

“We really believe that we have given our children a gift”

Discourses on bilingual child-rearing in an online parenting forum

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Abstract

Parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing are influenced by prevailing language ideologies and popular discourses on the advantages of bilingualism. This study seeks to explore the ideologies underpinning parental decisions on family language policies in a predominantly English monolingual environment. Focussing on how the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy, the discursive construction of bilingual parenting is explored in one of the largest online parenting communities in Australia, essentialbaby.com.au, using critical discourse analysis. This is a ‘mainstream’ forum that is not a priori concerned with language. The corpus consists of 15 discussion threads totalling 266 comments posted between 2007 and 2014 by parents and carers seeking and giving advice on bilingual child-rearing. Findings suggest that due to the increasing valorisation of bilingualism in general discourses, bilingual family language policies, such as the ‘one parent – one language’ strategy, have become incorporated into mainstream parenting strategies. Overall, this study finds that parents are often faced with contradictory bilingual child-rearing realities that inform their language-related parenting decisions. The research extends existing literature on how the monolingual mindset operates on an individual level, and has implications for language policy at individual, institutional and state levels.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “‘We really believe that we have given our children a gift’: Discourses on bilingual child-rearing in an online advice forum’ has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree, to any university or institution other than Macquarie University. I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and that it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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09 October 2015

List of Abbreviations and Conventions

List of academic abbreviations and acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
FLP	family language policy
HL-vs-CL	home language versus community language
LOTE	language other than English
ONOL	one nation, one language
OPOL	one parent – one language

List of corpus abbreviations

The corpus for this project is based on publicly available data from the online parenting forum www.essentialbaby.com.au. The following is a list of abbreviations commonly used in comments found in the corpus:

DD	dear daughter
DH	dear husband
DP	dear partner
DS	dear son
ESL	English as a second language
LOL	laugh out loud
OMG	oh my god
OP	original poster/post
PP	previous poster

Data conventions

The corpus was compiled and prepared for presentation using the following conventions: Forum threads have been numbered in chronological order from oldest to newest post (see Table 1, p. 26). The original post in each thread is titled OP plus the thread number, e.g. OP7 is the original post in thread 7. Comments within each thread have been numbered chronologically, e.g. 4.7 is the 7th comment in thread 4. Comments within the threads that were posted by the original poster are labelled with the comment number, e.g. OP7.16 is the 16th comment in thread 7 which is authored by the original poster of that thread.

All comments used as examples have been copy pasted directly. No changes have been made and grammatical or orthographic errors have not been corrected nor marked with [*sic*].

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1. Introduction

In 1994, when I was five years old, as part of a project on multiculturalism, my primary school in Newcastle, NSW, conducted interviews with pupils from immigrant backgrounds. My family had only arrived in Australia a few months prior: my parents knew very little English, and I knew none. As part of the project, a picture book was made by the school, with photographs and descriptive captions telling the story of our previous lives in far-away places; Switzerland, in my case. Most of the captions were only partially true due to mistranslations, yet entirely truthful in reflecting how little English we knew at the time. Fast-forward to the year 2013: I had just completed a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Berne, Switzerland, and was packing my bags to return to Australia. Whilst packing, I found that long-lost picture book. On the very last page, I discovered a photo of myself, proudly wearing my first school uniform during my first Easter Hat Parade. Below the photo, a short note, obviously dictated, and copied in the unsteady hand of a five-year-old. In the note, I thank the children in my class for taking care of me and for ‘writing for me all the words I need’.

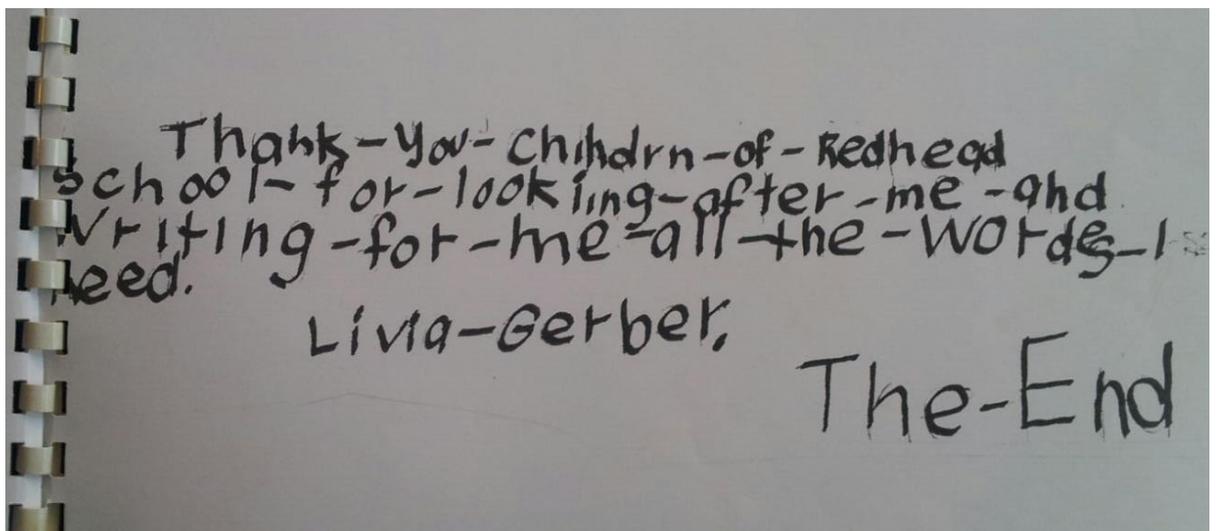


Figure 1. Livia's thank you note (1994)

Although my primary school was evidently interested in making its multicultural students feel welcome, their focus, unsurprisingly, was primarily on my (linguistic) integration, the ‘words I

needed' were English words. This obviously left the maintenance of my mother tongue to my parents. At the same time as the local school was pressuring my parents to make certain I learnt English as quickly as possible, my mother was relentlessly pressured by my grandparents to ensure their grandchildren would not forget their Swiss-German roots. Given this situation, I have often wondered whether my parents had consciously planned to raise me, and my younger siblings, bilingually when they first embarked on their adventure on the other side of the world. I have since asked my mother how she had planned to raise us bilingually. In response, she looked at me, puzzled, then laughed and said that, at the time, she did not know what she was doing.

