Sociolinguistic Studies

ISSN: 1750-8649 (print)
ISSN: 1750-8657 (online)

Article



Grandparents as custodians of Arabic as a heritage language in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

The phenomenon of three-generation households is typical in many homes across the world, though perhaps less so in North America and Western Europe. When multigeneration families share the same physical space and take part in the same activities, the dynamics of parenting, eating, how time is spent and allocated, and relationships differ from families in which only parents and their children live together. One of the main (relevant) differences is that in these multilingual families there is easy access to the learning of heritage languages and socialisation into and through them. As the article will demonstrate shortly, such ease is also accompanied by relational and relationship challenges which bear on the heritage language learning process. The article describes the language transmission efforts of three Arabic-speaking families in the United Kingdom to teach and use Arabic with their children at home. Data was collected in the form of audio-recorded interactions, family background forms and parental interviews. Interview data was analysed thematically, and interactional data was analysed from the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics. The data reveals that, in addition to parents, grandparents uniquely enhance not only the learning of Arabic but also the experience of learning it. Children have a direct opportunity to learn Arabic and its various, often rare, dialects with help from their monolingual grandparents. Relationship dynamics between parents, their own parents, their parents-in-law, and their own children appear to shape and be shaped by the explicit and implicit language beliefs and practices of family members. Grandparents seem to also contribute to children's emotional socialisation and their future beliefs of Arabic as an authentic means by which to express emotion. This is the first study to highlight the role grandparents play in the FLP of Arabic as a heritage language.

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SOLS VOL 18.1–2 2024 107–132 https://doi.org/10.1558/sols.24784
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https://utppublishing.com/doi/pdf/10.1558/sols.24784 - Wednesday, February 11, 2026 5:17:20 AM - UVI-FFT IP Address:193.146.45.80

KEYWORDS: multigeneration families, Arabic, English, Family Language Policy, grandparenting, heritage language, United Kingdom

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1 Introduction

Research undertaken by nine universities in the United Kingdom in 2018 suggests that as many as 20% of children are bilingual (Floccia, 2018). The most up-to-date statistics by the Office of National Statistics (2021) report that in 2021, 28.8% of children in England and Wales were born to at least one non-UK born parent; in 2018 the figure was at 34.4%. This means that these parents speak another language alongside English and are perhaps raising their children as bilinguals. Children of mothers born outside the country of residence are referred to as heritage speakers. They are defined as 'minority language speakers in a majority language environment, (b) heritage speakers are bilingual, [and], (c) by the time they are adults, heritage speakers tend to be dominant (i.e., more proficient) in the language of their larger national community' (Lohndal, Rothman, Kupisch, and Westergaard, 2019: 4). King and Ennser-Kananen (2013) define heritage languages as 'often taken to be the language used on home or familial contexts'. Heritage speakers acquire their HL mainly at home in the family (Spolsky, 2012) and increasingly so at weekend, complementary, or heritage language schools often run by volunteers in the community (Çavuşoğlu, 2014; Szczepek Reed, Said, Davies, and Bengsch, 2020; Hancock and Hancock, 2021; Harrison, 2021).

2 Family language policies and intergenerational language transmission

As a system, the family is central to the understanding of how heritage languages (HLs) are learned, used, and maintained (see Said, 2022). As a unit, the family is the foundation of language learning and socialisation of children (Schwartz, 2010; Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011). The field of Family Language Policy (FLP), defined as 'explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home and among family members' (King and Fogle, 2017: 315), recognises the central yet complex role of the family in language learning. Typical FLP studies describe parental efforts to transmit the families' heritage language (HL) to their children because most work on FLP has taken place in mainly Western settings (Lanza and Lomeu Gomes, 2020) where parents are the main caretakers. As more diverse family structures are recognised and reported in the

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literature (see Wright, 2020; Wright and Higgins, 2022), however, a different account of caregiver involvement in the transmission of the heritage language is emerging.

Although scarce, developing research has begun to chronicle and provide a better understanding of grandparent roles in the transmission of the HL (Ishizawa, 2004; Kenner, Ruby, Jessel, Gregory, and Arju, 2007; Ruby, 2012; Lanza, 2021a). The studies contend that, in many cases, grandparents offer authentic linguistic input that is both frequent and of high quality to young children. Wenhan, Bee Chin, and Cavallaro (2022) illustrate that where grandparents are caregivers, they often engage in negotiations with parents about language practices. They also note that grandparents' language beliefs affect the language practices within their families often resulting in the language shift of the HL to English. Kopeliovich's (2010) auto-ethnographic work on her children's language development in Russian-Hebrew also sheds light on the integral role grandparents play. She elucidates that, in addition to parents' Russian input through stories, songs, and puppet shows, among other things, that it was in fact the 'intergenerational bonds' that grandparents made with the children that helped to 'foster [the] heritage language maintenance' of Russian (Kopeliovich, 2010: 256). Another early work on grandparents' roles in FLP is that by Smith-Christmas (2014) in which a mother and her mother-in-law (paternal grandmother) created, maintained, and supported a 'Gaelic-centred FLP' which supported the transmission of Gaelic. This was true despite the fact that other extended family members contributed to Gaelic's shift towards English. Her 2018 study on affective dimensions of FLP also illustrates that, though grandparents play an important role in language transmission, children also negotiate and often rebuff intergenerational efforts to learn and use the family's HL. The grandmother's 'child-centred discourse style' (Smith-Christmas, 2014: 131) successfully encouraged one sibling to use Scottish Gaelic but did not encourage the other five years later. The complex nature of relationship dynamics, child agency, and emotions play a role in these circumstances. Similarly, Xiang and Markova's (2021) study of HL Mandarin Chinese and grandparents' roles in transmitting it in Canada presents two contradictory findings. They argue that, though their study proves that when grandparents reside with a family, grandchildren are less likely to make phonological and grammatical errors during narrative tasks, they are also more likely to possess 'lower abilities' in reading Mandarin texts with PinYin. They also 'spend fewer hours reading in Mandarin, produce more incomplete sentences per utterance and shorter narratives' (Xiang and Markova, 2021: 380).

