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### Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

#### FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICES

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#### *Abstract*

This paper studies Kazakhstani citizens' family language policy and language practices in education within the period of transference from bilingual education policy to multilingual education policy. The study starts with an analysis of different views on family language education and practices. Bilingualism or trilingualism are researched within the Kazakhstani society via families. Family language policy is influenced by three main factors: beliefs, individual practices, and intervention practices. These factors are in line with an integration to the constantly changing society and global world. These changes influence not only the community of practices, but also the family language policy in-depth. The quantitative study results show that citizens' beliefs highly influence their choices of using languages at home and educational environment rather than their community and intervention practices. The research work revealed the similarity of parents and children's language repertoires. Their beliefs concerning family language policy mostly depend on the fact that a certain language is more spoken in a society or it is necessary to use it. In the survey results, Kazakh and Russian languages appeared to be more frequently used in the family. The study proposes to dwell on the other stakeholders' voices in further research that may identify and explain various issues while bilingual-trilingual education transference.

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## 1. Introduction

Multilingual education has brought an enormous change to community practices in the society. Different languages are not bounded to one another (Garcia, 2007). Each of them has its specific peculiarities and sometimes language usage might appear to be in mess (Heller, 2007). Having had over 6000 languages in the world, it is obvious to have different discourses about multilingualism and its effect on social cohesion, community practices and citizens' education in particular. Multilingualism is now being explored in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, language teaching methods and other sciences. Different interpretations and approaches to this phenomenon make it possible to state its complexity and uniqueness (Ababkova, Pokrovskaya, & Trostinskaya, 2018; Aladyshkin, Kulik, Michurin, & Anosova, 2017; Bylieva & Sastre, 2018; Lee, 2019; Protassova, 2018; Rubtsova & Almazova, 2018; Sotskova & Spiridonova, 2018).

Kazakhstan is a home for 130 ethnic groups whose policy is to keep understanding and tolerance between nations living within the country. Therefore, it is essential for young scholars to investigate the bridge between multilingual education at home environment, community practices and language practices in education within Kazakhstani multiethnic society. This paper aims to research citizens' family language policy and language practices in education, and whether their beliefs, community practices and/or intervention practices influence their language choices. Studying and understanding this may propose some solutions for improving ways of implementation of the language policy as well as answer the citizens' needs of community practices of ethnics living in Kazakhstan and countries.

The famous Nelson Mandela's saying "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart" (as cite in Laka, 2014, para. 2) denotes that people care about the attitude the other speakers expresses toward their language. It is important for communities to understand languages of the other and promote tolerance from generation to generation within the society because it is significant to have "an aggregate of people who, united by common enterprises, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, and values – in short, practices" (Eckert, & McConnell-Ginet, 1999, p. 186). In order to develop people's understanding of intercultural communication and its peculiarities as well as challenges, they should be educated in school environment and brought up wisely in home environment.

### 1.1. Key definitions

Language policy is defined in different definitions. The one, given by Wright (2016), which is connected with the history of language because every community has its own experiences and evolution, have been chosen. Wright explains the language policy as the historical process of language change and planning which is connected with individuals' activity in political and social life.

The community of practice is "the process of knowledge generation, application, and reproduction, is that communities of practice are groups in which a constant process of legitimate peripheral participation takes place" (Hoadley, 2012, p. 290). Interchange of information within the community through the years accumulates into a big picture of knowledge. Thus, community members and their families are involved in the process of interrelation and discursive practices (Kilner, 2004), gather, and

transfer the community knowledge from generation to generation. The knowledge of linguistic and cultural peculiarities is essential for all communities of practice, for instance, traditional holidays, dances, etc.

## **1.2. Conceptual framework**

Family language policy is defined as the main concept of this research, which is influenced by three main factors as beliefs, individual practices, and intervention practices (Spolsky, 2004). The factor of beliefs is based on the people's ideologies that encourage them to cooperate within the community. The second factor, the individual practices is determined by the choices that individual people make for language practices. The third one, intervention practices are the foundation for the individuals' language management, which is directed to change according to the community language practices. Thus, these factors are always in line with the change and integration to the particular society and global world that are constantly changing today. These changes influence not only the community of practices, but also the family language policy in-depth.

