“Is it really for talking?”¹: The implications of associating a minority language with the school

Cassie Smith-Christmas

This paper examines how caregivers in a bilingual family discursively link Gaelic to a school context when interacting with Maggie, an eight year-old who is currently enrolled in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. The paper argues that the caregivers achieve this discursive framing primarily through treating Gaelic as a performance language and through orienting to discourses that de-normatise Maggie’s use of her minority language. The paper argues that although the caregivers believe they are encouraging Maggie’s use of Gaelic, by framing the language in a school context, they link Gaelic to authority. It is further argued that this association of Gaelic with authority may be one of the many contributing factors to Maggie’s low use of the language overall. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of this argument in terms of language policy and planning.

Keywords: minority language education; language shift; Gaelic; authority; performance language; language policy

Introduction

Immersion language education can play a vital role in revitalising an autochthonous minority language. In areas where the language shift is so acute that the language is no longer used as a regular mode of communication in the family and/or community, for example, the school can be one of the primary sites children are able to acquire the language fluently (see for example, King, 2000; Baker, 2007; Ó Baoill, 2007). However, despite this potential role in what Fishman (1991) refers to as ‘Reversing Language Shift’ (‘RLS’) and the existence of minority language education at Stage 4 of Fishman’s well-known Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, Fishman also warns (1991, 2001) against using education as a convenient solution to the intricate problems that arise when a language recedes from everyday life. Spolsky (1991) takes a similar stance to Fishman, arguing that the real challenge in education as an RLS strategy lies in ensuring that pupils use the language outside the classroom. This difficulty is not one which is necessarily easily surmountable, as illustrated by Fishman’s (1996, p. 79) recounting of his friend John MacNamara’s experience as a student in an Irish immersion school:

He [John Macnamara] was scolded one day by the lady who ran a candy store. He had just bought the candy from her and began talking English to his sister. ‘You have learned Irish all your life. How come you’re speaking English? You should be talking Irish to your little sister.’ Later, out on the street, the sister asked him, ‘Is Irish really for talking?’ That really did happen. It had not occurred to them that Irish was for talking. It was a school subject like geography and arithmetic.

¹ This quote is from Fishman (1996, p. 79). Full reference given in References section.
The revelation that minority language immersion education does not necessarily result in pupils’ use of the language outside the classroom is well-documented in the case of the Celtic languages, which serve as the focus of this special issue (for examples of this premise in other linguistic contexts, see Hornberger, 2008; Woolard, 2011). Research in Wales (e.g. Edwards & Newcombe, 2005), Ireland (e.g. Harris, 2005) Brittany (e.g. Ó hlfearnáin, 2011), the Isle of Man (e.g. Clague, 2009) and Scotland (e.g. O’Hanlon, McLeod & Paterson, 2010; Will, 2012) shows that while pupils may have the ability to speak the respective Celtic language due mainly or in part to the role of the school, social use of the language remains limited. The dominant language persists on the playground, a reality which, as demonstrated in Hodges’ work in Wales (2009) and Dunmore’s work in Scotland (2015), often carries forth into these pupils’ adult lives. There are a number of reasons for the lack of social use of the minority language, but underpinning them all are the realities of language shift and the reflexive relationship between these realities at the macro and the micro level; as Harris (2005, p. 974) writes in the case of Irish, pupils ‘know that there are very few occasions outside (particularly involving their peers) in which there might be either a real need, or even an opportunity, to speak it.’ The need for complementary efforts in language planning, particularly those which link the home domain to the school, have been recognised (e.g. Edwards & Newcombe, 2005; Armstrong, 2014; Smith-Christmas & Armstrong, 2014) and programmes such as Twf in Wales have sought to build such bridges; however, the challenge of expanding the use of the minority language beyond the classroom remains a formidable one.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how a child (Maggie, aged eight and four months at the time of the recording), as well as various adults in her family (Maggie’s great-aunt Isabel and aunt Màiri), seem to view their minority language—Scottish Gaelic—in the same light as John MacNamara’s sister. Given the apparent ubiquity of classroom minority language use not translating to social minority language use, this is perhaps not surprising; however, what is surprising is that not only does Maggie come from a home where a number of her family members harbour very pro-Gaelic ideologies and enact these ideologies in everyday language practices (in other words, the school and the home complement one another in terms of Maggie’s minority language experience), but that this view is strengthened by the Gaelic-speaking adults’ actions within this particular conversational episode. Through microinteractional analyses of selected excerpts from a recorded interaction, this paper will explore how although the adults appear to think they are encouraging Maggie to use Gaelic, in reality, the way in which they frame Gaelic reifies English as the language for, as John MacNamara’s sister puts it, ‘talking’ and equates Gaelic with didacticism. The paper explores the ideological underpinnings of this framing, postulating that they might in part be a facet of the blame-shifting that sometimes accompanies language shift (cf. Kroskrity, 2009), thus providing further insight into often self-perpetuating nature of language shift and adding further perspective to the challenges of using education as a tactic for minority language revitalisation.
Scottish Gaelic in Education
Scottish Gaelic, henceforth referred to simply as ‘Gaelic,’ is an autochthonous minority language spoken by fewer than 58,000 speakers in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2013). The 1872 Education Act, which for the first time made education compulsory in Scotland between the ages of five to thirteen, made no mention of Gaelic and not only was Gaelic excluded from the curriculum, but pupils were reportedly beaten for using their native language in school (see for example MacKinnon, 1974, p. 55). It was not until more than century later that Gaelic education provision came to fruition with the introduction of the Bilingual Education Project in the mid-1970s (see MacLeod, 2003; McLeod, 2003; Roberston, 2003). This was followed by the introduction of Gaelic immersion early years playgroups and in 1985, Gaelic immersion education extended to the primary level, with the first two Gaelic Medium Education (GME) units established in Glasgow and Inverness, the total number of students of which was 24 (O’Hanlon, 2010). Throughout the years, GME has grown considerably; in 2011–2012, there were 2418 pupils at primary level receiving their tuition through the medium of Gaelic (0.7% of the total primary roll), while 1104 pupils at secondary level were being taught through the medium of Gaelic (0.4% of the total secondary roll) (Galloway, 2012). On the Isle of Skye, which serves as the locus of this particular study (and where according to the most recent census, 29.4% of the population speaks Gaelic), there are currently 91 nursery pupils and 244 primary pupils enrolled in GME; a further 121 secondary pupils are taking subjects taught through the medium of Gaelic (Highland Council website, 2015; see also Müller, 2006 for more on secondary GME provision in Skye).

