‘One Cas, Two Cas:’ Exploring the affective dimensions of family language policy

The aim of this article is to illustrate the fluid nature of family language policy (FLP) and how the realities of any one FLP are renegotiated by caregivers and children in tandem. In particular, the paper will focus on the affective dimensions of FLP and will demonstrate how the same reality—in this case, a grandmother’s use of a child-centred discourse style as a means to encouraging her grandchildren to use their minority language, Scottish Gaelic—can play out differently among siblings. Using a longitudinal perspective, the paper begins by examining a recorded interaction between a grandmother, Nana¹, and her granddaughter Maggie (3;4) and will discuss how Nana’s high use of questions and laissez-faire attitude to Maggie’s use of English contribute to the child-centred nature of the interaction, and in turn, to Maggie’s playful use of Gaelic. The paper then examines an interaction recorded five years later in which Nana interacts with Maggie’s brother Jacob (4;0) in the same affective style; however, unlike Maggie, Jacob evidences overtly negative affective stances towards his minority language. The paper concludes by discussing these observations in light of the reflexive nature of FLP in terms of emotional affect, linguistic input, and language shift.

Keywords: Family Language Policy; language maintenance; language shift; language input; emotional affect

Introduction

Termed ‘Family Language Policy’ (‘FLP’), this growing area of sociolinguistics is concerned with how language is managed at the family level and how these management practices are embedded in wider ideological and sociocultural realities (see for example, Piller, 2002; Luykx, 2003; Canagarajah, 2008; King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry, 2008; Schwartz, 2010; Armstrong, 2014; Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). Much of FLP, especially from the caregivers’ perspective, therefore involves input management; that is, managing the quantity of input—for example, how often each language is used with the child—as well the quality of the input. Distinguishing quantity from quality is not necessarily straightforward; reading to the child in the minority language, for example, not only increases the overall minority language input that the child receives, but it also exposes the child to another speech register (see for example, Stavans, 2012). The intersection of input quantity and quality, and the effect of each on overall language maintenance, is a central concern in both FLP research as well as psycholinguistic approaches to childhood bilingualism (see for example, Kasuya, 1998; De Houwer, 2007; Gathercole and Thomas, 2009; Mishina-Mori, 2011; Unsworth, 2015). For the sake of clarity in this particular paper, however, I will simply use ‘quantity’ to refer to the amount of language that is spoken and ‘quality’ to refer to how it is spoken, which includes both the social and linguistic aspects of language use.

¹ All names are pseudonyms.
This article centres on a relatively under-researched aspect of input quality: emotional affect. Although there is a growing interest in the intersection of language and emotion (e.g. Dewaele, 2004; Pavlenko, 2006), as Lanza (2016) has recently emphasised, research into the affective component of FLP remains underdeveloped. There are some notable exceptions, however, two of which very clearly illustrate how quality in terms of emotional affect may in part compensate for low input. The first of these is Döpke’s (1992) well-known study of children in Australia with one German-speaking parent. Döpke finds that although the children with German-speaking mothers generally receive more German input, the children with German-speaking fathers generally spend more time using the language in playful, child-centred activities, and thus, the children are more inclined to use their minority language. Similarly, in her study of two children growing up trilingually in Switzerland, Chevalier (2012) attributes one of the children’s relative high fluency in English despite relatively low English language input to the linguistic practices of the child’s aunt. Drawing on Tannen (2006), Chevalier demonstrates how the aunt uses a ‘high involvement’ style and how she actively solicits communication from the child (cf. also Takeuchi, 2006). Chevalier’s study clearly demonstrates the importance of caregivers other than the child’s parents in language maintenance, a sentiment echoed in Ruby (2012). In her study of a child of Bangla heritage in London, Ruby compares the child’s mother, teacher, and grandmother interacting with the child when completing a puzzle task. The teacher and the mother do not use Bangla with the child, even though they can both speak it; the grandmother, however, not only uses Bangla in the puzzle task, but in doing so, also manages to imbue the interaction with positive affect and create multiple Bangla language-learning opportunities.

Like Ruby, this paper also analyses how a grandmother—referred to as ‘Nana’—attempts to encourage her grandchildren’s language maintenance through child-centred interactions. The paper shows how although Nana seems to have some success with Maggie (3;4 at the time of the recording), she is less successful when interacting with Maggie’s younger brother Jacob (4;0 at the time of the recording) five years later. Although it is not unusual for older siblings to be more proficient in the minority language than younger ones, an observation which is often attributed to reduced input (see for example, Dumanig, David, and Shanmuganathan, 2013; Kopeliovich, 2013; Parada, 2013), this paper aims to further shed light on the processes by which this observation becomes a reality. Further, as there is relatively little research on children in endangered language communities that centres on the home rather than institutional settings such as the school (for notable exceptions, see for example, Kulick, 1992; Luykx, 2003; Makihara, 2005; Meek, 2007), this paper also aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the micro-level processes that ultimately lead to language endangerment.

