

Heritage Language Media Consumption in Multilingual Families: A Closer Look

by

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Abstract

Media, such as television, music, and books, are integral to most modern households. Hence, it can significantly influence children's home learning environment. For multilingual migrant parents interested in passing on their heritage language and culture to their children, media can be a powerful medium. This research study explored whether heritage language media use is facilitated by the following factors: family language background, family structure, and family heritage language perceptions. We retrospectively executed a causal-comparative quantitative analysis on interviews with parents of multilingual kindergarteners in Montréal, Canada. The results determined that family valuation of the heritage language had a statistically significant relationship with heritage language media use in the household. These results contribute to understanding multilingual family language policy, heritage language development and maintenance.

Preface

This thesis derived its data from a national research collaboration between Dr. Andrea MacLeod at the University of Alberta, and the University of Montréal. It is an original work by Anusha Khepar. No part of this thesis has been previously published.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Andrea MacLeod for her guidance. I would also like to show appreciation to my committee members for their valuable time and feedback. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my parents, sister, partner and friends for their endless support and encouragement.

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Introduction

A family language policy is the explicit (Shohamy, 2006) and overt (Schiffman, 1996) planning of language patterns within the home (King et al., 2008). It dictates language use across all domains of family life: communication, literacy, media, education, travel, social participation and activities (King et al., 2008). In recent years, investigations of family language policy have turned their focus to migrant families. In this context, family language policies are made or broken for preserving the heritage language within and across generations in diasporic communities.

Media is a domain that has been studied little in relation to family language policy. Specific research on this relationship ascertains that media can augment multilingual migrant individuals' knowledge of, and connection with their heritage language and culture. However, research on maximizing the benefits of media for heritage language and culture preservation is elusive. Specifically, what factors facilitate heritage language media consumption at home?

The present study will attempt to answer this question. We will repurpose data from a larger research project exploring language development and maintenance in young, multilingual children residing in Montréal, Québec, Canada.

Background

The following sections will explore and expand on existing knowledge in the fields of family language policy and heritage language maintenance, shift and loss.

Heritage Language Maintenance, Shift, and Loss in Diasporas

A heritage language can be defined as one that has personal and historical importance to individuals and families (King & Ennser-Kananen, 2012). Also sometimes referred to as a community language or a home language, the heritage language among migrant diasporas exists along a continuum (King & Ennser-Kananen, 2012). On one end is a state of heritage language maintenance, in which heritage language use is sustained over successive migrant generations (Fishman, 1972; Sevinç, 2016). On the other end is a state of heritage language loss characterized by the encroachment of the dominant language. A dominant language can be defined as one that is spoken by the majority of a given population.

Between heritage language maintenance and loss, we have language shift: a state of flux in which the heritage language contends with the dominant language (Fishman, 1972; Sevinç, 2016). An interplay of personal, social and economic factors facilitates movement along this spectrum. For example, opportunities for education and employment are some of the top motivators for increased dominant language use. In many migrant families, the dominant language is lauded as the pathway to academic and professional success (Bissoonauth, 2011; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Zhang, 2010). Because of this, some parents aggrandize the dominant language over the heritage language, inadvertently contributing to language shift. However, immigrant parents residing in neighbourhoods with a homogenous heritage language are less likely to emphasize dominant language learning. In these communities, losing the heritage

language would isolate their children from a more significant proportion of the population (Lieberson, 1971).

At the same time, however, children of migrant parents may themselves experience internal and external pressures to undergo language shifts as they gain awareness of their linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences (Fillmore, 1991).

The subsequent section explores tools for gauging language shift, as the sum effect of the abovementioned factors.

Assessing Language Maintenance & Shift: Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) is an 8-stage framework for assessing language vitality, which it defines as a large *number of speakers* using a language in multiple *domains of use* (Lewis & Simons, 2010). Stage 1, high language vitality, is associated with the use of the language across educational, occupational, government and media domains. Conversely, at Stage 8, most language use is by older generations (Fishman, 2001) in restricted domains.

Fishman postulates that language strength is predominantly achieved through steady intergenerational transmission: parents teaching the heritage language to their children. When there are lapses in sharing the heritage language with the next generation, the heritage language moves along the continuum to a state of language shift and, without intervention, complete language loss. In pivotal work on reversing language shift, Fishman (1991) further affirms the role of the home context by stating that the reversing language shift hinges on the family and community.

Although traditionally developed for assessing language endangerment, language vitality models can also be applied to evaluating the stability of a heritage language in migrant diasporas

(Bezioglu-Goktolga & Yagmur, 2022; Canagarajah, 2008; Gafaranga, 2010). In this context, data trends conjecture that assimilation to the host country's dominant language occurs within three generations (Fishman, 1972, 1991). First-generation immigrants arrive with a firm grasp of, and preference for, the heritage language. Their children, second-generation immigrants, are typically bilingual, with equal mastery of heritage and dominant languages. Their grandchildren, the third-generation immigrants, predominantly favour the dominant language (Fishman, 1972, 1991). Considerable research has explored these intergenerational language shift patterns. Most recently, studies have discovered no distinct demarcation in language use between the first and second generations of migrants. This connotes that the second-generation is not unwaveringly and uniformly bilingual across their lifespan. Instead, their heritage and dominant language use patterns gradually shift as they age into different life phases (childhood, adolescence, adulthood). As such, the second generation is particularly fascinating as the crux of language shifts. In contrast, the third generation is often invariably monolingual in the dominant language across their lifespan. Their language use patterns are rooted in heritage language loss (Ortman, 2008).