Bilingual child-rearing in an English-dominant environment is not an easy task. In a society that largely sees English monolingualism as the norm (Clyne, 2005), promoting a language other than English (henceforth LOTE), often with little community or institutional support, can be a daunting undertaking. My mother's reaction to my question was the initial spark that ignited my interest in bilingual parenting in the Australian context. The paradox of my five-year-old self's thank you note in a book celebrating multiculturalism and multilingualism, further sparked my interest in the tension between the dominance of English and the valorisation of diversity as it is experienced by families.

Research within English-dominant contexts has long identified that due to a lack of institutional support, schools are often the site of language shift (Rubino, 2010). Language maintenance therefore usually falls to the home domain (Kipp, Clyne & Pauwels, 1995; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Armstrong de Almeida, 2006), where top-down discourses on bilingualism shape parental beliefs towards bilingual child-rearing, and ultimately contribute to minority language maintenance or shift (see De Houwer, 1999; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Schüpbach, 2009; Kirsch, 2012). Existing research has primarily taken qualitative approaches manifest in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (see Schwartz, 2010) to explore how family language

policies (henceforth FLP) are negotiated in the home (Döpke, 1998; King & Logan-Terry, 2008). As a result, the language ideologies underlying the choice of bilingual FLP strategy have been found to reflect wider societal attitudes towards bilingualism (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008), including the belief that by consciously adopting a bilingual FLP strategy, bilingual child-rearing is regarded as a ‘good’ parenting strategy to achieve additive bilingualism (King & Fogle, 2006).

To the best of my knowledge, very little is known about the parental attitudes on bilingual child-rearing among parents who, although interested in bilingual parenting in an English-dominant society, are not taking part in a language-specific research study. This study therefore sets out to fill this gap by examining bottom-up discourses on bilingualism in a publicly available online parenting forum, using critical discourse analysis. I intend to explore how language ideologies shape and inform parents’ understanding of bilingual child-rearing, and expect to derive implications for languages education, as a site where more support needs to be provided to families in their language-related decisions.

To address this gap in the literature, this thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the literature on theories of language ideology. Next, the monolingual mindset is discussed in terms of its influence on Australian languages education. The focus then turns to the ‘bilingual bonus’, a language ideology that valorises bilingualism within the home domain. This is followed by an overview of FLP studies conducted in the Australian context including a brief review of the two most commonly mentioned bilingual FLP strategies in the research literature. The chapter concludes by highlighting a relevant gap in the literature that calls for an exploration of how the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy in the Australian context.

Chapter 3 explains the methodological approach taken to address the identified lacuna. This study takes a qualitative approach to data analysis by employing critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) and thematic analysis to explore the language ideologies that inform parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing. After providing the rationale for the research approach, the principles of data collection are explained, followed by a description of the corpus, and its limitations. This chapter concludes with an outline of the methods of data analysis, and of CDA as the theoretical framework that informs the analysis of online discussion threads.

The analysis in Chapter 4 follows the research questions stated in Chapter 2. The chapter begins by addressing how contributors talk about bilingualism and the initial challenges they have faced, or are facing. This is followed by an exploration of the language-related parenting choices parents make in terms of *when* and *how* to raise their children bilingually. The analysis then turns to parents' discursive construction of bilingual FLP strategies, followed by an exploration of the causes for parents' frustration when their strategies are failing.

Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the key findings and critically discusses the results and conclusions based on the research questions. It begins with an analysis of how the monolingual mindset systematically shapes parents' understanding of bilingualism, and their choice of bilingual FLP strategy to promote double monolingual language acquisition. The discussion then turns to how the realisation of the bilingual bonus is underpinned by monolingual constraints. The section brings to light how bilingualism is valued as a generic skill, and not as a linguistic skill in its own right. Lastly, an exploration of parents' discursive construction of bilingual parenting as a 'good' parenting strategy demonstrates that bilingualism is first and foremost conceived of as a competitive advantage. Based on these findings, the conclusion suggests that more research is needed to understand how bottom-up discourses on bilingualism influence parental decisions about bilingual child-rearing upon schooling, indicating that

schools are a site for potential improvement to provide parents with more information and support in their bilingual child rearing endeavours.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, existing research into the interrelationship between prevailing language ideologies which inform parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing is reviewed. The emerging field of FLP illuminates how parental decisions are shaped by both local and global discourses on the value, and advantages, of bilingualism within society. Section 2.2 explores the literature concerning language ideologies, and how tensions arising between language ideologies shape social organisation. Section 2.3 outlines how the monolingual mindset shapes discourses on individual and societal bilingualism and influences Australian languages-in-education policies. Section 2.4 explores the belief in the bilingual bonus that valorises early childhood bilingualism as a ‘good’ parenting strategy. The focus then turns to mothers’ sense of responsibility in implementing a bilingual FLP strategy and in imparting the bilingual bonus. Section 2.5 provides an overview of FLP studies in the Australian context, giving particular focus to the ‘one parent – one language’ (henceforth OPOL) strategy. This chapter concludes by identifying a gap in the literature: there is a need to investigate how the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy. The research questions arising from this gap are addressed in Section 2.6.

2.2. Language ideologies

Silverstein (1979) defines language ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Language ideologies arise from beliefs and attitudes about language socially shared by a group or community. Therefore, language ideologies serve as the “mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55). This mediating role is further explored by Irvine and Gal (2000), who identify three semiotic processes that reveal

people's ideological understanding of the relationship between linguistic variability and social identities. These semiotic processes are: iconisation, fractal recursivity, and erasure. Iconisation is the process of mapping a linguistic form or variety onto group membership, thereby transparently linking the linguistic form to qualities of a specific group. Fractal recursivity "involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). Oppositions such as 'us – them' or 'right – wrong' organise social and linguistic contrasts. These contrasts can be projected from an intra-group to an inter-group scale and vice versa, thereby changing the perspective of those defining the comparison (Gal, 2008). The third semiotic process, erasure, involves the oversimplification of sociolinguistic variation within a social group or a language. By conceptualising the group or language as homogenous, variation is rendered invisible (Irvine & Gal, 2000). Kroskrity (2010) states that these processes "provide useful means of describing and comparing the productive features of language ideologies" (p. 201). Therefore, the identification of these processes is important for the discussion of underlying language ideologies that inform people's beliefs and attitudes towards language and its speakers.