**Language Shift: Scottish Gaelic, the Isle of Skye, and the Campbell Family**
This study draws on a long-term ethnography of a family I refer to in my research as the ‘Campbell family’ and in particular, their use of Scottish Gaelic, an autochthonous minority language spoken by less than 58,000 speakers (less than 2% of the population) in Scotland (NROS, 2013). Scottish Gaelic—simply referred to as ‘Gaelic’ for the remainder of the article—has suffered centuries of language shift due to the disenfranchisement of its speakers and the resultant stigmatisation of the language. Scottish Gaelic does not play a role in a sense of national Scottish identity the way that Welsh does in Wales or Irish does in Ireland, for example; instead, the language is perceived as primarily belonging to the mountainous north and west of Scotland, known as the Highlands, and particular to the Hebrides, which are the islands of Scotland’s west coast. Currently little more than half (52%) of the population of the Outer Hebrides (which is considered the ‘core’ Gaelic-speaking area) and only 29.4% of the population of the Isle of Skye, the island in the Inner Hebrides where this study takes place, speak Gaelic. Thus, despite maintenance efforts, such as the Gaelic Language Act 2005, a Gaelic language TV and radio station, and the availability of Gaelic immersion education at certain schools, the language remains in a precarious position (for more on Gaelic language shift and maintenance, see for example, Withers, 1984; MacKinnon, 2009).

This article centres on language maintenance efforts at the family level, which in this particular family—referred to as the ‘Campbell family,’ whom I have now known for ten years—are spearheaded by two main individuals. One of these individuals is Nana (the grandmother referred to earlier), who was born in the latter half of the 1940s, a time when Gaelic was still relatively strong on the Isle of Skye. However, despite the language’s strength on some parts of the island (see Duwe, 2006) the 1961 Report for Scottish Education reported that an ‘English pale’ was developing around the more urbanised areas of the island; and thus, although Nana raised her three children as Gaelic speakers, many of her peers did not. English was therefore the language of the playground and soon became the preferred language of Nana’s own children and their peers. Over the years, however, Nana has remained staunch in her pro-Gaelic language ideologies, and she often initiates conversation with her children in Gaelic even though they tend to answer her in English.

Nana’s youngest son Aonghas married Peigi, who became the other main driving force in the family’s language maintenance efforts. Peigi’s parents were Gaelic speakers but raised her as a monolingual English speaker, and Peigi, subsequently learned Gaelic to fluency as an adult. Led by Nana and Peigi, the family as a whole made a concerted effort to raise Aonghas and Peigi’s first child, David, as a Gaelic speaker. Their efforts were largely successful, as when I first met the family in 2007, David (4;7 at the time) appeared fully fluent in both languages and would willingly speak to Nana in Gaelic. However, as I concluded elsewhere (Smith-Christmas, 2016), the Campbell family illustrates Fishman’s (1991) simple yet extremely apt observation that once the process of language shift begins, it is very difficult to arrest. Thus, despite the family’s efforts at language maintenance, language shift continues in the third generation: with the exception of using Gaelic within their immersive Gaelic classroom (see Smith-Christmas, 2017), David and his younger siblings, Maggie and Jacob, primarily use English in most spheres of their lives.
In earlier work (Smith-Christmas, 2016), I distilled this continuing language shift down to two overarching reasons: first, the fact that English-dominant family members, such as the children’s aunt and uncle, in many ways ‘model’ language shift to the third generation (see Smith-Christmas, 2014) and secondly, to the affective dimensions of language use. This latter reason posits practices in the family as well as the wider community to reify an association of Gaelic with authority and English with solidarity, resulting in a negative emotional valence around Gaelic. The purpose of this paper is to take a longitudinal perspective in re-visiting the dimensions of affect in language maintenance, and in particular, in focusing on the positive emotional valence of Gaelic. By focusing on excerpts from two recordings, referred to as ‘Flowers’ and ‘Cockerel,’ the article discusses how Nana uses a ‘high involvement’ (cf. Tannen, 2006; Chevalier, 2012) interactional style as a means for encouraging language maintenance. It demonstrates how although Nana’s efforts in terms of Maggie’s linguistic trajectory may have been somewhat successful, this does not appear to be the case with Maggie’s younger brother Jacob. The paper will conclude by discussing how this inter-sibling and diachronic perspective illustrates the fluid and dynamic nature of FLP.

**Methodology**

This paper is situated in a nine-year ethnography of the Campbell family, whom I initially met by placing an advertisement in a newspaper that serves Gaelic-speaking areas, asking for ‘three generations of a Gaelic-speaking family’ for my MA research. This then led on to my PhD thesis, in which I recorded the family’s naturally-occurring interactions over a two-week period in the summer of 2009, and then later to postdoctoral research in 2014, in which I tried as best as I could to replicate the 2009 recordings. Throughout the intervening years between recording sessions, I have visited the family on numerous occasions and have stayed at Nana’s house during these visits. Nana’s house is approximately 100 metres from her grandchildren’s house, which means that the children freely move between both locations and that I am able to observe and record the children in their own home or in Nana’s house. As both parents work, Nana or the often assumes the role of primary caregiver, and she has a very close relationship with all of her grandchildren. The fact that the family was being recorded in the home environment and that they were primarily talking to each other were important facets in minimising the Observer’s Paradox. Further, my Gaelic was limited at the time of recording the 2009 corpus and the family was used to speaking around me and expecting me not to understand. I have since become much more fluent and consider myself a ‘new’ speaker of the language (cf. O’Rourke, Pujolar, and Ramallo, 2015). However, by the time I recorded the 2014 corpus, the family so familiar with me recording them that this seemed compensate for the fact that I now understood everything they were saying.

