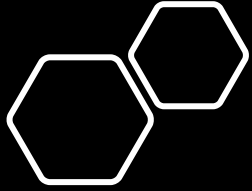


Digital resources as overt tools for family language learning and use among Arabic multilingual families

Fatma Said
Zayed University, UAE

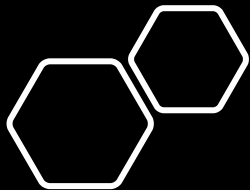


Outline

- Theoretical frameworks
- Research Questions
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion/implications

Theoretical frameworks

- Sociolinguistics (Meyerooff, 2018; Cornips & Rooji, 2018)
- Bilingualism- dialects (Cenoz, 2013; Aronin & Singleton, 2012)
- Family Language Policy (Piller & Gerber, 2021; Lanza & Gomes, 2020; Lanza & Lexander, 2019; King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008; King & Fogle, 2013; Spolsky, 2012)
- A family as unit and how they learn, use and manage languages
- Language Socialisation (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986)- socialised *in* and *through* their language (Lanza, 1997)



Research questions

How do Arabic speaking multilingual families learn and use their languages?

How do transnational families use technology to learn languages?

Families

2 projects- one
in the UK and
Saudi Arabia
and one in the
UAE

12 families
(UK) and 10 in
UAE (5 Emirati
and 5 non-
Emirati) and 2
families in
Saudi Arabia

Majority (2-
parent
families), single
mothers,
extended
family living
arrangements,
families with
domestic help
(maids and
nannies).

Interlingual
couples,
bilingual Arabic
speakers,
Speakers of
different
Arabic dialects

Methodology

- Mixed methods and data driven
- Recordings of interactions at home (sometimes video)
- Interviews (Jain, 2021)
- Linguistic background survey (Barrett & Twycross, 2018)
- Interpretive approach (participants' views made meaningful through their understanding of events/ideas)
- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Interactional Sociolinguistics (Rampton, 2019)

Points of note (Said, *forthcoming*)

- Reflexivity/reflective thinking: bilingual Arabic speaker
- Insider knowledge- outsider knowledge
- Balance between them /avoid assumptions
- Data collection: Mothers as partners in data collection
- More data was offered
- What to do? Thinking about this
- Flexible: re-do ethics and interview children

Findings: Technology (themes)

Skype for family
talk

Zoom/Skype for
learning Standard
Arabic

Youtube as
immersion tool

E-readers as
supporters of
Arabic literacy
development

‘Policing’ technology (Said, *under review*)

- Parents seemed very aware of the challenges technology may present (addiction, affecting cognitive abilities, dangers of content or predators).
- In all, but 2 families, all computers and iPads are to be used in public places
- Mobile phones are also policed
- Fadel (father, F3) “We either allow them to use these things at home or they use it behind our back, that’s more dangerous”
- Joe (father, F9) “ We limit it to weekends and Thursdays because the schools here use iPads, that winds me up, but hey, so yeah we can teach them how to use this responsibly...*Jumana (mother)* “well, can we?”



Zoom/Skype as a tool for teaching Arabic



“I wanted my kids to have what I had- it reminds me of my childhood and skype and then now Zoom allowed that to be true”. (Rima:F2:P2:INT)

“I told the teacher though- these are modern kids please be soft with them because I don’t think my kids can deal with a straight-faced tough teacher who expects you to recite Al Mutannabi and Hafez like the ABCs” (Fatima: F9: P1: INT)

Zoom changed my entire relationship with teaching my children Arabic, the lockdown really offered us a chance to formally learn Arabic. Not so much speak it, but learn it and even some grammar, I felt like my own relationship with grammar got better.
(Rola:F5:P2:D2)

Youtube



- Immersion tool (Said, 2021b) for those living in the UK
- “Even if they were to travel to Jeddah, they’d never have a chance to understand the culture, this gives them a chance to learn some things before they go” (Rowaida, F7:P1).
- “We cook together so I get to spend time with them, I wanna know what they are up to you know? At the same time, I can get them to find the ingredients in Arabic. “Hayl, zanjabeel” what? (laughs) I love it when they are confused and have to learn a new word. That makes me feel happy.” (Karima, F12: P1).



Literacy

An abundance of resources now for Arabic that were not available to parents as little as 10 years ago (Said, 2021a, 2021b)



Literacy (Said, 2021a; Said & AlGhamdi, 2018)

Resources such as this help both the parent and child become familiar with Arabic script. There is the transliteration and translation. The Arabic is marked overtly for vowel signs to help beginners.



Literacy

- “I re-connected with my own Arabic and sometimes I think I was reading for me, oh that how’s you say Jack and the beanstalk in Arabic”? (Nahla, F1: P2).
- “They like to read more when it’s online, I like that, I don’t need to remember where the book is!” (Joory, F8: P2)



More advanced Arabic sample.