Moreover, Kroskrity (2010, p. 195) argues, "language ideologies represent the perception and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group". The concept of discourse refers to language-in-action; that is language users use language in a specific way for a specific purpose (van Dijk, 1997; Blommaert, 2005). By doing so, language users construct and display their membership in social groups (van Dijk, 1997). Hence, the dominance of a particular discourse or social group is fundamental in the shaping of beliefs or attitudes towards particular language use. As such, social divisions such as gender, class, generation or nationality open up the "potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership" (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 197). Therefore, members' understanding of what is 'acceptable' or 'correct' about language use is influenced by the discourses they are

exposed to. These conflicting perspectives result in language ideologies being perceived as always shifting, multiple, contested, and changing (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2002; Kroskrity, 2010; Piller, 2015). Overall, beliefs about language not only shape social organisation, but are also complex expressions of social issues. On the one hand, language ideologies shape the language use associated with social constructs such as personal, group, or gender identities. On the other hand, language ideologies underpin the language use within fundamental social institutions such as the nation-state, the law, or within education (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994).

In summary, language ideologies are socially shared beliefs about language and language use. The ideologisation of language can be identified by focussing on the semiotic processes proposed by Irvine and Gal (2000). These processes reflect the complexity of language ideology as the mediating link between social organisation and social identity. As such, language ideologies are contested, shifting and multiple, and shaped by dominant discourses.

The ‘one nation, one language’ (henceforth ONOL) ideology is one example. This ideology is based on the “belief that monolingualism or the use of one single common language is important for social harmony and national unity” (Piller, 2015, p. 6). Tensions resulting from this language ideology can be particularly prevalent at the level of the family. Parental beliefs and attitudes towards bilingual child-rearing are challenged and influenced by socially shared beliefs about language. In the following sections, I will first discuss the influence of the monolingual mindset on Australian languages education and how the lack of support for societal bilingualism on institutional levels has resulted in the need for increased private language planning. I will then explore how beliefs about the value of bilingualism has led to an increasing number of families choosing to raise their children bilingually from an early age.

2.3. Monolingual mindset and languages education

In Australia, as is the case in other English-speaking nations such the United States or the United Kingdom, the ONOL ideology is one of the predominant language ideologies that shapes private and public language use, as well as language-in-education planning, and public policy. In the Australian context, the ONOL ideology has been termed the ‘monolingual mindset’. This term was coined by Ingrid Gogolin (1994) in German as ‘monolingualer Habitus’. Hajek & Slaughter (2015) note that Michael Clyne was the first to introduce and to popularise the English translation. Clyne (2005, p. xi) argues that a prevailing monolingual mindset largely ostracises Australia’s numerous multilingual speakers, and renders them invisible:

The greatest impediment to recognising, valuing and utilising [Australia’s] language potential is a persistent monolingual mindset. Such a mindset sees everything in terms of monolingualism being the norm, even though there are more bi- and multilinguals in the world than monolinguals and in spite of our own linguistic diversity.

De facto, Australia is a multicultural and multilingual nation (Clyne, 2011). Nevertheless, the monolingual mindset renders this multilingualism invisible, which in turn inhibits Australia’s plurilingual language potential (Clyne, 2005). Here, ‘plurilingual’ refers to individuals’ ability and agency in using more than one language for distinct purposes (Marshall & Moore, 2013). In what follows ‘bilingual’ refers to the language ability of an individual in two languages (Lüdi & Py, 2009), and ‘multilingual’ refers to the presence of more than one language within a nation, institution, or social group (Baker, 2011). Therefore, the definition of ‘individual bilingualism’ refers to an individual’s “native-speaker fluency in two linguistic codes” (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009, p. 16), and ‘societal’ or ‘community bi- or multilingualism’ refers to the language practices of a distinct social group (Baker, 2011).

In Australia, societal multilingualism is due to the fact that, according to the 2011 census data, 20.4 per cent of residents speak a LOTE at home (N=1,579,949) (ABS, 2011). As Lo Bianco

and Slaughter (2009) explain, Australia's multilingualism is generated from three main sources: Indigenous Australians, Anglophone Australians who have acquired plurilingual competencies, and immigrant Australians from non-Anglophone backgrounds. The latter group generates the largest source of multilingual skills. These language skills are either fostered "in institutions or transmitted via the intimacy networks of child-raising within families and communities" (p. 4). The census question is only directed at those households who speak a language in addition to English within the home environment. However, this percentage may not include individuals who are learning a foreign language within an institution, or speak a second language at varying proficiency levels, and hence may not perceive themselves as being plurilingual. Another reason why this percentage may also underestimate the actual number of people who speak a LOTE is that they speak this language outside the home; in the workplace, with friends and extended family, or among the wider community (Benz, 2015). Accordingly, it can be inferred that there is a "largely untapped resource of community bilingualism" (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009, p. 5) that could serve as a starting point for languages education.

In the literature it is largely agreed that the monolingual mindset is the dominant language ideology that informs language planning and policies on institutional and educational levels (see Clyne, 2005, 2008; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009; Nicholas, 2015). LOTEs are primarily chosen for inclusion in the curriculum according to their "perceived economic value, international status, tradition of the education system and availability of teachers and materials" (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, some languages are more prominent than others within the education system, resulting in the valorisation of individual bilingualism in these particular languages. For instance, over the past thirty years, languages education policy has been in the so-called 'Asianist' phase (Djité, 2011). Within this policy phase, the Federal Australian Government has been prioritising Asian language learning over European language learning in response to the increasing political and economic importance of the Asian region

for Australia (Lo Bianco, 2004; Djité, 2011). Languages education has been found to largely not reflect Australia's current language demography, despite the shifting emphasis on particular languages within it (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004). Ultimately, this results in a general underrepresentation of community languages within languages education.

