Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	11 Child agency and home language maintenance
Author(s)	Smith-Christmas, Cassie
Publication Date	2020
Publication Information	Smith-Christmas, Cassie. (2020). 11 Child agency and home language maintenance. In Andrea C. Schalley & Susana A. Eisenchlas (Eds.), Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development (pp. 218-235). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. doi:10.1515/9781501510175-011
Publisher	De Grouton Mouton
Link to publisher's version	https://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-011
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/16451
DOI	http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-011

Downloaded 2024-04-27T16:06:49Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.

11 Child Agency and Home Language Maintenance

Cassie Smith-Christmas

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses child agency and its role in home language maintenance. The concept of child agency has been orbiting "Family Language Policy" "FLP" (King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry 2008; Lanza and Lomeu Gomes this vol.) for some time now. In the first introduction of the term "Family Language Policy" as such, Luykx (2003: 41) emphasises that "in the 'language ecology' of the family, children are agents as much as objects. For this reason, socialization should be viewed in terms of 'participation' rather than merely 'transmission." Similarly, Tuominen (1999: 71) characterises her findings of multilingual families in the US as suggesting "that children in multilingual families not only 'test' their parents but often 'run the show." The import of child agency is also reflected in caregivers' comments, often as a rationalisation for undesirable outcomes, such as language shift (e.g. Kulick 1992; Kroskrity 2009) or use of swearwords (Coetzee 2018). Yet, as Fogle and King (2013) rightly point out, the concept of child agency has not gained much traction in FLP research until recently. Exactly *what* agency means and *how* it operates remain much-debated questions among some of social sciences' most prominent figures (e.g. Giddens 1979; Taylor 1985; Bourdieu 1997, to name just a few). Emergent through these discussions is "agency" on the one hand and "structures" on the other, yet crucially, an emphasis on the highly reflexive relationship between the two entities: as Giddens and Turner (1987: 8) put it for example: "agents, action, and interaction are constrained by, yet generative of, the structural dimension of social reality." In exploring this reflexivity, a number of FLP researchers whose work looks at child agency (e.g. Fogle and King 2013; Gyogi, 2015; Bergroth and Palviainen 2017; Said and Zhu Hua 2019) anchor their analysis in Ahearn's (2001: 112) definition of agency as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act." Invoking this definition, however, points to the potentially paradoxical challenge of discussing *child* agency specifically in so far as the child is *still in the process* of acquiring the sociocultural knowledge (including *language*) requisite for their capacity to act. As Meek (2007: 36) puts it: "the degree to which a novice must 'understand' the constitutive potential of language (Ochs 1996: 431) in order to reproduce, disrupt, or transform the world around him or her remains uncharted and ambiguous."

In grappling with the added challenge of considering *child* agency specifically, FLP researchers have turned to other fields that focus on aspects of childhood and especially child-caregiver relations. In her work on the FLPs of refugees in New Zealand, Revis for instance (2016) draws on developmental psychology in centring her analysis in Kuczynski's (2002: 9) definition of agency as "individuals as actors with the ability to make sense of the environment, initiate change, and make choices." Like FLP research, other related fields, such as developmental psychology and sociology, tended initially to apply a unidirectional lens to caregiver-parent relations (Cummings and Schermerhorn 2003; Morrow 2003). Strauss (1992) for instance likens earlier developmental conceptualisations of children's socialisation to a fax machine, where parents were seen to transmit a copy of particular beliefs and behaviours to their children. Similarly, as Fogle and King (2013: 2) point out, early child language socialisation research—one of the main fields from which FLP research emerged—"tended to emphasize caretakers' roles in socializing children *to* and *through* language to culture-specific norms" before advancing more reciprocal views of the socialisation process (see Schiefflin and Ochs 1986; Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Kulick and Schiefflin 2004; Duranti, Ochs, and Schiefflin 2011). Echoing this sentiment, Morrow (2003: 113) highlights how across various disciplines, the child is often seen as an *outcome*: children are the proverbial "products" of their caregivers in both the biological and the social sense.

It is this emphasis on outcome that is argued to account largely for the orbiting nature of child agency in FLP research described earlier. As King (2016: 728) notes, the initial phases of FLP research centred on the key question of "What beliefs, practices, and conditions lead to what child language *outcomes*?" (emphasis my own). With this focus on outcomes, FLP research has illustrated *how* and *why* a language may be maintained in the family, which is in turn crucial to understanding the processes of language shift and social change more generally (see Döpke 1992; Lanza 1997; Curdt-Christiansen 2009; Ó hIfearnáin 2013, Bezçioğlu-Göktolga and Yagmur 2018, to name just a few examples). However, this outlook unintentionally privileged a unidirectional perspective. FLP's early focus on language maintenance meant interest was—and going back to Strauss' fax machine analogy— in *how* the child was (or was not) a copy of the caregivers' linguistic practices. What was of concern was whether or not the language was maintained, to what degree, and what led to this reality, such as the amount of input both in terms of *quality* and *quantity*, and the ideologies underpinning the caregivers' language practices (see for example, De Houwer 1990; Kasuya 1998). It was not until Gafaranga's (2010, 2011) work based in Conversational Analysis therefore that FLP began to orbit back towards looking at the crucial role children can play in shaping language use within the family. Situated in the Rwandan community in Belgium, Gafaranga's work illustrates how children resist their caregivers' use of Kinyarwanda by initiating what he refers to as "medium requests". Here the child's use of French is a bid for French as medium-of-interaction, not Kinyarwanda. This alongside caregivers' acquiescence to these bids is responsible for widespread language shift in the Rwandan community. Thus, FLP research began to take a more active interest in children's role in thwarting language maintenance and in how children actively shape the contexts for their own language input.