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To date, very few studies, if any, have presented data on Arabic-speaking grandparents and their roles in FLP. Even though grandparents are mentioned as a motivation for children to learn the HL so that the children can communicate with them (see Gomaa, 2006), no study has examined the intricacies of the roles grandparents may possibly play in their grandchildren's learning of Arabic. This article aims to fill that specific gap and add more generally to the current under-researched area of grandparent roles in FLP.

2.1 Arab migration to the United Kingdom and the Arabic language

The first Arabs are said to have arrived in the United Kingdom before the nineteenth century (El-Solh, 2007; Seddon, 2014) and settled mainly in the northeast and west of England as well the Midlands. Newer waves of migration took place later in the 1950s and then more recently in the last twenty years (IOLMAS, 2004). It was not until the 2011 United Kingdom Census that the ethnic choice of 'Arab' became a possible 'tick box' option for respondents (ONS, 2011). 230,600 individuals identified themselves as 'Arab' (0.4% of the population) and 159,000 (0.3%) indicated Arabic as a language they spoke alongside English.

Given the numbers of Arabs and Arabic speakers in the United Kingdom, it is clear that Arabic is a minority language, not supported outside the home or beyond the Arabic-speaking community. Arabic is a major world language with over two hundred million speakers across the Middle East and North Africa (Kaye, 2016) and over a billion individuals who can read Arabic script for liturgical purposes. The Arabic language is 'multiglossic and multidialectal' (Azaz and Abourehab, 2021: 91; Said, 2024) with formal (not used in everyday conversation) and spoken varieties. Arabic speakers learn their spoken variety (for example, Cairene, Damascene, Baghdadi) at home from birth and then learn the formal or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in school (Versteegh, 2014). Table 1 below illustrates how speakers of different dialects say, 'I don't know what to do' (Bani-Hani, Majdalawieh and Obeidat 2017).

Table 1. Arabic dialects in use.

Dialect	Formulation
Jordanian Arabic	Mish ʿaarif shuu aʾamal
Palestinian Arabic	Shuu biddy aʾamal (literally: what do I need to do?)
Emirati Arabic	Ma ʿarif shuu assawwee
Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)	La ʿaʾalamu madha afʾalu
Egyptian Arabic	Mish ʿaarif aʾamal eyh
Tunisian Arabic	Mn-ʿarfi-sh
Algerian Arabic	Ma- ʿala baalee
Kuwaiti Arabic	Ma adree shuu asawwee

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The table illustrates the differences between the Arabic dialects, and the example demonstrates the unique differences between them. It is also important to note that these examples in the table are only samples of the main dialects since these differ internally from village to village and even from tribe to tribe. The differences in dialects, however, do not cause problems for children as they acquire these unique variations of Arabic. Most children in majority Arabic-speaking countries go on to learn MSA at school and perhaps English or French as well; in this way all their languages and dialects are supported. However, the situation is somewhat different if children are born in a non-Arabic language majority environments because they are expected to learn the dialect at home while support for MSA is absent. The parents, as will be illustrated below, frequently find it a challenge to teach both MSA and their spoken variety alongside English (see Said, 2021; see also Garcia-Ruiz, Manterola, and Ortega, this issue, on the complexities of language situations in FLPs).

2.2 This study

The data for this study is taken from a project that investigated Arabic speaking parents' language policies and practices in the United Kingdom in 2018. The data reported here is based on three families living with, close to, or in regular communication with grandparents. This led the researcher to ask the following question: *What role do grandparents play in Arabic language learning and practice of their grandchildren?* The question was proposed out of the need to understand how these unique intergenerational family dynamics affected HL learning and language use within the family home.

3 Methodology

The project takes on an interpretive outlook and views reality as socially constructed and understood from the perspective of the participants (Elbardan and Kholief, 2017). It adopts linguistic ethnography (see Maseko, this issue) which combines some tenets of ethnography with those of sociolinguistics (Copland and Creese, 2015).

