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FINAL ACCEPTED VERSION

‘Our cat has the power’: The polysemy of a third language in maintaining a power/solidarity equilibrium in family interactions

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This article examines how power and solidarity in family relations are negotiated along linguistic lines, and in particular, the role of a third language in this negotiation process. It takes as its case study a transnational family in Ireland who practice a strongly pro-Polish FLP and where the parents are seen as authorities in Polish and their daughters are seen as authorities in English, the dominant societal language. The paper takes a microinteractional approach to analysing excerpts where family members engage in language-learning activities using Irish, the national autochthonous minority language. The paper demonstrates how in many ways, Irish operates as a neutral, third space for family members to negotiate power/solidarity alignments, and thus contributes to the family’s maintenance of a power/solidarity equilibrium. The paper also demonstrates the polysemy inherent in how these negotiations play out at an interactional level, especially vis-à-vis the family’s pro-Polish FLP, as well as the polysemy of Irish-as-a-language within the scope of the family’s interactions as a whole.

Keywords: FLP; Polish; Irish; power; solidarity; transnational families

Introduction

Everyday interactions are the fabric through which families are woven (and sometimes unwoven) into being over time and space (Varenne, 1992; Tannen, Kendall, and Gordon, 2007). Co-sanguinity may of course enter the ontological equation, especially in sociolegal conceptions of ‘families’; however, not only are biological criteria not applicable to many families, but co-sanguinity does not itself guarantee that individuals will engage in the complex emotional, relational, and material aspects of family-making (Silva and Smart, 1999; Szydlik, 2008; Wright, 2020). Rather, these latter components primarily play out on the interactional terrain and within what Tannen (2007) conceptualises as a power/solidarity paradigm, where individuals’ communicative acts reify a sense of hierarchy and/or distance (power) or equality and/or closeness (solidarity)ⁱ. Tannen (2007) emphasises that individual utterances may also be polysemous in that they simultaneously engender *both* power and solidarity. Family cohesion naturally involves achieving a sense of equilibrium within this paradigm: certain family members (e.g. caregivers) must take up roles of authority so that the contractual rights and obligations of family life are carried out (e.g. children’s socialisation as competent and moral human beings); at the same time, family members must also have a shared sense of *being* a family, which in turn necessitates some degree of equality and closeness among all family members (Aronsson and Gottzén, 2011; Aronsson and Cekaite, 2011).

Although initially concerned more with the social and linguistic factors that lead to (or impede) children’s bilingual acquisition, the field ‘Family Language Policy’ (‘FLP’; Luykx, 2003; King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry, 2008) has increasingly turned its

attention towards ‘how families are constructed through multilingual language practices, and how language functions as a resource for this process of family-making and meaning-making’ (King and Lanza, 2017, p. 718; see also van Mensel, 2018; Curdt-Christiansen and Huang, 2020; Palviainen, 2020; Wright, 2020). Work which takes an interactional approach to FLP shows the complex and intricate ways in which power/solidarity negotiations play out along linguistic lines, and the added layer that multilingualism brings to the polysemous nature of the power/solidarity paradigm (e.g. Fogle, 2012; Gyogi, 2015; Revis, 2016; Smith-Christmas, 2016; Danjo, 2018; van Mensel, 2018; Said and Zhu, 2019; Song, 2019). For example, in Said and Zhu (2019), Arabic is deployed by the mother as a means to index her authority as well as to build closeness, especially through her use of Arabic terms of endearment; simultaneously, the son capitalises on the role of Arabic in reifying the adult-child power differential in a manner which subtly reinforces his *own* power in the interaction, as it contributes to him successfully gaining the floor. Van Mensel (2018) illustrates how multilingualism itself—rather than one of the family’s available named languages per se—functions as a key component in how a family builds solidarity through their creation of a multilingual familylect, and shows how the dynamic negotiation of the parameters of this familylect along power/solidarity lines is one of the key ways the family ‘does being a familyⁱⁱ.’

Asymmetry in language competencies among family members—typically with the caregivers possessing greater competence in the minority language and/or the children possessing greater competency in the dominant societal language—can be a key component of how power and solidarity are negotiated in multilingual families (Zhu, 2008; Song, 2016). Work on child language brokering especially (e.g. Antonini, 2016;

Revis, 2016; Gallo, 2017) highlights how inversion of generational roles along linguistic competency lines potentially threatens families' sense of a power/solidarity equilibrium; for example, Revis (2016, p, 8) describes how the accretion of interactions where the child acted as language broker 'represented a challenge to them [the caregivers] as authorities in the home,' which in turn potentially poses problems for the family's overall well-being.

The purpose of this paper is to add to perspectives on how power/solidarity alignments are negotiated in multilingual families. It will take a novel approach in its focus on how an autochthonous minority language (Irish) is incorporated into a transnational family's pro-Polish FLP and will elucidate how Irish learning activities function as an additional linguistic tool for the family's maintenance of a power/solidarity equilibrium. It will also examine the polysemous nature of these negotiations in terms of Irish-as-a-languageⁱⁱⁱ in the family's wider interactional milieu as well as the polysemy evident in the individual turn-by-turn negotiations.