The recordings were transcribed according to the transcription conventions given in the appendix of this article. In order to gain a picture of the overall language use in the family, speakers’ conversational turns were coded for language: Gaelic, English, Mixed, and Undecided. From the combined 2009 and 2014 corpora, 7087 turns were coded for
language (see Smith-Christmas, 2016 for much greater detail on transcriptions, coding, and the family’s overall language use). The majority of analysis on the Campbell family, however, has been conducted using a microinteractional approach to language alternation as pioneered by Auer (1984) and used widely in research on multilingual families (e.g. Li Wei, 1994; Gafaranga 2010, 2011). The analysis in this particular article centres on two interactions, the first of which is referred to as ‘Flowers’ in the 2009 Corpus, in which Maggie (3;4) is playing at Nana’s house after breakfast. The second interaction is ‘Cockerel’ in which Nana and Jacob (4;0) and I are driving in the car to a restaurant. These two interactions were chosen because their playful and (mostly) dyadic nature provides a good point of comparison with Chevalier (2012) and Ruby (2012), thus laying the groundwork for further exploring the role of positive affect in language maintenance.

Transforming everyday events into child-centred interactions

Before going into a deeper analysis of two excerpts from ‘Flowers,’ it is necessary to frame these examples within the two speakers’—Maggie and Nana’s—linguistic practices as a whole. Nana, who taught in Gaelic immersion education before she retired, is a high user of Gaelic, especially compared to other family members: her overall use of Gaelic in the corpus from which this excerpt is drawn was 65% (1342 turns) and mixed language use accounted for a further 16% (326 turns) of her total conversational turns (2059 turns). As previously mentioned, Nana is one of the main actors in the Campbell family’s Gaelic-centred FLP. One of the ways in which she enacts this role is by what I refer to as a ‘stand your ground’ approach to language choice: while the child usually answers in English, Nana continues using Gaelic. This is very different from Nana’s linguistic practices with adult family members, as often within a few turns, Nana will switch to her adult interlocutor’s preferred code choice of English or code-switch between English and Gaelic frequently.

In terms of Maggie’s language use at 3;4, her Gaelic was very sporadic: 11% (75 turns) of her overall turns (680 in total) were coded as ‘Gaelic,’ with an additional 8% (57 turns) coded as ‘Mixed.’ A number of Maggie’s Gaelic turns were comprised of single-word utterances (e.g. carson? ‘why’) or utterances in which a single lexical item was repeated. Further, with the exception of questions (e.g. cà ’bheil iad? ‘where are they?’), Maggie’s use of syntactically complete units in the form of full sentences is limited to one instance in the entire 2009 corpus. It is clear, therefore, that Maggie’s productive use of the language is limited; however, as will be seen from the following excerpt, she has full passive knowledge of Gaelic and is also able to effectively insert Gaelic words into otherwise-English utterances.

In this excerpt, Nana watches as the Bed and Breakfast guests who stayed at Maggie’s house the previous night drive by the window. Nana then turns the conversation to Maggie’s experience of Bed and Breakfast guests, referred to as “B and Bs”. Maggie then begins to sing and the focus turns towards Maggie using what she calls her clachan (‘rocks’) as a make-believe organ:
Excerpt 1^2

1 Nana  nist () cò bha seo? oh seo na- siud na B& Bs air falbh.
now who was that? here’s the- that’s the B&Bs away.
2 Researcher  ahhh () seadh=
uh-huh
3 Nana  =snog an nighean bheag a bh' ann ()
nice, the little girl that was there
an robh thu a' bruidhinn ris an nighean bheag?
were you speaking to the little girl
cha chreid gun robh Dave-=
I believe Dave-
4 Maggie  = are they away?
5 Nana  tha iad air falbh
they are away
6 Maggie  why?
7 Nana  oh tha iad air falbh a dh'àite eile ()
they’re away to another place
an robh Dave a' bruidhinn ris an nighean bheag shnog
was Dave speaking to the nice little girl
a bha siud? ? (?) mmm-hmm=
that was there?
9 Maggie  that's my B&Bs they're not your B&Bs =
10 Nana  =[[ I \know
11 Researcher  [[[@[@]]
12 Nana  your B&Bs? huh
13 Maggie  they're not your B&Bs
14 Nana  not my B&Bs () I \know. /thusa /thusa ()
you you
B&Bs agadsa () an toil leat B&Bs?
[they] are
15 Maggie  no:::
16 Nana  \'s toil:::tha iad laghach
yes you do [like them]they are nice
17 Maggie  no…
18 Nana  (tha:::)
([they] are)
19 Maggie  yes they are they make a ball for me
20 Nana  rinn iad ball
they made a ball
21 Maggie  yes=
22 Nana  =oh tha sin snog=
that’s nice
23 Maggie  and I squashed it
24 Nana  oh (bu tu)- tha mi creidsinn gun robh thusa mi-mhodhail an robh
I believe that you were rude, were you

^2 Transcription conventions can be found before the ‘References’ section of this article.
In this excerpt, Nana initially takes an external event (the B and Bs leaving) and transforms it into a conversation in which the child’s experiences of this particular event become the focal point. Nana’s first turn is more or less an instance of self-talk and although I chime in (Turn 2) after Nana’s answer to her own question, the topic of the original question serves as a springboard to centre the interaction on Maggie’s experiences. Nana first comments on the little girl who was staying at Maggie’s, then asks Maggie if she or her brother spoke to the little girl who stayed at their house. In Turn 27, when Maggie starts singing ‘no’ and it is apparent that she has perhaps grown tired of the topic of the B and Bs, Nana encourages Maggie to sing more. Maggie, however, informs Nana that she is not going to sing yet, as she needs to get her ‘clachan’ (‘stones’). Nana then warns her to be careful with the stones.

It is evident that Nana hones in on Maggie’s activities, and, with subtle guidance, allows Maggie to determine the flow of activities within this interaction. However, although Nana appears to let Maggie define the shape of the interaction, Nana’s style within this particular episode is anything but laissez-faire. Parallel to Chevalier’s (2012) characterisation of the aunt’s interactional style as ‘high involvement,’ so too can Nana’s style be characterised as such in multiple ways. First, Nana asks a number of questions of Maggie; in this excerpt alone Nana poses five direct questions to Maggie and in the twelve-minute interaction as a whole, Nana asks Maggie a total of 30 direct questions. With the exception of one question, these questions do not appear to elicit vital information that would determine further action, but rather, seem to be a way in which to engage Maggie in conversation. Part of this strategy may come from the fact that, as previously mentioned, Nana was a Gaelic immersion teacher, and therefore was presumably adept at creating an active and stimulating learning environment through the use of questions. Another facet of Nana’s high involvement style is her exaggerated intonation at points; for example, after Maggie informs Nana that the B and Bs are Maggie’s B and Bs, not Nana’s B and Bs, Nana uses exaggerated intonation in her answer in Turn 10, denoted by the rise/fall intonation on ‘I know’. She then playfully acts hurt in Turn 12, and in Turn 14 uses the emphatic form, as well as a rise/fall intonation.
on the word *thusa* (‘you’; ‘-sa’ renders it emphatic) in confirming that, as Maggie has stated, the B and Bs are indeed Maggie’s B and Bs and not Nana’s B and Bs. Not only does this high involvement style maintain the child-centred nature of the interaction, and thus, as in Ruby’s study, builds emotional closeness between grandmother and granddaughter, but from a linguistic perspective, it is potentially very conducive to Maggie’s Gaelic development. Maggie is receiving a high degree of Gaelic input; further, she is actively encouraged to use the language through Nana’s questions. It is also worth pointing out that to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in Gaelic, one must either repeat the verb in the affirmative or the negative; therefore, Nana is potentially facilitating Maggie’s linguistic development even more so than a ‘yes/no’ question in English.

Although Nana’s interactive style appears aimed at facilitating Maggie’s Gaelic development, Nana tends to orient towards the bilingual end of Lanza’s well-known (1997) continuum of strategies caregivers use when the child replies in the dispreferred language. Lanza (p. 317) emphasises that ‘the strategies for opening negotiations of monolingual context contribute to establishing bilingualism in the early years’—in other words, that orienting towards the more monolingual end of the continuum is more conducive to maintenance of the lesser-used language. Nana, however, orients towards the more bilingual end of the continuum; she does not, for example, request Maggie to repeat her responses in the preferred code (Gaelic) nor, with the exception of Turn 20, does Nana re-formulate Maggie’s responses in the preferred code. In general, Nana uses what Lanza terms the ‘Move on’ strategy: the child’s use of the dispreferred language is glossed over and the conversation continues (cf. also Saville-Troike’s 1987 concept of ‘dual-lingualism;’ Gafaranga’s 2010 concept of ‘parallel mode.’). It is also evident that even though Nana tends to use monolingual Gaelic in this excerpt, she herself is not adverse to using English (Turns 10, 14, and 33), especially when it comes to repeating Maggie’s previous utterances. As discussed in more detail in Smith-Christmas (2016), Nana’s repetitions of her grandchildren’s utterances are an important way in which she builds and maintains close relationships with them. As her grandchildren predominantly speak English, these repetitions occur primarily in English. I contend that one of the ways that Nana maintains the child-centred and positive affective nature of this interaction is through her use of *English* as well as her lack of sanctioning Maggie’s use of English. By using English, Nana is interacting with Maggie on Maggie’s terms, and by refraining from sanctioning Maggie’s use of English, the interaction remains fun, playful, and very child-centred, whereas if Nana were to continually mark Maggie’s English utterances as ‘faultable’ (cf. Goffman, 1974), this dynamic may come under threat.