“I’m not a *jekara*, I use it well” (Said, *under review*)

- Children form ideologies about the use of technology
- Influenced by parents
- But, older children seems to balance between what they want vs. what their parents want (9 years+)
- Children (6 year olds) introduce languages at home (e.g. Italian) (Said, *under review*).

“She works hard for us”

- Family relationships are manifested through a number of ways (Said & Hua, 2019; Said, 2022).
- *“It’s everyday during term time, but we are learning a lot, I used to hate it, but then I went to Beirut and it was cool and I made friends because of the Arabic”*
- *“Mama is happy if we do it and she works hard for us, she got us a special tablet ” (Karol, 15)*

Conclusions (Said & Hua, 2019; Said, *under review*)

- These resources on the first level teach, maintain the HL or encourage children to engage with their languages.
- Some parents have removed their children from Arabic schools
- Parents re-connect with their HL.
- Children take part in shaping how technology is used.
- But on a socio-emotional level they help bind relationships, make relationships and that is key in language maintenance.
- Technology magnifies aspects of families and their languages in more pronounced ways (doing family). (Curdt-Christiansen & Lanza, 2018; Gomes, 2018; Lanza & Lexander, 2019; Hua & Wei, 2016)
- Parental responsibility –cultural ethnotheory (Fogle, 2013; Said, 2022)
- Children define their roles as children in the family (conforming/rebelling).

References

- Aronin, L., & Singleton, D. (2012). *Multilingualism*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Barrett, D., & Twycross, A. (2018). Data collection in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 21(3), 63–64. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2018-102939>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cenoz, J. (2013). Defining Multilingualism. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026719051300007X>
- Cornips, L., & Rooij, V. A. de. (2018). *The Sociolinguistics of Place and Belonging: Perspectives from the margins*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Curdt-Christiansen, X. L., & Lanza, E. (2018). Language management in multilingual families: Efforts, measures and challenges. *Multilingua*, 37(2), 123–130. <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2017-0132>
- Gomes, R.L. (2018). Family Language Policy ten years on: A critical approach to family multilingualism. *Multilingual Margins*, 5(2), 54-76.
- King, K. A., Fogle, L., & Logan-Terry, A. (2008). Family language policy. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 2(5), 907–922.
- Jain, N. (2021). Survey Versus Interviews: Comparing Data Collection Tools for Exploratory Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(2), 541–554. <http://dx.doi.org.zulib.idm.oclc.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4492>
- King, K. A., & Fogle, L. W. (2013). Family language policy and bilingual parenting. *Language Teaching*, 46(2), 172–194.
- Lanza, E. (2004). *Language Mixing in Infant Bilingualism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lanza, E., & Gomes, R. L. (2020). Family language policy: Foundations, theoretical perspectives and critical approaches. In *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development: Social and Affective Factors* (pp. 153–173). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-008>
- Lanza, E., & Lexander, K. V. (2019). Family Language Practices in Multilingual Transcultural Families. In *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Multilingualism: The Fundamentals* (pp. 229–252). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501507984-011>

- Meyerhoff, M. (2018). *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429507922>
- Piller, I., & Gerber, L. (2021). Family language policy between the bilingual advantage and the monolingual mindset. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(5), 622–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1503227>
- Rampton, B. (2019). Interactional sociolinguistics. In *The Routledge handbook of linguistic ethnography* (pp. 13–27). Routledge.
- Said, F.F.S. (2022). Family as a system: Values and ideologies in family language policies of diverse Arabic-speaking multilingual families. In Wright, L. & Higgins, C.(eds.) *Diversifying family language policy: Diverse families, modalities, and contexts*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing
- Said, F.F.S. (forthcoming). “No one teaches you how”: The challenges of transcribing and presenting multilingual data in sociolinguistics. In Samuelson, B.L &, Silvhiany, S. (Eds.). *Learning to do research multilingually*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters (Researching Multilingually Book series).
- Said, F. F. S. (2021a). Arabic-English bilingual children’s early home literacy environments and parental language policies. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 29(3), 424–440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2021.1928724>
- Said, F. F. S. (2021b). ‘Ba-SKY-aP with her each day at dinner’: Technology as supporter in the learning and management of home languages. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 0(0), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1924755>
- Said, F., & Zhu, H. (2019). “No, no Maama! Say ‘Shaatir ya Ouledee Shaatir’!” Children’s agency in language use and socialisation. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 23(3), 771–785. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006916684919>
- Said, F., & AlGhamdi, F. (2018). Development of minority language literacy at home: The case of an Arabic-English speaking family. *Paper presented at the Fourth Intergenerational Transmission of minority Languages Symposium: Language and identity*. <http://ikt.edu.uu.se/jhlm/?p=415>
- Spolsky, B. (2012). Family language policy—the critical domain. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33(1), 3–11.
- Hua, Z., & Wei, L. (2016). Transnational experience, aspiration and family language policy. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 37(7), 655–666.

Thank you!

- Fatma.said@zu.ac.ae
- Twitter: @Arabizi
- I'll be happy to correspond with you!