3.1 Data collection

Complementary to the interpretivist epistemology described above, this mixed-methods project collected the following data sources: self-reporting data (background survey on families and semi-structured interviews), research notes, mother's diary entries, and real-world data (interactional data). Researcher notes

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were made throughout the project timeline whenever there was an opportunity for a phone call/conversation with the parents, when something of note took place, and after each transcription episode.

The three data sources presented in this paper are described below. Demographic data was collected in the survey and offered contextual data (age, language spoken, country of birth, education levels). Second, semi-structured interviews offer the researcher an opportunity to better understand the data already collected (Alshenqeeti, 2014). These were conducted at the end of the project in an attempt to not influence the monthly interactional episodes more than they were already affected by virtue of being part of the project (Norris, 1997; Kawulich, 2005). Jacob and Ferguson's (2012) interviewing protocol ideas were adapted. This meant that, in addition to piloting the questions with a parent who was not part of the project, a script was prepared for before and after the interview. Before, all parents were asked to share how they felt about the data collection period, how they chose which joint activities to record, how mothers found the diary entry tasks and what they thought they learned during this time. This script allowed parents to immediately relax and talk about their experiences, thus paving the way for the researcher to ask deep contemplative questions about each family's interactional recordings. The researcher then asked the set questions with suitable follow up questions. The closing script used allowed the researcher to thank the families and share her insights into the beauty and complexity of their language data and to inform the families of the next steps in data analysis and dissemination.

Third, interactional data was collected in the form of audio recordings that were produced each month. Each family produced on average 15 hours of interactional data each. Due to the mothers' overt involvement in the project, the researcher asked them to record joint family intergenerational interactions at times of their choosing. The researcher would then either go to the home and upload the recording or the mothers would email the MP3 copy to the researcher.

3.2 Data analysis

Interviews and spoken data were transcribed and translated, checked for correctness, and then thematically organised according to six-steps (Clarke and Braun, 2006). The guiding criterion was one in which meaning was inductively derived (Anderson and Clarke, 2019); this is coding the data according to the meaning within it. See Appendix I for a detailed description of how one main theme was generated. An inter-rater reliability of the themes was conducted by a

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colleague (O'Connor and Joffe, 2020) to ensure some consensus in the way data was interpreted, and that the suggested themes reflected participants' responses. Interactional data was analysed from an interactional sociolinguistic perspective (Rampton, 2019) in which interactions are analysed on a turn-by-turn basis to understand how meaning is created during the interaction and how speakers and interlocutors understand one another.

3.3 Ethics

Following ESRC's (2014) research ethical guidelines, participants were only accepted into the project after signing the consent form and speaking to the researcher about the nature and duration of the research. All participants in this project were assigned pseudonyms so as not to identify them and their identity was only known to the researcher. Participants were given the option to withdraw from the project without suffering any consequences (Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden, 2001; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2017). All data was stored on password protected computers and any data kept for analysis was anonymised.

3.4 The participants

Participants were purposively selected (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood, 2015) through Arabic language schools and Arab cultural clubs. Those who showed interest could register through the researcher's email address that accompanied the WhatsApp and Facebook messages. The researcher would then conduct a short phone conversation to explain the research and ascertain the suitability of the families for the project (they needed to self-identify as bilinguals). Once families, or (more precisely) the mothers, agreed to take part and gave their consent, they were asked to fill in a background form, which collected details about the families, their living arrangements, languages spoken at home and about children's schooling. Table 2 introduces the three families.

In the interviews, all the parents said that they aimed to transmit Arabic to their children (the declared language policy). They offered examples of how they tried to fulfil such aspirations (language practices) by enrolling children in weekend schools (see Karpava, this issue), buying Arabic books, installing satellite TV. For F1 satellite, TV was initially installed for Umm Khamis but eventually become a tool of language support later.

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Table 2. Family demographics.

Family	Parents	Children	Repertoires in the home	Arabic learning at weekend school?	Language of media content
F1	Zaina (mother) 35 Khamis (father) 38 Umm Khamis (paternal grandmother) 62	Dawud (9) Adnan (6) Nuh (4)	Yemeni Arabic English Hadrami and San'aani Arabic (Yemeni Arabic from different parts of Yemen	Yes	English (Neflix, Youtube, TV) Arabic (Youtube, Satellite TV)
F2	Farah (mother) 32 Micheal (father) 39 Laoise (paternal grandmother) 58	Mustafa (8) Maria (6) Lulu (3.5)	English Yemeni Arabic Irish (Gaelic)	MSA learning at home	English (Youtube, Amazon) Arabic (Youtube, Arabic reading websites, Arabic learning websites, satteelite TV)
F3	Hoda (mother) 30 Uthman (father) 35 Grandmother (Umm Ahmed) 50	Luma (7) Djamal (5)	Libyan Arabic English Darija French	Yes	English (Youtube, Netflix) Arabic (online Arabic school activities)

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Based on researcher notes, all the families begun their day in the kitchen preparing school lunches, eating breakfast, and sometimes completing unfinished homework for the older children. It is also during this time that they made plans for the day, discussed appointments (dentist, GP) and plans they may have for the weekend. F1 consistently eat dinner as a family, F2 and F3 do not always eat dinner together because of the fathers' work schedule. Mothers have the most contact time with children and support the children's learning, homework, and teaching Arabic. Fathers take on the role of supporter of their families and help mothers to implement family activities and FLP rules and practices. F1 and F2 engaged in Arabic literacy activities the most and watched the least content on TV and Youtube. F3 read the least in Arabic and watched TV the most with English as the main language of such content.

