Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

Thesis Booklet



Family Language Policy and Heritage Language Maintenance among Hungarian Families in the United Kingdom

Thesis for obtaining a PhD degree in the Multilingualism Doctoral School of the University of Pannonia

in the branch of

Linguistics

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Veszprém, 2026

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism has become a global norm shaped by migration, transnational mobility, digital communication, and intercultural relationships. In migrant families, language use is closely connected to identity, intergenerational communication, cultural continuity, and the maintenance of heritage languages (HLs). Family has therefore become an important domain of language policy and language transmission (Fishman, 1991).

Family Language Policy (FLP) examines how multilingual families manage, negotiate, and experience language use. Rooted in Spolsky's (2004, 2008, 2012) tripartite model, FLP research focuses on three interconnected dimensions: language ideologies, language management, and language practices. More recent approaches have expanded this framework by emphasising the dynamic nature of bilingual family life and the roles of child agency, emotional and sociocultural factors, institutional influences, and digital communication (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Hollebeke et al., 2022).

Heritage language maintenance is particularly important in migrant contexts, where majority languages dominate educational, professional, and public domains. Previous research has associated HL maintenance with interacting factors including parental language ideologies, literacy practices, family relationships, community and institutional support, and children's own linguistic preferences (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2022). Hungarian families living abroad remain relatively underrepresented in FLP research, particularly in the United Kingdom.

The present study investigates FLP among Hungarian-speaking families living in the United Kingdom, focusing on relationships between language ideologies, practices, management strategies, and internal and external factors associated with heritage language maintenance. It extends Spolsky's tripartite model by incorporating recent theoretical developments concerning child agency, sociocultural influences, digital communication, and transnational ties. A mixed-methods design combines a large-scale questionnaire with follow-up interviews, providing both quantitative patterns and qualitative insights into bilingual family life.

The dissertation addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the patterns of language practices, ideologies, and management strategies in Hungarian families in the UK?
2. Which internal and external factors are associated with variation in children's Hungarian language proficiency and Family Language Policy?

It is hypothesised that Hungarian families will display predominantly bilingual practices, with Hungarian remaining particularly important in emotionally embedded and

intergenerational interactions and English becoming more dominant in literacy-related, educational, and digital domains. Variation in HL maintenance is expected to be associated with interacting internal and external factors, including parental language ideologies, child agency, literacy practices, community involvement, digital exposure, and institutional support.

The study addresses the underrepresentation of Hungarian transnational families in FLP research and develops an integrated analytical framework combining Spolsky's model with dynamic, relational, and sociocultural approaches to FLP. Through its mixed-methods design, it also seeks to provide a context-sensitive understanding of how multilingual families negotiate heritage language transmission.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Hungarians in the UK

Hungarian migration to the United Kingdom has developed in response to broader political and socioeconomic transformations in Europe. Successive migration waves have created different institutional, demographic, and sociolinguistic conditions for Hungarian language use and intergenerational transmission. Earlier migration included labour migration before the First World War and politically motivated emigration following the Second World War and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The most recent migration wave intensified following Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004, when free movement contributed to a substantial increase in Hungarian migration to Western Europe, particularly the United Kingdom (Gazsó, 2016).

Recent Hungarian migration differs from earlier waves in its demographic composition and settlement patterns. Migration increasingly shifted from predominantly young, single workers towards longer-term settlement involving families with children (Gazsó, 2016; Papp et al., 2019). According to the Office for National Statistics, approximately 102,000 Hungarian-born individuals were living in the United Kingdom in 2021, although estimates vary because of continuing migration and return migration. Hungarian migrants are also geographically dispersed, despite a substantial concentration in London. These developments have created new conditions for intergenerational heritage language transmission and bilingual child-rearing.

Hungarian diaspora communities are heterogeneous in their migration histories, identities, settlement trajectories, and relationships with Hungarian institutions and transnational networks. Recent research similarly distinguishes between different forms and degrees of diaspora and transnational engagement. Such differences are particularly relevant to FLP

because participation in Hungarian community networks may provide families with additional opportunities for heritage-language use and transmission.