Additionally, Nicholas (2015) argues that the dominance of the monolingual mindset within Australian languages education marginalises societal bilingualism in favour of individual bilingualism. Within languages education, the main focus lies on teaching English to children with a different mother tongue, as opposed to additionally promoting their competence in their native language (Nicholas, 2015). Similarly, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Armstrong de Almeida (2006) found that within Canadian discourses on early childhood education, the focus lies on the assimilation of migrant children into the monolingual English mainstream, thus 'normalising' these children. The study also found that both parents and early childhood educators understood bilingual language development to be primarily a parental responsibility. In the Australian literature on immigrant languages, the family is also considered a crucial site for the use and maintenance of community languages. However, school has been identified as a critical space "which promotes and accelerates language shift" towards English (Rubino, 2010, p. 17.6). Overall, the promotion of second language learning is primarily aimed at the English-speaking majority, thus ignoring the proportion of the population that already speaks another language (Nicholas, 2015). Ultimately, this limits the choices parents can make about their children's language competencies and increases the pressures on home language maintenance.

In summary, the monolingual mindset shapes language-in-education policies and underpins the unequal status of immigrant and foreign languages within Australian languages education. School thus plays a very limited role in supporting the maintenance of home languages. In fact, the opposite is true, and schools are often the sites of language shift. As a consequence, the

need for language maintenance efforts within the private sphere increases. This means that English – as the dominant language of the nation – marginalises other languages on both micro- and macro-levels within society. Nevertheless, Australia’s perceived and encouraged monocultural identity has been progressively challenged by its prevailing cultural diversity and demographic changes. Therefore, as Clyne (2005) emphasises, “families need to develop a conscious language policy if they are keen on ensuring that the children develop plurilingually” (p. 106). Conscious decisions on language use within the family are not only crucial for immigrant families, but are also crucial for Anglophone or mixed marriage parents interested in fostering high-level bilingualism competencies in their children.

2.4. The bilingual bonus

Often the conscious decision to raise children bilingually in the home sphere is also based on the belief that early childhood bilingualism provides children with an advantage over their monolingual peers. The following section explores what I term the bilingual bonus (the ideological valorisation of bilingualism). This ideology stands in contrast to the monolingual mindset which shapes parents’ and caregivers’ understanding of English monolingualism as the norm (Clyne, 2005). Often, communities with a largely monolingual population render monolingualism invisible, whilst bilingualism is seen as both unusual and beneficial (Clyne, 2008). Therefore, the increased dissemination of the benefits of bilingualism, particularly in the popular media, valorises parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing, and link bilingual parenting to the notion of ‘good’ parenting.

In the literature, bilingual competencies are associated with a range of cognitive, health, personal, and economic benefits for individuals and the society. It has been suggested that bilinguals have a heightened metalinguistic awareness and cognitive control that allows them to compare and switch between language systems (Mehisto & Marsch, 2011). Additionally, it has been found that “lifelong bilingualism protects against age-related cognitive decline, and

may even postpone the onset of symptoms of dementia” (Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012, p. 10). On a personal level, knowledge of the minority language helps maintain a connection to the country of origin, and is considered beneficial if the family decides to return there (Janssen & Pauwels, 1993). Moreover, bilingual skills have been associated with increasing children’s self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as fostering their cross-cultural understanding (King & Mackey, 2007). This cross-cultural understanding and proficiency in more than one language are considered assets when seeking employment. Therefore, bilingualism is associated with potential economic benefits that allow an individual to seek work overseas, in tourism or in a multinational company (Baker, 2011, 2014). Due to these perceived economic advantages, bilingual child-rearing in general, and bilingual education in particular, have been found to be regarded by middle-class parents as worthwhile investments (Piller, 2001). For example, King and Fogle (2006) in their interview-based study of families promoting Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States found that parents explained their bilingual FLP decisions by referring to the economic opportunities and cultural advantages their children would gain. These parents relied heavily on their personal experiences when evaluating and incorporating information and advice from the popular media, advice literature, and from family and friends into their language management. Parents’ reliance on popular media discourses indicates that the benefits of bilingualism have been widely disseminated through the media and among the general population. Parents also defended their FLP decisions by positioning themselves as ‘good’ parents who wish to bestow bilingual competence as a ‘gift’ upon their children. King and Fogle (2006) thus conclude, “family language policies for the promotion of additive bilingualism have become incorporated into mainstream parenting practices” (p. 695). Therefore, bilingual child-rearing is justified by the belief in the bilingual bonus as an advantageous parenting strategy.

The bilingual bonus is particularly relevant for the valorisation of bilingualism for families raising their children in majority language contexts. These advantages are presumed to only be accessible to bilinguals, and thus unavailable to monolinguals (Ellis, 2006). Parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing are influenced by the social contexts which they are socialising their children into, and the beliefs that valorise early childhood bilingualism within those contexts (Piller, 2001; Yates, Terraschke & Zielinski, 2012). Family language policy therefore becomes an important site where language ideologies and language practices intersect. As a micro-level social structure, the family unit has been identified “as a site in which language ideologies are both formed and enacted through caregiver–child interactions” (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 914). It is particularly within bi- and multilingual family units that dominant language ideologies influence attitudes and beliefs towards the value of bilingualism in general, and towards language practices for transmitting a language in particular. Therefore, FLP is primarily concerned with caregiver (mainly parental) language ideologies, beliefs and attitudes that inform their language-related child-rearing decisions, “thus reflecting broader societal attitudes and ideologies about both language(s) and parenting” (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 907). Such attitudes include cultural-specific beliefs of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ parenting (King & Fogle, 2006; Basta, 2010), and public discourses on ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ strategies to use in bilingual child-rearing. Consequently, providing the bilingual bonus has come to be considered a ‘good’ parenting strategy. Some studies argue that bilingual child-rearing has become part of middle-class parenting (Döpke, 1992; Basta, 2010; Doyle, 2013), thereby indicating that the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy among middle-class bilinguals.

Nevertheless, the belief in the bilingual bonus and bilingual parenting as ‘good’ parenting is often confronted with realities that make the implementation of bilingual parenting strategies challenging. As Schwartz (2010) points out, “the declared language ideology of one or both

parents does not necessarily coincide with the strategies followed consciously or unconsciously in language practice with children” (p. 177). This is particularly true in the case of minority language-speaking mothers raising children in an English-dominant society. For example, in her study of Japanese mothers in Britain, Okita (2002) found that mothers’ decisions to raise their children bilingually were often based around their desire to be able to communicate to the child in their native tongue, and around their motivation to maintain ties with their native country. Therefore, the emotional connection to their language influenced mothers’ language choices (see also Pavlenko, 2004). Nevertheless, Okita (2002, p. 105) found that mothers were often faced with a language choice dilemma because they were “primarily responsible for the decision” of how to raise their children bilingually. Due to the challenges associated with bilingual child-rearing, mothers’ initial patterns of language use were often modified over time, often towards an increased use of English. In contrast, Okita found that fathers’ approval of bilingualism for their children’s “personal intellectual, social and cultural development, or for future job prospects” (p. 106) was based on the underlying assumption that learning Japanese would come naturally to their children. However, bilingual child-rearing turned out to be hard work performed largely by mothers – even if it remained largely invisible to the fathers, extended family members and outside observers.