4 Findings and discussion

The section presents the findings based on the most prominent themes that answer the research question: *What role do grandparents play in Arabic language learning and practice of their grandchildren?* In short, multigenerational living reveals much about language, language choices, and the deliberate nature of language planning as well as the importance of the family relationship. All the grandmothers tell their grandchildren stories in Arabic and English, both from books or from memory. All expressions of affection are expressed in Arabic for the Arabic speaking grandparents and in English and Irish by Laoise (F2). There are some instances in which she does say words of praise in Arabic as well. All joint activities take place in mixed languages where children use English and some Arabic while the grandmothers mostly separate their languages and use Arabic or English. The article shows how, through joint socialising practices, grandparents are able to support the learning of HLs, adhere to, and simultaneously contradict parental FLPs as well as augment the family's language use. The two most prominent themes were identified as: *grandmothers as custodians of HLs* and *grandparents as contradictors of parental FLPs*.

4.1 Grandmothers as custodians of HLs

The first interactional excerpt presented below is of part of a joint cooking session between Umm Khamis and Mustafa (8), the eldest child in the family. Umm Khamis is teaching him to make a popular pie-like pastry filled with meat known as *muttabaq*, common in South Yemeni cuisine. It is a street food said to have originated in Southeast Asia and brought back to Yemen by Yemeni

seafarers who had traded in Indonesia and Malaysia. For ease of reference, speakers have been coded for generation (1: grandparents, 2: parents, 3: children), gender (m/f), and age.

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Excerpt 1. Only use Arabic! (see Appendix II for transcription conventions).

01 Umm Khamis 1-F-62 *Aiwa jeeb haadh...zayn...w tamaat, w kozbara, wayn-l l-laham ya ya Mustafa?*
%tra: Yes, bring this...okay..and tomatoes, and coriander; where is the meat, O, O Mustafa?

02 Mustafa 3-M-8 *Laham umm ... owdha hina*, what shall I do? Cut it?
%tra: The meat umm ... is here, what shall I do? Cut it?

03 Umm Khamis *La, La, mafruum ya walad, jeeb, jeeb, [tah zayn*
%tra: no, no it needs to be minced, bring it, bring it, okay, okay

04 Mustafa Okay, but I wanna do it, [*ana bissawwi zayn?*
%tra: Okay, but I wanna do it, I'll do it, okay?

05 Umm Khamis *Zayn habibi khub khub...aiwa...aiwa kidha yalla khub...mashaAllah...maashi kamaah!*
%tra: Okay my love quick quick...yes..yes... like that come on quick, well done ... fabulous!
%sit: It seems that the grandmother has allowed Mustafa to put the meat into a mincing machine and she is helping him to ensure the meat is minced well.

06 Mustafa Haha, wohoo, I did it, *Shukran ya Jiddaty*, you are the best too, *alheen aysh?*
%tra: Haha, wohoo, I did it, thanks [my] grandmother, now what?

07 Umm Khamis L-heen ya juwaydi ya'ayni jeeb busal w thoom w… aiwa...aiwa..khub
%tra: Now, my good well-mannered boy, my precious (my eye) bring the onion and garlic and… yes…yes…hurry
%sit: both laugh

08 Mustafa Okay, but can I now do the flour, can I put it on the pancake pan?

09 Umm Khamis *Aysh hal hadra bil engalezi, laysh ya 'ayni, guul bil 'araby yalla…*
%tra: What's this talk in English? Why, my precious? Say it in Arabic, come on.

10 Mustafa *Zayn*...okay
%tra: Okay...okay

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11 Umm *Aiwa...masha'Allah yalla*
Khamis **%tra:** Okay, well done, come on then

12 Mustafa *Ajeeb daqeeq w khamer[a*
%tra: I'll get flour and yeast

13 Umm *Khameera, eee, khameera…mmm? Guul.*
Khamis **%tra:** yeast eee [elongating the sound] yeast, mmm? Say [it]

14 Mustafa *Khameera (.) w sukkar w milih (.) w … zubda?*
%tra: Yeast(.)and sugar and salt (.) and... butter?

15 Umm *La maashee zubda, bass zeyt*
Khamis **%tra:** No, there is no oil, just oil

The underlined words above are Hadrami Arabic (spoken Southeast Yemen mainly but also South Saudi Arabia and Western Oman) which is different from other dialects across Yemen (see Al-Saqqaf, 2006). The interaction between Mustafa and his grandmother takes place in Yemeni Arabic or, to be more precise, in 'Adeni, Hadrami, and San'aani Arabic' (F1:INT); Zaina (the mother) later explained that her mother-in-law's upbringing had her learn more than one Yemeni Arabic dialect. Mustafa seems to have no problem in understanding the questions and requests his grandmother gives him, despite her multidialectal use of Arabic. The socialisation practice of cooking together is also one in which Umm Khamis builds her relationship with Mustafa through affectionate praise (turns 05, 07, and 09) whilst also simultaneously advocating for the Arabic language (turns 09–13).