However, despite these growing numbers, and despite pupils’ attainment in terms of linguistic competence in Gaelic, English is the peer group language of GME children and remains so when they grow older, thus diminishing its potential as an effective RLS strategy (see Dunmore, forthcoming). One of the reasons for this widespread language practice is that with the exception of three schools located in urban areas, all GME schools are ‘units’ within wider English-medium schools, meaning that English is the language of communal school spaces and the wider pupil population (see Morrison, 2006; Armstrong, 2013). However, being part of a Gaelic-only school does not necessarily mean that students use Gaelic outside the classroom (see Nance, 2013); as detailed in O’Hanlon, McLeod, & Paterson (2010, p. 44), a high proportion of children in GME are from homes where Gaelic is not used and/or from areas where community use of Gaelic is low or non-existent and thus are more comfortable using English. As Will (2012), however, shows in her study of GME pupils on the Isle of Lewis, even pupils from strongly Gaelic-speaking families and areas tend to use English outside the classroom. One of Will’s explanations for this is that within the bounds of classroom, Gaelic is reified as the compliance code and in contrast, the use of English elicits ‘opportunities for rebellion’ (p. 119), functioning as a way for pupils to distinguish their personal identities from their school identities.

Will’s hypothesis became instrumental in formulating my own argument (see Smith-Christmas, 2016) that the association of Gaelic with authority is another reason why, in addition to the shift-perpetuating realities already in place in a family on Skye referred to
as the ‘Campbell family’, the youngest members of this family developed an early and continuing preference for English. In one interaction (p. 102), for example, eight year-old Maggie states that she uses English on her ‘free breaks’ and also that she does not use Gaelic at home because she is ‘not in school.’ This last statement not only lends support to Will’s suggestion that English may function as a way for GME children to distinguish their personal identities from their school identities, but also suggests that Maggie strongly associates Gaelic with school. As school is the most authoritative domain within Maggie’s sociocultural landscape, I further contend that this association leads to a link between Gaelic and authority, which is compounded by other realities within Maggie’s family as well as her wider community. The aim of this paper therefore is to lend credence to these assertions by embarking on an exploration of the interaction from which Maggie’s ‘free breaks’ and ‘cause I’m not in school’ declarations are drawn. In doing so, I will examine the ways in which two caregivers (Isabel, Maggie’s great-aunt, and Màiri, Maggie’s aunt) discursively strengthen the association between Gaelic and school and thereby with authority. I will demonstrate that while the caregivers’ motivations appear to lie in a desire for Maggie to use more Gaelic, the framing of these requests and comments works against this goal and further contributes to perpetuating language shift in the family. The paper will conclude by postulating the possible motivations for Isabel and Màiri’s particular framings and will situate these motivations within the ideological landscape of language revitalisation in Scotland.

