Maintaining One Language While Learning Another.

Moroccan Children in Belgium

Graziela Dekeyser¹ & Gillian Stevens²

¹*Centre for Sociological Research, KU Leuven*

²*Department of Sociology, University of Alberta*

Relevance of the study

Language proficiencies of children are crucial for

Increasing chances of success in the destination country

Maintaining a bond with their own ethnocultural heritage

Current political and public debates in Flanders, Belgium

Focused on the importance of institutional language (Dutch) proficiency

BUT no census data available about language

Forbidden by law

Setting of the study

Antwerp city > Antwerp province > Flanders (Dutch-speaking)
> Belgium

Moroccans in Antwerp, Belgium

Currently the largest non-EU immigrant group in Belgium

Very linguistically diverse group

Moroccans in Antwerp, Belgium

Currently the largest immigrant group in Belgium

Very linguistically diverse group

BUT

Linguistic processes within the Moroccan immigrant communities in Europe are *understudied*

Especially compared to the Turkish community

Theoretical framework

Research questions

- RQ (1a): How are language practice, ideology, and management related to children's proficiency in their **heritage language**?
- RQ (1b) How are language practice, ideology, and management related to children's proficiency in **Dutch**?
- RQ (2) Do the relationships between language practice, ideology, and management and children's proficiency in their heritage language **parallel** those between language practice, ideology, and management and children's proficiency in Dutch?

Data & method

Multilingualism in Antwerp (MInA) dataset

Disproportional quota sample: schools > pupils in 5th & 6th year (10-12y.)

Online survey during school hours

Subsample[!]: children of Moroccan ancestry (N=312)

Measures:

Self-reports of children on language proficiency[!]

Self-reports of children on language practices, attitudes, and management

Data & method

Method

Linear regressions

Controlling for data clustering within schools

Results: full model – language practice

Variable	Heritage Language		Dutch	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	.674	.578	2.349	.357
Language Practice				
Dutch Mainly Used to Child ³				
By Both Parents	-.325	.210	-.114	.094
Only By Mother	-.354*	.163	-.064	.091
Only By Father	-.399**	.134	.011	.090
HL Used By Siblings? (yes=1)	-.095	.141		
Dutch Used By Siblings? (yes=1)			.574***	.125
Number of Non-Dutch Languages ⁴				
Two	.315*	.126	-.093	.064
Three or More	.273	.273	.130	.162
Mother's Proficiency in Dutch			.113***	.028
Mother's Proficiency in HL	.439**	.144		
Father's Proficiency in Dutch			.034	.028
Father's Proficiency in HL	-.079	.078		

Note: +p < 0.10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. Controlled for: ethnicity, migration generation, gender, age at immigration, parents' intermarriage, sibship position

Results: full model – language attitudes

Variable	Heritage Language		Dutch	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	.674	.578	2.349	.357
Language Attitudes				
Importance to Parents that				
Child Learns Dutch			.122*	.045
Child Learns HL	.181+	.096		
Importance to Child				
Of Learning Dutch			.008	.051
Of Learning HL	.067	.076		

Note: +p < 0.10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. Controlled for: ethnicity, migration generation, gender, age at immigration, parents' intermarriage, sibship position

Results: full model – language management

Variable	Heritage Language		Dutch	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	.674	.578	2.349	.357
Language Management				
Amount of Linguistic Brokering	.030*	.013	-.011	.010
Language Rules at School ⁵				
HL Always Allowed	.373*	.162	-.013	.150
HL Sometimes Allowed	.320*	.122	-.148	.190
Child Doesn't Know	.069	.205	-.065	.090
R ²	.236		.350	

Note: +p < 0.10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. Controlled for: ethnicity, migration generation, gender, age at immigration, parents' intermarriage, sibship position

Conclusion & Discussion

Children's proficiency in their HL and Dutch are affected by different aspects of FLP

HL proficiency is shaped by parents who value the learning of the HL, are fluent in it and use it

Dutch proficiency is fostered by the use of Dutch by the younger generation within the household, along with parents' attitudes and proficiency

Conclusion & Discussion

Language policy outside of the household affects HL proficiency but not Dutch proficiency

Thus suggesting that the goal of the monolingual policy within schools is not reached

Conclusion & Discussion

Valuable insights into children's experience of the world

By asking children themselves, instead of adult actors

Children are active agents in shaping their language repertoires

"If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."

Questions?

Forthcoming in:

Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development