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Article

Blurring the binaries of home/school in Family Language Policy: Parents as teachers in heritage language lessons

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Abstract

The persistence of the COVID-19-induced lockdowns resulted in increased parent-child encounters as parents worked from home while children learnt through remote platforms. This blurred the binaries of home/school as parents assumed the role of teachers by participating in children's schooling more formally. By focusing on the role of parents as teachers in heritage language tasks, this study discusses family language ideologies and how they are infused into the teaching and learning of Ndebele, a historically minoritised and marginalised language in Zimbabwe. Data is drawn from a linguistic ethnography of a Ndebele heritage language family residing in the city of Bulawayo. Data consists of audio-recorded Ndebele language lessons and parental interviews. By drawing on the concepts of Family Language Policy and Bourdieu's notion of 'legitimate language', the study exposes how children's heritage language tasks became important aspects of family's language transactions, contestations and negotiations. Parents build on their temporary teacher authority to assert their agency in reinforcing a Ndebele identity by endeavouring to teach Ndebele to their children through a 'Ndebele lens'. Children's stances towards parents' monolingual practices and ideologies reveal their resistant agency. Their appeals for explanations and translations of some Ndebele words and expressions into English reproduce school language practices and ideologies that project English as the legitimate language. Parents' insistence on monolingual practices and children's language negotiations also reproduces the tensions that exist between English and indigenous languages at school and in the community at large. The study concludes that despite these tensions, these heritage language tasks present opportunities for productive language concordant parent-child encounters that reinforce children's linguistic identities.

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1 Introduction

The persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related lockdowns resulted in increased contact and interaction between some parents and their children at home. In conformity with the World Health Organization's (WHO) protocols to curtail the spread of the pandemic, governments throughout the world generally encouraged a 'work from home' approach while schools took the route of online and remote teaching. Where there was insufficient infrastructure to support interactive online learning, alternative methods of ensuring continuity in learning were adopted. For a country like Zimbabwe, the COVID-19 pandemic could not have hit at a worse time. It found the country already reeling from a myriad of socioeconomic and political challenges, which drove the cost of online learning infrastructure beyond the reach of many. Most schools turned to the more affordable and accessible social messaging platform WhatsApp, to share children's schoolwork with parents, who in turn administered it to their children at home. This meant that parents had to assume the role of teachers in this new setting, positioning them – at least from the perspective of their children – as knowers and authorities in various subject areas. This led to a blurring of the binaries of home/school as parents began to participate in their children's schooling in formal ways. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on Ndebele language lessons conducted by parents. Heritage language lessons provided a window into the dynamics of language learning and socialisation within families. For families from minoritised language backgrounds, the lessons also afforded parents opportunities to assert and reinforce Family Language Policy (FLP) and authoritatively influence children's language learning trajectories. By focusing on the role of parents as teachers during heritage language lessons, this study discusses how parents' language ideologies are embedded in the teaching and learning of Ndebele in a family living in an urban area in Zimbabwe and how language transactions and negotiations in these encounters are infused with FLP dynamics.

FLP is defined as the explicit and overt decisions that families in their various manifestations (Macalister and Mirvahedi, 2017) make regarding language use in their homes (King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry, 2008; Spolsky, 2012). It is concerned with how families in bilingual and multilingual contexts manage and negotiate their language transactions (Slavkov, 2017). This concept focuses on what families do with languages within their linguistic repertoires in their daily

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interactions, their beliefs and ideologies about language and language use, and their goals and efforts to shape and influence language use and language learning outcomes (King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry, 2008; Spolsky, 2012; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013). Within minority and minoritised language families, FLP explains how some families are able to maintain their heritage languages, while others shift to the dominant languages (Schwartz, 2010; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013a; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013; Smith-Christmas, 2014). Ren and Hu (2013) also expand the concept of FLP to include an array of literacy practices that families engage in during their daily interactions.

Interactions between parents and children during heritage language lessons and other literacy activities form part of FLP since 'these dialogues illuminate what language inputs parents provide, how the quality and quantity of inputs enrich the linguistic environment in which children develop bi/multiliterate skills' (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013:102). Drawing on this view of FLP, I discuss how the focal family's language transactions during Ndebele lessons reify and reproduce the tensions, negotiations, resistance, and agency which characterise their FLP. The study also shows how children in the focal family negotiate their agency in FLP by deploying resistance strategies, sometimes resulting in parents' revision and negotiation of their language practices. Given the history of the minoritisation of Ndebele in official spaces in Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2006, 2008a; Ncube and Siziba, 2017b; Maseko and Matunge, 2020), its use within the family remains the core ingredient of its survival (Fishman, 1991). Ndebele language lessons provided a temporary redress to the problem of Ndebele being taught through the lenses of non-L1 Ndebele teachers in Bulawayo and other parts of Matabeleland, a problem that has seen frequent and often emotionally charged outcries (Maseko and Matunge, 2020). The COVID-19-induced school closures, therefore, presented opportunities for parents to teach Ndebele through 'Ndebele lenses' at home. This potentially legitimises its use in a context dominated by the hegemonic English and Shona languages beyond the family sphere, potentially valorising it while also reinforcing the home as a safe space for the use of Ndebele.