Method
This article is situated in an eight-year ethnography of the Campbell family. The particular excerpts analysed in this paper are drawn from an interaction recorded on the last night of a series of recordings (approximately six hours) of the family’s naturally-occurring conversations in the home environment in July 2014. The aim of this corpus was to replicate as closely as possible a similar corpus of the family’s interactions in July 2009, on which I based my PhD thesis. Speakers were aware that they were being recorded and signed consent forms prior to recording both corpora. The fact that I was constantly recording and had a close relationship with the family meant that for the most part, the effects of the Observer’s Paradox were mitigated.

However, occasionally my presence did seem to have an effect on speakers’ language use and while these interactions may not be completely representative of the family’s everyday language use, they are extremely valuable in discovering how certain latent ideologies come to the forefront of family consciousness (see also Smith-Christmas, 2014). The interaction under scope in this paper is one such example and I contend that in this interaction, my presence was largely responsible for the admonishing stances that the caregivers take towards Maggie in critiquing her lack of Gaelic use. In this particular interaction, Maggie, Nana (Maggie’s paternal grandmother), Isabel (Nana’s sister and Maggie’s great-aunt), Màiri (Nana’s daughter and Maggie’s aunt) and I are finishing a Chinese takeaway meal and waiting for Maggie’s mother and siblings to arrive at the house so that we can have a cèilidh—that is, a party where the children perform what they have learned at the Fèis, a summer programme in which children take traditional

2 This is a pseudonym, as are all names used in this study.
music, dance, and sports classes through the medium of Gaelic. It should be emphasised here that although Màiri and Isabel may come across as slightly harsh in these excerpts, their utterances, especially Màiri’s, were said in a light-hearted manner. As is consistent with my other work on the Campbell family, I use a microinteractional approach (cf. Auer 1984, 1986) in analysing these conversations. Transcription conventions are given at the end of this article.

**Gaelic as a Performance Language**

Before moving on to the core of the analysis, it is necessary to outline some pertinent background information about the four key speakers in this interaction. Nana, who was in her late sixties at the time of the recording, is very overt in her pro-Gaelic ideologies and along with the children’s mother, Nana is one of the main actors in setting up the Gaelic-centred Family Language Policy (see Smith-Christmas, 2014, 2016). In contrast to Nana, Nana’s sister Isabel frequently uses English with both adult interlocutors as well as Nana’s grandchildren; in fact, Isabel’s total monolingual Gaelic use in the 2014 Corpus totalled only 20% of her total conversational turns (see Smith-Christmas, 2016). Isabel is nine years younger than Nana and this age difference is hypothesised to account in part for Isabel’s relatively low use of Gaelic. Similar to Isabel, Nana’s daughter Màiri, who was raised by Nana as a Gaelic speaker, generally uses English with other interlocutors and reserves the use of Gaelic for occasional talk directed to the third generation.

Thus, it is clear to see that among the adult speakers, Gaelic is not a normative and habitual practice for all speakers in the family. This reality, along with the other language shift-inducing practices present in the family and the wider community, all contribute to the third generation’s low use of Gaelic (see Smith-Christmas, 2016 for much further detail). Thus, from an early age (3:4 in the 2009 Corpus), it was clear that Nana’s granddaughter Maggie had developed a strong preference for English. This reality has not changed in the five years since the 2009 Corpus; in the 2014 Corpus, for example, only 5% of Maggie’s total conversational turns were coded as ‘Monolingual Gaelic.’ Explaining all the various contributing factors to Maggie’s low use of Gaelic is far beyond the scope of this article, so I have chosen to focus on one aspect in particular: the occasional didactic framing of Gaelic and how this ultimately serves to position the use of Gaelic as an aberrant language choice (i.e. non-normative) in family interactions. Given that the Campbell family as a whole are trying to maintain the language with the third generation, this positioning seems counterproductive and the goal of this particular analysis is not only to examine this positioning in terms of its potential effect on Maggie’s overall use of Gaelic, but also to shed light on the possible origin of this positioning and what this can tell us about the reflexive nature of language shift and revitalisation.