The other key work that played a role in initiating what can be seen as the "agentative turn" in FLP is Fogle's (2012) study of transnational adoptive families (US caregivers adopting Russian children). Fogle situates her analysis within an understanding of agency from second language socialisation (e.g. van Lier 2007; see also chapters in Deters, Gao, Miller, and Vitanova 2015) and discourse analytic perspectives which privilege the co-constructed, *in-situ* nature of agency (e.g. Al Zidjaly 2009). She identifies resistance, participation, and negotiation as the three main ways in which the adopted Russian children in her study enact their agency as speakers and in turn shape the contexts for language learning in their new environment. Like Gafaranga, Fogle emphasises how analysing child agency in the context of family language use is not simply a matter of examining what the children are *doing* (e.g. resisting their caregivers' linguistic regimes) but understanding *how* these actions impact current and future family language practices. Aligning with Kuczynski's (2002: 9) emphasis on change as discussed earlier, Fogle argues that (2012: 41), the key question concerning child agency in FLP is: "at what point can children have an influence on the construction of family language policies?"

Following Gafaranga and Fogle's landmark studies in the shift towards a more agentative view of the child in FLP research, several studies (e.g. Gyogi 2015; Revis 2016; Antonini 2016) discussed agency from a perspective of cases where the child takes on the role of expert vis-à-vis their caregivers' novice role due to the children's greater linguistic and sociocultural competence in the majority language than their caregivers, for example such as sometimes occurs in immigrant families (see also Kuczynski, Marshall and Schnell 1997:36). With this agentative turn also came a perceptible shift in focus, which King and Lanza (2019: 718) characterise as "increasingly interested in how families are constructed *through* multilingual language practices, and how language functions as a resource for this process of familymaking and meaning-making in contexts of transmigration, social media and technology saturation, and hypermobility" (see also Lomeu Gomes 2018).

We are now in this most recent wave of FLP research. Home language maintenance is still of certain import, not only from a theoretical perspective but also from the perspectives of caregivers going to great lengths to transmit their language to their children (for very recent examples of this premise, see for instance Higgins 2019; Purkarthofer and Steien 2019). However, agency now appears in a different light: the playing field has been levelled, so to speak, and children are now generally considered as equal co-participants in constructing the various and diverse ways in which a language may (or may not) be maintained in the home (*cf.* Luykx's earlier quote). In doing so, FLP has highlighted the creative and multifarious linguistic and paralinguistic resources through which children enact their agency in everyday interactions, and ultimately, how these agentative acts shape how individual families engage in the process of "doing being" a family (*cf.* Auer's 1984 term of "doing being bilingual").

The purpose of this chapter is to trace this trajectory of FLP research from its initial focus on agency from a resistance lens to the more multidirectional focus which characterises this most recent wave of FLP research. The chapter will thus critically evaluate *how* certain acts are agentative, and what this means in the family's evolving interactions with each other and within the wider society. In making these evaluations, the chapter will draw on a conceptualisation of child agency in FLP as outlined in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The Intersectional, Multidimensional, and Multilayered Nature of Child Agency in FLP

[Figure 1 goes here]

This diagram illustrates the intersectional, multidimensional, and multi-layered nature of conceptualising child agency in FLP. All four main dimensions ("Compliance Regimes"; "Linguistic Competence;" "Linguistic Norms" and "Power Dynamics") are seen to intersect with *each other* in the convergence of the centre circle "Child Agency." For instance, as will be discussed at length in the chapter, both compliance regimes and linguistic competence contribute to the formation of linguistic norms within the family. The diagram therefore does not imply these dimensions can be easily disentangled from one another. Rather, it illustrates how their convergence provides a meaningful starting point for examining the various ways in which children can enact their agency in family interactions. As Revis (2016) discusses in her application of a Bourdesian framework to FLP, these diverse acts of agency in turn are both the product *of* negotiation within the family and also contribute *to* the process of change within the family (the inner layer); similarly, interactions within the family are also circumscribed by, and also play a role in shaping, the existent structures (e.g. linguistic and cultural norms; institutions such as schools and government bodies) that constitute the fabric of the family's wider social milieu (the outer layer). It is argued that this intersectional, multidimensional and multi-layered conceptualisation is necessary if we are take into account that, as Canagarajah (2008: 173) states, the family[1] is a "dynamic social unit, situated in space and time, open to socio-political processes". The remainder of this chapter therefore centres on the four main intersectional dimensions in this model to discuss the multifarious and creative ways in which children can enact their agency in everyday conversation, and in turn bring about changes in communication within the family and the family's wider social milieu.

2. The role of 'compliance' in child agency

As previously mentioned, Gafaranga's work (2010, 2011) on Rwandans in Belgium is seen as one of the main impetuses for the agentative turn within FLP research. This key study raises a number of theoretical questions about *what counts* as child agency in FLP, especially in terms of the specific task of looking at *language* in conjunction with child agency. One issue is that of *compliance*, which Kuczynski and Hildebrandt (1997: 240) define in the developmental tradition as the child's acquiescence to a caregiver's command (e.g. "Pick up that toy") within a certain timeframe. In essence, as described in the introduction to this chapter, earlier FLP research centred on the linguistic equivalent of "pick up your toy": "Speak Language X;" the ideologies underpinning this directive (that Language X is important for social/cultural/heritage reasons; that it benefits the child to be bilingual, etc.); and *how* this directive is indexed and reified in everyday interactions. This synthesis in turn aligns closely with Spolsky's 2004 tripartite model of language policy, which in turn has been very influential in FLP studies (see for example King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry 2008; Schwartz and Vershik 2013; Altman et al. 2014). At the basic level, therefore, agency in the form of resistance is seen as the child *not* speaking Language X.

Whereas in the developmental tradition the directive "Pick up your toy" appears clear-cut, in the FLP tradition the parallel directive "Speak Language X" can be reified in multiple ways on multiple levels. One study which clearly demonstrates this premise is Lanza's (1997) landmark FLP study of caregivers in Norway who decide to follow the "one-parent one-language" (OPOL) strategy, with the father speaking Norwegian and the mother speaking English. This decision implicitly therefore sets up Norwegian as the compliant code to use with the father and English as the compliant code to use with the mother; in other words, the *very act* of setting up this particular family language policy means that there is an underlying expectation of compliance being related to language and interlocutor (*cf.* Palviainen and Boyd 2013). How this expectation is then brought to fruition hinges on how compliance is established both synchronically (in the moment of interaction) and diachronically (accreted over a series of interactions), an observation which aligns with the developmental tradition and the concept that what children understand as compliance and caregivers in turn accept as compliance is usually a matter of negotiation over time and space through multiple interactions (Kuczynski and Hildebrandt 1997). Lanza (1997) views this negotiation process in terms of a continuum of the discourse strategies that a parent may use in initial response to the non-compliant choice (in this case, English to the father, Norwegian to the mother) and how caregivers *overtly mark* an utterance as a non-compliant code choice. Overt marking may include for instance ignoring the child's use of the non-compliant language until he or she uses the compliant language with that particular interlocutor. Conversely, the caregiver may choose *not* to overtly mark the child's language choice in a particular utterance as non-compliant: it might be glossed over in conversation, or the caregiver might indeed code-switch to the non-compliant code choice, thus not reifying it as non-compliant at all.

---

[1] In this chapter, the term "family" is used to refer to adult caregivers and their children, as this is the implicit definition in most FLP work. For FLP work which widens the scope of this definition, see for example Kendrick and Namazzi's (2017) work on orphan families, where older children play the role of caregiver to younger children.

In direct reference to Lanza's (1997) continuum, Gafaranga (2010: 257) illustrates how caregivers in the Rwandan diaspora community tend to use the latter strategies, by either glossing over the children's use of French or in fact code-switching to French themselves. Parents therefore are not overtly reifying Kinyarwanda as the compliant code choice, which in turn raises an important question about compliancy and its relationship to agency: to what extent can the children's habitual linguistic choices of French be considered an act of resistance if the parameters of compliance have not been set in place? In other words, is the adult's use of Kinyarwanda in *the first place* equivalent to asking the child to pick up the toy, and is the child's reply in French the equivalent of the child refusing to pick up the toy, or does the fact that the adult will then gloss over this use of French render this analogy incompatible? As Gafaranga shows, the children's use of French is *indeed* an act of child agency on several fronts, even if the caregivers have not strongly established the parameters for compliance. First of all, by, marking the adult's utterance in Kinyarwanda as "faultable" (*cf.* Goffman 1981) through what Gafaranga refers to as a "medium request," the child assumes an agentative role in the interaction, and manipulates the power dichotomy between caregiver and child. Secondly, thinking back to the importance of *choice* and *change* as per Kuczynski's (2002: 9) definition of agency, the child has made their decision based on particular environmental factors (the fact that they prefer French; the fact that the use of French will, at worst, simply be glossed over, or at best, accommodated—in other words, it will not be marked as faultable). Finally, the child initiates a change within the environment, notably from Kinyarwanda as medium-of-interaction to either parallel mode or French-as-language-of-interaction. As Gafaranga shows, the accretion of these negotiations of language-of-interaction, where again, the child "runs the show" (*cf.* Tuominen 1999: 71) is leading to widespread language shift within wider social milieu of the Kinyarwanda community in Belgium. Thus, the children are indeed engaging in resistance, thereby participating in one form of agency[2], even if the caregivers are not setting in place the paradigm for compliance in linguistic terms. A recent example of this can also be found in Canagarajah's (2019: 29) study of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora families, in which some caregivers accommodated their children's English dominance by adopting mixed language strategies in the home.

There is also substantial evidence of course of caregivers' deep concern that their children *are not* speaking Language X. For instance, in Higgins' (2019: 63) study of the FLPs of "new" speakers (see Smith-Christmas et al. 2018) of Hawaiian, a mother describes how her son sees English as a "forbidden fruit," and how notwithstanding the strongly Hawaiian-only policy of his caregivers, he is now using more English. The mother, however, fears that if she is to "force" him to "talk more Hawaiian," it would only whet his appetite for more active resistance in the form of using more English. A similar example is recounted in Kopeliovich's (2013: 260) study of her four children's bilingual development in Russian and Hebrew in Israel. Here, she describes how although her eldest child Yotam was initially very compliant in terms of language choice, this shifted after he spent more time in the Hebrew environment of the school:

---

[2] As Ahearn (2001:115) emphasises, it is crucial that researchers not simply use agency as a synonym for resistance.

> However, at the age of 5, he was reluctant to switch to Russian even several hours after coming home! He started to express clear preferences towards Hebrew over Russian. The ethnographic log registered his frequent phrases like "I love Hebrew more ", "It is boring to speak Russian ". He started to use only Hebrew when he played alone with his toys, he actively resisted our attempts to switch the family conversation from Hebrew to Russian; he completely switched to Hebrew in his communication with his friends from Russian-speaking families with whom he had previously communicated in Russian. It was very hard for us to accept this behavior. […] We chose to avoid arguments and reproaches, as we were afraid to stick a label that could later force the child into the role of a "linguistic rebel".

Here it is clear to see the agentative nature of Yotam's refusal to speak Russian, best encapsulated by the phrase "linguistic rebel." Yotam is not adhering to the compliance regimes set forth by his parents, where Russian operates as the language-of-interaction in the home. Going back to Kuczynski's definition of agency, this example clearly shows how Yotam is able to "make choices" (in this case, the choice to use Hebrew instead of Russian). This choice is mediated by different factors, which in this case, appear to relate to his language attitudes. These are evidenced for example through his metalinguistic comments, such as "I love Hebrew more" which in turn resonates with other FLP research such as Revis' (2016: 7) example in which an Ethopian child in New Zealand insists on only speaking English because she feels "Kiwi". This type of language choice initiates change, not only in terms of the language-of-interaction, but as seen from Kopeliovich's framing of "hard to accept this" and having to "avoid arguments and reproaches," this type of choice is also emotionally challenging (*cf.* Smith-Christmas 2016). Continuing with the theme of *choice* and how it can lead to change in family language dynamics over time, the next section examines the interface between language competence and choice, and the role this relationship plays in conceptualising child agency in FLP.

3. Muddying the Waters: The Issue of Language Competence and Choice

In addition to raising issues of compliancy and its relation to agency, Gafaranga's study (2010: 248) also raises the question of how competency relates to choice, and therefore, to agency. For example, the children's preference for French over Kinyarwanda was related to their greater competence over the former as opposed to the latter. This observation prompts us to consider the question: to what extent can a child's use of a particular language be considered a *choice* if the child appears to *lack* the choice (i.e. does not have the requisite linguistic skills) to say the utterance in a particular language? My own eight year study (2016) of a family on the Isle of Skye, Scotland provides a good case and point. The repercussive effects of language shift in this family meant that the third generation—and especially the youngest member of the third generation, Jacob, who was 4;0 when I recorded him in 2014—lacked much productive use in Gaelic and, like the children in Gafaranga's study, answered in the majority language (in this case, English) when addressed in the minority language (Scottish Gaelic). In a recent article examining how Jacob's grandmother Nana makes concerted efforts to embed the language in child-centred contexts as part of her overall language maintenance strategy (Smith-Christmas 2018), I contend that in many interactions, even if he *wants* to, Jacob in fact lacks the linguistic capability to respond in Gaelic. However, I posit that even in the absence of choice in many instances (as I suggest is the case for Jacob), the child is still exercising their agency. First of all, it is well-established within the literature on language choice, and particularly on code-switching, that an interlocutor's choice of one language over the other for (or within) a particular utterance often relates to their competence in that particular language (Auer 1984). A specific language choice in a particular instance is in turn the result of the interface of each interlocutor's own linguistic trajectory and the interactional milieu that they are navigating at that very moment, and in that sense, even if a speech act *is constrained* by competency, in interactional terms, it is still a choice. Secondly, these choices do not exist in a vacuum: in Jacob's case, his answering in English is just one of the many ways through which he actively resists his caregivers' pro-Gaelic FLP. For example, as described in the 2018 article, in one interaction in which Nana, Jacob and I went to a seafood restaurant, Jacob asked the names for various items on the wall (such as a fish, a crab, etc.) and after Nana or I would supply him the answer in Gaelic, he asserted "no, not *iasc*" ("fish"), thereby enacting his agency not only though his use of English, but also implicitly telling *us* not to speak Gaelic. In another incident (Smith-Christmas 2016:71), Jacob's great-aunt attempts to read him a story in Gaelic, but he is so vociferous in his refusal to have the story read in Gaelic, that again, he constrains the adults in the language *they* must use. Jacob accomplishes this through metalinguistic comments such as "No I want it in English," thus clearly enacting his agency even though, as discussed earlier, in many ways he lacks the linguistic means to make a choice between Gaelic and English. His *overall* choice is English, and he makes this point loud and clear.

In her study of two Japanese bilingual adolescents in the UK, Gyogi (2015: 258) noticeably demonstrates the interrelated nature of competence and preference. Writing about one of the two girls in her study, "Naomi's interview suggests that her language shift is mostly a competence-based one; the growing gap between her English and Japanese proficiencies has pressed her towards this language shift, rather than a conscious desire to challenge her mother's beliefs." Gyogi also shows how Naomi incorporates these lapses in linguistic competency into a skilful way of code-switching, masking her gaps and making it appear that rather than *lacking* competency, she deliberately inserts English into utterances as a means to "show off" that she knows English. Similarly, Boyd, Huss, and Ottesjö's (2017: 523) analysis of play sequence among children in an English-medium pre-school in Sweden, shows how one child, Rose, speaks a nonsense language following her classmates' use of Swedish in preceding turns, which according to the authors, is a means for Rose to ratify her participation in the conversation, despite her lack of Swedish. Thus, notwithstanding the potential of competence to place constraints on agency (such that the *choice* dimension might be absent from children's language acts), it is clear that children employ multiple strategies to navigate the conversation, and use what skills they *do* have in varied and creative ways, thereby enacting their agency.

Further, in some instances, the child's lack of competency may in fact be the source of the child's enactment of agency in the conversation, rather than an agentative strategy to mask the lack of competence. In their study of an Arabic-English family in the UK, Said and Zhu Hua (2019:776-777) demonstrate how six year-old Hamid has been trying to make a bid for his father's attention, but to little avail. He then uses Arabic as a strategy in this endeavour, and a grammatical error in his utterance then serves as an opportunity for his father to verbally attend to this lack of competency. Hamid is therefore successful in his attempt to gain a response from his father while his grammatical error—although not necessarily intentional—serves as a means for Hamid to further hold his father's attention. Thus, in enacting his agency by speaking Arabic, Hamid is able to attain his desired conversational goals. Similarly, in my own work (Smith-Christmas 2016), one of my main observations about Maggie—Jacob's older sister aged 3:4 when I recorded the family in 2009—is that she tends to use Gaelic specifically when she wants to mitigate trouble between her and her caregivers. This usually consists of single lexical mixes (e.g. p. 91 "I am *modhail*" in asserting that she is indeed being polite). Much of the efficacy of this strategy essentially lies in the reflexive relationship between preference and competence. Because Maggie does *not* use Gaelic very often, instances in which she *does* use Gaelic become marked (*cf.* Myers-Scotton 1993), and in many ways, constrains *how* she can use the language (i.e. lexical mixes versus full sentences). Both of these often contribute to her caregivers' affective softening towards the strife at hand, normally through their overt amusement at her utterances. Thus, although Maggie is constrained linguistically by *what* she can accomplish in Gaelic, it is in fact this lack of competency that makes her use of Gaelic such a potent tool for enacting her agency vis-à-vis her caregivers. It also resonates with her caregivers—especially her grandparents' generation—high use of code-switching and mixing for effect, which is one of the hallmarks of Maggie's family's communicative practices. It one of the key ways the family participates in "doing being" a family, the concept of which is investigated in more depth in the next section.

4. "Doing Being" a Family: The Negotiation of Linguistic Norms

As illustrated in Figure 1, both compliancy regimes and issues of linguistic competence contribute to the formation of linguistic norms within the family. Again to return to Gafaranga's landmark study, the accretion of the children's answering in French leads to the community norm of Kinyarwanda for adults and French for children and therefore adults do not expect children to answer in Kinyarwanda; in fact, hypothetically-speaking, the child's reply in Kinyarwanda could be seen as a breach in interactional norms and may result in a breakdown in communication (see Kulick 1992; Smith-Christmas 2016). This highlights another challenge in conceptualising child agency in FLP, especially in terms of Fogle's (2012:32) question of "at *what point* can children have an influence on the construction of family language policies": to what extent can we see any speech act (in this case, language choice) as an act of agency versus a reification of linguistic norms at work, and how does this relate to the reflexive nature of agency, as both *shaped* by and integral in *shaping* particular norms?

In order to discuss this question, we will begin by exploring how children's accreted acts of linguistic compliance can become agentative, and in doing so, shape linguistic norms within the family. The concept of compliancy as a form of agency is well-established within developmental psychology (Kuczynski 2002), and in embarking on this exploration, I draw on my recent work in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht in Ireland (see Smith-Christmas, under review) in illustrating how compliancy can be a form of agency. In the following excerpt, the mother Mia explains how she invoked discourse strategies, such as ignoring her daughters if they addressed her in English, in setting up Irish as the compliant choice, thereby firmly establishing the language as the language-of-interaction between Mia and her daughters. Here, Mia describes what happens when *she* breaks this interactional norm:

Excerpt 1: Mia and her daughters

1 Mia yeah yeah (.) yeah it doesn't enter their heads not to speak to me in Irish no matter who is in the company (.) and sometimes I recently decided (.) oh God (.) I should make an effort when we are in company (.) and address something to them in English so that the other person knows what I'm on about (.) and they find that uncomfortable, they don't like that

2 Cassie that's great

3 Mia yeah

4 Cassie that's great

5 Mia I know yeah, yeah it's, it's great (.) I've noticed that, they just kind of go (.) they look at me weird (.) and they speak to me in Irish as if to say (.) come on

This example clearly highlights the reflexive nature of child agency and language choice. Irish is firmly established as the language-of-interaction between Mia and her daughters; however, Mia occasionally tries to re-negotiate this norm in the company of interlocutors who do not speak Irish. Her attempts are unsuccessful, however, due to her daughters' agency: they do not allow Mia to breach this norm. Thus, even though their actions are compliant with Mia's *overall* FLP, they are still an act of agency, and in fact an act of agency that curtails Mia's own agency. Her use of English is sanctioned, therefore reflexively strengthening the norm of Irish as the language of interaction in this family.

Similarly, Boyd and Palviainen (2013: 238, 241) show how children in Swedish-Finnish OPOL families translate accreted compliance into agency. Like Mia's daughters, they actively sanction their parents' use of the "wrong" language. In one example (p. 241) the daughter Sara takes a teacher-like tone in informing her Finnish-speaking father that his use of the lexical item *åtta* (eight) is "mother's language." The authors write that "this is a nice example of child agency in that Sara effectively confirms her adherence to the interaction order of OPOL". This sentiment is echoed in Palviainen's work with Bergroth (2017) on the pre-school-family interface, which demonstrates how children's linguistic compliance to pre-school linguistic regimes also can be seen as a type of agency. It is clear therefore that there is a highly reflexive relationship between compliancy, norms, and child agency. Children not only enact their agency in FLP in their *choice* to use the code the caregiver has set up as the compliant choice, but also by enforcing these compliancy regimes, i.e. by sanctioning their parents' non-compliant choices. The children therefore play a key role in how linguistic norms are established and in turn how the language can be maintained in various ways. Further, children may enact their agency by participating in normative practices in other ways that support language maintenance. In their study of multilingual families in Norway, Obojksa and Purkarthofer (2018:257) show how one adult participant positioned gifts of Polish books each time her father returned from Poland as a reflex of her *own* agency. When she was younger, she would specifically request Polish books, and therefore, in addition to participating in her family's strongly pro-Polish FLP, she took an active role in maintaining Polish in other domains. Similarly, Nyikos (2014: 33) gives another example of a child enacting her agency by actively seeking to promote her own language maintenance, a decision precipitated by a visit to the home country (Slovakia) where the child was teased for speaking Slovak "with an American accent."

Van Mensel's (2018) recent work on familylects of multilingual families in Brussels is also highly illustrative of the way in which children play an active role in shaping family linguistic norms. Firmly situated in the most recent wave of FLP research, Van Mensel's study takes a more resource-oriented approach, showing how in spite of various asymmetries in individual family members' linguistic competencies (in one of the families, both parents—Ann and Ricardo—speak Spanish but Ricardo cannot speak much Dutch), all family members exploit a variety of linguistic resources in "doing being" a family (*cf.* Auer 1984). Multilingualism therefore plays a large role in the creation of these families' particular familylects, and the norms associated with these familylects are constantly being re-negotiated. For example, in one instance (p. 243), Ann and Ricardo's daughter Daniela repeatedly asks her parents in Spanish if they would like more coffee, but inserts the Dutch word "koffie" for instead of the Spanish "*café*." Both parents index that at some level, this instance of use is incorrect, but their motivations appear different, with Ricardo's stance seeming to relate to politeness norms and Ann's to the use of mixing. Daniela, however, asserts in Spanish that she speaks "really well" and van Mensel (p. 244) concludes that Daniela is not resisting her parents' language choices per se, but instead is "resisting the 'delimiting' and 'policing' of her language as she exploits the linguistic resources in her repertoire in a playful and creative way." In other words, she is actively shaping the norm of multilingualism-within-the-family. However, this does not mean that the parameters for language norms are boundless. For example, in one instance (p. 242), Ricardo uses the wrong Dutch diminutive suffix (*-etje* when it should be *–je*) on the word "*boek*" (book). His daughter then overtly corrects this, and van Mensel concludes that "family repertoire thus appears to follow certain rules as well, and in this case it is one of the children who imposes a normative restriction on what can be said, thus illustrating how the family language policy is co-constructed by both children and parents." Thus, members—including children—work together in establishing the parameters for linguistic norms in FLP as they evolve over space and time.

5. Re-negotiation of roles: Children's empowerment through linguistic and cultural capital

The last example—in which the child enacted a expert role vis-à-vis the caregiver—resonates with the theme of this section: children's empowerment through linguistic and cultural capital. As Revis (2016) discusses in her Bourdesian approach to FLP in refugee families in New Zealand, immigrant children's experiences at school mean that they often acquire linguistic capital more swiftly than their caregivers, and thus are in a position to act as interpreters. This language brokering in turn may occur in a number of different situations in both the public and private sphere, from doctor visits and shopping, to informal visits with acquaintances (Antonini 2016). Some of these situations might require the child to navigate challenging spheres of communication (e.g. medical terminology in doctor's visits) or might be particularly distressing, as illustrated in Gallo's (2017: 77) study where a child has to broker a conversation between her father and a policeman at the door. In this case, the stakes are particularly high, as in the context of Mexicans in the US, any encounter with authorities had the potential to lead to deportation. The gravity of these situations compounds the child's relative power vis-à-vis the adult's disenfranchisement; even in situations not of this nature (e.g. a social visit), we see a clear inversion of the expected caregiver-child relationship. As Revis (2016: 8) discusses, this inversion can cause discomfort for caregivers, and the accretion of language brokering interactions has the potential to cause a shift in parent-child relations: "while some families only expressed concern about the reversed order of authority, others added that this represented a challenge to them as authorities in the home." Thus, we see the child's agency operating at two different levels: first, in the child's action (i.e. the act of performing language brokering) and then at the *change* it brings about in the family—in this case, inverting traditional power dynamics. Language brokering in the case of FLP very clearly highlights how linguistic competency adds another dimension to the bidirectional nature of language socialisation. Not only are the children socialising the caregivers into being caregivers, but in the case of transnational families, children also have the potential to socialise their parents into the sociocultural milieu of their wider environment.

In addition to language brokering, the linguistic competence asymmetry that can exist between children and their caregivers may take other forms in opening up avenues for children to use language to enact their agency in everyday interactions. Zhu (2008) for example shows how the children of Chinese immigrants in the UK use their greater linguistic competency in English to subvert traditional power structures in managing conflict talk. The growth of minority language immersion education is another means by which children may attain greater linguistic competency than their caregivers. In such instances, while the child may not normally play the role of interpreter—as situations such as going to the doctor's etc. are conducted through the majority language—the child is still able to subvert caregiver-child power relations. This often takes the form of the child overtly marking the adult's lack of linguistic competence, as seen in van Mensel's example discussed earlier, where the child corrected her father's use of the diminutive suffix. This also surfaced in my most recent research in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland (Smith-Christmas, under review) where the mother in each family spoke Gaelic but the father did not, and the children all attended Gaelic immersion education. In one of the families, the father had acquired a moderate level of fluency in Gaelic, and would try and speak it to me as the researcher when I was recording some of the interactions. His sons were eager to correct any lapses in fluency and were very animated in their corrections, thus subverting the traditional caregiver-child power relationship. Later in one of the interactions, the father capitalised on this power reversal and used it to pedagogical effect by engaging the children in homework activities, actively taking on the role of student while the children took on the role of teacher. It therefore became a way for the father to play a role in enacting the pro-Gaelic FLP that was typically his wife's remit. His emphasis on his sons' agency also provided a way in which he could facilitate and further their linguistic and academic skills acquisition.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to raise questions about conceptualising child agency in the context of FLP. In doing so, we have focused on critically examining what counts as agency and have explored the intricacies of the reflexive relationship between agency on the one hand and structures on the other. The chapter has illustrated how the concept of agency is "layered, complex, and at times contradictory" (Fogle 2012: 41). In trying to untangle these interwoven complexities and surfacing conundrums, the chapter has centred on four main intersectional dimensions of child agency in FLP research: compliancy; linguistic competencies; linguistic norms; and power dynamics. It has explored these dimensions through the main criteria of *choice* and *change,* focusing on how children can have an "influence on the construction of family language policies" (Fogle 2012: 32). It has examined how certain factors—such as linguistic competency—may appear to constrain choice, while at the same time demonstrating how the child employs a variety of strategies to circumnavigate these constraints, thereby reifying his or her linguistic act as agentative. In addressing the issue of compliancy and especially its relation to linguistic norms, this chapter has also critically examined whether certain acts exemplify agency or not, underscoring that when applying the criteria of choice and change, these acts are indeed agentative. This is especially true in terms of change: the children's linguistic agency has the potential to shape not only language practices in the family, but to induce change beyond the bounds of the family. In sum, the chapter has shown that there are many and varied points in which, at some level, children may influence FLP. It has shown the value of critically exploring the mechanisms by which these influences can happen and of continually questioning *how* a particular speech act is indeed an act of agency. As emphasised in the introduction, FLP is only just now circling back to the importance of child agency, and it is hoped that this critical examination will be fruitful in further explorations of this important topic.

References

Ahearn, Laura M. 2001. Language and agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30(1). 109–137.

Altman, Carmit, Zhanna Burstein Feldman, Dafna Yitzhaki, Sharon Armon Lotem & Joel Walters. 2014. Family language policies, reported language use and proficiency in Russian – Hebrew bilingual children in Israel. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 35*(3). 216–234.

Al Zidjaly, Najma. 2009. Agency as an interactive achievement. *Language in Society* 38(2). 177 – 200.

Antonini, Rachele. 2016. Caught in the middle: Child language brokering as a form of unrecognised language service. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 37(7). 710–725.

Auer, Peter. 1984. *Bilingual conversation*. Amsterdam: Johns Benjamins.

Bergroth, Mari & Åsa Palviainen. 2017. Bilingual children as policy agents: Language policy and education policy in minority language medium Early Childhood Education and Care. *Multilingua* 36(4). 375–400.

Bezçioğlu-Göktolga, Irem & Kutlay Yagmur. 2018. Home language policy of second-generation Turkish families in the Netherlands. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 39(1). 44–59.

Bourdieu, Peter. 1997. *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boyd, Sally, Leena Huss & Cajsa Ottesjö. 2017. Children's agency in creating and maintaining language policy in practice in two "language profile" preschools in Sweden. *Multilingua* 36(4). 501–531.

Canagarajah, Suresh. (2008). Language shift and the family: Questions from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *12*(2), 143–176.

Canagarajah, Suresh. 2019. Changing orientations to heritage language: The practice-based ideology of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora families. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2019(255). 9–44.

Coetzee, Frieda. 2018. "Hy Leer Dit Nie Hier Nie ('He Doesn't Learn It Here'): Talking about children's swearing in extended families in multilingual South Africa." *International Journal of Multilingualism* 15(3). 291–305.

Cummings, E. Mark & Alice C. Schermerhorn. 2003. A Developmental perspective on children as agents in the family. In Leon Kuczynski (ed.), *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations*, 91–108. London: Sage Publications.

Curdt-Christiansen, Xiao Lan. 2009. Invisible and visible language planning: ideological factors in the family language policy of Chinese immigrant families in Quebec. *Language Policy* 8(4). 351–375.

De Houwer, Annick. 1990. *The acquisition of two languages from birth: A case study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deters, Ping, Xuesong Gao, Elizabeth R. Miller & Gergana Vitanova. 2015. *Theorizing and analyzing agency in second language learning: Interdisciplinary approaches*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

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

Duranti, Alessandro, Elinor Ochs & Bambi Schiefflin. 2011. *The Handbook of Language Socialization*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Fogle, Lyn W. 2012. *Second language socialization and learner agency*. Adoptive family talk. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Fogle, Lyn W. & Kendall A. King. 2013. Child agency and language policy in transnational families. *Issues in Applied Linguistics* 19. 1–25.

Gafaranga, Joseph. 2010. Medium request: Talking language shift into being. *Language in Society* 39(02). 241–270.

Gafaranga, Joseph. 2011. Transition space medium repair: Language shift talked into being. *Journal of Pragmatics* 43(1). 118–135.

Gallo, Sarah. 2017. *Mi Padre: Mexican immigrant fathers and their children's education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Garrett, Paul B. & Patricia Baquedano-López. 2002. Language socialization: Reproduction and continuity, transformation and change. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1). 339–361.

Giddens, Anthony. 1979. *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure, and contradiction in social analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Giddens, Anthony & Jonathan Turner. 1987. Introduction. In Anthony Giddens & Jonathan Turner (eds.) *Social theory today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1-11.

Goffman, Erving. 1981. *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gyogi, Eiko. 2015. Children's agency in language choice: a case study of two Japanese-English bilingual children in London. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 18(6). 749–764.

Higgins, Christina. 2019. The dynamics of Hawaiian speakerhood in the family. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2019(255). 45–72.

Kasuya, Hiroko. 1998. Determinants of language choice in bilingual children: The role of input. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 2(3). 327–346.

Kendrick, Maureen, & Elizabeth Namazzi. 2017. Family language practices as emergent policies in child-headed households in rural Uganda. In John Macalister & Seyed H. Mirvahedi (eds.), *Family Language Policies in a Multilingual World* (Opportunities, Challenges, and Consequences). London: Routledge.

King, Kendall A. 2016. Language policy, multilingual encounters, and transnational families. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 37(7). 726–733.

King, Kendall A., Lyn Fogle & Aubrey Logan-Terry. 2008. Family Language Policy. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2(5). 907–922.

King, Kendall. A., & Lanza, Elizabeth. (2019). Ideology, agency, and imagination in multilingual families: An introduction. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *23*(3), 717–723.

Kopeliovich, Shulamit. 2013. Happylingual: A family project for enhancing and balancing multilingual development. In Mila Schwartz & Anna Verschik (eds.), *Successful Family Language Policy* (Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction), 249–276. Dordrecht: Springer.

Kroskrity, Paul. 2009. Narrative reproductions: Ideologies of storytelling, authoritative words, and generic regimentation in the village of Tewa. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19(1). 40–56.

Kuczynski, Leon. 2002. Beyond bidirectionality: Bilateral conceptual frameworks for studying dynamics in parent-child relations. In Leon Kuczynski (ed.), *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations*, 3–24. London: Sage Publications.

Kuczynski, Leon & Neil Hildebrandt. 1997. Models of conformity and resistance in socialization theory. In Joan E. Grusec & Leon Kuczynski (eds.), *Parenting and children's internalization of values* (A handbook of contemporary theory), 227–256. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.

Kuczynski, L., Marshall, S., & Marshall, K. (1997). Value Socialization in a Bidirectional Context. In J. E. Grusec & L. Kuczynski, (Eds.), *Parenting and Children's Internalization of Values: A Handbook of Contemporary Theory* (pp. 23–50). Hoboeken: John Wiley and Sons.

Kulick, Don. 1992. *Language shift and cultural reproduction: Socialization, self, and syncretism in a Papua New Guinean village*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kulick, Don, & Bambi Schiefflin. 2004. Language socialization. In Alessandro Duranti (ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, 349–368. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lanza, Elizabeth. 1997. *Language mixing in infant bilingualism: a sociolinguistic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lanza, Elizabeth & Rafael Lomeu Gomes. this vol. Family language policy: Foundations, theoretical perspectives and critical approaches.

Lomeu Gomes, Rafael. 2018. Family Language Policy ten years on: A critical approach to family multilingualism. *Multilingual Margins* 5(2). 50–71.

Luykx, Aurolyn. 2003. Weaving languages together: Family language policy and gender socialisation in bilingual Aymara households. In Robert Bayley & Sandra Schecter (eds.), *Language Socialisation in Bilingual and Multilingual Societies*, 10–25. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Meek, Barbra A. 2007. Respecting the language of elders: Ideological shift and linguistic discontinuity in a Northern Athapascan Community. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 17(1). 23–43.

Morrow, Virginia. 2003. Perspectives on children's agency within families: A view from the sociology of childhood. In Leon Kuczynski (ed.), *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations*, 109–130. London: Sage Publications.

Myers-Scotton, Carol. 1993. *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Code-Switching*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Nyikos, Martha. 2014. Bilingualism and Family: Parental Beliefs, Child Agency. *Sustainable Multilingualism* 5.

Obojska, Maria A. & Judith Purkarthofer. 2018. 'And all of a sudden, it became my rescue': language and agency in transnational families in Norway. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 15(3). 249–261.

Ochs, E. (1996). Linguistic Resources for Socializing Humanity. In J. J. Gumperz & S.C. Levinson (Eds.), *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity* (pp. 407–437). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ó hIfearnáin, Tadhg. 2013. Family language policy, first language Irish speaker attitudes and community-based response to language shift. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 34(4). 348–365.

Palviainen, Å., & Boyd, S. (2013). Unity in Discourse, Diversity in Practice: The One Person One Language Policy in Bilingual Families. In M. Schwartz & A. Verschik (Eds.), *Successful Family Language Policy: Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction* (pp. 223–248). Dordrecht: Springer.

Purkarthofer, Judith, & Guri Bordal Steien. 2019. Pretendre comme si on connait pas une autre langue que le swahili: Multilingual parents in Norway on change and continuity in their family language policies. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2019(255). 109–132.

Revis, M. (2016). A Bourdieusian perspective on child agency in family language policy. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *22*(2), 177–191.

Said, Fatma, & Zhu, Hua. 2019. "No, no Maama! Say 'Shaatir ya Ouledee Shaatir '!" Children's agency in language use and socialisation. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *23*(3), 771–785.

Schiefflin, Bambi, & Elinor Ochs. 1986. Language socialization. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15. 163–191.

Schwartz, Mila. & Anna Verschik (eds.). 2013. *Successful family language policy: parents, children and educators in interaction*. Dordecht: Springer.

Smith-Christmas, Cassie. 2016. *Family language policy: Maintaining an endangered language in the home*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Smith-Christmas, Cassie. 2018. 'One *Cas*, Two *Cas*': Exploring the affective dimensions of family language policy. *Multilingua - Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication* 37(2). 131–152.

Smith-Christmas, Cassie. 2019, under review. Do sheans: Children's Agency in Integrating Scottish Gaelic and Irish into 'Happy Families.' In *Léann na Sionainne*, Finnegan, edited by Aengus Finnegan and Gordon Ó Riain. Uppsala: University of Uppsala Press.

Smith-Christmas, Cassie, Noel P. Ó Murchadha, Michael Hornsby & Máiréad Moriarty. 2018. *New speakers of minority languages: Linguistic ideologies and practices*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Spolsky, Bernard. (2004). *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, Claudia. 1992. Models and motives. In Roy D'Andrade and Claudia Strauss (eds.), *Human motives and cultural models*, pp. 1-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1985. *Human agency and language: Philosophical papers, Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tuominen, Anne. 1999. Who decides the home language? A look at multilingual families. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 140(1999). 59–76.

van Lier, Leon. 2007. Action-based teaching, autonomy and identity. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 1 (1). 46–65.

Van Mensel, L. (2018). ‘Quiere koffie?’ The multilingual familylect of transcultural families. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *15*(3), 233–248.

Zhu, Hua. 2008. Duelling languages, duelling values: Codeswitching in bilingual intergenerational conflict talk in diasporic families. *Journal of Pragmatics* 40. 1799–1816.