

'SHE'S THE BIG DOG WHO KNOWS' – POWER AND THE FATHER'S ROLE IN MINORITY LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION IN FOUR TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN TALLINN¹

Colm Doyle
Tallinn University

Abstract. This paper presents the family language policies of four Estonian-non-Estonian bilingual, transnational families, with focus paid to the language management efforts of the fathers and the challenges they faced, including child agency and imbalances of power. The findings indicate that minority-language fathers also engage in 'language work' (Okita 2002), and demonstrated that the fathers' language management efforts were constrained and determined by factors such as the level of competence the men's spouse has in his L1, child agency, and access to a same language-culture community as a supportive resource.

Keywords: family language policy, language management, bilingual

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, attention has increasingly been paid to language policies operating at the level of the family. The field of Family Language Policy (FLP) investigates and seeks to understand and explain how parents and children negotiate how language is acquired, learned and employed in the domain of the family (King et al 2008, King, Fogle 2013, Palviainen, Boyd 2013). FLP studies include analysis of one or more of the components of Spolsky's

¹ The present author wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers for their generous and invaluable feedback on this paper.

(2004) language policy model with respect to the family, namely: language *ideology*, language *practice*, and language *management* (Schwartz 2010, Schwartz, Verschik 2013).

This paper investigates the language policy of four bilingual, transnational families in Tallinn, wherein the mother in each family is a native-Estonian-speaking Estonian, and the father originates from a country other than Estonia and speaks a language other than Estonian as his native language (L1). In particular, the paper focuses on the language management efforts of the fathers, whose 'role' it is as 'guardians of the minority language' (Piller, Pavlenko 2004) to transmit the family's non-societal language, and the challenges they faced, including the agency of the child(ren).

Labelled a 'post-Soviet urban multilingual space', Zabrodskaia (2014) describes Tallinn's language environment as 'developing in the interplay of the Estonian and Russian speech communities, in the context of the European Union and in the global trend of English as the international *lingua franca*' (p. 111). The author states that Tallinn is a 'relatively unique place where traditional notions of majority/minority are approached from a different angle', given that the 'majority' speaks a 'small' language (Estonian) and the 'minority' speaks a 'big' language (Russian)² (Zabrodskaia 2014: 127).

According to the Statistical Yearbook of Tallinn (Tallinn City Government 2018: 15), in 2018 over 450,000 people lived in Tallinn (comprising 34% of the total population of Estonia; Statistics Estonia 2018: 12). Ethnic-Estonians make up 53% of the population of the city (ethnic-Russians 38%, ethnic-Ukrainians 3%, and other ethnicities 6%; 157 ethnicities in total), and Estonian is spoken as an L1 by 51% of the population (Russian as L1 45%, Ukrainian as L1 1%, and other languages as L1 3%) (Tallinn City Government 2018: 20, 23).

The author believes that the present paper is a worthwhile and worthy contribution to the literature on language management in

² Worldwide, according to Ethnologue, there are some 1.14 million speakers of Estonian, and 265 million speakers of Russian (Simons, Fennig 2018).

the family for two reasons: firstly, the paper focuses on the actions and efforts of minority-language *fathers* – much research centres either mothers or children; and secondly, the context of Tallinn is a non-English-language, post-Soviet space and allows the researcher to investigate how language policy at the micro-level 'is conceptualized in situations of perceived fragility' of a 'small' national language, such as Estonian (Verschik, Doyle 2017; see Kalmus 2003, Ehala, Niglas 2006, Doyle 2013, and Pawłusz 2017).

2. Power and 'language work' in transnational families

According to Jackson (2009), much of the literature on raising children with more than one language has underplayed and 'underestimated the way in which power and identity render bilingual childrearing an intricate, complex, and highly political activity' (p. 60). The 'busy intersection' (Piller 2002) of roles, discourses and belief systems that is the linguistic intermarried relationship 'provides an excellent opportunity within which to examine the interdependent nature of identity and power' (Jackson 2008: 339).

Changing the linguistic environment in which one centres one's life can be a welcome opportunity to reinvent oneself, but it can also be a cause of emotional stress, or even trauma; this is especially the case when one's 'linguistic repertoire' does not 'suit' the new environment (Busch 2017). Myers-Scotton (2006) tells us that an individual's linguistic repertoire is 'an index of that person's position in society' on 'both a societal and an interpersonal level' (p. 114). Referencing work by Pierre Bourdieu, she explains that in a given linguistic marketplace or space, different symbolic values are assigned to different language varieties, leading to speakers in the marketplace possessing different quantities of linguistic or symbolic capital. The more capital one possesses, the more power one wields. These values are reflected in the choices that speakers make, and, moreover, these choices have a future effect by determining what value is assigned to a given language variety going forward (ibid.: 114–5). Myers-Scotton

reports on a study by Keith Walters of anglophone women married to Tunisian men living in Tunisia, wherein the linguistic capital that the women were granted on the back of their competence in the international and prestigious languages of English and French was countered by the women's poor command of Tunisian Arabic, a pre-requisite for full acceptance into and by Tunisian society and the women's family-in-law. Worryingly it seemed that the women's husbands were ambivalent about assisting the women to improve their Arabic skills as this would necessitate a renegotiation of the women's relationships with their husband, family-in-law, and Tunisian society, as well as the power the women held (Myers-Scotton 2006: 115–6).