Previous FLP research has focused mainly on families in immigration and transnational contexts to understand how they negotiate between the compulsion to assimilate to the language demands of the host country and the desire to maintain their heritage languages (Fogle and King, 2013; Kayam, 2013; Hua and Wei, 2016; Said, this issue). Other studies have deployed FLP to understand why some families shift from their heritage languages while others have successfully maintained them, despite the presence of immigrant-unfriendly or hostile state language policies (Seloni and Sarfati, 2013). Yet some studies have

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investigated the dynamics of children's language socialisation in language shift situations in both indigenous and immigration contexts (Luykx, 2005; Gyogi, 2015). While most studies consider parents and other extended family members to be the authorities whose language ideologies influence the establishment and direction of FLP (Schwartz and Moin, 2012; Smith-Christmas, 2014; Maseko and Mutasa, 2018, 2019; Said, this issue), increasing scholarship has begun to acknowledge the role of children's agency in and their perspectives on FLP (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013a; Fogle and King, 2013; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013; Gyogi, 2015; Said and Zhu, 2019; Wilson, 2020). Starting from these studies, the present contribution attempts to show how the formal heritage language lessons present the home as a site where language policy contestations and negotiations take place. My focus on Ndebele legitimation in the family is an endeavour to understand the counter-hegemonic stance against the reproduction of state-wide language practices in FLP.

2 Minoritisation of the Ndebele language in Zimbabwe

Even though language policy scholarship in Zimbabwe rarely frames Ndebele as a minority language, visible language practices in various domains attest to its minoritisation alongside several formerly designated official minority languages. A minoritised language is defined in this study as one whose value is not recognised on the interactional scene by speakers of sociolinguistically dominant languages (Kasbarian, 1997). A language becomes minoritised because its speakers generally have less political power and influence in a territory (Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty, 2008). In this section, I provide a cursory discussion of the politics of language in Zimbabwe to expose the dynamics of Ndebele minoritisation.

While there are no recent sociolinguistic survey figures to confirm the demographics, Ndebele is thought to be spoken by around 15% or 16% of Zimbabwe's population. Shona is the dominant African language, spoken by between 75% and 85% of the population, while English, the colonial language, is the mother tongue of 1% of the population (Ndhlovu, 2006, 2008a; Ndlovu, 2010). Before the new constitution was passed in 2013, English, Shona, and Ndebele were the only officially recognised national languages. English has maintained its unassailable position as the country's lingua franca, while Shona and Ndebele, hitherto presented as equal national languages, remain in fierce contestation for functional space (Ndhlovu, 2006, 2008a). However, visible language practices have tended to expose this fallacy of parity (Nkomo and Maseko, 2017). The reality is that while English dominates in education and commerce (Ndhlovu,

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2008b; Nkomo, 2008; Maseko, 2021a), in the counter-hegemonic struggle against English imperialism, Shona profited from its political and demographic superiority to dominate and suppress other indigenous languages (Ndhlovu, 2006, 2008a). The preponderance of Shona is neither accidental nor innocent but symbolic of pre-and post-independence political contestations.

Explaining Ndebele language minoritisation in Zimbabwe, Ndhlovu (2006) extensively implicates the colonial hand in this. He shows how Professor Clement Doke, a South African linguist who was commissioned to research and advise the colonial government on how to handle linguistic variation in the Shona language overstepped his mandate, resulting in linguistic chaos. Ndhlovu (2006) also demonstrates how Doke's recommendations about language use in Matabeleland provinces without objective research and sufficient sociolinguistic motivations had a lasting impact on minority languages. In particular, Doke's recommendation that Shona and Ndebele be the only languages taught in Mashonaland and Matabeleland schools respectively, created the impression that the country was a Shona-Ndebele bimodal and bicultural state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). While this recommendation promoted Shona and Ndebele to create a sense of equality, the reality has been that Shona benefited from its strong political backing to hegemonically dominate the Zimbabwean linguistic ecology.

In contemporary Zimbabwean society, the dominance of Shona has to be read from the perspective of the government's desire to consolidate the Shona hegemony which was violently established during the early days of Zimbabwe's independence. Between 1983 and 1987, the Robert Mugabe-led ZANU government embarked on an operation code-named 'Gukurahundi', a violent military operation that resulted in the mass killings and the maiming and raping of Ndebele-speaking citizens in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands provinces. Official narratives at the time would claim that the operation targeted dissidents consisting of former ZIPRA combatants, the military wing of the opposition PF-ZAPU which had just lost the elections. The dissidents were accused of oftentimes concocted treasonous and sabotage crimes and a plot to overthrow the government. When the operation ended in 1987 after the signing of a Unity Accord between ZANU and PF-ZAPU, over 20,000 mainly Ndebele-speaking citizens had been killed, while thousands have remained unaccounted for to this date (Ncube and Siziba, 2017a; Alexander, 2021; Sibanda, 2021). Many of those killed were accused of harbouring and aiding dissidents, a claim that has since been faulted and dismissed by many researchers. That scholarship generally frames Gukurahundi as a genocide against the Ndebele people, whose crime was supporting the Joshua Nkomo-led PF-ZAPU. Mugabe's quest to turn newly

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independent Zimbabwe into a one-party state required him to deflate and annihilate the opposition and consolidate ZANU's victory and Shona triumphalism over Ndebele politicians in ZAPU (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Alexander, 2021; Sibanda, 2021). The so-called 'dissident menace' was blown out of proportion to justify the genocide, and Gukurahundi was meant to be the final nail on the political aspirations of PF-ZAPU and its supporters (Kriger, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009).