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3 For both corpora, each speakers’ turns in the conversation were coded for language: Monolingual Gaelic, Monolingual English, Mixed (i.e. code-switching) and Undecided. For the first generation speakers, in many cases the insertion of single lexical items into otherwise Gaelic utterances were coded as ‘Monolingual Gaelic.’ due to the proliferation of English lexical items into everyday Gaelic discourse (see Smith-Christmas, 2012).

4 A further 5% were coded as ‘Mixed.’ No turns were coded as ‘Undecided.’
The following two sections therefore analyse the mechanisms by which the caregivers enact this particular discursive positioning. One of the ways in which it is achieved appears to be through framing Gaelic as an object to be performed, not as an everyday normative mode of communication. The first instance of this framing occurs when I ask Maggie in Gaelic how many students there are in her classes at the Fèis and she begins counting to herself in English. Isabel then asks Maggie if she can count in Gaelic and Maggie rises to Isabel’s challenge, as seen below:

Excerpt 1

1 Isabel an urrainn dhut cunntadh anns a’ Ghàidhlig?
can you count in Gaelic
2 Maggie yuh huh (0.9) >aon dhà tri
one two three?
   [intervening numbers in Gaelic]
   trichead ’s a naoi /forty @@@
   thirty-nine
3 Nana @@
4 R @
5 Maggie @@ forty one forty two forty three
   ceithread ’s a::: ceithir
   forty-four
   [intervening numbers in Gaelic] /fifty @@@ fifty one fifty two fifty three
   fifty [[four fifty five fifty six @@]]
6 Isabel [[fifty ceithir fifty còig fifty sia fifty seachd]
   four five six seven
7 Maggie fifty seven- fifty seachd fifty [[ochd]
   seven eight
8 Isabel [[fifty ochd]
   eight
9 Maggie fifty naoi:::(1.4) [[fifty (eleven)]
   nine
10 Isabel [[tri fichead]
   sixty
11 R @
12 Maggie @@
13 Isabel (fifty)
14 Maggie I don’t think I can say any more
15 R tha sin ^ceart gu leòr
that’s all right
16 Maggie sixty one sixty two sixty three sixty four .hhh
17 Isabel sixty còig sixty sia sixty seachd sixty seven
   five six seven
18 Maggie I can ac- I can actually (. ) eh count to one hundred in /Gaelic
19 Nana ^m
20 R HI< ^hm
21 Isabel dè?
   what?
In this example, it appears that Maggie understands Isabel’s question to be an implicit request to perform Gaelic rather than to use it in continuing to determine how many pupils are in her classes at the *Fèis* (as there certainly are not sixty pupils in each class). As discussed in Smith-Christmas (2016), this particular performance activity is well-ingrained within family practices, as from an early age, Maggie exhibited a propensity for counting in Gaelic. Within the 2009 corpus there are three documented instances where caregivers explicitly encourage Maggie to count in Gaelic and in these instances, counting is treated as a discrete activity tangential to the ongoing interaction. Now that she is older, Maggie still engages in this performance ritual and it is clear to see she perceives the expectation for her to perform this task correctly: after she admits that she can count no higher in Gaelic (Turn 14), she then counters this with claims in Turns 18 and 22 that she can indeed count to more than a hundred in Gaelic. The expectation to perform correctly may also stem from the fact that maths skills such as counting are normally associated with the school and the object of most school activities after all is to supply the correct answer. Thus, Isabel’s request for Maggie to use Gaelic in counting not only frames the language as an activity separate from normative language use, but it also subtly links the language to the school; it is further argued that Isabel is very aware of this link with school, as in an interview in December 2014, Isabel contends that the only reason Maggie’s younger brother Jacob will count in Gaelic is ‘because they’re doing it in school’. As well, the fact that Maggie was often asked to engage in this particular type of performance when she was younger may further invoke the authoritative dimension of Isabel’s request: Maggie may feel this activity is somewhat childish, which is again supported by reference to Jacob, as in the 2014 recordings there are several instances where the caregivers ask Jacob (who was four at the time) to count in Gaelic (cf. also Dunmore’s [2015, p. 185] example of a GME-educated adult ascribing her low Gaelic use in part to her association of Gaelic with childhood and therefore feeling as if she were going ‘backwards’ by speaking Gaelic).