In a study of postings concerning the raising of children with two languages by Australian mothers in a 'online mummies' forum', Piller and Gerber (2018: 12) remark that in the discourses, mothers, regardless of L1, were viewed (and viewed themselves) as 'guardians of their children's bilingual language development'; this meant that mothers ended up being 'managers of their family's bilingualism and arbiters of bilingual parenting practices', even in cases where it is the father who is the native speaker of the non-societal language. The authors argue that their findings are evidence that bilingual parenting is still seen as women's 'work' (Okita 2002). Such a discourse problematizes and disempowers minority-language fathers, and overburdens majority language mothers with additional 'work', which causes anxiety and tension, and potentially conflict and feelings of guilt and inadequacy (Kouritzin 2000, Piller 2001a, Okita 2002). This is neither healthy for the parents or children, nor is it conducive to the creation and maintenance of a harmonious environment for bilingual language acquisition.

Language choice is at times the result of conflicting desires. Jackson (2008) reports on the case of an American man residing in Japan and married to a Japanese woman who often used Japanese with his children as he did not want to be seen by his parents-in-law as a 'foolish foreigner' who could not function in Japanese. The man

was proud of his command of Japanese and wanted to demonstrate his competence, but this clashed and was incompatible with his role as the source of native English-language input and with his desire for his children to acquire fluency in English. Thus, neither language choice could be seen as being neutral or apolitical (Myers-Scotton 2006: 116).

As should now be apparent from the above discussion, language policies are not implemented in a vacuum, and language choice is a highly personal, political and contextual act (Piller 2001b, Myers-Scotton 2006, Jackson 2008). These political acts are, of course, also taken by the children in transnational, bilingual families, and due to child agency and the power of children as socialising agents (Tuominen 1999, Luykx 2005), family language policies (FLPs) and their associated language management are negotiated *together* with the children in the family (Palviainen, Boyd 2013), rather than being dictated *to* them. In this way, children wield their own power in socialisation, and language acquisition and transmission processes. Fogle and King (2013) argue that an FLP 'is best understood as emerging in interactions between' family members, and that the negotiation of linguistic, cultural and national differences in the transnational family 'plays a large part in establishing new family roles and relationships' (p. 20). Moreover, Kopeliovich (2010, 2013) argues that it is in parents' best interest to be mindful of the sociolinguistic factors of bilingualism and to work together with their children, with the aim of avoiding instilling negative feelings in the child towards the family's non-societal language.

3. Data collection and participants

This section and the next discuss data collection and the participant families. First, a general overview of the participants is given in this section, before a language profile for each family is presented in Section 4.

3.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Similarly to the present author's previous studies (Doyle 2013, Verschik, Doyle 2017), this study employs a micro-sociolinguistic, qualitative approach with the semi-structured interview as its data-gathering tool. This type of research assists a researcher in arriving at a more nuanced picture of a sociolinguistic phenomenon by shining a light on smaller communities of practices that are overlooked by macro-research and also seeks to uncover the 'why' to a speaker's speech acts (Verschik, Doyle 2017; see Verschik 2005 for a discussion).

Four interviews were recorded, one with each of the four participating couples. Both parents were interviewed together. The language of the interview was English (and Estonian also with Family 4). Each of the interviews was over an hour in length (mean length of 1hr 8min). All interviews were recorded in the domestic residence of the participants in Tallinn, Estonia. The interview questions were for the most part identical for all the interviews. The present author as researcher collected the participants' demographic information via a questionnaire sent to and received from the participants in advance of the interviews, which also acted as a springboard for discussion. Three interviews were recorded between May and July 2013 (Families 1–3), with a fourth recorded in August 2014 (Family 4).

3.2. LANGUAGES AND AGES OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 1 below provides the ages³ of and languages spoken by the family members, and nationalities, and L1s of the parents. As aforementioned, the families in the study can be considered transnational – the mothers were all from Estonia and of Estonian nationality, while the fathers all originated from outside Estonia. Unlike the mothers, whose L1 (native language) was Estonian, the fathers all

³ All ages and other data at the time of recording. See Section 3.1 above.

Table 1. Family members – Age and languages of family members, and nationality of parents

Family NEL ¹	Child(ren)		Mother		Father	
	Age ² and Languages ³	Age, nationality and LI ⁴	Languages ⁵	Age, nationality and LI	Languages	
Family 1 Hebrew	Girl 1;2 Est=AA 'Very good' Heb=AA 'Good'	42 y Estonia Estonian	English 'Very good' Hebrew 'Very good' Russian 'Average'	53 y Israel Hebrew	English 'Very good' Estonian 'Beginner' German 'Low'	
Family 2 Slovenian	Girl + Boy 6;1 + 4;6 Est=AA 'AA' Slo=AA 'AA'	35 y Estonia Estonian	English ⁶ Finnish Slovenian 'conversational' Russian	34 y Slovenia Slovenian	English Estonian Croatian Bosnian German	
Family 3 Swedish	Girl 4;8 Est=AA 'Good' Swe=LTA 'Passive'	33 y Estonia Estonian	English C1 Russian B1 Swedish A2	40 y Finland Swedish	English C1 Finnish C1 Estonian B2	
Family 4 Turkish	Girl 5;4 Est=AA 'Very good' Tur=LTA 'Very weak'	43 y Estonia Estonian	English C1/B2 Finnish A2 Russian A2 Swedish A2	40 y Turkey Turkish	English B1 Estonian B1	

¹ The family's Non-Estonian Language ('NEL')

² Age at time of recording (years ; months)

³ Age-appropriateness (AA = Age-appropriate; LTA = Less-than-age-appropriate) and description of level in family languages as reported by the parents

⁴ Age at time of recording; Nationality; Native language

⁵ Other languages spoken by the parent with level as self-reported

⁶ Levels not reported

spoke a language other than Estonian as their L1 (Israeli Hebrew, Slovenian, Finland Swedish, and Turkish, to be exact). All parents, bar one (Father 3), grew up in monolingual home/family environments.