Since the genocide, the Ndebele language and the Ndebele people continue to suffer systematic and structural marginalisation in education, the media, the justice system, and commerce. On the other hand, Shona has appropriated a *de facto* national status, reinforced in large part through state-sponsored narratives and popularisation projects (Ndhlovu, 2006; Ncube and Siziba, 2017b). In contemporary Zimbabwe, the minoritisation of Ndebele borders on its proscription. Presently, its use in the Zimbabwean parliament is frowned upon. Often, Ndebele-speaking parliamentarians are rebuked for using their native language while contributing to parliamentary debates, yet Shona parliamentarians are allowed to use their language (Nkomo and Maseko, 2017). National memory, branding, and national sentiment privileges the Shona language and cultural symbols to the detriment of alternative linguistic and cultural products in Zimbabwe. In the field of education, the deployment of non-Ndebele speaking teachers in predominantly Ndebele-speaking regions renders the implementation of mother-tongue instruction and teaching of the language difficult. Several other practices are visible, including the decimation of the Ndebele language in the media and its devaluation in the field of the performing arts, where Ndebele artists are compelled to use the Shona language in their performances to appeal to a Shona-centric and Shona-saturated Zimbabwean arts sector (Ncube and Siziba, 2017b). The Shona language is therefore presented as the legitimate and prime marker of 'Zimbabwean-ness' (Ncube and Siziba, 2017b). The stifling of Ndebele linguistic and cultural products is viewed in many ways as a reproduction of Gukurahundi in symbolic forms (Maseko, 2022).

Given the foregoing, it is imperative to examine how FLP is infused into heritage language lessons to challenge language ideologies circulating in the community at large. The family as the last line of defence for the Ndebele language is not exempt from extra-familial language ideologies and practices. Ideologies that influence FLP have also been shown to form around family members' past language experiences (Tannenbaum, 2012; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013). A discussion on the minoritisation of Ndebele in Zimbabwe is indispensable in illuminating language ideologies that have formed among the Ndebele people over the years because past experiences powerfully impact FLP (Maseko, 2022).

Unlike in schools, where Ndebele is subservient to English (Maseko, 2021a), parents can draw on their FLP to reinforce and position Ndebele as a legitimate language during Ndebele lessons at home.

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3 Conceptualising FLP as a legitimising space

In this contribution, I build on the concept of the 'family as a space' (Lanza, 2021) to explain how the Ndebele language was suddenly presented with the opportunity to thrive during heritage language lessons at home. I also draw on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'legitimate language' (Bourdieu, 1991) to explain how the focal family's FLP assumed a legitimising role for the Ndebele language, potentially challenging its subservience in education and other official domains (Ndhlovu, 2006; Maseko and Matunge, 2020). According to Bourdieu (1991), a language gains legitimacy from its association with players in the politics of state formation. This normality tends to be reproduced in spaces such as educational institutions, which are capable of imposing its recognition and reproducing its political domination (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 1996). Because social uses of languages are bound to their social value, these uses reproduce systems of social difference by ranking and classifying those who use them. The notion of a legitimate language, therefore, implies legitimate practices, and speakers who fail to manipulate the legitimate language are excluded from social spaces which demand its competence (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 1996). While the concept of 'legitimate language' has been deployed to explain relationships of languages in polyglossic contexts, which usually correspond to macro level state-based societies, increasing literature has used this notion to understand language relations under small-scale and indigenous multilingualism (McKinney and Molate, 2022).

The concept of 'space' denotes not just a domain for language learning but also a potentially safe one that supports the acquisition and use of the family language, especially by children (Higgins, 2018; Lanza, 2021; Purkarthofer, Lanza and Berg, 2021). Because language practices in the family are important for children's language development, it is now axiomatic that FLP has implications for the intergenerational transmission of heritage languages. While the home has been associated with intimacy and privacy (Fishman, 1991) COVID-19-induced home lessons tended to amplify the reality that it is in fact a space along the private-public continuum (Purkarthofer, Lanza and Berg, 2021). When parents conduct heritage language lessons in a 'formal' way, they assume temporary teacher authority within the family space, providing them with an opportunity to legitimise the heritage language in the family and challenge language ideologies

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circulating in the formal school system. Although the education sphere has been presented as a potentially safe space for learning minoritised languages (Childs, 2016; Cenoz and Gorter, 2017) the family stands out as a bulwark against outside forces and as the last line of defence for heritage languages (Schwartz, 2010; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013). Heritage home language lessons conducted by parents, therefore, galvanise this function.

Extending this understanding of FLP, I further argue that Ndebele language lessons provided the focal family the opportunity to engage in Ndebele-centred practices. Previously, the home has only been seen as an informal language acquisition sphere (Fishman, 1991). Linguistic products and other popular modes of expression acquired within this space are prone to devaluation by education systems (Bourdieu, 1991). Oftentimes, speakers of devalued varieties also participate in the destruction of their language in collaboration with speakers of 'legitimate' linguistic products (Bourdieu, 1991). In schools, this is achieved through practices that privilege the dominant languages while de-emphasising and devaluing competing linguistic alternatives (Heller, 1996). Time allocation for teaching different languages inherently fulfils social functions of legitimation and delegitimation (Bourdieu, 1991). In Zimbabwe, for example, indigenous languages have limited time allocation in contrast to English. Further, English is embedded in the teaching and learning of content subjects as the language of instruction. The education system has a monopoly in the production and reproduction of legitimate practices. Therefore, how families position their heritage languages during literacy practices symbolises their dispositions in challenging and dismantling school practices that devalue them, potentially strengthening the family as a space for their valorisation.

4 Literature review

Although interest in FLP research is increasing globally, the tendency has been to investigate how immigrant and transitional families negotiate between the linguistic demands of the host countries and the need to maintain their heritage languages (Fogle and King, 2013; Seloni and Sarfati, 2013; Connaughton-Crean and Ó Duibhir, 2017; Revis, 2019; Soler and Roberts, 2019). Other studies have also examined the role of FLP in children's bilingual development and how extra familial language practices impact children's language repertoires (Schwartz and Moin, 2012; Slavkov, 2017). While research ascribes agency to parents as the authorities who are central to the articulation of FLPs in nuclear families (Maseko and Mutasa, 2018, 2019), several studies have begun to discuss children's agency and perspectives (Gyogi, 2015; Revis, 2019; Said and

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Zhu, 2019; Wilson, 2020). Increasing interest has arisen regarding FLPs of multiple-generation families (Smith-Christmas, 2014; Soler and Roberts, 2019; Wenhan, Bee-Chin, and Cavallaro, 2022; Said, this issue). Most of these studies do not discuss the role of parents as teachers in formal heritage language lessons in pandemic contexts. Some studies have examined the nexus between literacy practices and FLP (Schwartz and Moin, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013a; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013; Slavkov, 2017).