The grandmother's consistent use of Arabic coupled with Mustafa's mixing of Arabic and English illustrates the versatility of language in which the need for communication goes beyond named languages. Pennycook (2007: 127) highlights those multilingual 'use repertoires of linguistic resources without necessary recourse to notions of languages' (see also Garcia, 2011). Second, it also demonstrates the integral role grandmothers play in socialising grandchildren into using the HL during everyday joint activities. Drawing on Lanza's (1992: 649) classical strategies for interaction, Mustafa's grandmother effectively helps him switch to Arabic. In this episode, Umm Khamis employed the adult repetition strategy, in which the adult repeats what the child said in the HL (turn 13) and, again in this instance, also directly communicates her language preferences (turn 09). Mustafa understands the preference for Arabic implicitly through Umm Khamis' consistent use of Arabic (even though she understands English) and explicitly through her utterance 'say it in Arabic'. He agrees and, for the remainder of the recording, he speaks mostly in Arabic, illustrating that

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his grandmother successfully managed their language use. The enactment of implicit and explicit language management (Spolsky, 2003) is when a person in a position of power (the grandmother) attempts to control how another in a lesser position (Mustafa) uses language.

The episode suggests that children are able to practice the HL more directly with their often mainly monolingual grandparents. Language lives and is transmitted through interaction and grandparents who are monolingual can offer authentic, sizeable, and high-quality input to children who are then able to learn and use the HL effectively (Brehmer and Treffers-Daller, 2020). Huang and Fang (2021) found that intergenerational language transmission was most effective when grandparents lived with their grandchildren in the same physical space. That also increased the quality of the HL input due to the many opportunities for language use in a myriad of contexts that require different sets of vocabulary and sociopragmatic knowledge. In this way, children are socialised to learn not only appropriate Arabic, vocabulary for particular activities, but also the varying cultural connotations in each event (see also Ochs and Schieffelin, 2011). Similarly, Smith-Christmas and NicLeoid (2020) describe how adults' childhood socialisation through Gaelic by grandparents and family members later offered them an advantage through which they could relearn Gaelic in adulthood.

In addition, the episode elucidates the ability of multilinguals to carefully choose words to communicate their desired meaning to the interlocutor. Umm Khamis' use of the emotional vocatives *ya'ayni* (my precious), or *ya juwaydi* (my good well-mannered boy), and *ya Habibi* (my beloved), or her praise of his good work, *maashi kamaah* (fabulous), are deliberate choices to express how she feels about her grandson and thereby simultaneously build a closer relationship with him. Mustafa interprets the meaning to denote praise and expresses his appreciation of these words in turn 06. This emotional socialisation is achieved through the Arabic language and Mustafa is in turn being socialised to equate Arabic praise words and phrases with authentic emotion (Said and Hua, 2019). Pavlenko (2006) illustrates through many examples in her work that speakers, especially caregivers, often choose language based on its 'perceived emotionality', how authentically it can express the desired emotion. Fitness and Duffield (2003: 473) explain: 'Emotion, then, can be thought of as the currency of family relationships, imbuing them with meaning and importance', which aptly explains the socialisation outcome above. Zaina (mother in F1) explains:

> I want them to learn Arabic, and also proper Arabic, not just this kalaam (language/speech) we talk all day. I need them to be able to read and write and understand, not like myself, I cannot do that. (F1:INT)

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In this excerpt, she seems to express her desire for her children to not only know spoken Arabic, but also and more importantly to gain literacy skills in MSA (see also Ramoniene and Ramonaite, this issue, on attitudes towards dialects). All the parents in this project expressed unambiguous ideologies about MSA and spoken Arabic, and this is to be expected, given the diglossic nature of Arabic (a more detailed account of diglossia and FLP can be found in Said, 2024). The grandmother's explicit request for Mustafa to use Arabic is in support of the mothers' belief about the importance of Arabic language (see Mirvahedi and Nawaser, this issue). Grandmothers' positive effects on HL learning have been reported elsewhere; for example, Ruby (2012) highlighted the key role grandmothers played in teaching their grandchildren Bangla directly and through several socialising activities. Similar to F1, Ruby also demonstrated how grandmothers managed to balance their roles as 'teacher' and 'grandmother' in 'perfect harmony'.

Similarly though unique in the entire data set, in F2 the English Irish speaking grandmother Laoise champions the learning of Arabic and has done so since the birth of her grandchildren eight years ago. She says during an interview with her daughter-in-law (Farah):

> *For me, I always want the kids to speak the language of their roots, it's important. I tried with my own kids with Irish, but I just couldn't do it. After Shelly turned ten, it was hard ... my babies will learn Arabic and yes, Irish.* (F2:INT)

This was an unexpected interaction with the grandmother as the researcher had not planned to interview her, but she sat in while the interview took place with Farah and asked to say a few words. These were important words because they contextualised her actions of buying Arabic language books for her grandchildren online even though she did not understand Arabic.