This last observation points to somewhat of a paradox at the microlevel of FLP. Linguistically speaking, Nana’s discourse strategies are not as conducive to Maggie’s Gaelic language development as they could be. However, invoking more monolingually-oriented strategies may jeopardise the positive affective nature of this interaction. Not only would this mean that Nana’s relationship with her granddaughter may suffer, but it is important to remember that for the most part, Nana is creating an interactional space in which Gaelic serves as the medium of positive affect, which in turn provides a way for Maggie to get close to her grandmother and her grandmother’s native language. Thus, there is a double-edged sword component to language policy within the family: in order
to maintain positive affect, Nana must sacrifice some of the more linguistically conducive aspects of language maintenance. This further points to Fishman’s (1991) well-known adage that once language shift begins, it is difficult to arrest; once the dominant language has been established as the child’s preferred choice, caregivers may have to adapt to this reality in order for the interaction to remain child-centred and imbued with positive affect (cf. Ruby, 2012). This reality is true with other interlocutors, namely Maggie’s older brother David and Nana’s own children (Maggie’s father, aunt, and uncle): as English is firmly these speakers’ preferred language, Nana’s sanctioning of their use of English (i.e. orienting to more monolingual strategies in terms of Lanza’s continuum) would potentially jeopardise her relationships with these speakers. As explained in detail in Smith-Christmas (2014, 2016), this means that Maggie is socialised into particular norms—in this case, the norm that if spoken to in Gaelic, one does not have to respond in Gaelic—which would make it difficult for Nana to suddenly change the rules of interactional engagement, by insisting, for instance, that Maggie answers in Gaelic, (see for example, Kulick, 1992, for similar observations of Gapun, Papua New Guinea; Rakoczy, Warneken, and Tomasello, 2008, for more on children’s understanding of norms).

Encouraging Maggie’s mixing and embedding language learning into other activities

At one point in the last excerpt, Maggie did indeed use some Gaelic, mixing the Gaelic lexical item clachan (‘stones’) into an otherwise-English sentence. The following excerpt shows how Nana uses one of Maggie’s lexical mixes—the word cas ‘leg’—and uses the affective, child-centred nature of the interaction to capitalise on this lexical mix as an opportunity for language learning. This particular instance occurs later in the interaction, in which Nana is putting the flowers Maggie has brought her in water. There are no stems on the flowers and Nana plays on the fact that the word cas means ‘stem’ and also ‘leg,’ after Maggie refers to the stem as the ‘leg’ of the flower:

Excerpt 2

1 Maggie = what (about these) flowers Nana?
2 Nana thoir dhomh iad 's cuiridh mi ann a sheo iad
give them to me and I’ll put them here
3 Maggie 'kay
4 Nana mmm-hmmm (. ) 's e potpurri @@ a dh 'fheumadadh mi dheanamh le seon
   ( . )
   I’ll have to make potpurri with this
   chan eil (. ) casan orra (. ) cuiridh sinn ann a shiud iad (. )
   there’s no stems on them. We’ll put them there.
oohhh nach eil iad breàgha=
   aren’t they pretty
5 Maggie = they got they just got face and a
6 Nana face. aodannan, nach eil?= 
faces, isn’t it?

7 Maggie and two legs
8 Nana face and two leg- face and one leg=
9 Maggie "no
10 Nana =aon chas a th’orra, nach e?=
   one leg on them, isn’t it?
11 Maggie =no
12 Nana ‘s e (.) siud an t-aodann (.) agus (.) aon chas (.)
   it is. here’s the face and one leg
   tha aodann ‘s dà chas ortsa
   you have a face and two legs
13 Maggie one cas two cas
   leg leg(s)
14 Nana aon chas (.) /dà chas (.) aon chas air a’ flùire³ (.) mmm-hmm (.)
   one leg two legs one leg on the flower
   sin facal math airson ‘cas’ (.) cas na flùr (.)
   that’s a good word for ‘stem’ leg of the flower
   ((sound of setting something down))
   oooh teth (.) an do ghabh thu do bhracaist?
   hot have you had your breakfast?

Parallel to Ruby’s (2012) example of how Aisha’s grandmother embeds further language learning and cultural knowledge into the task of putting a puzzle together, so too does Nana embed affect and language learning into the task of putting the flowers in water. Perhaps the most striking feature of this excerpt is the creative and playful way in which Nana capitalises on Maggie’s characterisation of the parts of the flower as having ‘legs.’ In Turn 4, Nana states of the flowers: chan eil casan orra (‘they don’t have stems’). Maggie, however, understands casan as meaning ‘legs’. Instead of clarifying this point, however, Nana implements Maggie’s playful characterisation of flowers as having ‘faces’ and ‘legs’ as a further language-learning opportunity. In Turn 6, after Nana repeats Maggie’s use of the word ‘face,’ Nana recasts this to ‘aodannan’ (plural of faces). She continues to use Gaelic in showing Maggie the ‘face’ and ‘one leg,’ of the flower, also saying that Maggie has one face and two legs (Turn 12). This then leads to Maggie’s playful lexical mix of ‘one cas two cas’, which Nana re-casts in monolingual Gaelic, as well as exaggerates the lenition in the word cas (ch [[k] goes to [x]].) She then uses a dative construction in stating that there is one ‘leg’ on the flower. She finishes the topic of the flowers by praising Maggie’s use of cas to mean ‘stem,’ (sin facal math airson ‘cas’ ‘that’s a good word for stem’) and uses the genitive (cas na flùr ‘leg of the flower’) in reiterating this praise.

Parallel to Excerpt 1, in Excerpt 2 Nana focuses the action on Maggie’s experiences and more or less lets Maggie guide the interaction. In doing so, she maintains a fun, child-centred dynamic. At the same time, she also manages to embed a number of language

³Thank you to one of reviewers for pointing out how in most dialects, this lexical item is feminine. As with the entire corpus, great efforts were made to represent how the word was actually said at that particular moment and in this instance, Nana pronounced the ‘f’ instead of leniting it. Further, the ‘r’ appears to be slender and is clearly followed by a schwa.
development opportunities. Her input emphasises complex (and quite difficult) structures such as case morphology and lenition (cf. Dorian, 1981). Her utterance in Turn 14, for example, not only recasts the lexical content of Maggie’s ‘one cas two cas’ mix, but it also highlights the fact that certain lexical items (in this case, nouns which are susceptible to lenition) should be lenited following the numerals one and two. It also orients to the more monolingual end of Lanza’s (1997) continuum, as does the recast in Turn 6. Despite these more monolingual orientations, however, the interaction remains playful and affectionate, and it is clear to see that Nana has successfully integrated language teaching into this child-centred interaction. Again, it is postulated that Nana’s experiences as a Gaelic immersion teacher may in part her skill at this endeavour.

It is also clear to see here that Nana mitigates any sense of didactism in her reformulation of Maggie’s ‘one cas two cas’ by praising Maggie (Turn 14- *sin facal math airson ‘cas’ ‘that’s a good for stem’). In the various instances in which Maggie does use Gaelic in the corpus overall—which often occur in the form of lexical mixes such as ‘one cas two cas’—Maggie normally receives some sort of praise or attention, usually in the form of laughter or the adult’s repetition. This reality again highlights the double-edged sword nature of language policy at the microlevel. While in other families, a mixed utterance might be more overtly sanctioned (especially if the caregivers are using the OPOL strategy, for example), the fact that Maggie uses so little Gaelic means that Nana often rewards her for what little Gaelic she does use. Although this practice may encourage Maggie’s productive Gaelic use and strengthen a positive emotional valence around Gaelic, the unintended consequence of this practice, however, is that Maggie appears to see Gaelic as a strategy to curry favour from her interlocutors. As described in more detail in Smith-Christmas (2016), Maggie particularly draws on this strategy when she wishes to deflect disciplining. Therefore, Maggie’s use of Gaelic often centres on negatively emotionally-valenced situations, such as arguing with their caregivers, a reality which I contend further contributes to her preference for English.

**Jacob’s Negative Emotional Valence Towards Gaelic**

In spite of Maggie’s clear preference for English, when her use of Gaelic in the 2009 corpus (when Maggie was 3;4) is compared to her brother’s Jacob’s (4;0) use of Gaelic in the 2014 corpus, it is clear to see that Maggie uses more Gaelic as well as appears to orientate more positively towards the language. (It should be noted that despite the eight-month gap in terms of age at time of recording, Maggie’s use of Gaelic at around 4;0 was similar to her Gaelic use at 3;4). Of Jacob’s 333 turns in the 2014 corpus, only 4% (12 in total) were coded as ‘Gaelic’ with another 4% coded as ‘Mixed;’ thus his use of *any* Gaelic, even including the 2 ‘Undecided’ turns (.6%) was below 9%, while Maggie’s use of Gaelic and Mixed alone was 19%. Additionally, linguistically-speaking, Maggie’s use of Gaelic at 3;4 is much more complex than Jacob’s at 4;0 on a number of dimensions, one of which is her ability to effectively integrate Gaelic lexical items into her English speech. Jacob does not appear to have this ability; further, a number of Jacob’s mixed examples are drawn from an interaction where Nana, Jacob and I go to a seafood restaurant and Jacob asks ‘what’s that’ for the various items decorating the restaurant. After Nana or I tell him the answer in Gaelic, he says ‘no, not [the Gaelic of the lexical
item]—for example, ‘no, not *iasg* (‘fish’) —the irony of which is in *using* Gaelic, he is telling Nana and I that he does not want us to use Gaelic *with* him.