Increasingly, studies have examined how families draw on diverse practices and multiple resources to influence children's language acquisition trajectories. They show how children's responses to an array of family literacy practices influence language socialisation and FLP. These studies suggest that language socialisation processes such as prolepsis, syncretism, and synergy mediate the sociocultural context and impact trajectories of children's bilingual and biliteracy development (Ren and Hu, 2013). Prolepsis explains how parents' past literacy practices and experiences influence their evaluation of children's future needs, while syncretism is the blending of old and new practices across generations to positively impact heritage language learning. Lastly, synergy denotes the reciprocity of language learning and socialisation between members, regardless of their position in the family (Ren and Hu, 2013). By focusing on Chinese-English bilingual families in Singapore, Ren and Hu (2013) reveal that FLP can be influenced by multiple factors, some of which are beyond the control of the family.

Similarly, Curdt-Christiansen (2013a) discusses how 'homework talk' formed part of FLP among Chinese-English bilingual families in Singapore. Through an examination of daily homework routines, the study uncovered a variety of strategies deliberately and intentionally deployed by parents to negotiate family bilingualism and specific ways of speaking. Because it exposes how children's homework tasks provide opportunities for the negotiation of FLP (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013a), her study illuminates the present paper in important ways. In this study, I also draw on and extend the view of the family linguistic environment as having a bearing on language maintenance. Further, I seek to show the relationship between parental ideological orientations and their language negotiations as they ride on temporary teacher authority during 'formal' Ndebele lessons at home. Previously, studies have focused on language interactions and negotiations during informal mealtime interactions and leisure activities (Kheirkhah and Cekaite, 2015).

Recent studies have begun to acknowledge the role of children in FLP and particularly how their imported language ideologies from school and the community permeate FLP (Luykx, 2005; Gyogi, 2015; Revis, 2019; Said and Zhu,

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2019; Wilson, 2020). By examining the FLPs of Quechua-speaking families in Bolivia, Luykx (2005) suggests that children's extra-familial language experiences inform their language negotiations at home, often reproducing school language practices. Said and Zhu (2019) also report on how children creatively manipulate their parents' language policy awareness, sometimes forcing parents into a climb-down from a strict FLP.

Studies have also demonstrated how children draw on multiple resources to assert their agency in FLP and act as their own language socialisation agents (Luykx 2005). In some instances, children socialise parents into new language practices by importing into the family those languages and language varieties legitimised and valued by the community (Gyogi, 2015; Revis, 2019; Said and Zhu, 2019). Parents' aspirations for children's upward social mobility and assimilation into the community's dominant linguistic and cultural milieu result in their capitulation to children's preferences, inadvertently socialising children into the norms of language shift (Luykx, 2005; Smith-Christmas, 2014). Smith-Christmas (2014) has also shown how language practices of some extended family members fostered language shift among speakers of Scottish-Gaelic, an endangered language in Scotland. Increasingly, such findings have led scholars to dismiss as simplistic the notion of parents as 'experts' and children as 'novices' in FLP. On the contrary, FLPs are instantiated and negotiated in parent-child interactions in different contexts (Schwartz and Verschik, 2013; Brooksbank, 2017; Maseko and Mutasa, 2018). But parents who possess high impact beliefs (De Houwer, 2009) are likely to employ language intervention strategies or management (Spolsky, 2004, 2009, 2012) to achieve desired language practices. Impact beliefs therefore refer to the parents' evaluations of their ability to influence children's language acquisition and practices (De Houwer, 2009).

Recently, studies have begun to analyse the FLPs of foster and adoptive families (Fogle and King, 2013; Purkarthofer, Lanza, and Berg, 2021) and refugee families (Revis, 2019). Extending the concept of family as a private and public space, research shows that within transnational families, the private-public dichotomy is becoming increasingly blurred (Purkarthofer, Lanza and Berg, 2021). In a study of expectations of what constitutes a good and normal life for children in foster homes in Norway (Purkarthofer, Lanza and Berg, 2021), language and culture were found to be central in that assessment. The involvement of public institutions such as child welfare services in the assessment of foster children's wellbeing suggests that the concept of family as a private space no longer endures (Purkarthofer, Lanza and Berg, 2021). Instead, FLP in foster families is not exempt from extra-familial and macro decisions about language socialisation for children under foster care.

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In the Zimbabwean and African context generally, the FLP approach remains largely underexplored. Studies are beginning to emerge, however. Some of these focus on how minoritised language families negotiate the linguistic ecology dominated by English and major endoglossic languages to maintain their heritage languages (Maseko and Mutasa, 2018, 2019; Maseko, 2021b). Yet others have focused on the emotional aspects of FLP to understand how it functions as a coping and defence mechanism in a post-genocide context (Maseko, 2022). In most of these studies, FLP is taken to be a derivative of parents' language ideologies and is not imagined as a site of formal language learning and a legitimising space for minoritised heritage languages. The present study advances the view that the family and FLP has a legitimising potential for minoritised heritage languages when Ndebele language lessons are conducted by parents in a language concordant home environment.