The children in F2 usually study Arabic with their mother on Mondays and Wednesdays in a formal style with books, a small whiteboard, and a laptop. Mondays and Wednesdays are also the days 'Mamó granny' comes over to make dinner and spend time with the children. Whilst she is cooking, she walks in and out as the children are learning Arabic. In one recording, the grandmother can be heard to be joining in with (3-year-old) Lulu's learning the alphabet, phonics, and words.

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Excerpt 2. Championing Arabic.

01 Mother *Yalla, lheen nasma'* okay? Ready? *Jaahizah? Tayyib roohi*
2-F-32 Okay, we'll listen now, okay? Ready? Ready? Okay my love (my soul)

02 Lulu Maama, is it Shams?
3-F-3.5

03 Mother *La*, it's umm....the....other one..okay *yalla*
No, it's umm...the...other one, okay come on
% situ: they are watching the video as it plays on Youtube, xxxx ... **baa mithli batteekh ba ba batteekh ba ba batteekh baa batteekh, taa mithli tuffah ta [ta ta tuffah ta ta tuffah taa tuffah** xxxx (TV song)
%tra: Baa is like bateekh (watermelon), ba ba watermelon, baa watermelon, taa is like tuffah (apple), taa taa apple, taa taa apple, taa apple

04 Lulu [**ta ta ta tuffah ta ta tuffah taa tuffah**, Maama look at that apple it's [xxx

05 Mamó [**Ta ta ta tuffah ta ta ta**
1-F-58

06 Lulu Mamó granny *ta* hhh ... *jeem* say *jeem*
Taa and *jeem* are names of alphabets in Arabic

07 Mamó *Jeem jeem* haa haa

08 Mother Bravo, Mamó granny, bravo
% Lulu, Mamo and Farah laugh together, Farah leaves the room to take a call.

09 Lulu Mamó granny look (.) look at the **babbaghaa**
Mamó granny look (.) at the parrot

10 Mamó Parrot, oh (.) baba mmm

11 Lulu *La la* Mamó granny (.) not *Baaba*, dad, hhhh **baBBaGHaa**
No, no Mamó granny (.) not Daddy, dad, hhh parrot (with emphasis on the bb and gh sound)

12 Mamó Mmm(.) b..**ba..BBa..Gha..aa..** yeah?

13 Lulu hhh yeah, yeah
%They continue to watch and sing along together

The children refer to Laoise as 'Mamó granny', with *Mamó* used in their family to mean grandmother in Irish. Over time, the mother (Farah) says:

> *they just called her that and eventually it became her name, even my sister-in-law's children call her that, it's like 'granny granny' twice.* (F2:INT)

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In this excerpt the grandmother sings along with the TV show and Lulu begins to teach her in turn 05 to say another letter *jeem* and in turn 07 the grandmother takes on the role of student and repeats faithfully *jeem*, but then also adds the next correct letter *haa*. This explicit support for a language the grandmother does not speak, and the children know she does not speak it, helps foster a close relationship with the grandchildren and supports the family's language policy and practices of teaching and learning Arabic. Farah says:

> We aim to teach them Arabic, and I want them to know it well and better than me. Michael is also happy to make efforts to help, but to also learn at least Standard Arabic as well. ((F2:INT;, see also Maseko, this issue)

Laoise is aware of such a desire and seems to support that through her actions of singing along with Lulu or sitting with the children to watch cartoons. In this episode, Laoise takes on the student position with Lulu from turns 06 to 12, Lulu takes on the teacher role. In turn 11, she corrects her grandmother's attempts at saying parrot in Arabic by emphasising (raises her voice) on the sounds that she thinks are difficult. Laoise goes along and correctly pronounces the word, which makes Lulu happy. This engagement is important as it implicitly signals to Lulu the importance of Arabic, even for a non-speaker like her grandmother.

Laoise, like Umm Khamis above, also refers to the children using Arabic and Irish endearment terms, the researcher did not hear any Irish terms nor were there any present in the recordings, but the mother said they are used often by Laoise, which makes her granddaughter Maria (6) incredibly happy. Laoise refers to the children as *habibi* (my beloved) and *ya roohi* (my soul). Over the data collection period, the grandmother would walk from her home each day, or the children would go to her and at the end of this phase the grandmother moved into the family home, making it a multigenerational household. Her support of Arabic is not just her belief that they should learn the language, as she says above, but her support is also a manifestation of how she views her position in the relationship with her 'babies' or grandchildren. She sees herself as supporter or advocate of their language. This support for Arabic helps build the children's confidence, their bilingual identity, and thus their well-being (Danielsbacka, 2022) because their grandmother connects with them through her championing of the Arabic language – an important repertoire in the family.