## **1.3. Multilingual education within home environment**

### *Early language education*

Since children primarily acquire their mother tongue at home, it is significant to mention early language acquisition that plays an important role for bilingual children's intercultural awareness and safety in multi-ethnic society (Mc Laughlin, 1985). It is essential that language education starts from the social information exchange since infancy ages (Kuhl, 2004). Kuhl highlights that child's language acquisition depends on the social context since it develops from inborn understanding to further abilities and progress as a speaker. In addition, Saffran, Senghas and Trueswell (2001) discuss children's early development in terms of learning languages, memorization and genesis which process in their cognitive acquisition of first language, then second and third ones. The substantial foundation for multilingual individual starts from strong bases of the first language acquisition (Tucker, & Ellis, 1998; Wąsikiewicz-Firlej & Lankiewicz, 2019). It is believed that child's early language learning might bring to different language disorders. However, as Khamitova, Jantassova, Tugambekova and Suleimenova (2015) state lots of bilingual and trilingual children do not evidence to have any language disorders in early ages. In addition, this issue points out Baker's (2000) notion of balanced bilingualism which determines bilingual children's special cognitive abilities to see the languages inside and feel the difference between languages they speak. Baker claims that bilingual children cannot be equally proficient in two languages simultaneously; they tend to use languages with a particular purpose at home or in the community. Estigarribia and Clark (2007) add that children cognitively leave back one of the languages in case they do not need it in everyday communication. Children switch from one language to another in home or school environment purposefully. This process is well observed in home environment when two or more children are raised in the family. Thus, bilingual or trilingual children might grow up in certain suitable conditions of practicing the languages in home environment, though advanced proficiency in both languages is a rare case.

### *Family language education*

Children's language education is mainly dependent on parents' language background. Romaine's (1995) notion of one parent – one language exemplifies the situation when parents have different language background and their competence in other language is varied too. As Barrett (1999) notes children acquire two languages from parents in the equal ground and develop the proficiency simultaneously. De Houwer (2007) found out that the notion of one parent – one language is not applicable for families in which one of the parents has chosen to speak majority language, so children would prefer to speak the same language at home and outside in terms of personal convenience.

Sometimes parents happen to reject bilingualism or trilingualism as if the second or third language acquisition might result in child's mother-tongue attrition (Macalister & Mirvahedi, 2017). They quit bilingual communication with the child by speaking only one language, which, consequently, brings psychological and emotional misbalance to child's language practice in the family (Khamitova et al., 2015). Such children appear to be naughty in behavior because they feel abandoned by parents and start losing confidence and mutual trust. We can understand that by developing monolingual communication with children parents try to foster a mother-tongue practice and national identity in their children's mind and heart. However, parents should take into account the following consequences of abandoning bilingualism in child's language practice.

On the contrary, fostering bi/ multilingualism within the family might be beneficial for children's successful educational achievements. Lotherington and Eamer's (2008) case study in Canada has elicited children's positive multilingual perspectives and its development through language used at home, in this case English language in Korean families. In addition to communication with parents, children improved their English language practices with relatives. Social activities with dominant English language were organized to see the family values in educational support to children in the external (not home) environment. Consequently, Lotherington and Eamer (2008) highlight "high levels of international experience in family socialization; parents' positively expressed high expectations of their children's accomplishments; opportunities for varied intellectual and physical enrichment activities; support for formal study of other languages, and pragmatic language use that involved multilingualism as natural and desired" (p. 115). Thus, Korean parents, being Canadian bilingual workers, are initially positive about their children's bi/multilingualism. This evidences their high expectations from children's school achievement and multilingual practices in Canada on the one hand. Moreover, on the other hand, children do not experience psychological and emotional difficulties balancing family language practice and community language practices in new multilingual and multi-ethnic environment as it was mentioned by Khamitova et al. (2015).

### *Extended family language practices*

Parents are the most influential communication parties in children's language practices as well as their siblings and other members of extended family like grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. According to Baker (2017) extended family influence, being additional one to parents', gradually prepares child for outside community practice in different domains. Educational language practices at school, communication in the playground and shopping centers, watching TV and listening to music with

close relatives' effect on children's language choice and practices. In addition, this choice is mainly made for the benefit of majority language, i.e. dominant one in the social environment.