Background: The Polish and Irish Languages in Ireland

This paper is based on data as part of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action-funded project 'Languages, Families, and Society' (LaFS Grant No: 794800), which looks at the experiences of minority language-speaking families in Galway, Ireland^{iv}. One of the focus minority languages is Polish, as Polish nationals (population 122,515) comprise the largest non-Irish national group in the Republic of Ireland (total population of 4,761,865 as of the most recent 2016 Census). Polish migration to Ireland can be largely attributed to the fact that in contrast to many other EU member states, Ireland—a country which has

historically had a long trajectory of emigration—allowed citizens of the 2004 EU accession states full access to the labour market and at that time, Ireland was experiencing an unprecedented period of economic growth known as the ‘Celtic Tiger’ (Grabowska, 2005; Debaene, 2008). The 2016 census recorded that 135, 895 people used Polish at home, 27, 197 of whom were born in Ireland and 108, 698 of whom were born outside of Ireland. These numbers suggest language maintenance within Polish families, particularly in terms of the number of Polish speakers born within Ireland, as it indicates parents born in Poland are using Polish with their Irish-born children. Recent ethnographic studies of Polish national families in Ireland (e.g. Machowska-Kosciak, 2017, 2020; Connaughton-Crean, 2020) corroborate this supposition, yet they also reveal the variance of families’ FLP implementation and enactment, as well as variation across individual schools and teachers in their stances towards pupils’ use of Polish. Some Polish national families take a more *laissez-faire* approach to Polish language maintenance, while other families reify pro-Polish FLPs and also extend their language maintenance efforts to sending their children to Polish complementary schools, which, as mainstream Irish education does not provide Polish language tuition, provides a key means to support children’s Polish literacy development (Pędrak, 2019; Diskin, 2020). Machowska-Kosciak (2017, 2020) and Connaughton-Crean’s (2020) work also illustrates how in spite of policy documents such as National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s publications in 2005 and 2006 and the Primary Language Curriculum published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2015 and 2019—all of which emphasise the need to valorise pupils’ home languages—promotion of pupils’ home languages does not necessarily bear out in practice. Connaughton-Crean (2020, p. 142)

for instance describes how some Polish national parents were discouraged by their children's teachers from speaking Polish to their children and she also describes (p. 197) how some of the children were told by their teachers not to speak Polish during the school day. These experiences however are not uniform, both in the context of Connaughton-Crean's own study—for example, some of the Polish national parents were encouraged by teachers to use Polish at home—as well as the Irish educational landscape as a whole, as recent work by Kirwan (2019) for instance highlights how some schools strongly embed promotion of pupils' home languages into curriculum and practice.

These different stances towards pupils' home languages occur against the backdrop of Ireland as a bilingual nation-state since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, one of the key aims of which was to safeguard its autochthonous minority language, Irish. Irish is taught as a compulsory L2 subject in English-medium schools throughout the Republic of Ireland and thus, any pupil beginning and completing their education in Ireland will have exposure to the language (Ó Laoire, 2012). This largely accounts for the discrepancy between ability in the language on the one hand and use of the language on the other in the 2016 Census: while 1,761,420 people (39.8% of the population) *can* speak the language, only 1.7% (73,803 people) of the population report that they use Irish on a daily basis outside the education system. It is clear to see that Irish occupies a minoritised position within Irish society, which has been the site of much criticism of Irish language in education as a language maintenance strategy (see Lo Bianco, 2012). There is much that could be said on Irish on the education system, but it is important to emphasise that recent work on 'new' Irish speakers of Irish (termed as such because they acquired the language primarily through the education system, not

home language socialisation; see O'Rourke, Ramallo, and Pujolar, 2015) has shown the positive effects of Irish language education in terms of active speakers of the language as well as the social and emotional benefits of the language to individual speakers' sense of self (Seoighe, 2020; O'Rourke and Walsh, 2020).

Methodology

This study centres on the Wieniawski^v family, who live in a middle-class suburb of Galway city in the west of Ireland (population 76, 953). In relative terms, Galway city is an urban stronghold for the Irish language: Galway and its suburbs have the highest rate of respondents claiming ability to speak Irish (41.4%) as well as the highest proportion of daily Irish speakers (3%) of any Irish city (CSO, 2016). In addition to Irish language use as part of official signage, Irish language use also figures prominently into in the linguistic landscape of the private sector (Brennan, 2018) and Galway city is home to Ireland's only officially bilingual university, the National University of Ireland, Galway. The most-spoken language besides English or Irish in Galway is Polish (4,310 speakers) and Polish nationals (3, 905) account for the third-largest nationality in Galway after Irish and UK nationals.

I first met the Wieniawskis in September 2019, and I am grateful to fellow FLP researcher Dr. Maria Obojska, who put me in touch with the family. The parents (referred to simply as 'Mother' and 'Father' in the transcripts for simplicity) met at university in Poland and moved to Ireland together in 2009. Their daughters Anita (nine years old) and Kasia (eight years old) were both born in Ireland. The father works for an international company on the outskirts of the city and the mother currently is a full-time

homemaker. The main source of data collection in this project is families' individual multimodal language diaries, in which they are asked to keep accounts of their different day-to-day sociolinguistic experiences. The Wieniawskis' diary consists of approximately five hours of audio-recording recordings and videos, in addition to photographs and 'traditional' written diary entries^{vi}. Data was uploaded on a shared secure online folder at the family's convenience and I would visit with the family approximately once a month during the data collection period^{vii}, totaling six visits, which ranged in length from one-and-a-half to five hours. After each visit, I would write notes and all but the first visit were audio-recorded. During these visits, the family and I would sit together in the living room and collectively discuss their linguistic experiences as well as reflect on what they had shared with me in their language diaries since the last visit. Although Anita and Kasia were initially shy with me in the first visit, by the second visit, they were very talkative and played a formative role in shaping the dynamics of the subsequent visits. The mother signed the consent form on behalf of the family, but as best practice, I would always seek all family members' assent in making the recordings during each visit. The caregivers also followed this practice when making the recordings for the family's language diaries.