Another example of framing Gaelic as a performance occurs later on in the interaction. This particular instance follows from Maggie’s statement that she does not speak Gaelic at home because she is ‘not in school,’ which, as seen below, leads to an argument between Isabel and Maggie about whether or not Maggie is ’good at speaking Gaelic.’ This argument then finally culminates in Isabel directing Maggie to speak Gaelic, as is also seen below:

*Excerpt 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maggie</th>
<th>Isabel</th>
<th>Excerpt 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>a::n:::d  (0.5) I don't need to speak Gaelic all the time=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>=but you won't (.) be so good at speaking Gaelic if you don't speak it all the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>yeah but I am good at speaking Gaelic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>well I don't think you are (.) I never hear you speaking Gaelic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>tell me something in Gaelic then</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Turn 5 of this excerpt, Maggie is commanded to ‘tell something’ to Isabel in Gaelic. Maggie is clearly somewhat blindsided by this abstract notion of ‘telling something’ in Gaelic and it is entirely possible that she finds this ‘hard’ not necessarily from a linguistic standpoint, but that she struggles with the abstraction of the command. Given the context of the earlier argument (Turns 2-4) about whether or not Maggie is ‘good at Gaelic,’ Isabel’s request could be construed as a challenge and in Turn 9, Isabel appears to think that she has proven her point by the fact that Maggie characterizes this challenge as ‘hard.’ However, Maggie does not give up easily and she embarks on a narration in Gaelic. What emerges from this example is that again, there appears to be a performance aspect to using Gaelic; Isabel’s request for Maggie to ‘tell something’ in Gaelic is similar to the way a caregiver might instruct a child to recite the alphabet or a poem (or count, as we saw earlier). Not only does this request contribute to framing Gaelic as a performance (as opposed to simply using the language), but the fact that this request is deployed as a means for Isabel to win the argument compounds its authoritative nature.

It should be noted that Maggie speaks Gaelic only after the adults have used Gaelic in their prior turns; it is probably ironic to anyone looking at this transcript excerpt that the interaction takes place through the medium of English. It is argued that the fact that the conversation is about Gaelic but takes place through English also helps to underscore the framing of Gaelic as a performance: the actual ‘talking’ (cf. Fishman, 1996, p. 79) is in English while the ‘performance’ is in Gaelic. Further, Isabel’s framing of Gaelic as something which Maggie can be ‘good at’ is reminiscent of a school context and specifically the child’s aptitude for a particular subject. After all, the phrase ‘good at English’ is not usually used in conjunction with assessing a pupil’s spoken use of their (home) language, but rather, their ability in English as a school subject. Gaelic, however, is framed as something which Maggie can be ‘good at’ instead of simply a language which she speaks and which is used in her home. Furthermore, Isabel’s assertion in Turn 4 invokes authority as it implies that Isabel is in a position to critique Maggie’s use of Gaelic, the irony of which is that Isabel uses English in making this criticism.

The association of Gaelic and authority through the link between Gaelic and the school is heightened later on in the interaction. Maggie is continuing her narration about her day at
the Fèis while Nana and Màiri, who were out of the room earlier, have just returned. Isabel then informs them that ‘we're getting a Gaelic lesson here with wee Maggie.’ There is nothing, however, about Maggie’s narration that is in any way lesson-like. Anything that could be construed as didactic has been instigated by Isabel, for example, when Isabel quizzes Maggie on the Gaelic lexical item talla (‘hall’) after Maggie uses the English equivalent in her narration. This characterisation of Gaelic use as a ‘lesson’ not only overtly frames Gaelic in a school context, but it also works to mark Maggie’s everyday narrative in Gaelic as deviating from normal language practices. The next section will look at the other ways which Isabel, now with the help of Màiri, further achieves this particular framing and will discuss how this framing works against the overall goal of language revitalisation in the family.

De-normatising Gaelic and Imposing a Double-Standard

Besides treating the use of Gaelic as a type of performance as seen in the last two examples, another way in which Isabel and Màiri ‘de-normatis’—that is, treat the use of Gaelic as deviating from the normal ‘unmarked’ code choice (cf. Myers-Scotton, 1988)—is by their incredulous reactions to Maggie’s use of Gaelic. After Isabel imparts to Nana and Màiri that ‘we're getting a Gaelic lesson here with wee Maggie,’ Maggie continues telling about her day at the Fèis. As seen below, Màiri then interjects, claiming that she cannot believe that Maggie is speaking Gaelic:

*Excerpt 3*

| 1 | Màiri   | ach I don't believe it |
| 2 | Maggie | \what? |
| 3 | Màiri   | thusa |
|    |         | you |
| 4 | Maggie | thusa: dè? |
|    |         | you what? |
| 5 | Màiri   | bruidhinn Gàidhlig |
|    |         | speaking Gaelic |
| 6 | Nana    | [[tha Gàidhlig]] |
| 7 | Maggie  | [[yes]] |
| 8 | Nana    | HI< tha Gàidhlig aig Màiri ^cuideachd |
|    |         | Màiri speaks Gaelic too |
| 9 | Maggie  | HI< bha mi /direach bruidhinn (( [broi:jn] )) Gàidhlig |
|    |         | I was just speaking Gaelic |
| 10 | Màiri   | HI< ^o: /bruidhinn (( [broijn] )) \Gàidhlig |
|    |         | speaking Gaelic |
| 11 | Nana    | HI< bha i bruidhinn Gàidhlig 's bruidhinnidh i [[Gàidhlig]] |
|    |         | she was speaking Gaelic and she will speak Gaelic |

Màiri’s first turn in this excerpt situates Maggie’s use of Gaelic in the realm of the incredible; it is unbelievable that Maggie would speak Gaelic. After Maggie counters this assertion with ‘bha mi direach bruidhinn Gàidhlig’ (‘I was just speaking speaking Gaelic’), Màiri then teases Maggie, imitating her dipthong in the word bruidhinn.
(typically, older speakers in the Campbell family would use an [i] as the first vowel in this lexical item). Although the conversation is very light-hearted, not only does Màiri’s statement of disbelief mark Maggie’s use of Gaelic as non-normative, but Màiri’s imitation of Maggie’s diphthong subtly marks the way that Maggie uses Gaelic as non-normative as well. This imitation also has the potential to act as a subtle critique of Maggie’s linguistic capabilities in Gaelic, as Màiri appears to be implying that Maggie is not pronouncing the word ‘bruidhinn’ correctly. Like Isabel’s Turn 4 in Excerpt 2, Màiri’s Turn 10 therefore also invokes some level of authority, as it implies that Màiri is in a position to critique Maggie’s use of Gaelic. This in turn invokes a double-standard, as from eight years’ of observing the Campbell family’s linguistic practices, it is more ‘unbelievable’ to hear Màiri speaking Gaelic than it is to hear Maggie speaking Gaelic (see Smith-Christmas, 2012; 2014; 2016). This claim is further supported by the fact that in Turn 8 of Excerpt 3, Nana feels the need to point out that Màiri speaks Gaelic, which suggests that Nana thinks that Maggie does not even know that Màiri speaks Gaelic.

This concept of a double-standard is further emphasised later on in the interaction when Isabel congratulates Maggie on her use of Gaelic, remarking ‘I didn't think you had any Gaelic actually until tonight at all – congratulations.’ Not only does the congratulatory component of the utterance further frame Maggie’s use of Gaelic as task-like in that it is something which appears can be achieved, but the preface to this congratulatory comment further marks Maggie’s Gaelic use as non-normative. Like the previous example involving Màiri, the language choice used in making this implicit critique further implies a double standard, as Isabel is speaking English. Further, as previously mentioned, Isabel’s daily use of Gaelic is also low overall and thus, by invoking a double-standard of Maggie, the caregivers in turn invoke some level of authority: the child must do what the adults wish her to do, even if it is not a practice in which they would habitually engage.

Isabel’s requests for monolingual Gaelic further compound the double-standard nature of this interaction with Maggie. As discussed earlier, in Maggie’s narration of her day at the Fèis, Isabel quizzed Maggie about the Gaelic equivalent of the word ‘hall,’ thus implicitly requesting Maggie’s use of monolingual Gaelic. Truly monolingual Gaelic, however, not only goes against the grain of Isabel’s own language use, but that of her generation as well. When Isabel does speak Gaelic, she, like the other first generation members in this study, frequently insert English lexical items into otherwise-Gaelic speech. As I have argued elsewhere (see Smith-Christmas, 2012), the high degree of mixed language use is as much a facet of the older, traditional speakers in this study as is their fluency in Gaelic in comparison to younger speakers. This premise is even playfully illustrated in another part of this interaction: Maggie answers ‘no, cha robh’ (thus saying ‘no’ in both languages), and after much laughter and repetition of the phrase, Nana follows up Maggie’s code-switched statement with ‘sin mar a tha sinn-code-switching nach e, Cassie?’ (‘that’s how we are – codewitching isn’t it, Cassie?’). Further, as evidenced by Isabel’s use of mixed language use in the counting sequence in Excerpt 1 (Turns 6, 8, and 17), mixing is acceptable, even in a ‘performance’ such as counting. Thus, by requesting monolingual Gaelic use, in addition to framing Gaelic as non-normative practice in other parts of the interaction, here Isabel further de-normatises
Maggie’s Gaelic use by requesting a practice (monolingual Gaelic use) that in many ways goes against the grain of community and family usage norms.