The following excerpt is drawn from an interaction referred to as ‘Cockerel’ where Nana, Jacob, and I are in the car on the way to the seafood restaurant in which Jacob later displays quite an overtly negative stance towards Gaelic. Although to some extent Nana must concentrate on driving, she nonetheless manages to actively engage Jacob in conversation, asking him a number of questions in Gaelic (28 in total) centred on his own experiences. As are the majority of the questions in ‘Flowers,’ most of the questions in ‘Cockerel’ appear motivated not by a need for information and/or clarification, but as a way of encouraging the child to speak. Nana also attempts to get Jacob to sing a song (albeit unsuccessfully) in Gaelic and also engages him in discussing the various things we see while driving. Thus, as in ‘Flowers,’ Nana has managed to transform a relatively mundane task (driving the car) into an affectionate child-centred activity. Just prior to this excerpt, however, Jacob has been calling Nana and me ‘bad’. At first Nana reacts to this by a playful, exaggerated crying; however, as Jacob persists, and starts kicking the seat, Nana lightly admonishes his behaviour, as seen in Turn 1. Nana then distracts Jacob by turning the conversation towards the topic of cockerels, as seen below:

*Excerpt 3*

1. Nana /ah thusa-tha thusa grannda you’re nasty
2. Jacob ((muffled/indistinct))°bad Cassie bad .) bad Cassie bad
3. Nana dè th’ ann an ‘coileach’- eil /fhios agad dè th’ ann an ‘coileach’? what is a cockerel- do you know what a cockerel is?
4. Jacob em (.)^FOREST
5. Nana COILEACH cockerel
6. Jacob /no
7. Nana HI< nach /eil? ((sings cockerel noises)) no?
8. Jacob (a cockle doodle doo)
9. Nana a what?
10. Jacob a gocka doodle loo
11. Nana a gock @
12. Researcher @@@
13. Jacob what's that?
14. Nana 's e cockerel
15. Jacob what's that over there?
16. Nana HI< cockle-lockle-loo (. ) cockerel
17. Researcher @@
18. Nana .hhh °cockerel HI< ((trills))
19. Researcher @@ I look like a /cock-erel
20. Nana @@@@@@
In this excerpt, Nana uses a similar high-involvement style with Jacob as she did with Maggie in the ‘Flowers’ excerpts. Here, Nana makes cockerel noises (Turns 7 and 18), which encourage Jacob to make similar sounds (Turn 23), and as can be seen from the transcript, much of the interaction consists of playful variations of the word ‘cockerel’ (e.g. ‘cockle-lockle-loo’ in Nana’s Turn 16) and cockerel noises. Nana asks a number of questions in this interaction and the subject of the cockerel comes up because Nana has asked Jacob a direct question with an implicit translation task. The fact that this particular question comes after Nana has commented on Jacob’s behaviour highlights the positive affective nature of the interaction: rather than further critiquing Jacob or telling him to stop kicking the seat, Nana changes the subject and engages him in a playful interaction. Not only does this achieve the desired effect in terms of Jacob’s behaviour but it also mitigates any potential friction between Jacob and Nana, therefore meaning that the episode as a whole remains child-centred and positively emotionally-valenced. Like the second excerpt from ‘Flowers,’ here too Nana manages to embed language learning in a creative way, developing Jacob’s lexical range by teaching him the word coileach. Again parallel to the second excerpt in ‘Flowers,’ in which cas was interpreted as ‘legs,’ here, coileach (‘cockerel’) appears misinterpreted as coille (‘forest’) which explains Jacob’s answer of ‘forest’ in Turn 4. Instead of overtly marking his misinterpretation, however, Nana repeats the word and gives clues to the correct answer through her animated use of cockerel noises.

It is also clear from this excerpt that Nana orients to the more bilingual rather than monolingual end of Lanza’s continuum. Similar to ‘Flowers,’ here the use of bilingually-oriented strategies, as well as the use of English, help foster the affective, child-centred nature of the interaction, as they align to the children’s preferred code. The main difference between ‘Flowers’ and ‘Cockerel,’ however, is Jacob’s lack of Gaelic use. Although most of what is shown in ‘Cockerel’ is primarily noises and renditions of the word ‘cockerel’, I nonetheless judge these two interactions as being representative of the children’s language use around this age: Maggie playfully code-mixed while Jacob generally refrained from any Gaelic use. Further, as illustrated by the restaurant incident, where Jacob told Nana and me not to use the Gaelic word for certain items, it appears he harbours some hostility towards the language. Thus, despite Nana’s efforts at making both ‘Flowers’ and ‘Cockerel’ child-centred, as well as integrating language learning into each interaction, the effect appears to be different for each child. Drawing on observations of each child’s continuing linguistic trajectories, the following section will attempt to shed further light on the observation that, as discussed in the introduction, younger children are often less proficient than in the minority language their older siblings due to reduced input.
Discussion

A few months ago, I was visiting the Campbells and Maggie (9;3 at the time) and I embarked on an online quiz about animals. The questions were written in English and we read them aloud in English, but discussed our answers together in Gaelic. Although it is rare for Maggie to speak to a member of her family in Gaelic, she will often use Gaelic with me, and during this activity, she not only used Gaelic very proficiently, but also very willingly. Meanwhile, Jacob was building a fort in the same room and at one point, asked us why we were speaking Gaelic. He then told us not to speak Gaelic. Similar to the juxtaposition of ‘Flowers’ and ‘Cockerel,’ I think that this incident clearly illustrates the difference between the two children’s linguistic trajectories, and provides a useful platform for further exploring why younger children tend to receive less minority language input than older children and what this means in terms of the dynamic and fluid nature of FLP.