Studies of Hungarian communities in different international contexts demonstrate that heritage language maintenance is shaped by family practices, settlement patterns, community networks, and broader sociolinguistic conditions. More recent research also highlights the diversity of family language management and identity construction among Western European Hungarian families, while community institutions such as civil organisations, religious services, scouting activities, and weekend schools may provide important domains for Hungarian language use beyond the home.

Despite these contributions, research on Hungarian migrant communities has predominantly focused on migration, identity, language contact, and broader sociolinguistic processes. Family Language Policy among Hungarian-speaking families remains comparatively underresearched, particularly in the United Kingdom. The present study addresses this gap by examining language ideologies, practices, and management strategies among UK-based families with at least one Hungarian-speaking parent and the intergenerational transmission of Hungarian within these families.

2.1.1. Hungarian Weekend Schools

Hungarian weekend schools provide important institutional support for heritage language maintenance and cultural continuity among Hungarian families in the UK. Most were established between 2010 and 2012 and aim to support Hungarian language and literacy development, cultural identity, and community building through language instruction and cultural activities (Papp et al., 2024). Operating outside the mainstream British educational system, they create additional domains for Hungarian language use and provide children with opportunities to participate in a wider Hungarian-speaking community. From an FLP perspective, weekend schools illustrate how family language management extends beyond the household and interacts with community institutions and broader ideological orientations towards bilingualism, identity, and cultural transmission. Participation may therefore support parents in balancing children's integration into British society with the maintenance of Hungarian as a heritage language.

2.2. Family Language Policy: Conceptualisations, Approaches, Definitions

Heritage language maintenance and language shift are closely connected to broader processes of language contact, migration, and multilingualism. Pauwels (2016) defines language shift as the gradual replacement of one language by another across an increasing number of domains, while language maintenance refers to the continued use or retention of a minority or heritage language. These processes are shaped by interacting individual, family, community, and societal factors. Within these, the family and home domain plays a particularly important role in the intergenerational transmission of heritage languages (Pauwels, 2016; Fishman, 1991).

This focus on the family provided an important foundation for the development of Family Language Policy (FLP), an interdisciplinary field concerned with how languages are negotiated, managed, and transmitted within family life. The term *Family Language Policy* was originally coined by Luykx (2003), while early conceptualisations emphasised explicit and overt planning concerning language use within the home (King et al., 2008). These approaches were strongly influenced by Spolsky's tripartite model of language policy.

More recent conceptualisations have expanded FLP beyond explicit parental planning to include implicit and covert language practices, literacy, lived experiences, individual agency, identity, and the broader social and cultural context of multilingual family life (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013). Consequently, FLP is increasingly understood as a dynamic process in which language practices and ideologies are negotiated by family members within wider sociocultural environments.

In the present study, **family** is understood "as a social institution governed by rigid moral conventions to an idea of family and wider personal life as diverse sets of practices" (Chambers, 2012, p. 33). **FLP** is defined as the combination of language management, language practices, and language ideologies within the broader social and cultural context of family life, with particular emphasis on internal and external family factors. The study is based on Spolsky's tripartite model, complemented by internal and external factors identified in subsequent FLP research.

2.2.1. Heritage Languages and Heritage Language Maintenance

A heritage language **(HL)** is the family or community language of speakers from ethnolinguistic minority backgrounds (Montrul, 2010). Little (2018) conceptualises HL primarily through intergenerational family transmission, emphasising its connections to identity, belonging, emotional attachment, and cultural continuity. Polinsky (2018) defines heritage speakers as bilinguals whose weaker language is typically the minority language of society and whose

stronger language is the dominant societal language. Heritage language proficiency is shaped by exposure and opportunities for active language use within both the family and the broader sociolinguistic environment. In the present study, Hungarian is therefore approached as a heritage language maintained through interacting family practices, ideologies, management strategies, child agency, and wider community and societal influences.

2.2.2. Language Ideologies in Family Language Policy

Language ideologies are socially situated representations of languages and their use that connect linguistic choices to broader social meanings, including identity, education, and socioeconomic opportunities (Woolard, 2020). Within FLP, they influence how parents value different languages and the language practices and maintenance strategies they seek to promote. Curdt-Christiansen (2009) conceptualises parental beliefs, aspirations, and expectations as forms of invisible language planning shaped by both macro-level sociopolitical conditions and micro-level family factors. Importantly, positive attitudes towards a heritage language do not necessarily translate directly into everyday language practices or successful maintenance (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). In the present study, language ideologies are therefore examined as a core component of FLP in interaction with language practices, management strategies, and broader internal and external factors.

2.3. Spolsky's Tripartite Model

Spolsky's tripartite model (2004, 2012) is one of the most influential frameworks in language policy research and provides the main theoretical foundation for the present study. It conceptualises language policy through three interconnected components: language ideologies, language management, and language practices. These components interact dynamically: ideological beliefs may shape management strategies and language practices, while actual practices may, in turn, influence ideologies and management.

Language ideologies refer to beliefs, values, and attitudes concerning languages and their perceived identity, cultural, educational, or economic value (Spolsky, 2004, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013). Language management refers to explicit attempts to influence language use through planning or intervention and may operate at state, institutional, community, or family levels. Within families, this includes parental efforts to promote heritage language use (Spolsky, 2004). Language practices refer to actual language use in everyday interactions and may either correspond to or diverge from language ideologies and management strategies.

Although originally developed as a broad model of language policy, the framework has increasingly been applied to families and other social domains. Spolsky (2021) further

developed the model into a multi-level framework encompassing individual, family, community, institutional, and state levels and placed greater emphasis on individual agency. Its applicability across micro-, meso-, and macro-level contexts makes it particularly relevant to FLP. However, at the family level, the model remains too general to capture the full complexity of everyday language decisions, relationships, and interactions. Subsequent FLP research has therefore extended the tripartite framework by incorporating additional internal and external influences on Family Language Policy.

2.4. Shortcomings of the Model

Spolsky's model provides a useful framework for FLP, yet it does not fully capture the complexity of language policy as it is negotiated within everyday family life. Critical approaches have highlighted the importance of agency, resistance, power relations, and the interaction of internal and external influences. In particular, the model does not sufficiently explain how family-level factors interact with broader institutional, sociocultural, and economic conditions. Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) therefore conceptualise FLP as emerging through interactions between internal factors, such as emotion, identity, family culture, parental impact belief, and child agency, and external factors, including policy regimes, sociocultural norms, economic conditions, and the sociolinguistic environment. These limitations have led FLP research to extend Spolsky's original framework by incorporating additional factors shaping Family Language Policy.

2.5. Extensions in FLP Research

2.5.1. From Spolsky's Tripartite Model to Expanded FLP Frameworks

Subsequent FLP research has extended Spolsky's tripartite model by demonstrating that language ideologies, practices, and management do not necessarily form a stable or internally coherent system. Parental ideologies may not translate directly into language practices or management strategies, while literacy practices may function as an important link between ideology and practice (Hollebeke et al., 2022). FLP is therefore increasingly conceptualised as fluid, context-sensitive, and continuously negotiated.

A major development has been the recognition of child agency. Rather than being passive recipients of parental language policies, children may actively negotiate, resist, or reshape family language practices through their linguistic preferences and everyday choices (Gafaranga,

2010). Research has also highlighted the emotional and relational dimensions of FLP, including emotional bonds, parental wellbeing, and intergenerational relationships.

FLP research has further incorporated external and institutional influences, including educational institutions, peer networks, migration policies, and digital environments, which may support or constrain heritage language maintenance (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2022). In addition, neoliberal perspectives have drawn attention to the perceived economic and symbolic value of languages, whereby linguistic choices may reflect considerations of educational opportunities, professional mobility, and marketability alongside identity and cultural continuity (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020).

Together, these developments extend the tripartite framework by conceptualising FLP as a dynamic and multidimensional process shaped by agency, emotional relationships, institutional and sociopolitical conditions, and broader systems of linguistic value.