5 Methodology

5.1 The focal family

This study focuses on the Gumede family (a pseudonym), also referred to here as the focal family. It is a nuclear family, consisting of a father, mother, and their three biological children. The family is a working-class family residing in a medium density suburb in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. Both parents are formally employed, while all three children, Melo, Siza, and Khanyi (not their real names) attend a primary school in the city. Table 1 below shows the profile of the Gumede family.

Table 1. Parents' assessments of the family's profile.

Member	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages spoken
Father	51	Bachelor's degree	Auto electrician	Ndebele, English, Shona
Mother	45	Diploma	Nurse	Ndebele, English, Shona
Melo (boy)	11	Grade 6	Student	Ndebele, English
Siza (girl)	8	Grade 3	Student	Ndebele, English
Khanyi (girl)	6	Grade 1	Student	Ndebele, English

The focal family is typically multilingual, whereby in addition to the family's Ndebele heritage language, English and Shona are also spoken, albeit with varying levels of proficiency. Both parents are fluent in Ndebele, English, and Shona while, according to parental reports, all three children have varying competencies in Ndebele and English.

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5.2 Data collection

In this study, linguistic ethnography was deployed as the overall research strategy. Since the study sought to document and describe how the family's language transactions permeated heritage language lessons and how these language negotiations reproduced and reified FLP, a linguistic ethnography was indispensable. Linguistic ethnography is a methodological approach that combines linguistic and ethnographic tools to provide a precise account of language use to reveal how it shapes and is shaped by its social context (Khan, Imtiaz, Khan, Amina, and Ahmed, 2020). As a point of convergence for research traditions covering sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and language teaching and learning, linguistic ethnography provided a flexible approach for understanding how the participating family's language practices, negotiations, and contestations are related to the sociocultural context (Khan, Imtiaz, Khan, Amina, and Ahmed, 2020). Linguistic ethnography was therefore deployed as both a methodological and interpretive tool. Data collection involved audio-recorded formal Ndebele language lessons, voluntarily done by parents in the researcher's absence and lesson observations done by the researcher. Parents were allowed the freedom to choose which lessons to record. Before lesson recordings, Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both parents to understand their explicitly held language ideologies and language preferences for their children at home in general and in specific linguistic encounters. Parental interviews were conducted in English. The researcher designed a guide for the interviews. A total of eight lessons (four for Melo and four for Siza), each lasting between 30–35 minutes were recorded. There were four pre-arranged visits to the focal family to observe Ndebele language lessons. The observations allowed the researcher to reconcile parents' reported language ideologies and their actual language practices during lessons. Of the four recorded lessons per child, two were conducted under observation. The other two were recorded by parents without the presence of the researcher. Lesson recordings and the visits took place within a three-month period during COVID-19-induced school closures. Although this relatively short ethnographic fieldwork may have impacted the validity of the findings, it was unavoidable that the study be concluded in a short period, given the uncertainty that characterised school closures and lockdowns. Part of the limitations imposed by the study's duration is that the researcher and the participants may have not developed enough rapport and trust to facilitate honest discourse. Resultantly, some behaviour could have been informed by the participants' desire to impress the researcher based on what they felt was acceptable behaviour. Only Melo and Siza's lessons were recorded and observed since Khanyi, the youngest girl child did not receive any lessons during the research period.

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Participants' informed consent was sought before the interviews and recordings. This involved the researcher explaining in detail the nature and purpose of the study and guaranteeing participants' safety and confidentiality. Since the study also involved observing children's lessons, their consent to participate was sought through procedures of child assent and parental permission. To ensure participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in data presentation. During parental interviews and lesson observations, extensive field notes were also made. Taking a cue from Curdt-Christiansen (2013a), I also used the scheduled home visits to elicit explanations of previous lesson recordings from parents to make sense of the data for the transcribing process.

In the data analysis, I triangulate insights gleaned from audio-recorded lessons, parents' interviews, and lesson observations to identify and describe how FLP permeated heritage language lessons, family language transactions and negotiations. Data is presented in the form of narratives from interviews and excerpts from recorded interactions to show the contestations involved in the focal family's language use.

6 Findings

6.1 Parents' language ideologies and their FLP preferences

Parental interviews that were conducted before lesson recordings were meant to uncover parents' explicitly held language ideologies and FLP preferences. Interview data shows that both parents in the focal family have a strong attachment to their heritage Ndebele language. They view Ndebele as a source of pride for the family, and a heritage that has to be passed from one generation to the next. Both parents exhibit high levels of language awareness and language loyalty. In the following excerpt, the father explains the importance and value that he ascribes to the family's Ndebele heritage language:

> The home language is extremely important as a part of our culture as the Ndebele people. I see it as a source of pride and a part of my identity and the family as a whole. It is an important part of our heritage that should not be taken lightly.

Expressing similar sentiments, the mother also views the Ndebele language as the link between the family and its cultural heritage and a source of esteem for the family. She considers the Ndebele language as being intrinsically linked to the very essence of the family's life and cannot imagine how the family would survive if it were to lose its language:

> Our language is our culture. It is part of our daily lives, and I cannot see how it will be possible for us as a family to communicate and survive outside of it. Each time I am using Ndebele I feel proud even when am not at home. I feel that pride to use it even among Shona speakers. At work, I always stick to Ndebele when speaking to workmates. That's how proud I am of my language.

Both parents associate Ndebele with a sense of pride that defines who they are and is part of the family's identity. For the mother, as evident in the above excerpt, the sense of pride she feels when using Ndebele transcends the family sphere. She is proud to use it among speakers of the hegemonically dominant Shona language in public spaces. This demonstrates her high level of language awareness and loyalty.