In summary, the family is a site where language ideologies are negotiated through parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing. Raising a child in two or more languages is often associated with providing the child with a bilingual bonus that is unavailable to monolingual peers. The benefits associated with bilingualism therefore valorise bilingual child-rearing decisions and position parents as ‘good’ caregivers who are providing their children with an advantage in life. Minority language-speaking mothers in intermarriages are often primarily responsible for implementing bilingual FLP strategies, and therefore responsible for imparting

the bilingual bonus. However, the work involved in bilingual child-rearing remains largely invisible work as transmission of the minority language is assumed to happen naturally.

2.5. Bilingual FLP strategies in the Australian context

The previous sections have shown that parents who wish to raise their children in more than one language are exposed to competing language ideologies; the monolingual mindset on the one hand, and the bilingual bonus on the other. Although these ideologies are contested, their presence also reinforces each other. As discussed in Section 2.3, the monolingual mindset within languages education creates the need for bilingual parenting within the home domain. Therefore, the importance of bilingual parenting becomes ideologically valorised through the bilingual bonus. Section 2.5 explores how the idea of successful bilingual parenting has become closely tied to specific bilingual FLP strategies. I focus on bilingual FLP strategies in the Australian context, paying particular attention to the OPOL strategy.

Most research on language policy and practice has focussed on the nation-state and educational levels (Spolsky, 2004); however, in the past decades, the focus has shifted to include additional domains such as the home, and to family language policy (Piller, 2001; Okita, 2002; King & Fogle, 2006, 2013; Schwartz, 2010). Research on FLP is a comparatively new field of investigation. It draws from the fields of language policy and child language acquisition, and focuses on language practices, and overt language planning within the family sphere. The bulk of studies in FLP have focussed on either the North American, or European contexts (see Schwartz, 2010 for a review of FLP studies of the period 1998 – 2008, or King & Fogle, 2013 for a research timeline of influential studies from 1965 – 2013). To the best of my knowledge, bilingual FLP studies in the Australian context are scarce (but see Saunders, 1980; Döpke, 1992; Takeuchi, 2006a, 2006b; Yates & Terraschke, 2013). Existing studies in the Australian context predominantly focus on intermarried couples who seek to apply the OPOL strategy. In this strategy, one parent speaks the minority language, while the other speaks the majority language

from birth (Romaine, 1995). Consequently, the child is expected to interact with each parent in a different language.

Döpke (1992) for instance investigated the effectiveness of the OPOL approach on six children growing up in German-English bilingual households. She found that those children whose parents were most consistent in applying their OPOL approach achieved the highest level of competency in both languages in their children. Takeuchi (2006a; 2006b) focussed on school-aged children (5-8 years old) and their minority language maintenance. Takeuchi conducted interviews and case studies with Japanese mothers married to non-Japanese Australian men. She found that mothers' consistency in their Japanese use contributed to children's home language choices. Yates and Terraschke (2013) report on thirteen immigrant mothers who live in exogamous relationships in Australia. This study focuses on the families' bilingual FLP decisions, and the impact older siblings and social networks have on language maintenance. The authors identified the dominance of English as a significant challenge to heritage language maintenance, arguing that immigrant families need to be supported in understanding the benefits of bilingualism and the "emotional as well as the practical functions" their languages have to offer (p. 123). Overall, these studies indicate that the effectiveness of the OPOL approach is related to each parent's consistent use of one language in parent-child interactions.

The OPOL strategy deserves particular mention as it is one of two commonly documented strategies across the research literature (see Romaine, 1995 for a comprehensive typology of bilingual acquisition and their associated strategies). The second dominant strategy is the 'home language versus community language' strategy (henceforth HL-vs-CL). In this situation, both parents speak the minority language to the child. The child is only exposed to the majority language outside the home, and usually not until preschool (Romaine, 1995). Piller (2001) suggests that these two strategies are the most recognised in the research literature, because of the "class-position of many researchers" (p. 77), which has resulted in the assumption among

mainstream parents and bilingual child-rearing guidebooks that these two strategies are the most effective. For example, in their guidebook, King and Mackey (2007, p. 108) write that OPOL is “often held as the gold standard in bilingual child-rearing” for mixed-language families. Nevertheless, the majority of early childhood bilingualism researchers argue that the OPOL “language situation appears to be neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition” for bilingual child-rearing (De Houwer, 2007, p. 420; see also King & Fogle, 2006). The aim of OPOL is to create an exclusively monolingual context for parent-child interactions, because switching between languages is regarded by its proponents as counterproductive to the child’s language acquisition. However, as Döpke (1998, p. 43) comments, researchers argue that language mixing is “a natural aspect of the communication of bilinguals”. Therefore, OPOL is deemed an “unnecessary restriction of the natural interaction” between multilinguals (p. 44). This strategy is further criticised for its prevalence among research on White middle-class parents (Döpke, 1998; Piller, 2001). Scholars thus present these families, and the strategies they implement, as the norm. In the Australian context, FLP studies have primarily focussed on urban, middle-class intercultural couples where one parent speaks the minority language. One exception is the following study: Saunders (1980) conducted a longitudinal study of his own Australia-born children growing up in a German-English household. In contrast to most intercultural parents, Saunders exclusively spoke his non-native language, German, to his children. Nevertheless, he also reports that persistence and perseverance were key to overcoming his children’s unwillingness to speak the minority language.