In looking at the ways in which Maggie’s use of Gaelic is framed as non-normative linguistic practice, it is argued that what Isabel and Màiri are actually doing is unwittingly normalising language shift and therefore contributing to its perpetuation. Although ostensibly Isabel and Màiri think their playful chidings, as well as subtle and not-so-subtle challenges to use the language, encourage Maggie to use more Gaelic, I contend that these actions in fact, on some level, further inhibit Maggie’s use of her minority language. In exclaiming their surprise at Maggie’s use of Gaelic, Isabel and Màiri orient to discourses that treat it as the standard that children, both within their own family and within Skye, do not speak Gaelic. Further, through their framings of Gaelic as a performance and a ‘lesson,’ they also normalise another aspect of the language shift and revitalisation in Skye: that the one place the children will speak Gaelic is in the classroom context. The following section examines the implications of this reality in terms of language policy and planning, especially in terms of education as a language revitalisation strategy.

**Discussion: Implications for Education in RLS**

Earlier, I mentioned that this interaction was in part borne out of the Observer’s Paradox; in knowing that they were under scrutiny, certain actors, namely Isabel and Màiri, behave differently than they normally would. Also, as previously mentioned, this interaction took place on the last night of several days and nights of recordings and up until now Maggie has spoken very little Gaelic. It would be easy, therefore, to see this interaction as the caregivers’ attempts to prove to the researcher that Maggie can indeed speak Gaelic. However, although I think that this may influence the interaction on some level, I believe that the caregivers’ stances are primarily ideologically-driven and that my main role in the Observer’s Paradox has been to bring latent pro-Gaelic ideologies to the forefront of family consciousness. Both Màiri and Isabel have made comments to me over the years which indicate that they desire to see Gaelic maintained, especially within their own family, and I believe the stances they take in this interaction are indicative of this pro-Gaelic ideology. However, when this ideology is juxtaposed with their habitual language practices, there appears to be a mismatch. As Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998) and King (2000) demonstrate, this type of mismatch is not uncommon in minority language contexts, as pro-minority language ideologies are often pitted against mainstream-oriented ideologies which devalue the language. In the case of Isabel and Màiri, I contend that this accounts in part for both speakers’ relatively low use of the language despite taking very pro-Gaelic stances in this particular interaction. The question remains, however: why do Isabel and Màiri’s pro-Gaelic stances take such seemingly critical and didactic forms?

In attempting to answer this question, I will draw on the observation that certain Campbell family members take the ideological stance that GME should be doing more to reverse the language shift present in the third generation. Several times either Nana or Isabel have said to the children something to the effect of ‘You go to a Gaelic school, therefore you should speak Gaelic’ (Smith-Christmas, 2016), a decree clearly reminiscent
of John MacNamara’s story mentioned in the introduction. This also surfaces in an interview with Nana, Isabel, and Seumas (Nana’s son) in December 2014, in which Seumas postulates that he might have become a more frequent user of Gaelic if GME had been available when he had gone to school. In Nana and Isabel’s view, one of the reasons for the language’s decline within their own generation, as well as Nana’s children’s generation, is the lack of education available in Gaelic when they were school-aged. This is one of the reasons that Nana ascribes to Isabel’s relatively low use of Gaelic in comparison to Nana’s: Isabel never attained literacy in the language and at some level, this disenfranchisement has impacted her language use. Nana also attributes her own children’s habitual use of English to its status as the language of instruction in school: Nana’s first child was a Gaelic monoglot in his early years and in Nana’s words, ‘brought home the English’ from school. In Nana, Isabel’s and perhaps even Màiri’s view, therefore, it seems logical that once this educational lacuna was filled, the language decline would be stemmed. These particular speakers are not alone in their logic; as Dunmore (forthcoming) points out, there is a clear assumed link between GME and RLS, encapsulated recently for example by a Consultation Paper on the Gaelic Medium Education Bill, which reads (2014, p. 3):

The Scottish Government’s aim is to create a secure future for Gaelic in Scotland. This will only be achieved by an increase in the numbers of those learning, speaking and using the language. Gaelic medium education can make an important contribution to this, both in terms of young people’s language learning but also in terms of the effects this can have on language use in home, community and workplace.