The mothers ranged in age from 33 years to 43 years old (mean age of 38 years), while the fathers ranged in age from 34 years to 53 years old (mean age of 42 years). At the time of the recordings the 4 families had 5 children between them – each family had a girl, and Family 2 also had a boy. The youngest child was 4;6⁴, while the oldest was 11;2 (mean age of 6;4). The daughter in Family 1 was already a number of years into attending school, while the children in the other 3 families were of kindergarten/pre-school age. The four families all resided in Tallinn at the time of the study.

4. Family language profiles

Table 2 below outlines the patterns of language use as reported by the participant parents, showing language use between the parents, and between each parent and the child(ren), while the final column shows strategy and gives a very brief summary of language use in the family. This table is expanded on by the profiles that now follow. This section is immediately followed by a presentation of the study's main findings in Section 5.

4.1. FAMILY 1 (HEBREW AS NEL⁵)

Mother 1 (M1) is a 42-year-old native-Estonian-speaker from Estonia, and works as an office manager. She self-reports very good English, very good Hebrew and average Russian. Father 1 (F1) is a 53-year-old archaeologist and self-reports very good English, beginner Estonian and a low level in German. He originates from Israel and is a native speaker of Israeli Hebrew.

⁴ Years; months

⁵ Non-Estonian-Language ('NEL')

Table 2. Self-reported patterns of language use

Family	Mother < > Father	Mother < > Child(ren)	Father < > Child(ren)	Summary
NEL				
Family 1 Hebrew	Monolingual Hebrew <i>Father's LI = Non-societal language</i>	Monolingual Estonian <i>Mother's LI = Societal Language</i>	Monolingual Hebrew <i>Father's LI = Non-societal language</i>	A case of OPOL ¹ with strong usage of the non-societal language (Hebrew)
Family 2 Slovenian	Mixed <i>English + both family languages (Estonian and Slovenian)</i>		Monolingual Slovenian <i>Father's LI = Non-societal language</i>	A case of OPOL with mixed usage between parents
Family 3 Swedish	Estonian < > Both languages <i>Mother: Estonian Father: Both languages</i>		Swedish < > Both languages <i>Father: LI = Non-societal language Child: Both languages</i>	A case of OPOL with societal language (Estonian) slightly dominant over non-societal language (Swedish)
Family 4 Turkish	Monolingual Estonian <i>Mother's LI = Societal language</i>		Mixed <i>Both languages</i>	Mixed input from father – societal language (Estonian) dominant over non-societal language (Turkish)

¹ One-Parent, One-Language ('OPOL')

The couple resided together in Israel between the years 1998 and 2002, during which time their daughter and only child (11;2) was born. At the time of the interview in 2013 the family had been residing exclusively in Estonia since 2002. The couple converse in Hebrew and have done so ever since M1 began taking Hebrew lessons in Israel, though M1 did explain that it is 'very tiring' to always speak to F1 in Hebrew. The parents reported that they employ the One-Parent-One-Language (OPOL) strategy, whereby F1 speaks to his daughter exclusively in Hebrew, and M1 speaks to her daughter exclusively in Estonian. M1 reported that while they were living in Israel their daughter went through a phase of wanting to speak only Hebrew to M1. Today the interaction between parent and child is monolingual in the given parent's L1. The girl is reported to have age-appropriate Estonian, and age-appropriate spoken (but not written) Hebrew.

4.2. FAMILY 2 (SLOVENIAN AS NEL)

Father 2 (F2) is a 34-year-old teacher and reports competence in English, Estonian, Croatian, Bosnian and German⁶. He originates from Slovenia and is a native speaker of Slovenian. Mother 2 (M2) is a 35-year-old native-Estonian-speaker from Estonia, and works as an educational specialist. She self-reports competence in English, Finnish, and Russian⁶, and describes her Slovenian as 'conversational'.

The couple has lived together in Estonia since 2007, where both of their children were born (a girl, 6;1, and a boy, 4;6). Between themselves the parents speak mostly English, with some Estonian and Slovenian. The parents reported employing OPOL (M2 uses Estonian, F2 Slovenian), with F2 stating that he purposely ignores his children when they address him in Estonian in order to enforce the strict use of Slovenian between father and child. The children are reported as using both Estonian and Slovenian dependant on

⁶ Levels not reported.

context and activity. Both children are described as having age-appropriate Estonian and Slovenian.

4.3. FAMILY 3 (SWEDISH AS NEL)

Mother 3 (M3) is a 33-year-old native-Estonian-speaker from Estonia, and works in customer service. She self-reports competence in English (C1⁷), Russian (B1), and Swedish (A2). Father 3 (F3) is a 40-year-old news correspondent from Finland. He is a native-speaker of Swedish and reports competence in English (C1), Finnish (C1), and Estonian (B2).

The couple spoke English for the first 9 months of their relationship, but switched to Estonian as F3 wanted to practice. Their daughter (4;8) was born in Estonia and the family have resided exclusively in Estonia since before her birth. M3 speaks Estonian to F3, while F3 speaks to his wife in both Swedish and Estonian. The parents employ OPOL – M3 Estonian, F3 Swedish, but their daughter replies to her father in both family languages (more so in Estonian than Swedish, however). The daughter is reported as having age-appropriate Estonian and less-than-age-appropriate Swedish.

4.4. FAMILY 4 (TURKISH AS NEL)

Father 4 (F4) is a 40-year-old retail worker from Turkey. His first language is Turkish, and he reports competence in English (B1) and Estonian (B1). Mother 4 (M4) is a 43-year-old⁸ native-Estonian-speaker from Estonia, and works as a university administrator. She self-reports competence in English (C1/B2), Finnish (A2), and Swedish (A2). She can also speak ‘basic’ Turkish.

Other than a month or two residing in Turkey when their daughter (5;4) was just a baby, the parents have been living exclusively in

⁷ Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

⁸ All ages and other data at the time of recording. See Section 3.1 above.

Estonia since 2009, where their child was born. The parents began their relationship by speaking English to each other, but switched to speaking mostly in Estonian after F4 took a language course soon after arriving to live in Estonia.

The couple have tried to employ OPOL, but F4 cannot maintain monolingual Turkish-language exchanges with his daughter – the child often uses Estonian with her father, especially when she lacks the vocabulary in Turkish, and F4 admits that he ‘accidentally’ automatically replies in Estonian. F4 said he should make more of an effort to reply solely in Turkish. Their daughter went through a period of not speaking to her father in Turkish as her reasoning was that F4 understood Estonian. The parents report that their daughter speaks age-appropriate Estonian, but describe her Turkish as ‘very weak’, ‘simple’, and ‘beginner’. Every summer the family spends one month visiting F4’s family in Turkey; during this time the daughter tends to stay close to M4 to avoid speaking Turkish. However, the parents report that with each passing year her ability in the language improves.

5. Findings

This findings section is broken up into a number of topics as relate to the focus of this paper, namely the language management efforts of the fathers, and the challenges the fathers faced⁹. This section is immediately followed by a discussion section, and then the paper closes with its conclusion.

5.1. PARENTAL LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

Two of the four fathers (Israeli F1 and Turkish F4) talked about ‘insufficient’ language competence leading to challenges. F1 initially

⁹ The findings section mostly limits itself to the statements made by the four fathers. This is in no way to imply that what the mothers had to say was not insightful. It is simply that this approach made sense given space constraints and the focus of the present paper.

thought that when the family were all together (e.g. at the dinner table) that Hebrew would be the language used, but often it is the case that his daughter speaks to her mother in Estonian, at times to the exclusion of F1. He tries to also partake in the conversations, but his daughter rejects his input, telling her father that his Estonian is not good enough to participate. F1 says that at times he feels left out, and he finds it hard to understand his daughter's 'young person's Estonian' (on account of colloquialisms, slang, etc.). Outside the house F1's daughter tries to take advantage of her father's limited Estonian skills, so as to get the upper hand in front of her peers and others – to 'control the situation'. The father reported that his daughter even tries to downplay her father's Estonian-language skills so that she can 'speak for him' in an attempt to shape the narrative. F1 gave us the paper's title quote when he said: 'she wants it to seem like she is the big dog who knows, and I am the small dog who doesn't know'.

F4 would like an all (or mostly) Turkish-speaking household¹⁰, but M4's Turkish is too rudimentary for that. M4 states that she would not be against this scenario were her level in the language to improve in the future. F4 has a small number of Turkish-speaking acquaintances, whose children speak Turkish well, and so he sometimes brings his daughter to visit them to give her more exposure to the language. F4 made reference to the good level in Turkish of the wives of his acquaintances as rationale for why their children speak better Turkish than his daughter (i.e. the language is used more in those households).

In contrast to F1 above, Slovenian F2 stated that his high-level in Estonian allows him to partake in his children's school life. He reported that one of his male acquaintances is excluded from his children's school life due to insufficient competence in Estonian. F2 said, hyperbolically, that he 'would die' before he let this scenario happen to him.

¹⁰ Reference to the strategy known as 'Minority Language at Home' (ML@H)

5.2. COMMUNITY AS A RESOURCE

Community (or lack thereof) was a topic raised by all the fathers. In Excerpt 1 below we see that Slovenian F2 compensated for the lack of a culture-language community in Tallinn by amassing a collection at home of children's music and books in Slovenian. Notice also in the excerpt how M2 and F2 (differently) report F2's state of mind.

Interview Excerpt 1 (Family 2, July 2013)

M2: Since you are so afraid that they might lose Slovenian or Slovenian would be..¹¹ ah like a WEAKER¹² language. we have much more Slovenian music. kids' music at home. we have Slovenian books, we can show you later that they have bookshelf where there are 90% Slovenian books [and 10 of Estonian]¹³

F2: [there is a lot yeah]

M2: because {F2}¹⁴ all the time feels worried that- that.. kindergarten they hear my mother- with [my mother-]

F2: [NOT WORRIED]. not worried. I would like to. kind of offer this world to th- them. as well. yah? ah. I am probably not very good example for your. research. mhm. I was thinking about that before when it comes to the. <inaudible> characteristics of your *numerus*. yah? mmh... I don't have a community here. I am alone. so ah. they don't get.. ah this. <laugh>horrific</laugh> language from anybody else. except me and Skype with the grandparents

Israeli F1 reported that he struggles to find other Hebrew-speaking people in Tallinn. There is a Jewish community, but F1 reported that it is religious in nature, largely Russian-speaking, and does not reflect (*secular*) Israeli culture; the couple tried to send their daughter to Saturday school at the synagogue to get exposure to Hebrew

¹¹ Indicates pause - . very short pause; .. short pause; ... long pause

¹² Capitalisation indicates emphasis.

¹³ Utterance in square brackets [] overlaps with utterance in subsequent square brackets [].

¹⁴ Name redacted.

language and writing, but she refused to go, and the couple dropped the matter. F1 does know one Israeli in Tallinn, but this acquaintance keeps kosher and so F1 cannot invite him to his home, as F1's family does not practise, let alone is orthodox.

Swedish-Finn F3 stated that he has to compromise and 'make do' with the Swedes (of Sweden) in Tallinn. According to F3, Swedish-Finns are distinct culturally and linguistically from Swedish people, but it is in this *Swedish* Swedish-language community in Tallinn that F3's daughter will develop her Swedish-language skills¹⁵. Noticing that his daughter's competence in Swedish is quite 'passive', F3 recognises that he should do more to exposure her to the language, such set up play-dates with other Swedish-speaking children, but he says that it is not always possible to find the time.

As reported above, Turkish F4 sometimes takes his daughter with him to visit with his acquaintances for the language exposure. M4 reported that the community of Turkish families in Tallinn is somewhat split between those families in which the mother is Russian-speaking, and those where the mother is Estonian-speaking. According to M4, there is little intermingling between the two sets of families.

5.3. HOME EDUCATION AND STRIKING A BALANCE

F1 has started to try to teach his daughter to read Hebrew, but he gets easily discouraged and starts to doubt its utility – 'what use is it to her here [in Estonia]?' F1 also states that he is frustrated that his daughter is not developing her skills in Hebrew, and reports that she will only consume Hebrew-language media 'if she is bored and has nothing else to do'. Despite this, he is not going to push her – as can be seen in Excerpt 2 below he is ultimately not worried, and he wishes to avoid (needlessly) upsetting his daughter.

¹⁵ That said, F3 did explain that Swedes and Swedish-Finns share a sense of humour and a body of children's literature (stories and songs) that is separate and distinct from that of Finnish-speaking Finns, with which F3 stated he is not familiar.

Interview Excerpt 2 (Family 1, June 2013)

F1: I think also now there is no reason to worry. there was a time that I worried.. uh it was not nice feeling. but I think it's natural. there's not much to do... it's either do the fight. and start to. to be. I don't know. FORCE her to learn.. I don't think it would work. good.. because we live here and that's the nature of things HERE. so she will have Estonian as first language anyway. it's her mother tongue.. it's okay. but she can manage in Hebrew. and if she goes there {to Israel}¹⁵ she can manage also. so. she has another culture. another language. it's okay

In contrast to Slovenian F2 and his aforementioned tactics of 'fake deafness' (Section 4.2), Swedish-Finn F3, similarly to F1, is afraid to push this daughter to speak (more) Swedish as he does not want to risk his daughter developing negative feelings towards the language, as he himself did towards Finnish when he was a child. M3 reported that their daughter does speak Swedish only with her paternal grandparents and relatives in Finland, and for the moment F3 finds it sufficient that his daughter hears Swedish from him and practices her Swedish when in Finland. When asked how this situation arose, F3 stated that 'it was her choice'. In this case it is fortunate that Finland is only some 80 km from Tallinn, and so quickly accessible. When asked about him teaching his daughter to read and write Swedish in the future, F3 said that he would assist his daughter should she request it, but if she is not interested he will not be the one to force her to undergo extra lessons at home in what he feels is her free time for her own interests.

Turkish F4 sometimes reads to his daughter in Turkish at bedtime, but F4 reports that she will only tolerate this 'if she is in the right mood', and sometimes she cries and says she cannot understand the Turkish-language stories. Similarly to the case in Family 1, Couple 4 report that their child will watch Turkish-language cartoons only when there is no readily-available 'alternative'. In contrast to the

¹⁶ Author's clarification in curly brackets {}.

situation in Family 4, the daughter in Family 3 is content watching Swedish-language DVDs – most from Sweden – and being read to in Swedish. Indeed, her parents report that she will often pick up a book and ‘read’ it from memory, in Swedish for a Swedish-language book, and in Estonian for an Estonian-language book. Couple 3 reports that as a rule they alternate the nights when they read bedtime stories in Estonian versus Swedish – every second night the story is in Swedish.

5.4. LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AND FAMILIAL IDENTITY

When asked about their commitment to transmitting both Swedish and Estonian to their daughter, Couple 3 explained their reasoning with reference to culture and with a comment about the ‘smallness’ of Estonian and Finland Swedish (Excerpt 3 below).

Interview Excerpt 3 (Family 3, May 2013)

F3: both.. the the Swedish we speak in Finland and Estonian considering Estonian history. both.. we both have this feeling that we are not under threat in a like– but still that.. we are very small languages or or and and that’s why I think. it’s so obvious that we should..

M3: <laugh>continue</laugh>

F3: <laugh>continue</laugh>. I mean I don’t believe in in politics. of course that’s also but– but you don’t protect your own culture and and language by having some.. like laws. of course of course it’s important– but I think most important– if I speak Swedish with her. then she will speak until she is. dead more or less.. then it’s her. like option. like. choice what she speaks with her children.. but that’s basically my– like my way to just– to be myself

Note too, however, F3’s comments about how speaking Swedish to his daughter allows him to ‘be’ himself. The above is a multilayer response that connects the transmission of culture with the transmission of language, but also recognises the intimate connection one

has to one's first language (L1). The couple developed upon this topic later in the interview. When questioned as to why they think that some Estonian-language mothers do not pass on their L1 when resident outside Estonia, they had the following to say (Excerpt 4 below).

Interview Excerpt 4 (Family 3, May 2013)

Interv.¹⁷: do you understand.. maybe the attitude of some Estonian mothers who just kind of go <sigh> '*ma ei viitsi*'¹⁸ like, you know just

M3: mhmh

Interv.: because you're you're a mother, you- you know you've all the MOTHER duties to DO and then you're expected to kind of carry the Estonian flag on your back and it's just too much of a burden, is it-

M3: I don't think it's a burden

F3: I don't understand it. first of all. [it's not a burden]

M3: [it's SO ODD] to say [it's a burden]

F3: [second of all]. even if language.. is culture and culture is whatever, it's not like. I represent a group of- because I am Swedish-speaking that I represent this group, there is no kind of this kind of. nationalism or the [Estonian flag]

M3: ['I always] have to have a flag with me<laugh>

F3: yeah. it's more like a family tradition. in that way I guess.. and and I don't understand people who give up because what you are actually saying is that. I am leaving everything behind. I am leaving who. I. am.. in a way.. I am not saying that's what people think but that's how I like interpret it.

It may seem, on first glance, that in Excerpt 4 F3 contradicts the statement he made in Excerpt 3 about being a speaker of a 'small' language community. A fair assessment, however, would likely be that F3 feels that him transmitting *Finland* Swedish language and

¹⁷ Present author as interviewer

¹⁸ Estonian: 'I can't be bothered'

culture is a ‘good thing’ as this population is ‘small’¹⁹ – while as a speaker he is not a representative or representation of the language/culture, not transmitting it would be a damn shame – but that his (primary) motive derives from a desire to maintain his connection to his childhood past. Not to do so would be walking away from everything one is/was, according to F3. It should be noted, however, that it remains unclear how *Finnish* F3’s daughter’s Swedish will remain in the future, given her interaction with the Sweden Swedish community in Tallinn and consumption of audio-visual media from Sweden.

5.5 TRANSNATIONAL CHILDREN

Following a discussion by Couple 2 of the pragmatic application of language mixing for disciplining children in public – which M2 remarked the literature on bilingual parenting advises parents *not* to do – F2 had the following to say to parents about being prepared to have oneself and one’s family seen as ‘weird’ for being bilingual/bicultural (Excerpt 5 below).

Interview Excerpt 5 (Family 2, July 2013)

F2: once you get over the fact that everybody else... might perceive you as a weirdo.. ahhh somebody different. ah somebody who... and your children as well. yeah? you’ll never FIT into this. you know. *noh*²⁰ ahh then I guess it’s okay. they’re very different from typical Estonian kids. ahh. we get it from kindergarten. we get it from from. your your {M2’s} parents basically. they are somehow– your father always describes them as <laugh> creatures from some other planet </laugh>

¹⁹ Some 286,000 Finnish citizens resident in Finland reported Swedish as their native language in 2013 (5.25% of the population) (Statistics Finland 2014).

²⁰ Estonian-language interjection

Couple 2 went on to explain that their children are more ‘open’, talkative and ‘lively’ than typical Estonian children. When the present author as researcher asked F1, given the challenges he has faced (and still faces) in transmitting the Hebrew language and Israeli culture, whether he felt as if he was ‘losing’ his daughter from a cultural point of view, F1 had the following to say (Excerpt 6 below).

Interview Excerpt 6 (Family 1, June 2013)

F1: sometimes it’s annoying because I’m growing an Estonian child [*<laugh>*] but sometimes it’s nice to think of it, *<laugh>*so I’m PATRIOT*</laugh>*

Interv.: [*<laugh>*]
okay

F1: I’m following the Estonian nationalism. But I think it’s all nonsense, because the kid is a kid, it’s my kid, it’s– I cannot lose it unless I do bad things. I don’t think it’s BAD to be either. I also live here, it’s not a foreign country anymore although sometimes I feel like it is, but that’s ah. ups and downs but it’s not– it’s like a home here

Unsurprisingly, F1’s reply was a complex one. Ultimately he does not feel as if he is ‘losing’ his daughter culturally; F1 both rejects the concept of ‘loss’ of his daughter – ‘it’s all nonsense’ – and states that he, to some degree, feels part of the Estonian nation, semi-joking stating that he is a ‘patriot’. He concludes by stating he feels at home in Estonia, most of the time.

6. Discussion

We shall now summarise the findings of the study and discuss them with reference to the literature on bilingual, transnational families.

The study did find the four mothers to be supportive of their husband in transmitting the non-Estonian language (NEL); the NEL was valorised and the mothers did not intentionally obstruct

the father in his efforts. That is not to say, however, that the father’s language management is being seamlessly executed.

The fathers are attempting to transmit their L1 in a sociolinguistic context that does not present many opportunities for use of or exposure to the language. Apart from Swedish-Finn F3²¹, the home country is far away and costly to travel to, the community of same language speakers in Tallinn is small, and the language does not wield prestige in Estonia and is not supported by the state education system²² (cf. cases in Doyle 2013). In such cases minority-language parents rely on a supportive home environment that provides sufficient input in and exposure to the non-societal language (De Houwer 2007, Pearson 2007).

Piller and Gerber (2018) have pointed out that when a strict version of the One-Parent-One-Language (OPOL) strategy (no mixing!) is presented in the popular literature as the ‘gold-standard’ for bilingual parenting, which then flows into the public psyche, the non-societal language can suffer, especially if the children’s primary caregiver is an L1 speaker of the societal language, and it the non-societal language speaking-parent who spends much of working day outside the home (see Caldas 2006: 42). For the families in the study, where language mixing occurred in parent-child dyads it was in the father-child dyad and to the detriment of usage of the NEL. It is unfair to blame a parent for their level of competence in their spouse’s language, but no mother reported using the NEL with their child(ren) even in a restricted manner, e.g. in a certain place or for a certain activity. It is remarkable that given M1’s ‘very good’ Hebrew, that F1 reported frequently being ‘left out in the cold’ at the dinner

²¹ Family 3 is an interesting case where F3 has access to a relatively lively community of Swedes in Tallinn, in which his daughter can practice her Swedish, and while F3 shares cultural similarities with this community, what is not shared is nationality, homeland, and language variety.

²² That is in no way to say that the fathers experienced any negative or discriminatory attitudes by society, neighbours or family-in-law. This question was put to all the parents, but nothing of this nature was reported.

table. One would imagine it would be an excellent opportunity for the family to all speak Hebrew.

There was a split between the fathers on whether to compromise on language usage and home education – Slovenian F2 took a strict approach and demanded use of the Slovenian language by his children when they spoke to him, while Swedish-Finn F3 and Turkish F4 were more accommodating of their child's mood and wishes. It does seem, however, despite both girls' reluctance to speak their father's L1, Swedish is in a stronger position in Family 3 than Turkish is in Family 4. This could be related to the amount of exposure the child has to the NEL – in Family 3 Swedish is used in the parent dyad and F3 only speaks in Swedish to his daughter, while in Family 4 Turkish does not feature at all in the parent dyad and F4 reports often using Estonian in conversation with his daughter, forgetting to speak in Turkish. A factor in this could also be the family carving out a time for the Swedish language – every second evening the bedtime stories are in Swedish. Pearson (2007) states 'when parents [...] do what is well within their power to ensure activities for their children in the minority language, the children respond by learning it. [Otherwise], the invisible hand of the majority language takes charge' (p. 409). The present author wonders whether more could not be done in Family 4 to increase the use of and exposure to the Turkish language within the home, and also in conjunction with other Turkish-speaking families.

Meanwhile, reading the words of F1, one gets a sense that he has mixed emotions about his daughter's level in Hebrew (especially written) and her cultural identity. He recognises that it is somewhat futile to complain about the situation, but a little part of him laments what could have been had the family not relocated to Estonia from Israel. Piller (2001b) reminds us that in a transnational family at least one of the parents will be positioned as a 'migrant'. We can see M2 joke about this in Excerpt 5 when he refers to his children as 'weird' and 'creatures from another planet', and he means to include himself in this. It seems that F1's daughter is going through a phase

in her life where she is siding linguistically and culturally more with her mother (and her peers), and F1 is left alone without company in his 'migranhood'/ 'Israeliness', which seems to amplify the negative sides of being different, rather than the positive ones. The present author wonders whether the parents could not collaborate to consider engaging and fun ways for the whole family to (casually) study Hebrew reading and writing and explore Israeli culture as a shared activity.

Conclusion

This paper concerned itself with migrant fathers in transnational families and their efforts to transmit their L1 in the context of the multilingual, post-Soviet space (Zabrodskaia 2014) that is Tallinn, Estonia, where discourses of language, nation and culture often position Estonians as an 'endangered majority' (Kalmus 2003).

The findings indicate that minority-language fathers also engage in 'language work' (Okita 2002, Piller, Pavlenko 2004), and, for the fathers in the study, demonstrated that their language management efforts were constrained and determined by factors such as the level of competence the men's spouse has in his L1, access to a same language-culture community as a supportive resource, and the balancing act that is ensuring sufficient use of and exposure to the non-Estonian language while also allowing the child to exercise their own agency in deciding the language they use and the activities they engage in. It is the recommendation of the author that more be jointly done by the parents in Families 1 and 4 to foster skills in written Hebrew (Family 1) and spoken Turkish (Family 4).

It is the hope of the present author that the fathers are able to 'stay the course' in their language management efforts, and that the family members will together be able to negotiate a shared transnational space that maintains and valorises both of its languages.

REFERENCES

- Busch, Brigitta 2017. Expanding the notion of the linguistic repertoire: On the concept of *Spracherleben*—The lived experience of language. – *Applied Linguistics* 38(3), 340–358.
- Caldas, Stephen 2006. *Raising Bilingual-Biliterate Children in Monolingual Cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- De Houwer, Annick 2007. Parental language input patterns and children's bilingual use. – *Applied Psycholinguistics* 28(3), 411–424.
- Doyle, Colm J. 2013. To make the root stronger: Language policies and experiences of successful multilingual intermarried families with adolescent children in Tallinn. – *Successful Family Language Policy: Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction*. (Eds.) Mila Schwartz, Anna Verschik. Dordrecht: Springer, 145–175.
- Ehala, Martin; Niglas, Katrin 2006. Language attitudes of Estonian secondary school students. – *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 5(3), 209–227.
- Fogle, Lyn W.; King, Kendall A. 2013. Child agency and language policy in transnational families. – *Issues in Applied Linguistics* 19, 1–25.
- Jackson, Lachlan R. 2008. The political economy of language in intermarriage: Bilingual childrearing in Japan. – *Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture* 20(1): 339–357.
- Jackson, Lachlan R. 2009. Language, power and identity in bilingual childrearing. – *Crossroads* 3(2), 58–71.
- Kalmus, Veronika 2003. 'Is interethnic integration possible in Estonia?': ethno-political discourse of two ethnic groups. – *Discourse & Society* 14(6), 667–697.
- Kopeliovich, Shulamit 2010. Family language policy: A case study of a Russian-Hebrew bilingual family: Toward a theoretical framework. – *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education* 4(3), 162–178.
- Kopeliovich, Shulamit 2013. Happylingual: A family project for enhancing and balancing multilingual development. – *Successful Family Language Policy: Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction*. (Eds.) Mila Schwartz, Anna Verschik. Dordrecht: Springer, 249–275.
- Kouritzin, Sandra G. 2000. A mother's tongue. – *TESOL Quarterly* 34(2), 311–324.

- King, Kendall A.; Fogle, Lyn W. 2013. Family language policy and bilingual parenting. – *Language Teaching* 46, 172–194.
- King, Kendall A.; Fogle, Lyn W.; Logan-Terry, Aubrey 2008. Family language policy. – *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2(5), 907–922.
- Luykx, Aurolyn 2005. Children as socializing agents: Family language policy in situations of language shift. – *ISB4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*. (Eds.) James Cohen, Kara T. McAlister, Kellie Rolstad, Jeff MacSwan. Somerville: Cascadilla Press, 1407–1414.
- Myers-Scotton, Carol 2006. *Multiple Voices: An Introduction to Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Okita, Toshie 2002. *Invisible work: Bilingualism, Language Choice and Childrearing in Intermarried Families*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Pawłusz, Emilia 2017. Language as an object of national passion: Reflections from Estonia. – *Language Policy Beyond the State*. (Eds.) Maarja Siiner, Kadri Koreinik, Kara Brown. Cham: Springer, 223–239.
- Palviainen, Åsa; Boyd, Sally 2013. Unity in discourse, diversity in practice: The one person one language policy in bilingual families. – *Successful Family Language Policy: Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction*. (Eds.) Mila Schwartz, Anna Verschik. Dordrecht: Springer, 145–175.
- Pearson, Barbara Z. 2007. Social factors in childhood bilingualism in the United States. – *Applied Psycholinguistics* 28(3), 399–410.
- Piller, Ingrid 2001a. Private language planning: The best of both worlds? – *Estudios de Sociolingüística* 2(1), 61–80.
- Piller, Ingrid 2001b. Linguistic Intermarriage: Language choice and negotiation of identity. – *Multilingualism, Second Language Learning, and Gender*. (Eds.) Aneta Pavlenko, Adrien Blackledge, Ingrid Piller, Marya Teutsch-Dwyer. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 199–230.
- Piller, Ingrid 2002. *Bilingual Couples Talk: The Discursive Construction of Hybridity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Piller, Ingrid; Pavlenko, Aneta 2004. Bilingualism and gender. – *The Handbook of Bilingualism*. (Eds.) Tej K. Bhatia, William C. Ritchie. Oxford: Blackwell, 489–511.
- Piller, Ingrid; Gerber, Livia 2018. Family language policy between the bilingual advantage and the monolingual mindset. – *International*

- Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, DOI: 10.1080/13670050.2018.1503227.
- Schwartz, Mila 2010. Family language policy: Core issues of an emerging field. – *Applied Linguistics Review* 1(1), 171–192.
- Schwartz, Mila; Anna Verschik (Eds.) 2013. *Successful Family Language Policy: Parents, Children and Educators in Interaction*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Simons, Gary F.; Charles D. Fennig (Eds.) 2018. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 21st ed. Dallas: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com> (02.09.2018).
- Spolsky, Bernard 2004. *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Statistics Estonia 2018. 'Population at beginning of year', 9 May 2018. Tallinn: Statistics Estonia. <https://www.stat.ee/stat-population-at-beginning-of-year> (08.09.2018).
- Statistics Finland 2014. 'Appendix figure 4. Country of birth, citizenship and mother tongue of the population 31.12.2013', 21 March 2014. Helsinki: Statistics Finland. http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2013/vaerak_2013_2014-03-21_kuv_004_en.html (03.06.2018).
- Tallinn City Government 2018. *Statistical Yearbook of Tallinn 2018*. Tallinn: Tallinn City Office. <https://www.tallinn.ee/eng/Yearbooks-and-Statistics> (02.09.2018).
- Tuominen, Anne 1999. Who decides the home language? A look at multilingual families. – *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 140(1), 59–76.
- Verschik, Anna 2005. Research into multilingualism in Estonia. – *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 26(5), 378–390.
- Verschik, Anna; Doyle, Colm J. 2017. Young Swedish-Estonian returnees to Estonia: Reflections on family language policy and a multilingual upbringing. – *Language Policy Beyond the State*. (Eds.) Maarja Siiner, Kadri Koreinik, Kara Brown. Cham: Springer, 123–140.
- Zabrodsckaja, Anastassia 2014. Tallinn: monolingual from above and multilingual from below. – *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 228, 105–130.

RESÜMEE

„TEMA ON SUUR KOER, KES TEAB“ – VÕIM JA ISA ROLL VÄHEMUSKEELE ÜLEKANDES NELJAS TALLINNA RAHVUSVAHELISES PERES

Töös on uuritud nelja Tallinnas elava kakskeelse rahvusvahelise perekonna keelepoliitikat. Kõigis neis peredes räägivad emad emakeelena eesti keelt, samas kui isad on eranditult välismaalased ning räägivad emakeelena mõnd muud keelt.

Isa keelepoliitika põhiülesanne neis peredes on anda lastele edasi ühiskonnas mitte-aktiivselt kõneldava keele ehk oma emakeele oskus. Töö fookuses on isade jõupingutused korraldada pere keelepoliitikat ning sellest tulenevad katsumused, muuhulgas ka laste subjektsus ning pere jõutasakaalu ebavõrdsus.

Uuringuandmete saamiseks viidi läbi poolstruktureeritud intervjuud iga pere mõlema lapsevanemaga nende kodus. Tulemused osutavad sellele, et vähemuskeelt kõnelevad isad võtavad osa nn keeletööst (Okita 2002) ning et uuringus osalenud isade keelepoliitika reguleerimiseks vajalikud meetmed on piiratud ja sõltuvad otseselt emade oskusest rääkida abikaasa emakeelt, lapse subjektsusest ning pere ligipääsust vastavale võõrkeelsele kogukonnale kui tugiüksusele.

Töö autori arvates peaksid kahes vaadeldud peres tegema lapsevanemad omavahel rohkem koostööd ja rohkem pingutama, et laps omandaks ka isa emakeele kõnes (perekond 4) ja kirjas (perekond 1).

Võtmesõnad: perekonna keelepoliitika, rahvusvahelised pered, isad, keelehaldamine