Family Language Policy

Defining Family Language Policy

To reiterate, family language policy can be defined as the explicit (Shohamy, 2006) and overt (Schiffman, 1996) planning of language use within the home (King et al., 2008). It is an emerging subsect of research that derives its origins from, and addresses the gaps within, two distinct areas of research: language policy and child language acquisition.

The field of language policy explores the rules, regulations, and protocols that actualize intentional language shifts in groups, societies or systems (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Three foundational components comprise a language policy. The first is language ideologies, which are

the values and beliefs regarding language and language use (Spolsky, 2004, 2012). Within the context of family language policy, family members within and across generations can have conflicting language ideologies, particularly in multilingual migrant families. The second component is language practices, which are the behavioural manifestations of these ideologies (Spolsky, 2004, 2012). The third component is language management, which is modifications to language practices through planning and interventions (Spolsky, 2004, 2012). Previous research on language policy has honed in on language policies at the institutional level, but language policies within the context of the home environment remain comparatively understudied.

Developing and Implementing a Family Language Policy

Parents are key players in developing and implementing a family language policy. Parents make decisions regarding which languages their children will learn, how the instruction of those languages will occur, and under which contexts those languages will be used (King et al., 2008). Their decisions have serious implications for transmitting the heritage language to their children. However, parents' choices are not made without regard to socio-political, socio-economic and cultural influences external to the family.

One such influence is the awareness of the socio-political power of particular languages and the potential for discrimination against immigrants who do not speak those languages. Many migrant parents may have experienced ethnic and linguistic discrimination, which consciously and unconsciously guide their family language planning (Curd-Christiansen, 2009). The socio-political systems of their country of origin may also influence family language policies in the new host country. This is best exemplified by Canagarajah's (2008) study on the attrition of Tamil among the Sri Lankan diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Through interviews and observations, Canagarajah describes how the British occupation of Sri

Lanka and the subsequent introduction of English as a “superior language” resulted in a negative valuation of Tamil. This sentiment has trickled down to modern generations and manifested as a rapid loss of the language among the Sri Lankan diaspora.

Many immigrant parents believe certain languages are invaluable for economic and social advancement. Accordingly, their appraisal of the heritage language is coloured by its market value in the host country. In a study of Chinese immigrant families residing in Québec, Canada, Curdt-Christiansen (2009) found that parents viewed both English and French as equally imperative for socio-economic advancement. French is the primary language of communication, media, education and government in Québec, while in the remainder of Canada, it is English.

In contrast to socio-political and socio-economic factors, cultural factors generally protect the heritage language against erosion. Language and culture are inexplicably intertwined (Verkuyten et al., 2019). As a critical feature of any ethnic group, language unlocks a set of shared values and beliefs, a culture, and a sense of solidarity and belonging with the ethnolinguistic group (Tannenbaum & Peleg, 2020). Immigrant parents often believe that proficiency in the heritage language promotes cultural identity and a sense of belonging (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Ultimately, the manner and extent to which families prioritize different socio-economic, cultural and socio-political factors defines their unique family language policy.

The Bidirectionality of Family Language Policy

The preceding section highlights how family language policies are influenced by several interacting top-down processes. However, children are active participants in their language learning. As such, family language policies are also shaped by bottom-up processes, including children’s agency and socializing power on household members. Principle research by Luykx

(2005) concluded that children may directly or indirectly socialize their parents through language in several ways. For example, parents may adapt their language patterns to improve their children's social or economic prospects, thus adapting their family language policies. Parents may also learn new languages directly from their children, who often have greater access to them through schooling, literature and media.

Child agency, within the context of family policy, can be defined as the ability of a child to accept or resist the beliefs and practices regarding language use in their home environment (Gyogi, 2015). As discussed earlier, children and parents in migrant families maintain a reciprocal relationship regarding language socialization. Children in these families may haggle their family's language policies during interactions by exercising personal agency. Research on conversational patterns in migrant families reveals that many parents encourage their children to use the heritage language at home during specific interactions. However, children may resist these expectations by offering no response, a response in the majority language, showing negative affect, or reversing conversational roles (Fogle & King, 2013; Hua, 2008; Zhan, 2021). Parents frequently responded to the opposition by terminating the interaction or changing their language demands (Fogle & King, 2013; Zhan, 2021). A study from the Tema Institute & Kheirkhah (2016) found that when children refused to communicate in the heritage language, parents resorted to a parallel discourse in which the parents communicated in the target heritage language and the child responded in the dominant language (Kheirkhah, 2016). As this demonstrates, children can use their agency to negotiate the established family language policies.

In addition to socializing their parents, children within a family also socialize each other. Their birth order particularly influences their language developmental trajectory, preferences and use. Older siblings are also the first to obtain schooling and, thus, the first to inject the dominant

culture and language into the home (Williams & Gregory, 2001). For younger siblings, one of their primary communication partners in the home becomes a dominant language source. Instantly, their exposure to the heritage language is reduced compared to the older siblings (Tsinivits & Unsworth, 2011). Older siblings are also often perceived as language experts by their younger siblings, which positions them as informal language teachers, providing instructions, explanations and feedback. Through this, they can dictate language use and choices in conversations, typically favouring the majority language (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2018). This manifests as apparent differences in the language patterns of older and younger siblings. Younger siblings are exposed to the majority language earlier and ultimately prefer the majority language (Kinsella, 2021). However, King (2013) determined that in some unique cases, it is the older siblings that tether their family to the heritage language and culture while the younger siblings act as a force of language shift.

Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Maintenance

The ideologies that underlie family language policies set the stage for parent-child interactions and, thus, child language development (De Houwer, 1999). Given this, family language policy is particularly relevant to understanding multilingual language development in migrant families, where children are often exposed to the dominant and heritage languages. On a smaller scale, the acquisition of the heritage language supports their children's connection to their religion, culture, extended family and the cohesiveness of the family unit as a whole (Kwon, 2017; Tannenbaum, 2012). On a larger scale, transmitting the heritage language to future generations within the diaspora contributes to its global robustness.

Research conducted on language maintenance and revitalization asserts that family-internal factors are fundamental despite the significant influence of family-external

factors (Fishman, 1991). Several studies on migrant families have similarly concluded that parents are their children's most prominent source of heritage language exposure (Canagarajah, 2008; Slavkov, 2017). Additional research in multilingual families suggests that caregiver passivity toward the family language policy contributes to increased heritage language loss (Canagarajah, 2008; Gafaranga, 2010; Lukyx, 2003). For these reasons, it is essential to discern how migrant households can foster heritage language acquisition and maintenance in their children.

Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Maintenance Through Media

In families, expectations regarding language use apply to many domains, including media. Media encompasses music, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet. Many migrant parents believe that increased consumption of books and television in the heritage language will enhance their children's heritage language development and their association with the culture (Kwon, 2017; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Said, 2021; Wang & Hamid, 2022). These beliefs are not unfounded, as research indicates that music, audiobooks (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009), television programs, cartoons, DVDs (Cho & Krashen, 2000; Nestreruk, 2010;) and print books (Caldas, 2006) can support heritage language learning (Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2012), and foster connections with immediate and extended family (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Wang & Hamid, 2022). Traditional stories, songs, and videos about history and customs can introduce novel vocabulary and grammar and contribute to a greater understanding of cultural norms. Furthermore, access to orthography through media materials can also foster interest and support the learning of reading and writing in the heritage language (Szecsi & Szilagyi, 2012; Tse, 2001). While media cannot replace natural language input, it can be a valuable asset for immigrant parents in the absence of social structures and contexts that provide a comprehensive language learning environment.

However, access to media materials in the heritage language is not comparable for all heritage languages. Research on multilingual collections available in libraries across Canada highlighted that only a select number of heritage languages are represented in their multilingual resources catalogues (Dilevko & Dali, 2002). Therefore, it may be more challenging for families from less popular language backgrounds to source media materials. Relating this research back to heritage language maintenance, languages strongly supported through media materials are more resistant to language attrition (Portes & Hao, 1998).

As mentioned, family language policies are bidirectional, with parents and children negotiating their ultimate terms and conditions. The dissonance between parents and children concerning language use can be intensified in the context of media. In these instances, parents must often adapt their language learning and use expectations to mitigate conflict. However, when parents and their children agree, children can enhance their language learning by introducing new media (Wang & Hamid, 2022). In this sense, media is simultaneously an instrument for heritage language maintenance and a measure of heritage language shift. The presence of heritage language in everyday media and other domains favours high language vitality. On the other hand, the absence of the heritage language in standard media may indicate a decreasing language vitality. Nonetheless, research is limited on factors that encourage and support media exposure in the heritage language. The upcoming section will focus on some of the factors that influence heritage language use patterns within the household. Given the value of media in heritage language development and maintenance, this study will determine whether those factors also influence heritage language media use in migrant households.

Home Environment Factors Influencing Heritage Language Use Patterns

Family Language Background

Research has rarely compared multilingual language development among children of endogamous and exogamous couples. The studies that do exist very clearly indicate that children from linguistically homogeneous families demonstrate more excellent proficiency in their heritage language (Park, 2019; Portes & Hao, 1998; Slavkov, 2017). Children from linguistically heterogeneous families face additional barriers to successfully learning the heritage language. Firstly, they receive heritage language input from only one parent. Their heritage language input is further reduced if the parent who speaks the heritage language is not the primary caregiver (Noro, 2009). This applies to all types of exogamous couples: those in which both partners identify with different minority heritage cultures and those in which only one partner identifies with a minority heritage culture. Among the latter, the other partner may belong to the dominant culture or may not identify with their heritage culture. Linguistically heterogeneous parents may also have to accommodate the perspectives and preferences of their partner and their partner's family. Studies on mixed marriages in Australia and South Korea have found that mothers faced resistance from their partner's relatives when sharing their heritage language and culture with their children (Mejía, 2016; Park, 2019). The discord among linguistically and culturally heterogeneous families can impact the extent to which the children value, and master their heritage language(s).

Family Structure

Research on whether multi-generational/multi-familial structures facilitate heritage language proficiency is conflicted but overwhelmingly suggests that a large, cohesive family

structure encourages heritage language use at home. It is also associated with more excellent proficiency in the heritage language (Portes & Hao, 1998). Yee (2021) established that the presence of grandparents, particularly those not fluent in the dominant language, was associated with the increased importance of maintaining the heritage language and increased proficiency in the heritage language among American-born Chinese families. The participants from this study who rated themselves as highly proficient in their Chinese dialect consistently cited having family members to communicate with as the best heritage language learning resource. Even when grandparents do not reside directly in the home, communication with grandparents using technology results in heightened knowledge and use of the heritage language (Said, 2021). Parents may also be more motivated to transmit the heritage language to preclude disconnect between their children and family members in these particular family structures. However, if and how the presence of extended family members in the household translates into heritage language, media consumption has yet to be determined.

Family Heritage Language Valuation

As discussed earlier, parents' values and beliefs are fundamental to family language policies. Several studies have investigated how parents' appraisal of the heritage language specifically translates to heritage language transmission efforts. Research on migrant families determined that parents who are strong proponents of the heritage language and culture were most inclined to make concerted efforts to provide their children with opportunities to develop proficiency in the heritage language (Areej, 2016; Dekeyser & Stevens, 2019; Idaryani & Fidyati, 2022; Park & Sarkar, 2007). These efforts included establishing expectations regarding heritage language development and use, travelling back to their country of origin, using a mixed-language strategy and employing heritage language (Areej, 2016; Park & Sarkar, 2007).