However, not even taking other studies and families into account, it is clear to see from the Campbell family that a disconnect exists between education in the minority language and use of the minority language outside the confines of the school. Returning to the question of why Isabel and Màiri’s chidings take such seemingly critical and didactic stances, it appears that part of what they may actually be doing, especially in the case of Isabel, is implicitly critiquing this disconnect between minority language use in the school and its (lack of) use in other domains such as the home. Coincidentally, the form this critique takes is very didactic in its delivery and is reminiscent of the place in which, because of revitalisation efforts, Maggie uses the most Gaelic: the school. These negative framings therefore may be in part an exercise in blame-shifting; here, the blame is either placed on the child or on the school instead on the caregivers’ own language practices (cf. Kroskrity’s 2009, p. 50 analysis of a similar stance in the Tewa community: ‘the in-progress language shift is misrecognized not as a failure of parents and community but rather as a failure of the children’). However, although blame-shifting may play some role in what is going on in this particular interaction, I contend that these framings are also suggestive of what Costa (2013) characterises as the abstraction of ‘language’ in RLS efforts, where language is often treated as an object, separate from the people speaking the language. We see this in Isabel and Màiri’s attempt at language revitalisation at the microlevel: their didactic framings reify Gaelic as an object, not something that is a part of normal, everyday communication. Further, what happens is that ‘speaking’ a language permutates into performing a language and the fact that this
permutation occurs reflects the advanced state of shift in the Campbell family: although many of the Campbell family members such as Isabel and Màiri can (and sometimes do) speak Gaelic, the language exists mostly in abstraction. Gaelic is *something* Isabel and Màiri wish to *save* (i.e. to pass on to the third generation), the irony of which of course is that the caregivers’ own language practices are part of the reason why the language needs ‘saving’ in the family in the first place (see Smith-Christmas 2014, 2016). Similarly, the fact that Gaelic is largely absent from normative language use in the community but exists in the school compounds this abstraction: Gaelic is parceled up according to domain instead of existing as an integrated part of community life. This of course is simply a reality of language shift and pointing out these realities is not intended to denigrate RLS efforts, either in the Campbell family or in the wider community, but rather, to highlight that while children like Maggie may be given the linguistic tools and opportunity to use their minority language, what seems to be absent is the *desire* to use the language outside the confines of the educational context (cf. Strubell’s 2001 Catherine Wheel model; also Harris, 2005, p. 974 as mentioned in the introduction). The desire, or rather lack of it, therefore, is one of the missing links in language planning and one of the reasons why the domains may not necessarily work in tandem as those involved in RLS intend. Again drawing on Costa (2013), what is needed, therefore, is a deeper understanding of speakers’ sociohistorical trajectories; their own roles in language shift and maintenance; and, in this particular case, how the association of the language with a particular authoritative domain can potentially inhibit the use of the minority language.

This is not to say however that GME has not had a positive effect on Maggie; for example, the fact that Maggie’s experience with literacy has primarily been through the medium of Gaelic means that she will happily read and write in Gaelic. One day, Maggie may choose to change her linguistic practices and GME will have contributed to her linguistic ability to enact this change (cf. Pujolar and Puigdevall’s 2015 concept of linguistic mudes). The point to be made here is that although immersion language education can be a valuable tool in RLS, there is not necessarily a correspondence between the pupils’ *learning* of the language and *using* the language, and that other factors, such as the affective associations (e.g. authority) that this language-domain relationship may take on, need to be brought into scope. This point is certainly not a new one within RLS research, but it is nonetheless important to see how this reality unfolds at the microlevel and how it relates to the reflexive nature of language shift in the home and the community. It is hoped that a deeper understanding of this reality may contribute to effective language planning, especially in terms of the role of education in RLS.

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**Transcription Conventions Used**

- : Elongated Sound
- - Cut-off
- word Emphasis
- WORD Increased Amplitude
- o Decreased Amplitude
- HI< Higher Pitch
- WH< Whispered
- CR< Creaky Voice
- BR< Breathy Voice
- > < Accelerated Speech
- = Latching speech
- [[] Overlapping Speech
- (.5) Pause (Seconds)
- (.) Micropause (less than two-tenths of a second)
- @ Laughter (pulse)
- (( ))) Non-verbal action
- { } Word/sound said ingressively
- / Rising Pitch
- \ Falling Pitch
- /\ Rise/Fall Pitch
- .hh Egressive Sound
- (?) Uncertainty in Transcript
- * Turns omitted

**References**

Armstrong, T. (2013). Negotiating Interactional Spaces: The playground as a bridge between language in the school and in the home. Paper Presented at the BAAL/Cambridge University Press Seminar, Lews Castle College UHI.