Predictably, and deriving from their language ideologies, both parents tend to gravitate towards the preference for a pro-Ndebele FLP by positioning Ndebele as the default language of communication within the family. Elaborating on this, the father explains:

> In terms of that, my wish is to see all my three children learning their mother language to perfection and using it with pride, not just at home but everywhere they go. So, I always try to speak to them in Ndebele at home. I know it's hard because they are used to speaking English at school and watching these cartoons on TV, which makes them speak English more. My approach is to try and make them speak Ndebele, especially when they are at home all the time.

From the above excerpts, parents, especially the father, are aware of the pressures that the family heritage language and FLP come under. Similarly, the mother is also concerned that, despite her efforts to enforce a pro-Ndebele FLP, there appears to be some resistance from the children as a result of these pressures:

> I try to speak to all my kids in Ndebele so that they learn it as their home language and as part of their identity. But sometimes kids just don't want [it]. They claim Ndebele is difficult and would rather speak in English. I think watching too much TV messes up their development in Ndebele. They are also used to speaking English at school. When I am not too busy, I try and correct their use of language but sometimes I just let them be.

While both parents exhibit an affinity for a Ndebele-centred FLP, the mother reports how she occasionally withdraws from such a strict FLP requirement. She reports how she only enforces language management 'when I am not too busy'; otherwise, she is sometimes inclined to 'just let them be'.

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6.2 Reinforcing a pro-Ndebele FLP in heritage language lessons

Both parents reported how they adhere to the Ndebele language when interacting with children during heritage language lessons. Their thinking was that these heritage language lessons provided them with temporary teacher authority to assert their preferred language practices. Their view was that children tended to revise their practices by adhering to Ndebele more than they normally would in ordinary interactions as soon as they are told 'it's time for the Ndebele lesson'. The father's observation was that:

> When I tell them it's time for the Ndebele lesson, I have realised they start to change their use of language by trying to stick to isiNdebele mostly. But you can also see that they are struggling to avoid switching to English. But what I do is that even when they switch to English, I still give instructions and answers to their questions in Ndebele.

The mother also reports how she strives to use Ndebele throughout the lesson, although she sometimes accommodates children when they seek clarity on issues they cannot make sense of in Ndebele. But she also reported how once this clarity has been given, she would quickly switch back to Ndebele before the children 'get carried away'. To this end, she explains:

> Yeah, you know it is sometimes difficult for them to stick to Ndebele alone. There are some concepts that even I myself may not be sure of. Children sometimes ask for equivalent English words that mean the same as those words. So yeah, sometimes I find myself having to explain those by giving English equivalents or examples, but I quickly switch back to Ndebele before they get carried away.

The above findings demonstrate the complexities of family language policy and that parents' language ideologies do not always translate into children's conformity. The mother, for instance, suggests that she at times foregoes her preferred FLP by accommodating children's requests to provide English explanations during Ndebele language lessons. English becomes a scaffold for learning Ndebele, which ordinarily should be the children's first language. Although the father also reports how he reinforces FLP by sticking to Ndebele throughout the lesson, he acknowledges that children often struggle to cope with his preferred practices. The father's stance of using Ndebele throughout the lesson equates to sanctions for children's nonconformity, while the mother's reports of her occasional accommodation to the children's practices by code-switching to English translates into the negotiation of her FLP.

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6.3 Negotiating FLP in lesson interactions

Lessons recorded by the parents and lesson observations reveal that there is a disconnect between what parents claim they are doing and what they actually do in concrete communicative interactions during heritage language lessons. Data from lesson recordings, however, do corroborate parents' reports about children's language practices. In particular, children's practices sometimes contradict parents' explicitly reported language ideologies and FLP. In the following excerpts drawn from recorded Ndebele language lessons, data shows that contestations that characterise heritage language negotiations reproduce FLP in some ways. The following excerpt is taken from Melo's lesson on *amabizo ezikhathi zebusuku* (naming the times of night).

Excerpt 1: From Melo's lesson

(...)
Father: *Namhlanje isifundo sethu sesiNdebele simayelana lamabizo ezikhathi zebusuku. Uyakwazi ukuthi esiNdebeleni ubusuku bubizwa ngamabizo atshiyeneyo kusiya ngokuthi kumnyama okungakanani?*
'Today our Ndebele lesson is about the different times of the night. Do you know that in Ndebele night times are named differently depending on the intensity of darkness?'
Melo: Ahh! *Njani? Hanti ebusuku kusebusuku kuphela?*
'Ahh! How? Isn't night just night?'
Father: *Hayi, kanti vele ubusuku buqala nini nxa ucabanga?*
'No, but in your view when does night begin?'
Melo: I think *ngama* 'around' seven.
Father: Ok, you are right. *Nxa sokusiba mnyama sesingathi sokuhlwile, sokuqala ukuba sebusuku*. Ahh, *kanje yi* lesson *yeNdebele leyi! Kumele sikhulume isiNdebele sodwa! besengikhohliwe.*
'When it starts to get dark, we can say the night is setting in. Ahh, by the way, we are in a Ndebele lesson! We are supposed to use Ndebele only!'
Melo: *Vele* daddy *nguwe* 'it's you' who always starts to use *isikhiwa* 'English'. *Kuyini vele* 'What is' *ukuhlwile?*
(...)

In the above excerpt, the father asserts his FLP by initially introducing the lesson of the day in authoritative monolingual Ndebele speak to set the tone for the lesson. As part of his FLP, the father had indicated during the interviews that he always sticks to Ndebele regardless of the children's practices. The above excerpt demonstrates that, despite his explicitly held ideologies, he sometimes

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violates his FLP by using English expressions during Ndebele lessons. As part of his language management, however, he is predisposed to correct his language practices. Melo's practices affirm parents' observations about their children's language practices generally. In the same excerpt, Melo accuses his father of contradicting his own FLP by being the one "who always starts to use English" during Ndebele lessons. In a way, this confirms that ideologies do not constitute practices although they do influence them and that there is oftentimes a contradiction between policy and practice (Spolsky, 2004).

Melo's language practices presented in excerpt 1 above are replicated by Siza in excerpt 2 below. In this example, the mother is conducting a lesson on *Imuli yami* (my family). Although the mother follows a mainly Ndebele-centred practice, Siza's appeals to English explanations of various familial relations replicate Melo's practices of using English during Ndebele lessons.

Excerpt 2: From Siza's lesson

(...)
Siza: *Kanti ubabakazi kutshoni* mummy?
'What does *babakazi* mean?'
Mother: *Ubabakazi ngumuntu ongumfazi ozalwa lobabakho.*
'*babakazi* is a female person born with your father'.
Siza: Is it the same as aunt?
Mother: Yes, but in English aunt can also mean *usisi kamama wakho* 'your mother's sister'.
(...)

Siza explicitly asks for an equivalent of *babakazi* (aunt) in English. Such requests for English explanations during Ndebele lessons were a common feature of parent-child interactions in both the recorded and observed Ndebele lessons. In terms of the parents' practices, their FLP is compromised by children's introduction of English into the Ndebele lessons. As it is shown in excerpts 1 and 2, parents are predisposed, consciously or unconsciously, to accede to the practices of their children by climbing down from their explicitly articulated ideologies about the Ndebele language and their preferences for Ndebele-only practices during heritage language lessons. Both excerpts reveal that despite their language ideologies and FLP preferences, parents tend to accommodate children's use of English.

In the following excerpt, FLP contestations are reproduced in Melo's lesson on *izaga* (proverbs). In this lesson, the father and the mother collaborate as teachers.

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Excerpt 3: From Melo's lesson

(...)
Mother: *Izaga yindlela amaNdebele asebenzisa ulimi ukuxwayisana lokukhuzana.*
'In Ndebele, proverbs are ways of using language to warn and advise each other'.
Father: *Ye, izaga ngamazwi afundisayo futhi.*
'Yes, proverbs also teach'.
Melo: *Ngesikhiwa kuthiwa kuyini izaga?*
'What do you call *izaga* 'proverbs' in English?'
Father: *Awusoze uzwisise ngesikhiwa. Ezesikhiwa azifani lezesiNdebele.*
'You will not understand it in English. English proverbs are not the same as Ndebele ones'.
Melo: Ok, but just tell me.
Mother: *Uzakuba* 'you will get' confused, focus *kusiNdebele* 'on Ndebele'.
Father: Ok, *ngama* 'they are called' proverbs, but *vele uzaba* (you will be) confused.
Melo: Ahh, *mina* 'I' don't know proverbs.
(...)

The above excerpt typifies the Gumedes' FLP negotiations, contestations, and management. Both parents initially enact Ndebele-centred practices in this lesson. They also attempt to assert their FLP and manage Melo's language practices by playing down and discouraging his request for English explanations. As a strategy to encourage Melo's use of Ndebele, they appeal to his sense of esteem by warning him that English explanations will further compound his confusion. Despite both parents' explicit calls for Melo to focus on Ndebele to avoid confusion, Melo disregards his parents' explicit directions by code-switching between Ndebele and English. This is a case of him asserting his resistant agency. Code-switching is a common language negotiation strategy in the Gumedes' FLP. Siza also deploys this strategy in the following excerpt involving her and the father. The lesson is on *amabizo enyamazana ezihlala ekhaya* (names of domestic animals).

Excerpt 4: From Siza's lesson

(...)
Father: *Yiziphi inyamazana ezihlala ekhaya ozaziyo?*
'Name any domesticated animals you know'.
Siza: uhmm, *inja* 'dog'.
Father: *Lani futhi?* 'What else?'
Siza: *I* 'a' cat.

Father: *Yaa, ngesiNdebele i*-cat *kuyini?* 'Ok, what is a cat in Ndebele?'
Siza: uhmm, I don't know *ukuthi kuyini* 'what it is'. I just know it's a cat.
(...)

In all these examples, code-switching is a strategy that both children use to negotiate their language practices. For the most part, parents manage their children's practices by striving to stick to the use of Ndebele, but the children's insistence on bilingual practices causes parents to give in to children's preferences. Discourse strategies that parents employ to encourage the use of one language and not the other have been shown to have an impact on how children draw on their multilingual repertoires during parent-child interactions. Gomes (2020) has also demonstrated that parents' attempts to exert explicit control on children's language practices by employing discourse strategies that make explicit their choices hinder children's full use of their multilingual repertoire. Gomes (2020) suggests that it could only be those strategies that are presented as requests that have the potential to foster children's access to their full linguistic repertoire (Gomes, 2020). It will seem then that in the focal family, parents' attempts to explicitly control Melo and Siza's responses only produce resistance. While both parents reported dispositions to favour a monolingual FLP during parental interviews, their actual language practices show that they are inclined to follow a bilingual FLP, which is reproduced during heritage language lessons with both children. Children's tendency to code-switch between Ndebele and English during Ndebele lessons could be a reproduction of school language practices in Zimbabwe, where English is valorised as the legitimate language. Another possible explanation for this tendency by children to code-switch between English and Ndebele could be that their practices are modelled around the parents' language practices. Lanza (1997) has shown that bilingual parents are prone to unconscious code-switching themselves even though they may claim not to do so. Code-mixing by Melo and Siza could therefore be an act of them demonstrating their bilingual competence acquired from observing their parents' language practices (Lanza, 1997).

7 Discussion

The findings of the study have thus far shown how FLP contestations and negotiations of the focal Gumede family are expressed and reproduced in language transactions during heritage language lessons. Interview data revealed that parents' ideologies about the importance of the family's heritage language resulted in their articulation of a pro-Ndebele FLP which they were predisposed to assert

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and reinforce during Ndebele lessons. Data from recordings reveal that despite these self-reported language ideologies and FLP preferences, parents tend to revise and negotiate their FLPs during concrete interactions. The revision of FLP is sometimes a function of parents' accommodation of their children's practices (Luykx, 2005; Revis, 2019; Said and Zhu, 2019). While parents are clear on the language acquisition trajectories they set for their children through FLP, their ideologies do not always correlate with children's practices. Findings showed that English intrudes into the FLP in ways that reproduce its dominance in extra-familial spaces as the country's lingua franca and the official language. The intrusion of English into children's language practices at home is reproduced in language transactions during Ndebele language lessons, despite parents' explicit policies that encourage Ndebele-centred practices. Language policy and practices in Zimbabwean schools privilege English as the legitimate language while indigenous languages are delegitimised and subordinated (Nkomo, 2008). The use of English as the language of instruction valorises it and also serves a legitimation function (Bourdieu, 1991). Parallels can be drawn between the findings of the present study and studies in other contexts which have also shown that FLP is subordinated to macro-level language policies and practices in education (e.g., Schwartz and Moin, 2012; Schwartz and Verschik, 2013; Slavkov, 2017).

Findings have shown that the parents in the Gumede family value their heritage language and would take visible steps to promote its use by the children in the family life. Ndebele home lessons necessitated by the COVID-19-induced school closures therefore presented parents with temporary teacher authority to reinforce the learning of Ndebele and to validate the family as space for its intergenerational transmission. The complexity of the Gumedes' FLP tended to inform language negotiations during these lessons. Both parents share similar ideas regarding the use of language, while the children's practices in actual Ndebele lessons run counter to their parents' ideologies. Melo and Siza's Ndebele-English code-switching during Ndebele language lessons is an act of FLP negotiation. Despite explicit parents' strategies to discourage the intrusion of English into Ndebele lessons, the data presented here suggests that both children enact their resistant agency through appeals and requests for English explanations of some Ndebele concepts. Code-switching has also been established as a common FLP negotiation strategy by children during homework in Chinese-English bilingual families in Singapore (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013a).

Because parents always want what's best for their children in terms of schooling, Ndebele-English code-switching is not entirely frowned upon. Parents' accommodation of their children's code-switching practices could therefore be read as a veiled acknowledgement of the power of children's imported language

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practices from the school and that parents' aspirations for their children's upward social mobility are an important factor in their FLP negotiation (Luykx, 2005; Maseko and Mutasa, 2018). This negotiation, however, potentially reproduces a cycle of oppression that the Ndebele language faces in education and other extra familial spaces and domains. The opportunity for parents to assert a Ndebele-centred FLP faces resistance from the educationally dominant English language. The children's practices reported in this study reveal that children sometimes use their knowledge of the second language to scaffold learning of certain aspects of their heritage language. Although English is a second language to most people in Zimbabwe, its pervasiveness in education, the media, commerce and business makes it a sought-after language. Competence in English places its speakers at an advantage in the job market. This partly explains why the Ndebele monolingual FLP that is explicitly articulated by parents of the focal family is overpowered by bilingual practices. Just as in other families, there is often a disconnect between language ideologies and practices. FLPs are more than mere pronouncements by parents but are characterised by maneuvres, contestations, and negotiations that are subordinated to the prevailing sociopolitical realities and children's educational needs (Luykx, 2005; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013a, 2013b; Slavkov, 2017). The findings also suggest that, despite these sociopolitical and educational pressures exerted on the home language, parents in the focal family regularly deploy discourse strategies that encourage the use of Ndebele at home to reinforce children's linguistic identities as an important aspect language maintenance.

8 Conclusion

This study discussed the Gumede family's language transactions, contestations, and negotiations during heritage language lessons and how they related to FLP. In this contribution, I specifically examine parents' self-reports of their FLPs and how parents used their authority as teachers during heritage language lessons to reinforce the family as a space that supports the Ndebele language. I then reconciled these explicit FLPs with actual practices gleaned from lesson recordings. Interview data shows how both parents' ideologies about Ndebele as a source of pride and esteem, a symbol of identity and a repository of the family's cultural heritage resulted in their explicitly pro-Ndebele FLP. The school closures as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns presented opportunities for parents to teach Ndebele through 'Ndebele lenses'. Analyses of lesson recordings revealed that children often negotiate FLP through contradictory practices, confirming the family as a site of language policy contestations and negotiations.

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Both Melo and Siza's FLP negotiations pivot around the use of English as a scaffold for learning Ndebele, thereby reproducing school language practices. Their tendency to code-switch between Ndebele and English and their requests for English explanations of Ndebele concepts and expressions curiously reproduce similar tensions by ameliorating English in their FLP. The study has also shown that FLP is partly a derivative of children's practices as parents often renegotiate their FLP to accommodate children's aspirations. The importation of English into the Gumede family language practices results in a weaker FLP. The study therefore concludes that the blurring of home/school binaries tended to amplify and replicate school language practices in the Gumedes' FLP. Although parents rode on their temporary teacher authority to assert their monolingual Ndebele-centred FLP in Ndebele lessons, multilingual practices were central to the negotiation of FLP. This research was limited to a study of a Ndebele heritage language family in an urban setting. The findings of this study are not generalisable to all Ndebele heritage language families since FLP is a nuanced notion that varies from one family to another depending on unique circumstances and ideologies.

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