In summary, the dominance of OPOL and HL-vs-CL strategies in the research literature may create the perception that the acquisition of two or more languages is best achieved if parent-child interactions take place in monolingual contexts. Bilingual FLP studies in the Australian context have primarily focussed on families where one parent exclusively speaks the minority language. These studies suggest that due to the dominance of English in society, parents must

create the need for their children to use the minority language. Additionally, parents' consistency in language use is sometimes presented as an essential prerequisite for the effectiveness of the OPOL strategy. Nevertheless, this strategy has been criticised for its elitist and unrealistic approach to bilingual parent-child interaction.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which language ideologies mediate the link between social structure and language use. Beliefs about language not only shape social organisation, but are also complex expressions of social issues. The focus then turned to the monolingual mindset which underpins Australian language policy and planning on national, institutional, and social group levels. On an institutional level, language-in-education policies do not reflect Australia's language demographics, thus devaluing LOTEs, particularly community languages. It was shown that this lack of consistent support for foreign and community languages within languages education, often results in a language shift in young bilinguals upon schooling. Consequently, the home domain has become increasingly important for language maintenance efforts among bilingual families. As a micro-social structure, the bilingual family has been identified by the literature as a site where ideologies, beliefs and attitudes about language are played out in parent-child interaction (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008). I then explored the ideological valorisation for bilingual child-rearing in predominantly monolingual societies. What I term the 'bilingual bonus' encompasses intellectual, cognitive, health, personal, and above all economic benefits that are believed to provide bilingual speakers with an advantage over monolingual peers. To achieve this advantage, parents adopt a bilingual child-rearing strategy in the home domain. By implementing bilingual FLP strategies, such as the widely disseminated OPOL approach, parents aim to promote additive bilingualism by creating a consistent 'double monolingual' (Heller, 2002) context in which each language is acquired. Bilingual child-rearing in the home domain is therefore influenced by two dominant, shifting

and contested language ideologies: first, the monolingual mindset that, on the one hand, creates the need to promote double monolingualism in the home domain, and, on the other hand, underpins bilingual child-rearing in an English-dominant society; second, the bilingual bonus that, contrary to the monolingual mindset, validates bilingual child-rearing practices. It was shown that in the research literature, it has been argued that this valorisation of bilingualism in English-dominant societies has led to bilingual parenting being incorporated into mainstream parenting practices as an expression of ‘good’ parenting (King & Fogle, 2006). The belief of particular bilingual parenting practices equating to ‘good’ parenting, whilst others are evaluated as ‘bad’ parenting, is in itself an ideological evaluation. The question arises how the above tensions between language ideologies influence parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context. Therefore, in the light of the dominance of the monolingual mindset, the question arises as to whether parental decisions on how to raise children bilingually in Australia are influenced by the prevailing monolingual mindset. Furthermore, the question arises as to whether, and how, the dominant bilingual FLP strategies described in the research literature and beliefs in the bilingual bonus have become disseminated.

In summary, a gap exists in our knowledge of the ways in which the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy specifically in the Australian context. Therefore, this study sets out to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do parents talk about bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context?
 - a. Is the prevailing monolingual mindset apparent in parents’ talk about bilingualism, and if so, how?
 - b. Is the bilingual bonus apparent in parents’ talk about bilingualism, and if so, how?
- 2) How is bilingual child-rearing linked to the notion of ‘good’ parenting?

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature on language ideologies and bilingual FLP strategies, and identified a gap regarding the link between contested language ideologies that underlie bilingual parenting, and the notion of ‘good’ parenting in the Australian context. This chapter outlines the methodological considerations underlying the research designed to address this lacuna. The next section is concerned with the methodological approach, followed by the principles of data selection, and a description of the corpus. This includes a discussion of the limitations of the corpus. Lastly, the methods of data analysis will be presented.

3.2. Approach

FLP studies primarily adopt qualitative approaches such as sociolinguistic interviews and case studies (for a review of current FLP literature see Schwartz, 2010). This also includes interview-based studies (Tuominen, 1999; Okita, 2002; King & Fogle, 2006; Takeuchi, 2006a; Yates & Terraschke, 2013), questionnaire-based studies (Pavlenko, 2004; De Houwer, 2007), and mixed-approach studies that incorporate semi-structured interviews with periods of observation (Kirsch, 2012; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013; Palviainen & Boyd, 2013; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015). These ethnographically-informed approaches are suitable to explore the negotiations of parents’ interactive practices (King & Logan-Terry, 2008) and the effectiveness of their bilingual FLP strategies (Döpke, 1992). However, this study focuses on an examination of the language ideologies that inform parental decisions on bilingual child-rearing. Therefore, naturally occurring data that has not been researcher-elicited is needed to explore how parents talk about bilingualism outside the context of a research study on bilingual parenting. To collect such data, this research draws on a corpus of publicly available conversations about bilingual child-rearing on an online parenting forum. Such conversations would be accessible to a wide

online audience that is primarily dedicated to the exchange of non-expert peer advice (Kouper, 2010). Therefore, these – mostly anonymous – conversations can be understood as a manifestation of public knowledge about bilingual parenting. Specifically, this study focuses on an online parenting forum as an environment to explore *how* parents talk about bilingual child-rearing, and the language ideologies that underlie parental advice on ‘good’ bilingual parenting.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Principles of data selection

My research draws on a corpus of written, publicly available online data. Forum threads were extracted from one of Australia’s largest online parenting websites: essentialbaby.com.au. This website is owned and operated by one of Australia’s major media organisations, Fairfax Media, and taps into its network of media sites to inform their over 255,000 members on “the latest parenting news around the world” (Essential Baby, 2015). Such parenting news ranges from practical advice on how to set up a nursery for one’s baby, to the latest gossip about celebrity parents and their offspring. These articles and blogs are freely accessible, however the interactive forums – where parents can pose discussion questions to other parents – can only be accessed by registered members. Registration is free and user profiles can be customised to reveal more or less personal background information. Members can create an alias with which they can contribute to a variety of forums that cover a range of sub-topics within categories such as ‘Pregnancy’, ‘Babies’, or ‘Toddler & kids’, etc. These forums are not primarily concerned with language, nor are there any sub-categories concerning language in general, or bi-/multilingualism in particular. A key word search for ‘bilingualism’ and ‘multilingualism’, and alternative spellings such as ‘bi-lingual’, resulted in 15 relevant forum threads that were posted between 2007 and 2014 in categories such as: ‘Miscellaneous’, ‘24-36 Months’, or

‘What do you think’. These threads (see Table 1 for overview) all have in common that posters are seeking advice on how to raise children bilingually. The presence of these discussion topics on bilingual child-rearing indicates that parental concerns regarding language are indeed present, despite there being no designated sub-topic in which to pose language-specific questions, or in which to express concerns on language management within the family.

This site was chosen for three reasons: first, with over 255,000 members it is one of Australia’s largest online parenting forums. Forum discussions enjoy a broad audience. On average, each thread in my corpus has been viewed 992 times, and commented on an average of 18 times. In comparison, the top fifteen most recently active discussion threads in the past month (September 2015) have an average of 2,949 views, and 33 comments. This indicates that discussion threads may reach a wide audience, however this audience is not necessarily active in participating in these conversations. It also indicates that topics related to bilingual child-rearing are less popular than other topics on the site such as ‘Birth to 6 months’ or ‘Games’.

Secondly, this is a general forum that is not specialised in bi-or multilingualism, so members are largely non-experts, making it possible to analyse peer advice as opposed to expert advice. Researcher-generated data generally reflects the beliefs of parents with an above-average interest in bilingual child-rearing. In contrast, online data represents bottom-up discourses amongst parents who are more generally interested in raising their children bilingually in a predominantly English-speaking environment.

Lastly, an investigation of parental beliefs about bilingual child-rearing in a general parenting forum will reflect more widely popularised discourses within the wider public. The discussion in Chapter 2 has shown that FLP studies in the Australian context largely focus on minority language speakers in intercultural relationships. This study encompasses a broader audience, including both minority and majority language-speaking, largely middle-class parents who

participate in general parenting forums without a specific interest in bilingual parenting. The exploration of how these parents talk about bilingual child-rearing may therefore provide a broader perspective on the dominant language ideologies that underlie wider discourses related to bilingual parenting.

3.3.2. Description of the corpus

The corpus consists of a sample of 15 forum threads posted between 2007 and 2014, containing a total of 266 comments (see Table 1 for overview). The corpus comprises a total of 40,657 words, whereby initial forum questions total 2,626 words, and forum discussions total 38,031 words. On average, forum discussions were active for 2 to 3 days after the original post was published, with exception of thread 11 which was posted over the Christmas holiday period where comments were posted infrequently over a period of two months. Overall, this indicates that these forum members generally participate in active discussion threads that are relatively short lived.

The initial question in each thread was posted by parents who wish to raise their children bilingually. Original poster (henceforth OP) is the term used within essentialbaby.com.au forums for the initiator of a discussion thread. Within these threads, forum members have the option to respond to the OP's question in the open discussion thread, or they can use a 'snapback' function to reply to specific comments within posts. From the use of pronouns in comments it becomes apparent that all OPs identify as female. Some mothers are minority language speakers while others are Australian-English speakers who have either moved abroad, or are married to minority language-speaking men. Across the forum, participants predominantly refer to their partners and children using abbreviations. For example, DH refers to 'dear husband' (see List of Abbreviations and Conventions). At the time of posting, the OPs in this corpus are either mothers-to-be (threads 12, 14, 15), or mothers with children who are under two years of age and learning to speak (threads 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11). The remaining OPs

either do not specify their children's age, or describe their children as toddlers (threads 5, 6, 10, 13). Across the discussion threads, OPs and contributors generally do not mention which LOTEs they are raising their children in. Where those languages are identified, OPs mention the following: Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Hebrew, Hungarian, Norwegian, Spanish, and Turkish. Additional languages mentioned by contributors across the threads include Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cantonese, Croatian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Korean, Macedonian, Mandarin, Samoan, Serbo-Croatian, Swedish, Swiss-German, Tongan, and Vietnamese.

Across the threads, OP mothers seem to be faced with similar bilingual child-rearing challenges and concerns. Generally, mothers are interested in others' experiences; how other parents are raising their children bilingually; whether they need to be concerned about language delay, or language confusion; and, when is the best time to introduce children to a second language, or to English. The majority of threads are therefore concerned with language-related parenting choices. For instance, thread 13 discusses challenges around increasing the exposure to Spanish, and thread 6 is concerned with whether English should be prioritised to avoid disadvantages upon schooling. These discussion threads therefore provide evidence of parents' underlying language ideologies that inform their decisions on bilingual child-rearing.

Table 1. Corpus of forum threads from *essentialbaby.com.au* (2007-2014)

Original Poster	Date posted	Original post topic	Comments/ Replies
OP1	March 26 2007	Raising a Bi-Lingual child	15
OP2	June 16 2007	...is the best way to raise your child bilingually?	16
OP3	October 14 2007	Bilingual families – can you tell me about your bilingual baby?	12
OP4	January 24 2008	Bi Lingual kids and speech development	11
OP5	May 16 2008	Bi-lingual	21
OP6	April 12 2009	Children of non English-speaking parents	41
OP7	October 14 2009	To deal with two languages any idea?	12
OP8	May 03 2010	Teaching baby 2 languages And tips, ideas, experience?	17
OP9	September 22 2010	Bi-lingual baby. Tell me your experiences.	15
OP10	June 04 2011	Bilingual toddler – when to start teaching English?	21
OP11	November 29 2011	Your bi-lingual baby Hints, Tips, Advice and Experience please	16
OP12	March 02 2012	Raising bi-lingual children do you do it? How and why?	32
OP13	May 10 2013	Bilingual and multilingual families how much time do your kids spend with each of their languages?	21
OP14	April 10 2014	Bilingual bub – any tips?	6
OP15	June 16 2014	Bilingual children	10

3.3.3. Limitations of the corpus

Public data has the advantage that it is readily available. However, the disadvantage of using public online sources is that, often, participants' "background or sociolinguistic information" (Nortier, 2008, p. 50) is unavailable except when explicitly mentioned within contributions. Member profiles on essentialbaby.com.au minimally provide members' gender and age (although some members choose not to disclose this information), and the number of posts they have contributed to, among other forum-related information. From the use of pronouns and the family descriptions within comments, it seems that with the exception of commenter (7.7), the posters are all female, and with the exception of two commenters (11.2 and 11.5), the posters are all married. The data therefore largely reflects how 'mainstream' mothers talk about bilingual parenting. Some contributions are more descriptive than others, and include more detail on a family's language ecology. Generally, families' actual language practices cannot accurately be deduced from online forum entries. However, the focus of this study lies on the language ideologies that underlie parental beliefs about bilingualism, and not on their actual language practices. For this purpose, the data offers adequate evidence of parental attitudes, desires, strategies and plans at that given point in time. Consequently, the data provides a snapshot of how parents are raising – or are planning to raise – their children bilingually and how they discursively construct bilingual parenting. From the descriptions within comments, it also becomes evident that some members are either Australian citizens, or have lived in Australia previously, and are now residing and raising their children overseas. Because issues related to maintaining English in a non-Anglophone country may be quite different from those faced by parents in Australia, only those comments that explicitly contribute to the discourse on raising children bilingually in the Australian context are considered for the analysis.

In summary, despite a lack of background information about contributors, an exploration of naturally occurring data on how mainstream parents talk about bilingualism in a general online

parenting forum promises to uncover widely held beliefs about bilingual child-rearing in an English-dominant context. A critical discourse analysis of online parenting forums therefore offers a pertinent lens through which influential dominant ideologies, attitudes and beliefs are made transparent. Such an analysis is valuable, as it provides insights into the social practices and (implicit) common knowledge that shape parental understanding of successful bilingual child-rearing.

3.4. Data analysis

My method of data analysis is a combination of thematic and critical discourse analysis, as such an analysis illuminates underlying language ideologies that inform parental decisions about bilingual child-rearing. I use CDA as the main theoretical framework to ground my understanding of parents' underlying language ideologies that inform their choice of language strategies in an English-dominant environment. As one aspect of CDA, I draw on thematic analysis as a deductive method to identify recurrent key topics emerging from the data related to the language ideologies and research questions set out in Chapter 2. I apply a deductive method that is focussed around predetermined themes because Pavlenko (2007) criticises an overreliance on reoccurring themes within an inductive analysis, as the researcher then tends to overlook what the data does not say. The unsaid can be equally relevant. Therefore, Pavlenko (2007, p. 167) stresses the need for analysts "to adopt a specific theoretical framework that would allow them to clarify the nature of their conceptual categories and to pinpoint the links between the recurrent themes and conceptual constructs". I am aware of this criticism related to a purely inductive approach, and have taken this into account for my analysis by combining thematic analysis with CDA as the main theoretical framework. The goal of thematic analysis is therefore to reduce qualitative data into representative themes in relation to the research questions.

CDA views discourse primarily as a social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Blommaert, 2005) and, as such, discourse is seen as “what transforms our environment into a socially and culturally meaningful one” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 4). In the literature, the linguistic situation in Australia is often described as being characterised by a monolingual mindset (Clyne, 2005; Hajek & Slaughter, 2015), where multilingualism and multiculturalism are promoted, yet their fostering is still hindered by monolingual ideologies. Therefore, the discursive practices of parents seeking to raise their children bilingually within this environment are informed and shaped by dominant discourses that in turn “influence such socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 259). Thus a comprehensive explanation and critique of the way in which these dominant discourses influence bottom-up discourse practices is at the core of CDA (van Dijk, 1993). The underlying language ideologies that shape how parents talk about raising children bilingually can be made visible via the three semiotic processes of iconisation, fractal recursivity and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000; see Section 2.2). By identifying these processes, I further illuminate how language ideologies, such as the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus, shape how parents talk about bilingual child-rearing, and inform their language choices in an English-dominant context. These processes therefore enable an examination of how bilingualism is understood as an index of ‘good’ parenting practices, and further illuminate bottom-up discourse practices.

CDA is defined “as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifest in language” (Wodak, 2001, p. 2). The main objective of CDA is therefore not just to uncover and analyse social inequalities as demonstrated in discourse or language use, but to suggest measures to effectively influence change (van Dijk, 1993). For this study, identifying dominant discourses, and instances of intertextuality, may shed light on why parents give preference to certain bilingual FLP strategies over others, and how these decisions are shaped by underlying

language ideologies. ‘Intertextuality’ refers to the re-citation and recycling of pre-existing texts and meanings (Blommaert, 2005, 2010). Such texts may include advice literature, socially assumed general knowledge, discourses within popular media, or simply ‘what one has heard’ or been told by peers, family, or experts. Thus, as Bloor and Bloor (2007) argue, an intertextual analysis of discourse serves two functions within CDA:

(1) it plays an important role in revealing speakers’ and writers’ strategies in reinforcing or re-formulating ideas and beliefs; and (2) it can reveal traces of the dominant ideology or evidence of ideological struggle and cultural change (p. 54).

Wodak (2001) writes that “an important perspective in CDA is that it is very rare for a text to be the work of any one person (...) texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (p. 11). Uncovering instances of intertextuality therefore illuminates wider discourses on bilingualism that have been incorporated into parents’ understanding of bilingual child-rearing.

3.5. Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach taken to collect and analyse a corpus of online discussion threads taken from the online parenting forum essentialbaby.com.au. Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 explained that this general Australian parenting forum was chosen because it allows for an analysis of publicly available data on parental beliefs on bilingualism and bilingual parenting in a context not specifically concerned with the acquisition of two languages in an English-dominant environment. Moreover, naturally occurring data that has not been researcher-generated allows for an in-depth analysis of bottom-up discourses among mainstream parents. In Section 3.3.1, the principles of data collection were outlined. A key word search in the online parenting forum served to identify fifteen threads posted between 2007 and 2014. An examination of the corpus in Section 3.3.2 showed that all OPs, and the majority of contributors, identify as married women, and mothers-to-be. The limitations of

using publicly available data, as outlined in Section 3.3.3, are accounted for and counteracted by the study's focus on how parents discursively construct bilingual parenting, as opposed to an investigation of their actual bilingual parenting practices. The dominant language ideologies that underlie parental beliefs about bilingualism and bilingual parenting are therefore made transparent by applying a CDA approach to data analysis. Section 3.4 described thematic analysis as one aspect of CDA that is guided by the research questions in Section 2.6. Such an analysis is valuable as it helps categorise emerging themes related to parental beliefs about bilingualism, and to relate these themes to the underlying language ideologies and semiotic processes that index bilingual parenting as a 'good' parenting practice.

4. Creating bilingual advantages via monolingual practices

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of the data collected from one of Australia's largest online parenting forums. