

From Home to the Crèche: Motivations Behind Parents' Language Policies

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in early bilingualism and other studies on early language learning. More and more, bilingual child rearing is seen positively. Even parents themselves identify themselves as “good parents” as they conscientiously and vigorously aim to promote, develop and nurture bilingualism in their children (King & Fogle, 2006). Although these concrete efforts of the parents to introduce two or more languages to their offspring are primarily motivated by their desire to pass down their languages, values and culture to their children, there seem to be other valid and pertinent rationales behind their parental choices of family language policies.

This paper investigates the reasoning, motivations and goals of parents in their choices of language policies and practices for their children. With emphasis on language policies in the level of beliefs and ideologies (King 2000; Spolsky, 2004, 2007; Woolard, 1998), we will explore and investigate parents’ declared language policies. Based on the excerpts of the interviews conducted with parents, our presentation will include data from two research studies: firstly, the study focused on 11 Francophone parents who decided to bring up their children in an English and French environment (Bouchés-Rémond-Rémont, 2015), while the second case included non-French and French parents who have enrolled their young children in a bilingual English-French crèche (Caporal-Ebersold & Young, forthcoming). After closely examining the data from the two separate studies, we will attempt to summarize the parents’ goals, aspirations and motivations behind their language strategies and approaches.

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