Interviews with the Nahuatl Indigenous community in Mexico identified a range of attitudes towards the Indigenous heritage language. However, anti-Indigenous attitudes within the community dissuaded its members from transmitting the heritage language to their children (Gomashie, 2023). For instance, one individual in this study expressed that they were not interested in teaching their children the language because they believed it sounded unattractive. Ultimately, parents' perceptions of the heritage language shape their children's perceptions. However, many of these studies have taken place among migrant communities in other countries, which diverge greatly from each other and Canada (Areej, 2016; Dekeyser & Stevens, 2019; Idaryani & Fidyati, 2022). The subsequent section will discuss the uniqueness of the Canadian linguistic and cultural landscape.

Ethnic & Linguistic Diversity in Canada

Canada's immigrant population continues to flourish rapidly, contributing to a wealth of ethnic and linguistic diversity. According to recent census data, 23 % of Canadian residents (8.3 million) were born in another country, and 1.3 million new immigrants have permanently settled in Canada over the past five years (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Statistics Canada projects that immigration to Canada will continue to grow in the decades to come, with immigrants eventually representing 29.1% to 34.0% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2022a). While Canada recognizes two official languages, English and French, more than 450 heritage languages are spoken. The most common non-official languages, that is, languages other than English or French, reported as heritage languages were Arabic (10.3%), Tagalog (8.4%), Mandarin (7.9%) and Punjabi (6.5%) (Statistics Canada, 2022b). These statistics cannot overstate the importance of investigating heritage language development and maintenance in Canada, as it applies to a growing proportion of the population.

The Current Study

Project Context

This research attempted to establish the relationship between household heritage language media consumption and several home environment factors: family language background, family structure, and family heritage language valuation. This was accomplished through the causal-comparative analysis of data from a large research project to understand multilingual children's language development and maintenance.

As discussed, family language policy embodies many aspects of, and decisions regarding, family life: literacy, communication, media and education. Traditionally, research in this field has heavily probed communication, literacy, and education among monolingual speakers of majority languages. Only recently have researchers turned their attention to communication, literacy and education among multilingual, minority language speakers. The consideration of media is new to many academic spheres, including family language policy and heritage language acquisition. Consequently, their relationship with media is less clear.

Furthermore, studies in this field often spotlight specific communities' or families' heritage language patterns. While this provides detailed insights into their experiences (Canagarajah, 2008; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015; King, 2013), it reduces the applicability of the conclusions to different heritage language diasporas (Clyne, 1991; Portes & Hao, 1998). Another consideration is that the speed of language shift can vary across immigrant populations of differing national origins (Ortman, 2008). Few studies have explored the language shift trends across multiple heritage language communities to establish general trends, and even fewer have yet to do so in the Canadian context.

This study takes place in Montréal, Québec, Canada. Québec has the most significant proportion of French speakers in Canada, where it serves as a heritage language to 71% of its residents. However, Quebec also receives the second-largest proportion of recent immigrants. Therefore, this province, precisely its capital metropolis, Montréal, provides a unique landscape to explore this topic.

Project Questions & Hypotheses

Given that family language background broadly impacts heritage language use patterns within the home environment, is there a relationship specifically between family language background and heritage language media consumption? As the existing literature suggests, linguistically homogenous family backgrounds generally promote heritage language use at home.

We hypothesize that this trend will also be observed explicitly in the media domain.

Given that family structure broadly impacts heritage language use patterns within the home environment, is there a relationship specifically between family structure and heritage language media consumption? As the existing literature suggests, multi-generational and/or multi-familial family structures generally promote heritage language use at home. **We**

hypothesize that this trend will also be observed explicitly in the media domain.

Given that family heritage language attitudes broadly impact heritage language use patterns within the home environment, is there a relationship specifically between family heritage language valuation and heritage language media consumption? As the existing literature suggests, positive parental attitudes towards the heritage language generally promote heritage language use at home. **We hypothesize that this trend will also be observed explicitly in the media domain.**

Methods

Participants

The study consisted of 179 bilingual kindergarten children between the ages of 4;9, and 6;10 (years; months) as well as their parents (see Table 1). Among these participants, 22 different heritage languages were spoken, including minority heritage languages and majority heritage languages (English and French) (see Appendix A). For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the 150 participants who spoke a minority heritage language. As a result, families who recognized the majority language as their heritage language were not included. All families participating in this study were recruited through socioeconomically disadvantaged schools in Montréal, Québec’s inner-city neighbourhoods (Ministère de l’Éducation 2016, 2017). The language of instruction at all of these schools was French, the official language in Québec.

Table 1: Participant Demographics.

	Age (Months)	% of Sample	
Mean	69.8	Girls	68.7%
Standard Deviation	4.7	Boys	31.3%

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Families were included in the original research project if their child:

1. Had previously attended one year of pre-kindergarten classes, part-time or full-time.
2. Was enrolled in their second year of formal education.
3. Spoke a language other than French at home.

Families were excluded from the original research project if the parents were not proficient in English or French due to the limited availability of linguistically diverse research assistants.

Ethics Approval

The original research study from which the data for this study was extrapolated was approved by the Research Ethics Board. Additional approval was obtained from the affiliated school board. No additional ethics approval was required.

Procedure

Data Collection

Research assistants conducted semi-structured interviews with parents using the *Canadian Questionnaire of Language Use & Exposure in Bilingual Preschool-Aged Children (C-QUEB; MacLeod, 2021)*. Designed to be administered in short-answer format, the *C-QUEB* poses questions related to the child's language background, the parents' language background, the siblings' language background, language use patterns in the home, age of exposure to different languages, and the amount of exposure to different languages across contexts. The interviews took place in person or over the phone, in French or English.

Data Analysis

Responses from parents were translated into a spreadsheet and dummy-coded categorically to allow for analyses (see Table 2 and Appendices C-F). Because the data was coded categorically, non-parametric analyses were most appropriate. The purpose of the statistical procedures was to compare whether the mean of the dependent variable (heritage language media consumption in the household) varied between groups of various independent variables: family language background, family structure, and heritage language valuation. As such, the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test were selected. The two tests differ

in that the Mann-Whitney U test suits variables with two or fewer groups, while the Kruskal-Wallis H test accommodates more than three groups. If the relationship between the variables was proven statistically significant, a Dunn’s Test was executed. This post-hoc test follows non-parametric analyses to pinpoint which groups within an independent variable differ significantly. All statistical procedures were performed using Jeffrey’s Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) software (JASP Team, 2023.)

Table 2: Coding Scheme.

Variables	Coding Scheme
Heritage Language Media Consumption	0: The heritage language is not used in any media types (film, television, radio), or information is unavailable. 1: The heritage language is used in one of the three media types (film, television, radio). 2: The heritage language is used in two media types (film, television, and radio). 3: The heritage language is used in all three media types (film, television, radio).
Family Language Background	0: Parents have different heritage language backgrounds. 1: Parents have similar heritage language backgrounds.
Family Structure	0: A nuclear household consisting of parents and no other extended family members. 1: A multi-generational and/or multi-familial household consisting of parents and one or more extended family members.
Family Heritage Language Valuation	0: The parents minimally value their heritage language. 1: The parents moderately value their heritage language. 2: The parents maximally value their heritage language.

Results

The most common heritage languages in this sample were Bengali (23.3%), Tamil (16.7%) and Tagalog (12.7%) (see Appendix A). Interestingly, most (58.0%) of the families in the study did not watch television or films or listen to the radio in the heritage language. A small subset (18.7%) of families consumed two forms of media in their heritage language, and 14.7%, one form of media. Only a select percentage (8.7%) of families used the heritage language in all of these media domains. Of the three different forms of media considered in this study—television, film, and radio—the least commonly used was radio (see Appendix B).

This study had three research questions, asking if there was a statistically significant relationship between heritage language media consumption and the following home environment factors: family language background, family structure, and family heritage language valuation. The results for each of these research questions are outlined in successive sections.

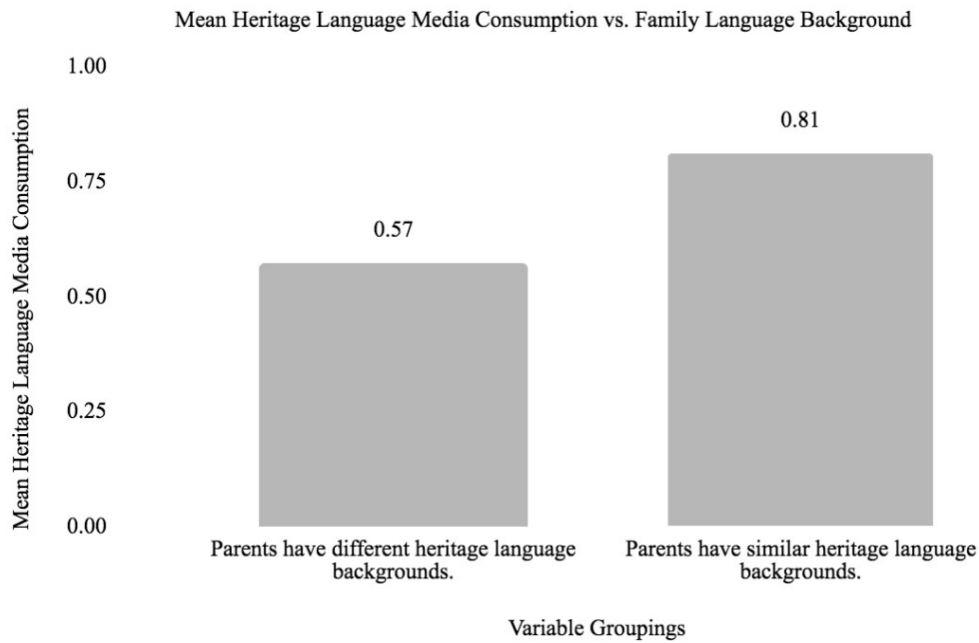
Family Language Background

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated no significant difference in heritage language media consumption among families with endogamous parents and families with exogamous parents, $U = 828.50, p > 0.05$. These families were comparable regarding their heritage language media consumption. In the context of this research study, these results suggest that family language background does not facilitate or hinder heritage language media use in multilingual families. Table 3 provides additional descriptive statistics on this independent variable. Figure 1 provides the mean heritage language media consumption in relation to family language background.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Family Language Background.

Variable Groups	% of Sample
Parents have different heritage language backgrounds.	69.5%
Parents have similar heritage language backgrounds.	30.5%

Figure 1: Mean Heritage Language Media Consumption vs. Family Language Background.



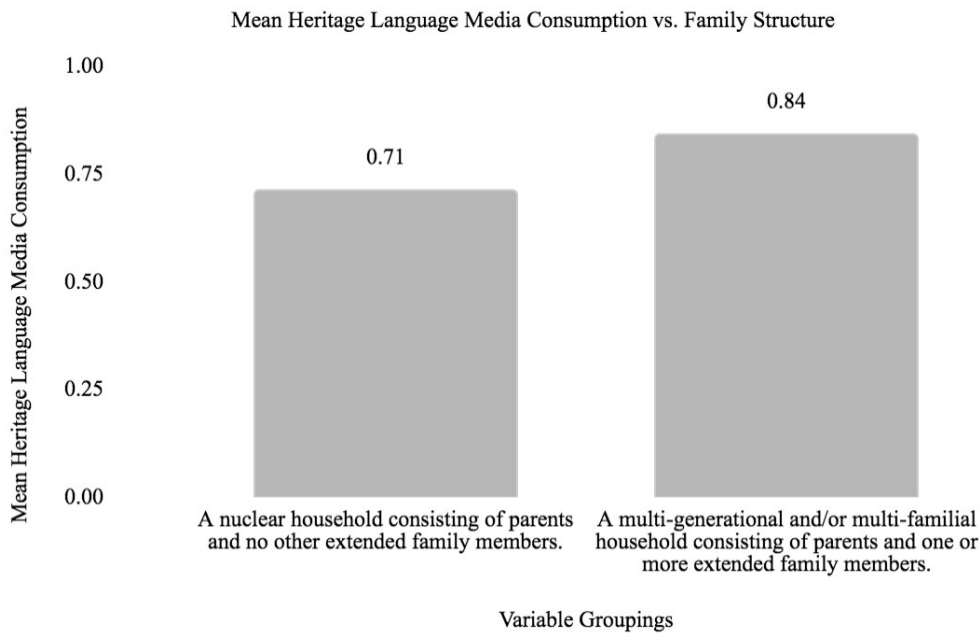
Family Structure

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated no significant difference in heritage language media consumption among nuclear families and multigenerational and/or multi-familial families, $U = 2998.50, p > 0.05$. These families were comparable regarding their heritage language media consumption. In the context of this research study, these results suggest that family structure does not facilitate or hinder heritage language media use in multilingual families. Table 4 provides additional descriptive statistics on this independent variable. Figure 2 provides the mean heritage language media consumption in relation to family structure.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Family Structure.

Variable Groups	% of Sample
A nuclear household consisting of parents and no other extended family members.	56.0%
A multi-generational and/or multi-familial household consisting of parents and one or more extended family members.	44.0%

Figure 2: Mean Heritage Language Media Consumption vs. Family Structure.



Family Heritage Language Valuation

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated a significant difference in heritage language media consumption among families who minimally, moderately, and maximally valued their heritage language, $H = 6.19, p < 0.05$. These families differed in their heritage language media consumption. In the context of this study, these results suggest that the valuation of the heritage language influences heritage language media consumption in multilingual families.

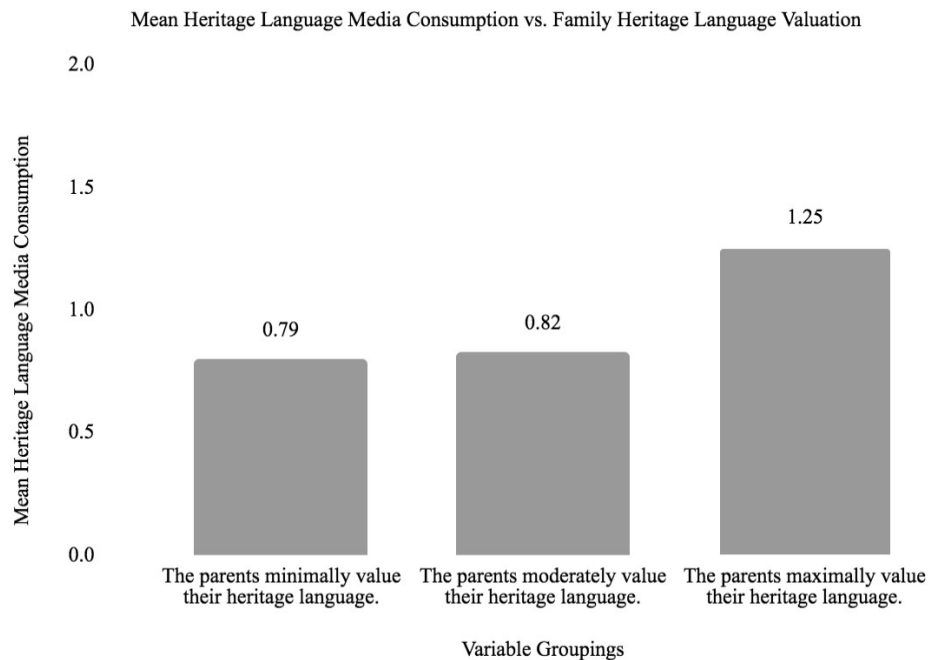
The post-hoc pairwise comparison using Dunn's Test revealed that heritage language media consumption differed between families who moderately and maximally valued their

heritage language, $z = -2.14, p < 0.05$. No other differences were significant. These results implicate that families who strongly identify with their heritage language and culture are the most predisposed to engaging with their heritage language through the media domain. Table 5 provides additional descriptive statistics on this independent variable. Figure 3 provides the mean heritage language media consumption in relation to family heritage language valuation.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Heritage Language Valuation.

Variable Groups	% of Sample
The parents minimally value their heritage language.	16.5%
The parents moderately value their heritage language.	27.8%
The parents maximally value their heritage language.	55.7%

Figure 3: Mean Heritage Language Media Consumption vs. Family Heritage Language Valuation.



Discussion

This research study is situated at the intersection of family language policy, heritage language development and maintenance in migrant families. It explored the relationship between heritage language media consumption and the following home environment factors: family language background, family structures and family perceptions of the heritage language. The study's results established a statistically significant relationship between the family valuation of the heritage language and heritage language media consumption. The following sections discuss these findings in detail.

Family Language Background

The first research question inquired about the validity of the relationship between family language background and heritage language media consumption. The data was grouped into the following categories: parents with different language backgrounds (0) and parents with similar language backgrounds (1). It was initially hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the variables. However, statistical analysis determined that family language background did not significantly affect heritage language media consumption and exposure.

Research suggests that endogamous couples have greater heritage language use at home compared to exogamous couples (Mejía, 2016; Park, 2019; Slavkov, 2017). Despite this, couples with similar language backgrounds were not significantly more likely to consume media in their shared heritage language in this study. This outcome may be a consequence of several factors. If the parent who does not claim the heritage language has substantial exposure to their partner's language and culture (such as through living in their partner's country of origin) and adopts the heritage culture at home, heritage language use at home increases (Noro, 2009). Research has

also shown that among exogamous couples, the attitudes of extended family members can negatively influence heritage language development and use at home (Mejía, 2016; Park, 2019). However, most of this research is based on multi-generational and/or multi-familial households. If exogamous couples maintain a nuclear family structure, there may be fewer unfavourable influences from relatives. Although the information is unavailable, these circumstances and the size and composition of the sample population may have dampened some of the anticipated variance between the different family language backgrounds.

Family Structure

The second research question inquired about the validity of the relationship between family structure and heritage language media consumption. The data was grouped into the following categories: nuclear households (0) and multi-generational and/or multi-familial households (1). It was initially hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the variables. However, statistical analysis determined that family structure did not significantly affect heritage language media consumption and exposure.

The existing literature proposed that a comprehensive heritage language network with two parents and additional family members who all speak the same language may be highly conducive to heritage language development and maintenance. Despite this, the association between heritage language media consumption and family structure was not statistically significant in this study. It may be that households with resident relatives may be no more inclined to engage with heritage language media than households without resident relatives, as they can independently construct a language nest offering extensive linguistic and cultural input (Fillmore, 1991; Ishizawa, 2004; Arriagada, 2005). While considerable exposure to the heritage language and culture is valuable for heritage language retention, a language nest consisting of

co-ethnic friends and neighbours may be a stronger influence than co-kin (Lieberson, 1971; Portes & Hao, 1998). Although the information is unavailable, these circumstances and the size and composition of the sample population may have dampened some of the anticipated variance between the different family structures.

Family Heritage Language Valuation

The third research question inquired about the validity of the relationship between the family valuation of the heritage language and heritage language media consumption. The data was grouped into three categories: families in which minimally value their heritage language (0), families in which parents moderately value their heritage language (1), and families in which parents maximally value their heritage language (2). It was initially hypothesized that there would be a relationship between the variables. Statistical analysis determined that family valuation of the heritage language influenced heritage language media consumption and exposure. Specifically, heritage language media consumption contrasted between families who moderately and maximally valued their heritage language.

This outcome elucidates that, exclusively, strong attitudes (maximal appreciation for the heritage language) translate to tangible behaviours. In the greater context, these results imply that steady, strong household attitudes toward the heritage language may be an essential predictor of heritage language transmission through the media domain (Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Sofu, 2009).

This is consistent with the research, which concluded that when parents have strong associations with their heritage language and culture, they are more likely to undertake efforts to ensure that it is shared with their children (Areej, 2016; Dekeyser & Stevens, 2019; Idaryani & Fidyati, 2022; Park & Sarkar, 2007). A lack of interest among multilingual families toward

language use patterns contributes to the decline of heritage language use at home (Canagarajah, 2008; Gafaranga, 2010; Luky, 2003).

Research on the associations between intentions and behaviours also affirms this: strong intentions better predict behaviour and remain stable over time (Conner & Norman, 2022). For this reason, families with maximally positive perceptions of their heritage language may also be more resistant to the family-internal and family-external factors that cause heritage language shift and loss.

Practical Implications

Given the vast ethnic and linguistic diversity in Canada, understanding heritage language patterns is vital for supporting migrant communities in maintaining their language and culture. National data indicates that nearly half (45%) of Canadian-born immigrants do not learn their heritage language (Houle, 2011). As media becomes increasingly pervasive in personal and family lives, it can be an important vehicle for heritage language maintenance in migrant families. Exposure to media in the heritage language is crucial for the children in these families to engage with their heritage language and culture, as they may have limited authentic opportunities to do so in their communities (Caldas, 2006; Cho & Krashen, 2000; DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Said, 2021). This research clarifies the family factors that most significantly impact heritage language media consumption and lays the groundwork for future research into additional factors.

The conclusions of this study are particularly relevant for professionals such as speech-language pathologists working with linguistically and culturally diverse populations. Previously, the research cautioned against reliance on media for language development. Clinicians should be aware that for migrant families teaching their children the heritage

language, there is space for media (Madigan et al., 2020). Clinicians should also be conscious of the lack of awareness among migrant families of the availability of cultural and linguistic media materials. For instance, surveys of libraries across Canada found that media materials in some of the most popular minority heritage languages in their catalogues are heavily underaccessed (Dilevko & Dali, 2002). Clinicians can communicate the importance of parental attitudes towards the heritage language and direct them to heritage language resources as appropriate.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of the Methodology

The depth and breadth of this research study were limited for several reasons. Firstly, given that the original study used the *C-QUEB Questionnaire* to guide parent interviews, this study was confined to a handful of variables. For instance, the questionnaire did not include information about sibling influence or other forms of media such as books and social media. These home environment factors are also known to frame heritage language development and maintenance (Lieberson, 1971; Portes & Hao, 1998; Portes & Schauffler, 1994) across the various family language policy domains. Therefore, these variables may also modulate the media domain.