It was clear from the language diary, as well as from the Wieniawskis' comments me over the course of the visits, that the caregivers had set up and maintain a very strongly pro-Polish FLP. As I do not speak Polish, however, my visits with them became a space of English language use; as Anita put it in her language diary, which she starting during the first visit: 'A lady is interviewing us, forcing my dear parents to speak their language of broken english' [sic]. Naturally, my relationship with the family and my

understandings of the interactions may have been different had I spoken Polish; however, I contend that in spite of the many disadvantages to not speaking the family's home language, there are also some advantages. One advantage is that I was reliant on the family's own interpretations of the recordings they made for me, which provided a reflective and reflexive way for me to explore certain hypotheses about the family's language practices and beliefs without the deep ethnography I have employed in previous studies (e.g. Smith-Christmas, 2016, where I lived with the family). This reliance extended to initially asking the family to help me with some of the transcriptions^{viii}, and in one of the visits in October 2019, the mother, Anita, and Kasia and I worked on transcribing two of the interactions. Originally, just the mother and I had arranged to meet to transcribe together, but when Anita and Kasia came home from school, the mother encouraged them to help me with the transcriptions. It was clear that the mother saw this as an opportunity for her daughters to develop their Polish literacy (which, from the other components of the family's language diary, is a very important part of their pro-Polish FLP; *cf.* Peđrak, 2020, p. 7). For me as a researcher, Anita and Kasia's help provided an important way in which I could understand more about their metalinguistic awareness, as well as their interpretation of how language norms operate within their family. Given the reflexive nature of the methodology, where transcriptions served as a means for further data collection, I have chosen to show an excerpt here which I feel encapsulates this reflexivity as well as illustrates the main theme of the article: how the family negotiates the power/solidarity paradigm. I surmised that at one point in one of the recordings, the father invoked what Lanza (1997) terms the 'repetition strategy', signaling to Anita that he finds her use of the English lexical item 'piano' problematic by

repeating the Polish equivalent ‘*pianino*’ (see Smith-Christmas, under review). I was correct in my guesswork, and asked Anita if she could transcribe the Polish conversation preceding and following this repetition. This then became an avenue for me to further explore the relationship between language and power in the Wieniawski family, as seen here:

Excerpt 1

- | | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 1 | Cassie | can we just transcribe the tiny bit where your dad corrects your word of- (.) piano |
| 2 | Anita | oh |
| 3 | Cassie | is that ok? |
| 4 | Mother | [[Anita] |
| 5 | Anita | [[yeah] |
| 6 | Mother | you try you try |
| 7 | Cassie | does- does your dad do that a lot (.) or |
| 8 | Anita | mhmhhh= |
| 9 | Kasia | =well we correct him too so |
| 10 | Cassie | @ @ @ |
| 11 | Mother | in English |
| 12 | Anita | yeah yeah it’s like my mum and my dad correct us in Polish @ and me an Kasia correct our parents in @ [[English] |
| 13 | Mother | [[English] |
| 14 | Cassie | so it works both way- ss |
| 15 | Anita | eh [[yeah] |
| 16 | Cassie | [[yeah] |
| 17 | Anita | it works both ways |
| 18 | Cassie | so <u>no one</u> has the power |
| 19 | Anita | [/yeahhh] |
| 20 | Kasia | [/yeahhh] |
| 21 | Anita | except our cat |
| 22 | Cassie | @ @ @ |
| 23 | Anita | our cat has the power |

In this excerpt, the girls outline the family language and power dynamics which were becoming clear to me at that point in the fieldwork: the children have the upper hand in the majority language (English) and the parents have the upper hand in the

language of the home (Polish). In the previous two visits, for example I had noted the girls correcting their parents' English (*cf.* Anita's diary entry mentioned earlier in characterising her mother's English as 'broken') and the 'piano' example confirmed to me that the practice 'works both ways,' as Anita puts it. Thus, a power equilibrium appears to have been reached and Anita further underscores this point by joking their family cat holds the power.

Although Anita's cat comment is a joke^{ix}, the concept of a third, neutral entity strengthening this family's power/solidarity equilibrium also resonated with my growing understanding of the family's language dynamics. Prior to this discussion of power following on from my request for Anita to help me transcribe the 'piano' excerpt, we had been transcribing the Polish language content from an interaction in which Anita's parents ask her to recite an Irish language poem. Throughout the language diary, as well as our various discussions, the Irish language featured prominently, and I was beginning to see the Irish language as analogous to the cat: a third, neutral space in which power/solidarity negotiations could play out. Therefore, the following analysis—which draws on the tenets of Conversational Analysis in its microinteractional approach to multilingualism in everyday interactions (see Auer, 1984)—juxtaposes two interactions centred on Irish language learning. On the surface, the interactions appear similar: the child(ren) perform an Irish language activity; are joined by their mother in this activity; and the father in turn requests translations of the Irish language content. However, the interactions are very different in tone, and the following examines how these differences play a role in maintaining the family's power/solidarity equilibrium.

