeven (Eds.), *Bilingualism and migration* (pp. 75–95). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

De Houwer, A. (2004). Trilingual input and children's language use in trilingual families in Flanders. In C. Hoffmann, & J. Ytsma (Eds.), *Trilingualism in family, school, and community* (pp. 118–135). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

De Houwer, A. (2006). Bilingual language development: Early years. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics* (pp. 781–787). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Döpke, S. (1992). *One parent one language: An interactional approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Fishman, J. A. (1985). *The rise and fall of the ethnic revival*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

García, M. E. (2003). Recent research on language maintenance. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 23,* 22-43.

García, P. (2008). Parental language attitudes and practices to socialise children in a diglossic society. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 8*(4), 328–344.

Gkaintartzi, A, Kiliari, A., & Tsokalidou, R. (2016). Heritage language maintenance and education in the Greek sociolinguistic context: Albanian immigrant parents' views. *Cogent Education, 3*(1), 1155259.

Gkaintartzi, A., Chatzidaki A., & Tsokalidou, R. (2014). Albanian parents and the Greek educational context: Who is willing to fight for the home language? *International Journal of Multilingual Research, 8*(4), 291–308.

Gkaintartzi, A., & Tsokalidou, R. (2012). Μετανάστες γονείς: Διεκδικητές ή όχι της γλωσσικής διατήρησης; [Immigrant parents: Champions of linguistic preservation or not?] In G. Androulakis, S. Metakidou, & R. Tsokalidou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference «Σταυροδρόμι γλωσσών και πολιτισμών: Μαθαίνοντας εκτός σχολείου»* [Languages and Cultures Crossroads: Learning outside school] (pp. 187–195). Thessaloniki: Polydromo.

Gogonas, N. (2012). Γλωσσική διατήρηση/μετακίνηση σε αραβόφωνους ομιλητές 2ης γενιάς στην Αθήνα: Αποτελέσματα εμπειρικής έρευνας [Linguistic preservation/shifts in 2nd generation speakers of Arabic in Athens: Findings of an empirical study]. In G. Androulakis, S. Metakidou, & R. Tsokalidou (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference «Σταυροδρόμι γλωσσών και πολιτισμών: Μαθαίνοντας εκτός σχολείου»* [Languages and Cultures Crossroads: Learning outside school] (pp. 357–370). Thessaloniki: Polydromo.

Griva, E., & Stamou, A. (2014). *Ερευνώντας τη διγλωσσία στο σχολικό περιβάλλον* [Investigating bilingualism in the school context]. Thessaloniki: Kyriakides.

Higgins, C. (2011). Space, place and language. In A. S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook on migration and language* (pp. 102–116). London: Routledge.

Higgins, C. (2018). The mesolevel of family language policy. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *15*(3), 306–312.

Hoff, E., & Core, C. (2013). Input and language development in bilingually developing children. *Seminars in Speech & Language, 34*(4), 215–226.

Hoffmann, C. (1991). *An introduction to bilingualism*. London: Longman.

Isari, F., & Pourkos, M. (2015). Qualitative research methodology: Applications in psychology and education. Athens: Hellenic Academic Libraries Link. Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/11419/5826

Lanza, E. (2007). Multilingualism and the family. In P. Auer, & L. Wei (Eds.), *Handbook of multilingualism and multilingual communication* (pp. 45–67). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lanza, E., & Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (Eds.). (2018). Multilingual families: Aspirations and challenges [Special Issue]. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 15*(3).

Lanza, E., & Wei, L. (Eds.). (2016). Multilingual encounters in transcultural families. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 37,* 653–654.

Määttä, S., & Pietikäinen, S. (2014). Ideology. In J.-O. Östman, & J. Verschueren (Eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 1–24). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Macalister, J., & Mirvahedi, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Family language policies in a multilingual world: Opportunities, challenges, and consequences.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd Edn.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Moin, V., Scwartz, L., & Leikin, M. (2013). Immigrant parents' lay theories of children's preschool bilingual development and family language ideologies. *International Multilingual Research Journal, 7*(2), 99–118.

Motsiou, E. & Kostoulas, A. (in press). Απόψεις, στάσεις & πρακτικές γονέων δί(πολύ)γλωσσων παιδιών [Views, attitudes and practices of plurilingual children's parents]. In *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Meeting of Greek Linguistics* (University of Thessaliniki, April 2018).

Okita, T. (2002). *Invisible work: Bilingualism, language choice and childrearing in intermarried families*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Palviainen, Å., & Bergroth, M. (2018). Parental discourses of language ideology and linguistic identity in multilingual Finland. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 15*(3), 262–275.

Park, S. M., & Sarkar, M. (2007). Parents' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children and their efforts to help their children maintain the heritage language: A case study of Korean-Canadian immigrants. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 20*(3), 223–235.

Pesco, D., & Crago, M. (2008). Language socialization in Canadian Aboriginal communities. In P.A. Daff, & N. H. Hornberger (Eds), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (Vol. 8, pp. 273–285). New York: Springer.

Piller, I. (2001). Private language planning: The best of both worlds? *Estudios De Sociolingüística, 2*(1), 61–80.

Piller, I. (2002). *Bilingual couples talk: The discursive construction of hybridity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Piller, I., & Gerber, L. (2018). Family language policy between the bilingual advantage and the monolingual mindset. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1–14. Advance Access. doi: 10.1080/13670050.2018.1503227

Romaine, S. (1995). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Romaine, S. (2013). The bilingual and multilingual community. In T. K. Bhatia, & W. C. Ritchie (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism* (2nd Edn., pp. 445–465). Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.

Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schwartz, M. (2008). Exploring the relationship between FLP and heritage language knowledge among second generation Russian-Jewish immigrants in Israel. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 29*(5), 400–418.

Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches.* London: Routledge.

Sella-Mazi, E. (2001). *Διγλωσσία και κοινωνία* [Bilingualism and society]. Athens: Proskenio.

Skourtou, E. (2011). *Διγλωσσία και σχολείο* [Bilingualism and school]. Athens: Gutenberg.

Smith-Christmas, C. (2016). *Family language policy: Maintaining an endangered language in the home*. Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan.

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spolsky, B. (2009). *Language management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tannenbaum, M. (2012). Family language policy as a form of coping or defence mechanism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 33*(1), 57–66.

Tsokalidou, R. (2005). Raising bilingual awareness in Greek primary schools. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 8(1)*, 1–14.

Tsokalidou, R. (2012). *Χώρος για δύο. Θέματα διγλωσσίας και εκπαίδευσης* [Space for two: Topics in bilingualism and education]. Thessaloniki: Zygos.

Wei, L. (2000). *The bilingualism reader*. London: Routledge.

Wei, L. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(5), 1222–1235.

Worthy, J., & Rodríguez-Galindo, A. (2006). "Mi hija vale dos personas": Latino immigrant parents' perspectives about their children's bilingualism. *Bilingual Research Journal, 30*(2), 579–601.