Sometimes extended family views might be different from those of the parents'. Thus, grandparents, for instance, might have contrasting attitudes toward grandchildren's language practices. Grandparents try to preserve mother-tongue practices and cultural identity and encourage their grandchildren not to mix up languages while communication (Lotherington & Eamer, 2008). Elderly generation strongly believes in fostering heritage language in a new settled country in order to transfer linguistic and cultural heritage to the future generations. By the way, it is obvious for almost all ethnic minorities around the world. Although, grandparents express resistance to bi-/ multilingual practices, grandchildren's language practices might be displayed in multiethnic community activities in schools where children could be clearly observed. Thus, grandparents might change their attitudes and feel positive about grandchildren's multilingual practices because the resistance showed by family members always cause emotional stress to immigrant children who are trying to immerge to the new society.

In the same vein, Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, and Cummins (2008) reported on family members' involvement in Chinese children's language education in a qualitative research study in Canada. Languages of communication were Chinese, Cantonese and English. Some grandparents appeared to support three languages in different home context, depending on how frequently grandparents meet their grandchildren. If children live and communicate with elderly generation every day, these grandparents tend to speak only Chinese and understand English to some extent. However, other grandparents, living separately from their children and rarely meeting their grandchildren, came out to communicate only in Cantonese. Taylor et al. (2008) highlight that "these complex family literacy practices initiate multilingual students into transnational and transgenerational webs of kinship, and cultural and faith-based communities of practice. Through these literacy practices learners are initiated into shared ways of knowing, remembering and imagining vital to the multiple affiliations and semiotic economies through which their identities are constituted" (p. 289). Therefore, extended family language practices and cultural ideologies directly influence children's language practices and multilingual identity construction as well as contribute to a particular family language practices depending on private peculiarities of the family and its members.

## **2. Problem Statement**

### **2.1. Language practices in the multiethnic community of Kazakhstan**

Family language policy demands looking at individual's current language ideologies in community practices. However, family language policy in Kazakhstani context is a challenging field to explore researchers because it has not been studied in-depth. We can mention several research studies made in this respect.

Kazakhization is widespread usage of Kazakh language and individuals' reflection on this notion in the country defined by Smagulova (2008) and the interrelation between ethnic groups and derussification in Kazakhstan in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Union period highlighted by Matuszkiewicz (2010). The trilingual policy as a national language policy of the country has been

discussed extensively in these research studies because bilingualism appeared to be essential after Kazakhstan became an independent country. In the same vein, the Kazakh language revitalization took place as a major factor of the national language policy supported by the ex-President Nazarbayev. On the one hand, it somehow brought the national ideology of disadvantaged population who could not speak Kazakh, having a Kazakh ethnicity. On the other hand, this national ideology provided the linguistic and identity bridge for provinces and cities in the country. However, we can notice that the Kazakh proficiency of ethnic Kazakhs in rural and urban areas definitely vary as well as linguistic peculiarities of the community practices in the north and south regions of Kazakhstan. Therefore, notions of Kazakh language is the language of elderly people; Shala-Kazakh is the person who mixes Kazakh with Russian predominantly; and a mangurt is person who has experienced mother-tongue attrition appeared to be emphasized as language ideology within Kazakhstani society. And, Kazakhs in province are more likely to be affiliated to Kazakh traditions and language practices rather than city Kazakhs. Of course, current community practices relatively influence present family language practices in the society as well as growing generation, and, respectively, future generation.

In her recent research, Smagulova (2017) has compared the situation in 2008 and concluded that the major change is happening to Russian-speaking Kazakhs in the city who practice choosing Kazakh medium primary and secondary schools for their children. Parents as the agents of change are making their choice toward revitalizing national language and culture by prioritizing family language and community practices in the country.

In addition to Kazakh and Russian languages, English language is also demanding individuals' and communities consideration because the world of globalization calls for proficient usage of English as a lingua franca nowadays. Therefore, the trilingual education system in all educational levels are developed and supported by the government throughout the country. Although the language policy brings lots of challenges to different stakeholders including administrators, educators, parents, and students, these difficulties are reform-based and well-planned by the government.

### **3. Research Questions**

Therefore, three research questions were employed in this study:

- 3.1. What influences family language policy (citizens' beliefs, community practices and/or intervention practices)?**
- 3.2. What influences language practices in education (citizens' beliefs, community practices and/or intervention practices)?**
- 3.3. Which language(s) dominate in family language policy and language practices in education?**

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The paper aims at studying family language policy and language practices in education in Kazakhstan. It is important to know and understand whether citizens' beliefs, community practices and/or

intervention practices (Spolsky, 2004) influence family language practices and language practices in education while secondary school policy is changing from bilingual into trilingual education today.

## **5. Research Methods**

The research employed various methods, including literature and content analysis, partial modelling, statistical methods of data processing, and correlation analyses.

### **5.1. Participants**

Participants (N= 85) were recruited randomly from different field of work ranging in from 30 to 50 years (regardless of their gender, social-economic status, ethnicity and education) with advertisement and emails. The sample criteria required the participants to report about their family language policy and practices in community and education, their children’s language policy and practices in community and education as well as their communication language practices with school teachers.

### **5.2. Design and procedure**

The quantitative study considers the conceptual Spolsky’s (2004) framework, which employs two categories of citizens’ for family language policy (parents and children). Another three categories were developed to elicit language practices in education (children, children – parents, and parents – teachers). To study the research question about dominant language(s), other three categories were employed - society, family and education. The survey included twenty-five questions that asked participants to choose either a certain language out of Kazakh, Russian, or English or all three languages. They should have also chosen the variant that explains the reasons for their choice of languages according to the conceptual framework: their personal beliefs, community practices and/ or intervention practices. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing on questioner displayed  $p = 0,840$ .

## **6. Findings**

The citizens’ beliefs, community practices and intervention practices were studied in this research in order to find out which of them influence family language practices and language practices in Kazakhstan education nowadays. The results are given in Table 1.

**Table 01.** What influences family language policy.

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Children</b>
Citizens’ beliefs	61	63
Community practices	15	13
Intervention practices	5	3
N	81	79

Family language policy is mostly influenced by citizens’ beliefs rather than community practices and intervention practices. Parents and children’s language repertoires are almost the same and their beliefs concerning family language policy mostly depend on the fact that everybody in society speaks a

certain language and/or it is necessary to use it. In the survey results, Kazakh and Russian languages appeared to be more frequently used in the family.

Survey results elicited that citizens' language practices in education in all categories are mostly influenced by citizens' beliefs with a slight difference in children and teachers communication. Citizens' choice of a language depends on their beliefs that other interlocutors understand a certain language more quickly. The belief of the necessity to speak a certain language appeared to be the least chosen by respondents (Table 2).

**Table 02.** What influences language practices in education.

	<b>Children</b>	<b>Children–Teachers</b>	<b>Parents–Teachers</b>
Citizens' beliefs	62	35	48
Community practices	15	24	22
Intervention practices	6	23	10
N	83	82	80

According to survey results, the dominant languages in the family, society and education are Kazakh and Russian. English appeared to be the least dominant in comparison with other two languages, but slightly more dominant in the society than at home and educational environment. Moreover, the survey showed that all three languages are more likely to be used in education for the moment. The respondents highlighted that languages are dominant because of the citizens' linguistic repertoires (Table 3).

**Table 03.** The in-family language policy and language practices in education.

	<b>Society</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Education</b>
Kazakh	30	59	35
Russian	45	18	25
English	10	7	7
All three languages	0	0	13
N	85	84	80

## **7. Conclusion**

This study results demonstrated that Kazakhstani citizens' beliefs are more likely to influence their family language policy and language policy in education in multi-ethnic country like Kazakhstan. Since the population is encouraged to learn three languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English) within the language policy proposed by the government, the study showed that citizens highlight using three languages only in education, and clear bilingualism is noticeable in social and home environments. Therefore, a wise delivery of the national policy is necessary for smooth transition from bilingual family language policy into trilingual language policy considering citizens' personal beliefs and ideologies. It is also important for strong establishment of language practices in national and community levels throughout the country as well as educating the competitive and professional generation in global arena.

This study is limited by not concerning the respondents' gender, ethnicity, education level, and other important factors. The further research may concern not only parents and children's part in family



language policy and language practices in education, but also teachers' and administrators' voices which may explain many issues why family language policy and language practices in education from their part.

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