4.2 Grandparents as contradictors of FLPs

There are undoubtedly challenges to living in a multigeneration arrangement. Such difficulties can arise due to cultural differences or sometimes ongoing strained relationships (Riley and Bowen, 2005). In F3, Hoda says that her mother only communicates with her children in MSA because she

> agreed to only speak FuSHa with the children to help them build their language better, I cannot and actually prefer not to speak with them Darija (Spoken Arabic) and I told Uthmaan [husband] the same, though he sometimes does. (F3:INT)

When asked why such an agreement was made, Hoda says

> because I want them to know the pure proper Arabic and I don't want them to be confused if they pick a book up. (F3:INT)

However, there are instances in which the grandmother does not adhere to the agreement and does in fact speak Darija (Spoken Arabic) which

> annoys me very much, she feels, or she said that I am being too much with all this FuSHa (MSA) thingy ...rule and says that I make things too hard for the children, but it's my choice. (F3:INT)

Hoda and her mother seem to hold different beliefs about learning Arabic, a common finding in other studies that have looked at intergenerational language beliefs. For example, Bezcioglu-Goktolga and Yagmur (2022) found intergenerational differences among Turkish speakers in the Netherlands, in which the older generation preferred Turkish whereas the younger generation preferred a more bilingual FLP. Even though decisions were mutually agreed upon, language use seems to constantly defy declared ideologies, and, where grandparents are involved, the issue is more complex due to the relationship dynamics. Yang and Curdt-Christiansen's (2021) study of grandparents' positive effect on children's learning the HL was due to their continuous input of Fangyan (a Chinese dialect) which ensured transmission to the children. They did however, also demonstrate that intergenerational language transmission similarly caused conflict and differences of opinion among the parents and grandparents which affected children's language use, similar to F3 above.

Hoda's 'it's my choice' signals that she feels as though the mother is interfering in her parenting choices and thinks that, over time, 'it's gonna affect their Arabic, they already find it difficult'. Hoda says that such disagreements have more recently caused tension between mother and daughter:

> but I will just be soft with her, she's my mother, I will have to depend on *'ammee* [father-in-law] and us [herself and her husband]. (F3:INT)

Children socialised into Arab cultural norms do not seek conflict with parents even when parents are mistaken. Hoda therefore de-escalates the tensions

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between herself and her mother. Although the grandmother does not live in the same home, she does often stay during the half term breaks or school holidays, and it is at these times that she asserts her authority and defies her daughter's wishes, increasing the children's use of Darija. Hoda says that, on the other hand, her father-in-law through Skype:

> is a superstar, he speaks to them in FuSHa, which is absolutely great, he loves Arabic and always makes time at the end of the chat to ask them about meanings of words or phrases. (F3:INT)

Grandparents can now communicate with their grandchildren despite the many months, even years, of not residing in the same geographical location (Keval, 2021). This example of the effects of grandparent involvement from afar illustrates Lanza's (2021b) recognition that '[t]he very dynamic and complex nature of "stretched" families brings in the necessity to envisage the family as a space, social in nature, as opposed to a domain'. Technology affords such close and frequent contact that the family becomes 'stretched' and the lives of all members are intertwined, presenting the same relational issues as families residing together.

In sum, when grandparents share the same physical space as their grandchildren, their presence bears on how the family uses its multiple repertoires. Table 3 below offers a comparison of the living arrangements in each of the families, how intergenerational living or increased contact affects (especially) children's language use and specifically how much Arabic the family uses as a unit in their interactions over the project timeline.

Table 3. Grandparents' influence on children's language use.

Family	Intergenerational living arrangements	Increase in language use due to grandparent effect	Use of Arabic due to grandparent effect
F1	Parents, children, grandmother	Increase in Yemeni and especially Hadrami Arabic.	English, but more Arabic
F2	Parents, children, regular daily contact with grandmother, end of project grandmother lived in the same home.	Continuous and consistent use of MSA, increasing uses of Irish.	Arabic and English
F3	Parents, children, regular visits from grandmother.	English, increasing amounts of MSA due to paternal grandfather, and increasing some Darija from maternal grandmother.	Mostly English

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Children in F1 increased their Arabic use because of Umm Khamis, and Mustafa in particular, expanded his multidialectal knowledge. In F2, the mother reports the children's confidence in using MSA, perhaps due to the unified efforts of the parents and their grandmother. In F3, the use of English seemed to increase with the minimal use of Arabic outside the Skype conversations with the grandfather (see Ringblom, Ritter, and Zabrodskaja, this issue) in Algeria and the Arabic homework session. It may be that F3 are challenged by the diglossic nature of Arabic and find it difficult to reconcile the two, in the same way F1 seem to have successfully managed to do so. Parents across this project stated that the diglossic nature of Arabic challenged them greatly in how they planned for their family language practices. Grandparents make a difference in the HL learning journey of many children in similar situations.

5 Conclusion

Grandparent-grandchild talk is a unique discourse that is filled with emotional language, storytelling, sharing of experiences (Harwood, 2000), and creative language use. In this discourse, there is a heightened need for connection and the expression of love, which makes HL learning more appealing than with parents, for example. In addition to Arabic school, home HL learning, YouTube videos and other materials, the grandparent-grandchild interaction offers a unique linguistic consistency which socialises children into their HLs. The language the children learn in these moments creates an indelible linguistic and cultural impact on the child for life.