Research suggests that siblings within a family dictate each other's language use preferences and patterns (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2018; Tsinivits & Unsworth, 2011; Williams & Gregory, 2001). Their ability to do so is partly influenced by their birth order, which also shapes their experiences with their heritage language and culture (King, 2013). Accordingly, despite growing up in the same household, siblings can have vastly different perceptions of their heritage language and culture (King, 2013).

Research also indicates that migrant families from a lower socioeconomic background prioritize majority language learning as a mechanism for socioeconomic advancement (Bissoonaath, 2011; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Zhang, 2010). An important consideration, however, is that for many migrant families, their occupations and socioeconomic status are predetermined and restricted by systemic factors (Hudson, 2023). These factors intersect with racial, religious, ethnic and gender discrimination, which are often inspired by stereotypical representations of immigrants and refugees (Iglesias et al., 2023).

Consequently, there are national patterns of discrepancy between migrant educational and professional backgrounds and current employment (Sharaf, 2013). These consistently force migrant parents into labour-intensive, low-paying, high-turnover jobs (Iglesias et al., 2023). Truly understanding the relationship between family socioeconomic status and the family language policy requires accounting for the combined effects of these family-external and family-internal factors. It also requires comparing and contrasting families with different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, because the sample population was selected from similar neighbourhoods in Montreal, this was not within the scope of this study.

Secondly, using a parent-report questionnaire prohibits access to participants' perceptions of their heritage language and culture, ethnocultural identity, and language preferences. These factors are relevant for understanding heritage language media consumption and heritage language preservation. Children can directly negotiate their family's language policies through language behaviours (Fogle & King, 2013; Hua, 2008; Zhan, 2021). The instances of compromise imply disharmony related to language ideologies among children and parents. Because the children are ultimately responsible for maintaining the heritage language, it is crucial to determine their perceptions and preferences. Moreover, how do they translate to

heritage language preservation efforts, such as engaging with the heritage language and culture through media? While research on language preferences and language perceptions has mostly focused on older children, adolescents, and adults, evidence suggests that the associations begin forming as early as preschool years (Morland & Hwang, 1981).

Thirdly, the results of this study may have also been skewed by the subjectiveness and categorization of parent responses. Definitions of the quantity of media consumption and the importance of the heritage language and culture are highly personal. For instance, the definition of “a little” television consumption in the heritage language may differ from family to family. For these reasons, the categorization of the responses was challenging and abstract.

Limitations of Study Setting

Lastly, Québec, Canada, is a unique cultural, ethnic and linguistic landscape. In 1974, French was established as Quebec's official and majority language. However, French remains a minority language throughout the rest of Canada. To ensure French vitality, Quebec has implemented additional legislation that mandates all children be educated in French. Migrant families in Quebec concerned with preserving their heritage language must contend with not one but two dominant languages. In other large Canadian metropolises, parents typically only have to accommodate English. Outside of Quebec, migrant parents may also find it easier to access heritage language resources for their children, such as media and schooling. This has implications for their consumption of heritage language media and their overall family language policies.

Directions for Future Research

Ultimately, the limitations of this study provide directions for future research. We recommend that future research explore the relationship between heritage language media consumption from the perspective of socioeconomic background and sibling influence. It would be especially valuable to consider these relationships from the first-person perspectives of children and observe how they transform over time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored the relationship between heritage language media consumption in the household and the following home environment factors: family language characteristics, family structure, and family heritage language valuation. A robust, predictive relationship was established between family heritage language valuation and heritage language media consumption.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of Languages Spoken by Participating Families.

Languages	Number of Families	% of Sample
Albanian	3	1.7%
Arabic	8	4.5%
Bengali	35	19.6%
Bulgarian	1	0.5%
Cantonese	1	0.5%
Cebuano	1	0.5%
Creole	2	1.1%
English	26	14.5%
Farsi	3	1.7%
French	2	1.1%
Gujarati	4	2.2%
Ilocano	5	2.8%
Ilonggo	1	0.5%
Khmer	1	0.5%
Mandarin	13	7.3%
Portuguese	1	0.5%
Punjabi	4	2.2%
Romanian	2	1.1%
Serbian	1	0.5%
Spanish	13	7.3%
Tagalog	20	11.1%
Tamil	25	14.0%
Turkish	1	0.5%
Urdu	6	3.3%

Appendix B: Media Use in Participating Families.

Languages	Number of Families	% of Sample
Film	131	73.2%
Television	140	78.2%
Radio	59	33.0%

Appendix C: Coding Protocol for Family Language Background.

Parent 1 Response	Parent 2 Response	Coding Value
Language X	Language Y	0
Language X	Language X	1
Language X	-	1

Appendix D: Coding Protocol for Family Structure.

Parent Response	Coding Value
No response.	0
Family/Grandparents/Cousins/Uncle/Aunt/Other	1

Appendix E: Coding Protocol for Family Heritage Language Valuation.

Parent Response	Coding Value
No response/A little important.	0
Important.	1
Very important.	2

Appendix F: Coding Scheme Protocol Heritage Language Media Consumption.

Television	Radio	Film	Coding Value
Never	Never	Never	0
Never	Never	Sometimes/Always	1
Never	Sometimes/Always	Never	1
Sometimes/Always	Never	Never	1
Sometimes/Always	Sometimes/Always	Sometimes/Always	2