Power in Caregiver-Child Relations: Reciting an Irish language poem

The following analyses how the parents' somewhat forceful coaxing of Anita's recitation of an Irish language poem reifies the parents' maintenance of the traditional subordinate role of the child in caregiver-child relations. The poem is from Anita's Irish language textbook used at school, and the poem's association with school therefore sets up the recitation in didactic terms, which is made even more salient by Anita's overt resistance to this activity. In triangulating this excerpt with other data, it is postulated that this extreme resistance does not emanate from an overt negative orientation towards the Irish language per se, but rather, Anita's perception that some of her Irish language learning materials sometimes seem too young for her—in this case, the poem's relatively immature topic of a boy not wanting to eat his vegetables^x (see Connaughton-Crean, 2020, pp. 194-196 for more on Polish-speaking children's attitudes towards Irish). As seen from the excerpt below, the parents try multiple tactics to encourage Anita to recite the poem:

Excerpt 2

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | FATHER | Dobra, to powiedz mi, powiedz mi czego się uczysz z mamą?
so what you learn with Mommy? |
| | | [[(?)] |
| 2 | ANITA | [[((huge sigh))] Głupiego irlandzkiego
stupid Irish |
| 3 | FATHER | GŁUPI IRLANDZKI (.) I to jest jakiś wierszyk?
stupid Irish Is this a poem? |
| 4 | ANITA | Najgłupszy wierszyk świata, no
The stupidest poem in the world |
| 5 | MOTHER | Spróbuj go powiedzieć
Try to recite it |
| 6 | ANITA | Ale ja go nie pamiętam
I don't remember |
| 7 | FATHER | To ile pamiętasz
Tell me how much you remember |
| 8 | ANITA | Ale ja niczego nie pamiętam
But I don't remember anything |

- 9 MOTHER No to spróbujmy (.) [(?) *cén fáth-*]
 Let's try why
- 10 ANITA [[?]]
- 12 MOTHER no to sprobujmy *cén fáth na-*
 Let's try why
- 13 ANITA *cén fáth nach féidir liomsa umm @*
 why can't I

Here, we see both caregivers encouraging Anita to recite the poem, despite her resistance and her overt dislike of the poem indexed in Turn 4. Her father first introduces the topic (Turn 1), then asks a more specific follow-up question (Turn 3), to which her mother encourages Anita to recite the poem (Turn 5). When the mother's request apparently does not meet with success, the father lends his support to building the recitation frame, asking Anita what she remembers of the poem (Turn 7), as opposed to reciting the poem verbatim. The parents' persistence in requesting that Anita perform a task she clearly does not desire to do, as well as the fact that the poem relates to schoolwork, invokes a sense of authority, which in turn contributes to the parents' position of power and the child's subordinate position. However, in Turn 9, we see the mother's shifting alignment in the power/solidarity paradigm: the mother ratifies *herself* as a participant in this undesirable activity of poetry recitation, thus positioning herself on more equal terms with her daughter. This bid for solidarity appears successful, as Anita begins to recite the poem in Turn 13.

The mother's prompting of the poem in Turns 9-13 is argued to be a good example of the polysemous nature of the power/solidarity paradigm: at the same time that mother's use of Irish invokes solidarity (which is seen to account for the success of this tactic), it also engenders a sense of power. The mother after all is demonstrating that she has mastery of this task. This premise is illustrated even more clearly in the following

excerpt, it becomes evident that the mother appears to have learned the *entire* poem (as opposed to just the opening line):

Excerpt 3

1	MOTHER	<i>sos</i> <i>a break</i>
2	ANITA	<i>sos ó ghlasraí a thógáil</i> <i>take a break from vegetables</i> <i>agus um</i> <i>and</i>
3	MOTHER	<i>agus suí síos uh-</i> <i>and sit down</i>
4	ANITA	<i>agus suí síos uh-</i> <i>and sit down</i>
5	MOTHER	<i>i gcomhair béile</i> <i>to a meal</i>
6	ANITA	<i>i gcomhair béile</i> <i>to a meal</i>
7	MOTHER	<i>agus na- mo rogha^{xi}- mo rogha</i> <i>and the- my choice my choice</i>
8	ANITA	<i>mo rogha @@ mo rogha</i> <i>my choice my choice</i>
9	MOTHER	<i>bia</i> <i>food</i>
10	ANITA	<i>bia</i> <i>food</i>
11	MOTHER	<i>Chociaż jedno słowo- a^{xii}</i> <i>Maybe just one word</i>
12	ANITA	<i>a</i>
13	MOTHER	<i>fháil</i> <i>get</i>
14	ANITA	<i>fháil</i> <i>get</i>

As seen here, Anita is not so much reciting the poem as much as repeating her mother's prompts, word by word. By taking the initiative to learn the poem herself, it is clear that the mother is very invested in helping her daughter with her schoolwork. However, in triangulating this interaction with the other data, it appears that there is more at play here than the mother's desire to help her daughter succeed at school, which again illustrates the polysemy inherent in this interaction. From her comments to me, the mother very

much enjoys engaging with language learning in general; however, her daily experience with languages in terms of interacting with other speakers (mainly English speakers) as well as her daughter's homework (which is in English) places her on a constant back foot, so to speak, as although she is a competent English speaker, she lacks confidence by her own admission (*cf.* Song, 2016, p. 97). I argue that in spite of the perceived power equality discussed in Excerpt 1—with the parents cast as authorities in Polish and the daughters' as authorities in English—the reality is that the daughters' upper hand in English still threatens the balance of power. At the risk of comparing multilingual families to a monolingual norm, the expected norm after all is that caregivers are seen as the figures of linguistic authority and will generally correct their children's use of language, which for monolingual families, performs the dual function of socialising the child into the language norms of the family *and* wider society. The fact that in transnational families such as the Wieniawskis, the children often have greater competence in the language of wider society gives rise to a potential power inequity, which is arguably compounded by the global status of English, an aspect of the language of which Polish nationals in Ireland are very cognizant (Connaughton-Crean, 2020). In other words, the child's greater competence in English means that the child can in some ways ostensibly function with greater ease within Irish society, as well as potentially on a global arena, than the caregivers. This asymmetrical power balance between child and caregiver in the Wieniawski family comes to the forefront especially in the context of homework, where again, the presupposed norm is that the caregiver has greater competence than the child; however, in this instance, the child's greater linguistic competence in English threatens this particular norm. Asserting herself as an authority

figure in Irish language homework not only allows the mother an opportunity to nurture her own affinity for language learning but it allows the mother to regain any potential lost ground in terms of linguistic confidence in helping with her daughters' other homework subjects, all of which are in English. Irish, provides a way in which the mother can mitigate the potential power shift in transnational families: her greater knowledge of the poem gives her the upper hand, and thus, Irish time is an important time in which she may regain any potential face loss due to her lack of native-like competency vis-à-vis her daughters' competency.

The mother appears to become frustrated by Anita's parroting of the poem (Turn 11), yet she continues to prompt Anita until the close of the stanza. The father then steps in with a solidarity alignment, as he instructs Anita to 'relax' and tell him what the poem means. When this is unsuccessful, he further aligns with solidarity by giving Anita permission to 'break' family rules—in this case, the pro-Polish FLP:

Excerpt 4

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | FATHER | A po angielsku wiesz
In English do you know what it means? |
| 2 | ANITA | Nie
no |
| 3 | FATHER | no chodzi o poszczególne słowa
I mean each word |
| ((Turn omitted- Intervening talk between mother and Kasia about an onion)) | | |
| 4 | FATHER | No?
So? |
| 5 | ANITA | <i>agus tá</i>
<i>and is</i> |
| 6 | MOTHER | tam jest u góry (.) Nie?
It's up there (.) No? ((referring to the onion)) |
| 7 | ANITA | <i>agus to znaczy 'and' albo też</i>
<i>'agus' means and or also</i> |

In reflecting on this particular excerpt, the father relayed to me that he opened this avenue for English language use because he thought it would be easier for Anita, as Irish language classes are taught through the medium of English; therefore, any translation exercises in school would naturally be from Irish to English. This aligns with other observations of his more lenient stance towards the pro-Polish FLP when his daughters discuss their schoolwork (*cf.* Obojska and Purkarthofer, 2019, p. 256, where a transnational family also allows greater flexibility in their pro-Polish FLP when discussing schoolwork; also Connaughton-Crean, 2020, p. 258). This concession to use English also functions to build solidarity, as it cedes language choice to Anita, and the father further utilises the concept of ‘choice’ in his next tactic to encourage Anita’s engagement: asking her to tell him what the individual words mean, which gives her latitude to pick out the words that she does indeed know. Anita then translates two high frequency words in Irish: the present tense copula ‘*tá*’ (‘is’) and ‘*agus*’ (‘and’), using the English lexical item ‘and’ in translating ‘*agus*’ but using a Polish sentence construction and Polish in elaborating on the definition. Thus, it is clear to see that Anita capitalises on this choice, not only in the Irish words she translates, but in her mixed language use in explain the meanings of these particular lexical items. Again, we also see the polysemy of the father’s concession for Anita to ‘break’ the pro-Polish FLP: at this same time this action confers a sense of equity by giving Anita choice, it also endows the father with power, as he reifies his position as the arbiter of when the child can or cannot break the pro-Polish FLP. This premise is illustrated in this final excerpt from this interaction: here, Anita finally gives a *précis* of the poem, saying that it is about a ‘dude’ who does not like vegetables:

Excerpt 5

- 1 FATHER Dobrze, a pamiętasz na jaki to jest temat?
Ok, but do you remember what topic this is on?
- 2 ANITA że koleś nie chce jeść swoich... yyy czego, koleś nie chce jeść swoich tych,
tych (.) **vegetables**
It's about a dude who doesn't want to eat - his um uh-
@@@
warzyw
vegetables
- 3 FATHER warzyw mmm hmm
vegetables

Here, the father's persistence has finally paid off, as Anita provides a summary of the poem. In doing so, she evidences a momentary lexical gap in Polish, shown by the pauses '*tych tych*' ('um uh') and pause, then her use of the English lexical item 'vegetables.' She then repairs this to the Polish equivalent '*warzyw*.' Her father then repeats '*warzyw*,' followed by 'mmm hmm'. This repetition of Anita's self-correction is seen as as a clear return to the pro-Polish FLP, and thus is another illustration of the polysemy inherent in power/solidarity negotiations: the father's agreement invokes a sense of solidarity, yet also further reifies his position as the arbiter of he FLP.

When I collaboratively transcribed this conversation with Anita, she was very clear that her word choice was 'dude'—rather than a semantically similar lexical item such as 'guy' for example—and this adamant stance evidenced to me her high metalinguistic awareness. Throughout the conversation, we have seen the father drawing on Anita's metalinguistic awareness in multiple ways, such as asking for a summary of the Irish language material and soliciting direct translations, thus building her metalinguistic awareness across three languages. It is argued that one of the reasons that he is able to do this so successfully is his careful navigation of the polysemous nature of the power/solidarity paradigm within a larger interactional frame that is associated with power—requesting his daughter perform a task related to school. Similarly, we also

have seen how the mother negotiates power and solidarity in this frame, and how this also contributes to Anita's language learning. Taken in isolation, this excerpt could suggest that the Wieniawski parents simply are committed to their children's academic success and that their efforts do not necessarily relate to the Irish language per se. Although indeed the parents are highly committed to their daughters' academic success, the next section will illustrate how the parents' motivations—and especially that of the mother—*do* appear to relate to the indexical value of Irish and how it in turn relates to their transnational Polish-Irish family experience.

Building solidarity: Collaborative language learning through an Irish language conversation

In the last section, the Irish language activity was framed in a didactic light, which in turn subtly reified the parents' authoritative position vis-à-vis the child. In contrast, in this section we see how family members build solidarity through a performance of a simple Irish language conversation, which the mother told me that she Anita and Kasia practice on the way to school each day (see van Mensel, 2019; Wright, 2020, for more on 'walk to school' conversations). Here we see the opening of this interaction:

Excerpt 6

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | MOTHER | Część już umiem (.) Paru rzeczy mi zostało.
I know some of it. There are some things left that I have to learn. |
| 2 | ANITA | ((unintelligible)) |
| 3 | FATHER | No jeszcze raz, bo ja =
Once again because I - |
| 4 | MOTHER | = <i>Dia dhuit</i>
<i>Hello (lit. 'God with you')</i> |
| 5 | ANITA | <i>Dia is Muire dhuit</i>
<i>Hello (lit. 'God and Mary with you')</i> |
| 6 | KASIA | <i>Dia is Muire dhuit</i>
<i>Hello</i> |

- 7 MOTHER *Conas atá tú?*
How are you?
- 8 ANITA *Tá mé go maith*
I am well
- 9 KASIA *Tá mé go maith*
I am well
- 10 ANITA *Agus tú féin?*
And you yourself?
- 11 MOTHER *Tá mé go maith (.) Cad is ainm duit?*
I am well. What is your name?
- 12 ANITA *Anita is ainm dom.*
My name is Anita.
- 13 KASIA *Kasia is ainm dom.*
My name is Kasia.
- 14 MOTHER *Cén aois thú? [[aois thú]*
How old are you? [[your age]
- 15 ANITA *[[Tá mé] tá mé deich mbliana d'aois.*
I'm ten years old.
- 16 KASIA *Tá mé ocht mbliana d'aois.*
I'm eight years old.
- 17 MOTHER *Slán!*
Goodbye!
- 18 KASIA *Slán!*
Goodbye!
- 19 ANITA *Slán!*
Goodbye!

Here, the Irish language conversation is reminiscent of a performance in which the three ‘actors’ have memorised their lines and have coordinated their cues. Unlike in natural, everyday conversation, the three speakers wait until each has finished their turn to embark on the next question, and the father’s Turn 2 suggests that they have just performed this conversation, as he requests they do it ‘once again.’ Following the father’s request, the mother enthusiastically begins the performance, and her daughters join in in a manner which echoes the mother’s enthusiasm. Thus, although certain aspects to this interaction are similar to the interaction in the last section—namely, that the father plays the role of audience member to the Irish language performance and the mother initiates the use of Irish—the mood of the interaction is very different. There is no sense of struggle on the parents’ behalf to persuade their children to use Irish; rather, the girls

willingly play their parts. One possible explanation for this difference in mood is that while in the previous interaction, the mother takes on more of an ‘expert parent’ role in prompting Anita to recite the poem, here the mother takes on the role of ‘novice,’ indexed for example her Turn 1, where she says that there are ‘still things left she has to learn.’ In positioning herself as a novice, the mother inverts the traditional power relationships between parent and child, thus allowing her to more easily take up a role of solidarity with her daughters. This concept of solidarity is further seen in the following excerpt, in which the father solicits a translation/summary of the conversation:

Excerpt 7

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 1 | FATHER | Dobra, teraz powiedzcie mi na jaki temat była ta wasza konwersacja
All right, now tell me what this conversation was about |
| 2 | MOTHER | Poranna, [[na przywitanie się pytamy się
A morning conversation to say hello |
| 3 | KASIA | [[Po prostu pytamy się, jakby]=
We are simply asking each other questions, sort of - |
| 4 | FATHER | =O co?=
What about? |
| 5 | KASIA | =(?) pytamy się
We are asking questions |
| 6 | MOTHER | [[<i>Dia dhuit</i>]
Hello |
| 7 | KASIA | [[<i>Dia dhuit</i>] Cześć?
Hello Hello |
| 8 | MOTHER | Cześć
Hello |
| 9 | KASIA | Cześć Ja k się masz
Hello How are you |
| 10 | ANITA | ° <i>Conas atá tú</i>
How are you |
| 11 | KASIA | Ja- [[ja k się masz
How are you |
| 12 | MOTHER | [[Ja k się masz
[[How are you |

Again, we see the dynamic nature of how power and solidarity are negotiated in this Irish language activity, especially in terms of the mother’s turns in this excerpt. In

Turn 2, for example, the mother answers the father's request for elucidation, as does Kasia in her overlapping Turn 3, suggesting that both the mother and Kasia view themselves as the intended recipients of the father's turn. This therefore places the mother and Kasia on an equal footing (see Goffman, 1979), which differs from the last excerpt, where Anita was understood as the intended recipient of the father's questions, and the mother's utterances served to elicit the Anita's recitation. In Turns 8-12, where both Kasia and the mother embark on a line-by-line translation of the Irish, we see the polysemous nature of the mother's utterances vis-à-vis the power/solidarity paradigm. Her collaborative effort in the translation puts her on an equal footing with Kasia on the one hand; however, the rising intonation on 'cześć' (the correct translation of '*Dia dhuit*' 'hello') in Turn 7 suggests Kasia's uncertainty. The way in which the mother then repeats 'cześć' suggests linguistic authority on the mother's part, as Kasia appears to wait for her mother's confirmation before translating the next line of the conversation. Thus, the mother's participation in the translation activity appears to engender both power and solidarity simultaneously.

Despite this possible shift to towards power in terms of the mother's alignment, the collaborative nature of the interaction continues, as the father then remarks that it is strange to have a 'morning conversation' where people ask each other's ages, and the mother replies that it is 'funny' to have this conversation. The father then prompts the topic of 'weather,' which suggests that he may have some familiarity with the conversational script, as Kasia and Anita embark on saying weather expressions. It is clear from the interaction that these weather expressions are relatively new and at one point, all four family members (including the father) offer their own phonological

interpretations of ‘*taitneamh*’ (shine) repeating this lexical item from the expression ‘*tá an grian ag taitneamh*’ (‘the sun is shining’). In this discussion of the word ‘*taitneamh*’, Anita takes on the role of ‘expert,’ which continues on into the initial part of the discussion of the expression ‘it is cloudy’:

Excerpt 8

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | KASIA | <i>tá scamallach</i> (.) (ag?)
<i>Is cloudy at</i> |
| 2 | ANITA | uh yeah I’d say so |
| 3 | KASIA | <i>scam-all-ach-(ag)</i> (.). It’s cloudy |
| 4 | ANITA | mmmm.... |
| 5 | MOTHER | To jest bardziej nam potrzebne.
<i>It’s more useful to us</i> |
| 6 | FATHER | @ @ @ |
| 7 | ANITA | <i>tá</i>
<i>is</i> |
| 8 | MOTHER | <i>tá</i>
<i>is</i> |
| 9 | KASIA | <i>tá scamallach</i>
<i>is cloudy</i> |

[... continuing discussion on ‘*scamallach*’]

- | | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 10 | KASIA | A moge na google translate zobaczyć?
<i>and can I check Google translate?</i> |
| 11 | MOTHER | No
<i>yeah</i> |

Here, we see several aspects that highlight how in contrast to the interaction involving the poem, the metalinguistic activities surrounding this Irish language conversation engender solidarity. First, there is clear collaboration between the participants, seen in Turns 7-9, where the mother and Kasia repeat ‘*tá*’ (‘is’) and then Kasia adds the lexical item that is the focus of this excerpt: *scamallach* (‘cloudy’). There is some confusion over this expression—first in the lack of a subject pronoun (*sé*) in the expression and then the addition of an extra syllable to *scamallach*, which sounds in Turn 1 as if Kasia is saying ‘*scamallach*’ and then the preposition ‘*ag*’. In her Turn 4, Anita signals that she does not

think that Kasia is saying this expression correctly, thereby positioning herself as expert. Thus, we see the fluidity of expertise in this interaction, as in Excerpt 1, for instance, Kasia appeals to the mother—not Anita—as the expert in translating the opening greeting. This fluidity again highlights the collaborative nature of this interaction: all three interlocutors have equal voice in constructing and verifying the accuracy of this particular Irish language conversation (*cf.* Said and Hua, 2019, p. 780 for a good example of the role of expertise in negotiating power/solidarity in family interactions)—that is, until ‘*scamallach*’ appears insurmountable and Kasia appeals to Google Translate as arbiter. In asking her mother if she may use Google Translate (Turn 10), however, Kasia is also subtly reifying the traditional generational power dynamic: before she must proceed with this change in the interaction, she must obtain her mother’s permission.

Another aspect of this excerpt is the humour in the mother’s comment that the phrase ‘it’s cloudy’ would be more useful to her, which invokes a hearty laugh from the father. Irish weather is notorious for its rain, and this humorous remark is seen as part of the Wieniawskis’ shared experiences of being a Polish national family in Ireland. Related to this, a further benefit of Irish gleaned from the family’s data as a whole to me is that Irish language activities may provide an additional way in which they feel a sense of belonging in the area in which they live; for example, in one of the language diary entries, the father reflects on how the family feels that Irish is a stronger part of their everyday life in Galway compared to their relatives’ experience in Dublin. As well, the first time I met the family, Anita told me how embarrassed she was every time her mother would say ‘*slán*’ (‘good-bye’) to other people. Although there is not scope to go into this symbolic use of Irish in Galway (see Brennan, 2018) in much depth, from my

own ethnographic observations, using ‘*slán*’ (‘good-bye’) or the phrase ‘*tóg é go bog é*’ (‘take it easy’) is one which in people in Galway signal affection and camaraderie when taking leave of each other. Thus, the mother is tapping into these social practices and incorporating them into her own linguistic repertoire. For someone not born and raised in Ireland, this may feel like a particularly powerful means by which to index solidarity in social interactions and to position herself as someone who ‘belongs’ there (*cf.* MacCubbin, 2011; Diskin, 2017).

Conclusion

In the analysis in this paper, we have seen the multi-layered and polysemous nature of language in power-solidarity negotiations. In terms of the family’s overall interactional landscape, we have seen how Irish is deployed both to maintain the subordinate position of the child in caregiver-child relations, as well as to build family solidarity and a shared sense of Polish-Irishness. Within the microinteractional scope of these conversations, we have seen how the polysemy of power/solidarity alignments plays out over individual conversational turns and how this relates to the family’s pro-Polish FLP. It is clear that the parents do not view Irish language activities an additional burden in maintaining their pro-Polish FLP, but rather, as a benefit. In terms of the individual benefits, for the daughters, their parents’ support of Irish aids their school success and metalinguistic skills across languages. For the mother, Irish provides a means to regain some of her linguistic confidence denied to her by her English-dominant world and a further way to feel a sense of belonging. For the father, who mostly is the ‘curious bystander’ to these

Irish language activities, he is able to engage with his wife and daughters in a novel way and play a part in their homework discussions, which are mostly the remit of the mother. In many ways, Irish provides a third linguistic space which family members may capitalise upon in maintaining a power/solidarity equilibrium, which sometimes is jeopardised by the daughters' greater competence in English. There are limits of course to what we may conclude from this paper, but as to the best of my knowledge, this is the first FLP paper which looks at transnational families integrating an autochthonous minority language into their interactions; therefore, further research in this vein will hopefully lead to other insights.

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Transcription Conventions

Times New Roman is used for Polish speech and Times New Roman italics are used for Irish speech. Times New Roman bold is used for English speech. Courier New is used for translations of the Polish language speech and Courier New italics are used for the Irish language speech.

-

Cut-off

WORD	Increased Amplitude
◦	Decreased Amplitude
=	Latching speech
[[]]	Overlapping Speech
(.)	Micropause
((description))	Non-verbal action
(?)	Uncertainty in Transcript
@	Pulse of laughter
/	Rising intonation

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ⁱ Tannen (2007, p. 30) presents these four attributes (hierarchy/distance; equality/closeness) on a grid; in this article, however, I conceptualise the former as power and the latter as solidarity.

ⁱⁱ This is an explicit reference to Auer’s 1984 concept of ‘doing being bilingual.’

ⁱⁱⁱ The choice to refer to Polish, Irish and English as ‘languages’ rather than ‘linguistic resources’ or approaching the data from a translanguaging perspective (see Wei and Garcia, 2014) is borne of an emic viewpoint: the Wieniawskis clearly saw Polish, English, and Irish as discrete ‘languages’ and thus I use this term throughout the article.

^{iv} ‘Ireland’ is used here to refer to the twenty-six counties which comprise the Republic of Ireland, thus excluding the six counties that comprise Northern Ireland, which remains part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

^v This is a pseudonym, as are all names used in this article. I chose ‘Wieniawski’ as the family’s surname pseudonym, as I enjoy the music of Polish violinist and composer Henrik Wieniawski. In the transcribing session described in this article, we discussed a Polish book about a boy who wants to play the violin, and thus, ‘Wieniawski’ came to be the family’s surname pseudonym. Although the sisters originally picked ‘George’ and ‘Peppa’ after the cartoon ‘Peppa Pig,’ eventually the parents and I encouraged them to decide on Polish first names, and they decided on ‘Anita’ and ‘Kasia.’

^{vi} The project methodology was approved by the National University of Ireland, Galway Ethics Committee, approval number 19-Aug-19.

^{vii} The bulk of the data was collected between October 2019-March 2020.

^{viii} I am grateful to Dr. Piotr Romanowski, his wife Sylwia, and his daughter Zuzanna, as well as Dr. Karolina Rosiak, for the remainder of the transcripts.

^{ix} Though see Tannen (2004) for the role of pets in mediating potential family conflict.

^x The translation of the stanza which Anita is meant to recite is: ‘Why can’t I/ Take a break from vegetables/ And sit down to a meal/ And have what I want?’

^{xi} In listening to the recording before Anita showed me the poem in her textbook, I had initially transcribed this as the word ‘*maróg[a]*’, which I thought was a deviant plural form of the lexical item meaning ‘pudding’, as the mother voices the silent ‘gh’ in ‘rogha.’ The reason I mention this is because Anita repeats this pronunciation, which underscores the fact that she is simply parroting her mother.

^{xii} The verb phrase is ‘*a fháil*’ (‘to get’) but the mother does not lenite the ‘f,’ rendering it as [f] and Anita repeats the word this way. Again, the reason for pointing this out is not to note aberrations in the mother’s Irish (a language in which she has had no formal instruction), but to highlight how Anita is completely reliant on her mother’s recitation.