Captured in this process of HL learning is the continuous negotiation of relationships, boundaries and rights between parents, their own parents, and their children. Equally embedded in these grassroot efforts of learning and using (or not) the HL is also the embodiment of being a family. Bilingualism, language beliefs, practices, management of Arabic (dialects, standard) or Irish are simply paths towards the strengthening and formation of relationships between these individuals to forge family.

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Appendix I. Thematic analysis example of the theme diglossia (adapted from Said, 2024).

Steps	**Data sample**
1: Familiarising oneself with the data	**Ex. 1 from Parental interview**: 'Arabic is not like Spanish, I have to teach them more than one Arabic because I want them to read Arabic, understand and enjoy all the good books and stories. So, this *'ammiyyah* and FuSHa thing is really killing, *shay' yu'waaji' raasi*, I'm telling you. do I give them both? Or one? Or none? My mother thinks they don't need FuSHa, my mother-in-law … well ... hhhh [laughs] she speaks to them in FuSHa and makes comments when they cannot umm … give her.. answer back, so it's really difficult for me in addition to needing to be a good mother and get them all they need, *ana umm, wa umm mumtaazah* is … umm … if I can say so, hhhh [laughs] but this thing is heavy on me'.
2: Generating initial codes	Having read the data a few times and underlining some sections from the interviews and identifying some interactions the following initial codes emerged: **a. Diglossia is a problem/it's hard** (150). **b. Children don't like to diglossia/ find it a challenge/have different opinions about it?** (40). **c. Diglossia puts pressure on the parents and children to learn** (59). **d. Being a good mother and teaching Arabic** (63). The numbers in the bracket show how many data points were attributed to the themes.
3: Searching for themes	A month later, another round of readings and re-evaluation of codes assigned the last time. Revising all the data assigned to the proposed codes above and then assigning more data to try to make a coherent set of themes. **Diglossia makes Arabic too hard to learn.** This comes from the interview and is inferred from the interaction between the children and their mother as well. In the interview, the mother communicates her frustration at having to make these language-related decisions and illustrates that the sociolinguistic nature of Arabic is a challenge in transmitting Arabic. **Diglossia puts pressure on the speakers' social and family life.** Issues of language are in fact related to family and the delicate management of family expectations, as the mother mentions in the interview. **Intersection of motherhood and language transmission.** To the criteria of being a good mother, the mother adds that she must also ensure good/correct(?) transmission of Arabic to the children and says that this aspect of diglossia adds extra pressure to her role as mother. She also explicitly says that she is an 'excellent mother'; perhaps she feels judged?

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4: Reviewing themes	Current suggested themes have been reviewed again with reference to the data and mapping of each theme to sections of data looking for congruency between labels and examples that capture participants' experiences and accounts. 6 themes have been identified thus far as they relate to **diglossia**: 1. Diglossia poses a challenge to the teaching and learning of Arabic as a HL. 2. Diglossia offers a unique/positive HL learning experience. 3. Language ideology/beliefs affect how speakers view diglossia. 4. Language management of Arabic language is unique. 5. Intersection of diglossia and motherhood. 6. Diglossia and familial relationships. The researcher asked an independent researcher to review the themes as attributed to data. All information, names and other identifying details of the family were removed. A file containing only the data in question with themes was shared. The independent researcher has agreed with all themes and data as they are attributed to the data that was shared.
5: Defining and naming themes	**1. Diglossia and family relationship management** highlights the connection between heritage language maintenance and use to family cohesion. This extends to non-immediate family members such as aunts, mothers-in-law, and parents who live in other geographical areas. They affect parents' language transmission trajectories. **2. Diglossia and child agency** refers to the instances in interactional data, interviews, as well as child interviews, that show the child's direct role in affecting language use and management at home. **3. Diglossia and HL transmission** the efforts, rules and events put in place by parents to ensure the learning and use of Arabic take place. **4. Child language beliefs** refers to the data that demonstrates children's developing language beliefs and preferences and how they communicate such beliefs. The seven suggested themes became four main themes that represent the data content and interconnected meanings. Some of these themes are further broken down into sub-themes that focus on small unique aspects of the main theme.
6: Producing the report/manuscript	A final report of themes across the data set was prepared and used to disseminate research findings.

Appendix II. Transcription conventions (adapted from MacWhinney and Wagner, 2010).

Symbol/word	Meaning
Multiple dots (…or…...)	Short/long pause
% tra	translation of the original Arabic
% sit	Situation (or activity taking place)
xxxx	Inaudible/unintelligible speech
Hhh	Laughter in speech
CAPITALIZATION	Emphasis
[	Overlapping speech
(.)	Very short pause
Italics	Arabic

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Acknowledgements

This project was supported by the University of York, United Kingdom, Department of Education research fund 2018. I also thank the three anonymous reviewers for taking the time, which they do not have enough of, to carefully read my manuscript and offer insightful and constructive feedback on the initial versions of this paper. I sincerely appreciate all the valuable comments and suggestions which helped to improve the quality of this manuscript.

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(Received 30th November 2022; accepted 28th February 2023;
final revision received 20th June 2023)

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