2.5.2. Internal and External Factors in FLP Research

Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) extended FLP research by organising influences on Family Language Policy into internal and external factors. Internal factors include emotional attachment, identity, family culture and traditions, parental impact beliefs, and child agency, while external factors comprise sociocultural, political, economic, and sociolinguistic influences. These factors are closely interconnected and interact with language ideologies, practices, and management.

More recent FLP research has identified additional influences relevant to contemporary transnational families, including sibling dynamics, parental language input, family interaction patterns, digital communication, neoliberal linguistic ideologies, transnational ties, and the timing of migration. Digital media may both extend opportunities for heritage language use and increase exposure to the dominant language, while transnational relationships can provide additional domains for heritage language communication. Neoliberal ideologies may further influence families' evaluation of languages according to their perceived educational and economic value.

Together, these internal and external factors provide an extended framework for examining how Hungarian transnational families negotiate bilingual upbringing and heritage language maintenance.

2.6. Towards an Integrated and Modified Model of FLP

The present study proposes an integrated FLP framework based on Spolsky's three core dimensions of language ideologies, language management, and language practices, conceptualised as dynamically interconnected rather than separate or static components. Building on Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020), the framework incorporates internal and external factors associated with Family Language Policy and heritage language maintenance.

The internal factors operationalised in the study include parental impact beliefs, child agency, child-directed speech, parental language input, and literacy-related practices, while external influences include heritage language educational support, community participation, transnational family contact, and digital exposure. Broader dimensions identified in the literature, including emotional attachment, language commodification, neoliberal language ideologies, and transnational belonging, provide contextual influences and are also explored through the qualitative component. Demographic and migration-related characteristics are examined as background variables rather than core dimensions of the framework.

The resulting model conceptualises FLP as a dynamic process emerging from interactions between language ideologies, management, and practices, shaped by internal family dynamics and broader social influences. It provides the analytical framework for examining how Hungarian transnational families in the United Kingdom negotiate bilingual upbringing and heritage language maintenance.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODODLOGY

3.1. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Drawing on the FLP framework and previous research on Family Language Policy and multilingual language socialisation (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; King & Fogle, 2006), the study examines family language use in Hungarian-speaking families in the United Kingdom. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the patterns of language practices, ideologies, and management strategies in Hungarian families in the UK?
2. Which internal and external factors are associated with variation in children's Hungarian language proficiency and Family Language Policy?

Based on previous research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Hungarian families living in the United Kingdom are expected to display predominantly bilingual family language practices, with both Hungarian and English present in everyday communication. At the same time, Hungarian is expected to remain dominant in emotionally embedded family interactions, intergenerational communication, and heritage language maintenance practices, while English is likely to appear more frequently in literacy-related activities, schooling, peer interaction, and digital media use (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020).

Hypothesis 2: Variation in children's Hungarian language proficiency and Family Language Policy will be associated with both internal and external FLP-related factors. Internal factors such as parental Hungarian language proficiency, parents' own language practices, child-directed speech, child agency, and literacy practices are expected to be positively related to children's Hungarian proficiency. Heritage language maintenance is also expected to vary in relation to external factors, including extracurricular activities, community events, church participation, and digital exposure. Negative beliefs about bilingualism are expected to show a negative association with children's Hungarian proficiency, whereas positive academic and literacy-related language ideologies are expected to be associated with stronger heritage language outcomes (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2022; Hollebeke et al., 2022).

The research questions and hypotheses were investigated through a **mixed-methods design**, outlined in the following sections.

3.2. Research Design

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in which the quantitative phase was followed by qualitative interviews. The questionnaire provided an overview of participants' language practices, ideologies, management strategies, language proficiency, and selected internal and external factors related to heritage language maintenance. The follow-up interviews were designed to clarify, elaborate on, and contextualise patterns identified in the quantitative analysis.

The two components were integrated through participant recruitment, the development of interview questions based on the quantitative findings, and the interpretation of results. This design enabled statistical patterns to be complemented by participants' accounts of the context-dependent processes underlying Family Language Policy.

3.3. Participants

The quantitative sample comprised 211 Hungarian-speaking parents living in the United Kingdom, including 197 women and 14 men. Participants had a mean age of 38.75 years (range = 25–52) and had lived in the UK for an average of 11.92 years (range = 2–26). All participants reported Hungarian as their first language. The sample was geographically dispersed across 70 postcode areas. Most participants had a high level of educational attainment (71.1%) and were in paid employment. Most households consisted of parents/guardians and children (82.5%), and the majority had one or two children.

The qualitative sample comprised 22 parents (17 mothers and 5 fathers): 12 from endogamous Hungarian families, six from exogamous families, and four single parents. Twelve interviews were conducted in person with participants connected to Hungarian weekend schools, while ten questionnaire respondents participated in online follow-up interviews.

3.4. Instruments

A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol were developed to examine the dimensions of Family Language Policy among Hungarian-speaking families in the United Kingdom.

3.4.1. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on the integrated FLP framework presented in Section 2.6 and drew substantially on the instrument developed for the *Pride, Prejudice and Pragmatism* project (Curdt-Christiansen et al., 2023). Items were adapted to the specific context of Hungarian-speaking families in the UK and subsequently piloted with nine members of the target community, resulting in minor refinements to wording and sequencing.

The final questionnaire comprised 107 questions, with additional items for families with multiple children. It covered demographic information; parent and child Hungarian and English proficiency; language practices, including parents' language use, child-directed speech, child agency, literacy-related activities, and digital exposure; parental language ideologies; and language management and heritage language maintenance strategies. An open-ended section allowed participants to provide additional comments and indicate their willingness to participate in the qualitative follow-up phase.

3.4.2. The Interviews

Following the questionnaire analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore areas requiring further elaboration and contextualisation. These included emotional attachment,

sibling interaction, family dynamics, ideological tensions, language commodification and neoliberal language ideologies, and institutional experiences.

The interviews focused on everyday language practices and child agency, intergenerational language transmission, parental language ideologies and future-oriented beliefs, and changes in parents' language use and perceived proficiency. They complemented the quantitative measures by providing insight into the motivations, emotions, negotiations, and family dynamics underlying the patterns identified in the questionnaire.

3.5. Procedure

3.5.1. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed online through Hungarian diaspora networks, schools, and social media using snowball sampling. Following a pilot study in December 2023, formal data collection took place between February 2024 and May 2025. Of 224 responses received, 211 were retained following eligibility checks and data cleaning. Participants were required to live in the UK and have at least one child aged 3–18.

Data were coded and analysed in JASP. Analyses included descriptive statistics, internal consistency testing, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression. A hierarchical regression examined the incremental contribution of child age and parental Hungarian proficiency, Hungarian language-related activities, and child agency to children's Hungarian proficiency. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

3.5.2. The Interviews

Twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted in Hungarian: 12 in person and 10 online. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed, manually checked, and thematically analysed. Initial codes were grouped into broader themes relating to family language practices, intergenerational transmission, ideological positioning, and institutional experiences. These themes were used to contextualise and interpret the quantitative findings.

The study received ethical approval from the University of Pannonia's Research Ethics Committee (**KEB_HTK_MDS_2024_04**).

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings in relation to the two research questions, focusing first on patterns of language practices, ideologies, and management and subsequently on the internal and external factors associated with heritage language maintenance. Quantitative findings are complemented by qualitative interview data.

4.1. Language Practices

Among participants with a partner, 67.0% had a Hungarian-speaking partner and 33.0% an English- or other-language-speaking partner. Hungarian was present in 98.6% of family language constellations, but predominantly alongside English or another language. Hungarian–English use was the most common pattern (59.7%), while only 23.2% reported exclusively Hungarian use. The findings therefore indicate predominantly bilingual rather than monolingual family language practices.

4.1.1. Parents' and Children's Proficiency

4.1.1.1. Parents' Proficiency

Parents reported significantly higher overall proficiency in Hungarian (M = 4.73) than in English (M = 4.20), $t(210) = 11.21$, $p < .001$. Hungarian proficiency was not significantly associated with length of residence in the UK ($r = .07$, $p = .322$), whereas English proficiency showed a significant positive association ($r = .29$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hungarian remained parents' stronger self-reported language despite long-term residence in the UK.

4.1.1.2. Children's Proficiency

Children's reported proficiency showed different patterns across age groups and language domains. Among children aged 0–5, Hungarian and English speaking and comprehension were broadly similar. In the 6–11 and 12–18 groups, English proficiency was higher across all skills, with the largest differences in reading and writing. Hungarian nevertheless remained important in family interaction, while English was more strongly associated with schooling, literacy, peer, and sibling domains. Interview accounts also showed that children could understand Hungarian while preferring to respond in English, illustrating the role of child agency in language use.

4.1.2. Language Use for Different Activities

Language use varied substantially across activities. Mixed Hungarian–English use was particularly common for news (61.4%) and music (53.1%), while television and radio showed

stronger English use. In contrast, communication between partners was predominantly Hungarian-only (59.1%). These findings indicate domain-specific bilingual practices, with Hungarian particularly prominent in interpersonal family communication and greater bilingual or English use in media-related activities.

4.1.3. Child-Directed Speech

Hungarian predominated in most child-directed interactions. Hungarian-only use was reported by 50.0% of participants for dinner conversations, 50.7% for parent-to-child communication, and 46.0% for partner-to-child communication. It was particularly strong in grandparent–child interaction, reaching 73.8% with paternal and 92.5% with maternal grandparents. Homework differed from this pattern, with mixed Hungarian–English use being most frequent (43.9%), reflecting the stronger influence of English in educational contexts.

4.1.4. Child Agency

Children's language choices differed according to interlocutor. Hungarian-only use was particularly frequent with grandparents (60.4% with paternal and 70.3% with maternal grandparents), whereas interactions with parents and siblings showed more mixed patterns. Interview data further demonstrated that children actively influenced family language practices by switching languages, responding in a different language, or strategically selecting Hungarian or English according to communicative context. Child agency therefore emerged as relational and context-dependent, shaped by interlocutor, linguistic resources, and communicative needs.

4.1.5. Digital Exposure

English exposure was generally higher than Hungarian exposure in screen-based activities, particularly television, although both languages showed relatively low levels of extended digital language practice. Interviews indicated a dual role for digital media: English-language content increased children's exposure to the societal language, while some parents deliberately selected Hungarian-language screen content to support heritage language maintenance. Digital environments therefore provided both increased exposure to English and opportunities for parental heritage-language management.

4.1.6. Literacy-Related and Extracurricular Activities

Shared reading was more frequent in Hungarian (M = 4.43) than in English (M = 3.54), whereas children's independent reading was considerably more frequent in English (M = 3.50) than in Hungarian (M = 1.79). Extracurricular and library-related activities occurred relatively

infrequently in both languages. The findings suggest that Hungarian literacy was more strongly supported through parent–child activities within the family, while independent literacy practices were more strongly oriented towards English.

4.2. Language Ideologies

4.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation identified five language ideology factors, explaining 51% of the total variance: Heritage/Hungarian Literacy Value, Home Language Use, School Language Support, Negative Beliefs about Bilingualism, and Academic and Career Benefits. All five factors showed satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70–.88$).

The results indicated predominantly positive orientations towards bilingualism and heritage language maintenance. Academic and Career Benefits had the highest mean ($M = 4.65$), followed by Home Language Use ($M = 4.58$) and Heritage/Hungarian Literacy Value ($M = 4.40$). School Language Support showed a more moderate mean ($M = 3.06$), while Negative Beliefs about Bilingualism received little endorsement ($M = 1.49$).

The interview findings reflected the same multidimensional pattern: parents valued Hungarian literacy and home use while also emphasising the educational and professional advantages of English and bilingualism. Overall, parental ideologies combined heritage-oriented commitments with pragmatic, future-oriented beliefs about their children's linguistic resources.

4.3. Management and HL Maintenance

Heritage language management was most frequently reported through virtual family contact (76.8%), followed by family visits to Hungary (68.3%) and participation in Hungarian camps (62.6%). Less frequent strategies included grandparent involvement (36.5%) and participation in Hungarian courses (35.1%).

The interview findings similarly highlighted regular contact with relatives, visits to Hungary, and participation in Hungarian camps. Overall, heritage language management was therefore strongly embedded in transnational family relationships and opportunities for Hungarian language use, rather than relying primarily on formal educational provision. At the same time, variation across the five strategies indicates that families employed different combinations of informal, transnational, and organised practices to support Hungarian language maintenance.

4.4. Internal and External Factors

4.4.1. Correlations between Children's Hungarian Proficiency and Internal and External Factors

Children's Hungarian proficiency was significantly positively associated with parental Hungarian proficiency (r = .218), parents' own language practices (r = .357), child-directed speech (r = .408), child agency (r = .510), and child age (r = .431). Child agency showed the strongest correlation with children's Hungarian proficiency. Strong relationships were also found between parents' own language practices and child-directed speech (r = .715), and between child-directed speech and child agency (r = .841).

Language ideologies were also associated with children's Hungarian proficiency. Heritage literacy ideology showed the strongest positive ideological association (r = .293), while Home Language Use (r = .153) and Academic and Career Benefits (r = .166) showed weaker positive associations. Negative Beliefs about Bilingualism were negatively associated with Hungarian proficiency (r = −.310).

Heritage language management itself was not significantly associated with children's Hungarian proficiency, child agency, or child age. Similarly, digital exposure showed no significant relationship with Hungarian proficiency. In contrast, proficiency was positively associated with shared Hungarian reading (r = .275), independent Hungarian reading (r = .532), Hungarian extracurricular activities (r = .311), church-related activities (r = .170), and Hungarian community events (r = .235), while library activities were not significantly associated with proficiency.

4.4.2. Predictors of Heritage Language Maintenance: Regression Models of Child Proficiency and Child Agency

Multiple regression analyses further examined the factors associated with children's Hungarian proficiency. In the broader model, child agency emerged as the strongest predictor (β = .683, p < .001), followed by child age (β = .425, p < .001) and Hungarian extracurricular activities (β = .242, p = .012). Shared Hungarian reading was at the threshold of significance (p = .050), while several other family language variables were not significant when considered simultaneously.

A separate model examining language ideologies and background variables identified child age (β = .403), Heritage Literacy ideology (β = .280), and parental Hungarian proficiency (β = .155) as significant positive predictors, while Negative Beliefs about Bilingualism were

negatively associated with proficiency (β = −.150). Complementary-school status was also significant, although its direction was sensitive to model specification.

For child agency, child-directed speech was by far the strongest predictor (β = .771, $p <$ .001), while School Language Support ideology showed a smaller positive association (β = .116, $p = .027$). The remaining ideology, management, family-language, and age variables were not significant.

Finally, hierarchical regression demonstrated the incremental contribution of the main predictors of children's Hungarian proficiency. Parental Hungarian proficiency and child age initially explained 19.7% of the variance. Adding Hungarian language-related activities increased the explained variance to 39.5%, and adding child agency increased it further to 54.3% ($R^2 = .543$, adjusted $R^2 = .534$). In the final model, all four predictors were significant: child agency (β = .397), Hungarian language activities (β = .352), child age (β = .325), and parental Hungarian proficiency (β = .182). These findings identify child agency as particularly important while demonstrating that heritage language proficiency is associated with multiple interacting child-, family-, and activity-related factors.

4.5. Family Type: Endogamous and Exogamous Families

Comparisons between endogamous and exogamous families showed no significant differences in any of the five language ideology factors, children's English proficiency, Hungarian language activities, or digital exposure. Significant differences were found, however, in children's Hungarian proficiency, child-directed speech, child agency, and heritage language management ($p <$ .001 in each case).

Children in endogamous families showed higher Hungarian proficiency, child-directed speech, and child agency than those in exogamous families. In contrast, heritage language management was higher among exogamous families. Thus, family type was associated primarily with language practices and children's Hungarian proficiency rather than parental language ideologies. These differences should not be interpreted causally, as other factors identified in the study were also associated with children's Hungarian proficiency.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The findings show that Family Language Policy among Hungarian-speaking families in the UK is characterised by flexible bilingual practices shaped by interactions between language ideologies, practices, management, and internal and external factors.

Regarding the first research question, the findings largely supported the first hypothesis. Hungarian remained central to parent–child and particularly grandparent–child communication, while English was more prominent in schooling, sibling interaction, independent literacy, and digital domains. This suggests functional bilingualism, in which Hungarian and English fulfil different roles within family life. Parents generally valued Hungarian language transmission while simultaneously recognising the educational and professional value of English and bilingualism. Heritage language management was particularly associated with transnational practices, including family contact, visits to Hungary, and Hungarian camps.

The second hypothesis was partially supported. Child agency emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictor of children's Hungarian proficiency, reinforcing the view of children as active participants in FLP rather than passive recipients of parental language policies. Hungarian language activities, child age, and parental Hungarian proficiency also significantly contributed to proficiency, while child-directed speech was strongly associated with child agency. Heritage literacy ideology was positively associated with proficiency, whereas negative beliefs about bilingualism showed a negative association.

In contrast, general heritage language management and digital exposure showed weaker or non-significant relationships with Hungarian proficiency. These findings suggest that active and meaningful language engagement may be more important than exposure or parental management alone. Overall, heritage language maintenance appears to emerge from interacting child-, family-, and context-related influences rather than from any single factor.

The findings therefore allow the original integrated FLP framework to be empirically refined. The revised model distinguishes between Strong/Direct factors (child agency, child age, Hungarian-language activities, and parental Hungarian proficiency), Background/Indirect factors (child-directed speech, literacy practices, complementary education, community activities, and HL ideologies), and Weak/Contextual factors (digital exposure, transnational ties, grandparental involvement, family language configuration, and HL management). This hierarchical order places child agency and meaningful opportunities for Hungarian use closer

to the centre of heritage language maintenance while retaining Spolsky's interconnected dimensions of ideology, management, and practice.

Limitations

The main limitations include the non-representative and strongly female sample, reliance on parent-reported data, the cross-sectional design, relatively brief interviews, and simplified measures of digital exposure and language management. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs, children's perspectives, direct proficiency measures, and migration-related contextual factors.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined Family Language Policy among Hungarian-speaking families living in the United Kingdom, focusing on the intergenerational transmission of Hungarian as a heritage language and the internal and external factors associated with heritage language maintenance.

Regarding the first research question, the findings showed that Hungarian and English fulfil partly different functions within family life. Hungarian remained particularly prominent in parent–child and grandparent–child communication, while English was more strongly represented in schooling, sibling interaction, digital media, and independent literacy practices. Parents generally expressed positive attitudes towards Hungarian maintenance and bilingualism, while language management relied particularly on transnational family contact, visits to Hungary, and heritage-language activities. Overall, these findings largely supported **Hypothesis 1**, demonstrating flexible and domain-specific bilingual practices rather than rigid language separation.

Regarding the second research question, both internal and external factors were associated with children's Hungarian proficiency, although their contributions differed considerably. Child agency emerged as the strongest and most consistent factor, while Hungarian language-related activities, child age, and parental Hungarian proficiency also made significant contributions. Heritage literacy ideology was positively associated with proficiency, whereas negative beliefs about bilingualism showed a negative association. In contrast, general heritage language management and digital exposure showed weaker or non-significant relationships with Hungarian proficiency. **Hypothesis 2** was therefore partially supported.

Taken together, the findings suggest an important distinction between the intention to maintain Hungarian and the processes through which maintenance is realised. Positive parental ideologies and management strategies do not automatically translate into stronger heritage language outcomes. Instead, Hungarian proficiency appears to be particularly associated with meaningful and sustained opportunities for language use in which children actively participate.

The dissertation therefore refines the proposed FLP framework by demonstrating that its components differ in the strength and directness of their relationship with heritage language maintenance. In particular, the findings place child agency and meaningful Hungarian-language engagement closer to the centre of FLP while retaining the interconnected roles of language ideologies, practices, management, and broader contextual influences.

Overall, the study contributes to FLP research by providing empirical evidence from an underresearched Hungarian migrant context and by highlighting heritage language maintenance as a dynamic, relational, and child-inclusive process rather than the outcome of parental language planning alone.

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