As previously mentioned, when I first met them in 2007, the entire family (meaning the child’s aunt, uncle, and great-aunt) were clearly making an effort to maintain a high level of Gaelic input for David and Maggie. However, by family admission and my own observations, this concerted effort appears to have waned over the years, especially among the more peripheral caregivers, such as Maggie’s aunt and uncle. This sentiment is captured in the following excerpt, taken from an interview with the children’s uncle Seumas in 2014. Here, Seumas reflects on how the family has changed since I first had met them:

Excerpt 4

1 Seumas so the- the Gaelic (.) to me I speak less Gaelic now than what I did seven years ago (0.4) but the only reason I was speaking it was to encourage David to speak it (1.2) if the children had (1.2) or like Jacob for example was- was speaking Gaelic I would converse to him in Gaelic
2 Researcher mhm
3 Seumas but he just point blank refuses (0.9) maybe it's my fault I should've just maybe spoken to him more in Gaelic and ignored him (.) if he replied back in English but ach that doesn't really work either (.) @

Seumas’ quote clearly illustrates how the children’s linguistic practices have an impact on the caregivers’ input management strategies. Initially, Seumas used Gaelic to encourage his eldest nephew to use Gaelic, but as David, and then his siblings, increasingly used English, Seumas’ efforts diminished. Thus, Jacob receives less Gaelic input in part because his siblings’ high use of English has lowered caregiver morale, so to speak, and the peripheral caregivers tend to use English with the children. Further, when the peripheral caregivers do use Gaelic, it is evident from Turn 3 in this excerpt that they are less likely to invoke more monolingually oriented strategies, such as ‘ignore[ing] him if he replied in English,’ due to the perceived futility of doing so. As previously mentioned, part of the reason for this futility is due to David, Maggie, and caregivers like
Seumas’ own roles in socialising Jacob into particular language norms, namely that talk in English will not sanctioned. The fact that Jacob has an additional ‘socialiser’ (Maggie) means that the cumulative effect of other actors’ linguistic preferences potentially have more impact on Jacob than his older siblings.

It is clear to see, therefore, that once certain actors establish a preference for English, the effects are far-reaching. It is also clear that Jacob strongly prefers English, and in the 2014 recordings there are two child-centred interactions in which his apparent animosity towards Gaelic forces his caregivers to switch to English entirely. In both cases, the caregivers are reading stories to Jacob which are written in English but in which they read in Gaelic. After Jacob’s constant complaints, however, the caregivers must make a choice: continue in Gaelic or give up on the interaction. There is therefore a high degree of reflexivity inherent in Jacob’s (lack of) Gaelic maintenance: his negative stance towards Gaelic means that his caregivers are limited in the Gaelic they can use in child-centred, positively emotionally valenced interactions with him. This not only curtails the linguistic input he receives in the minority language, but also lessens his opportunities to form positive associations with the language. The fewer positive associations he forms with the language, the more likely he is to object to the language being used with him, and so forth.

The case is clearly different with Maggie, who, relative to Jacob, produced a high amount of Gaelic when she was Jacob’s age. I posit that one of the reasons for the apparent difference is that essentially, her situation is the reverse of Jacob’s situation as described above. Because Maggie had more Gaelic input under the age of three (as English had not yet been firmly established as her older brother David’s preferred language), Maggie attained greater competence in Gaelic than Jacob. She therefore did not harbour such animosity towards the language as Jacob, and thus, the language was used with her in child-centred activities on a frequent basis. This in turn further afforded her more input as well as positive associations with the language. She therefore currently uses Gaelic in various activities when prompted and also willingly participates in organised Gaelic activities, such as music classes and film competitions for young Gaelic speakers.

**Conclusion**

This paper has examined the affective dimension of language use as a means to exploring the dynamic nature of FLP. It has shown how one reality—Nana’s interactional style—has had different effects for two siblings and has further shown how these differences can be explained by the cyclical and reflexive nature of language shift in the family. It has also shown the doubled-edged sword nature of language maintenance at the micro-level: in order to maintain the child-centred nature of the interactions, thereby building up a positive emotional valence around Gaelic, Nana sometimes has opted for strategies which are linguistically less-conducive to language maintenance. It has further shown the importance of these positive interactions for the children’s future linguistic trajectories and points to the need to consider the affective dimension in terms of wider efforts to
maintain the language, both for children who are socialised in the language at home and for children whose primary exposure to the language is through school.

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Transcription Conventions

: Elongated Sound
- Cut-off
word Emphasis
WORD Increased Amplitude
° Decreased Amplitude
HI< Higher Pitch
> < Accelerated Speech
= Latching speech
[[ ]] Overlapping Speech
( .5) Pause (Seconds)
( .) Micropause (less than two-tenths of a second)
@ Laughter (pulse)
{ } Word/sound said ingressively
/ Rising Pitch
\ Falling Pitch
\ Rise/Fall Pitch
( ) Uncertainty in Transcript

References


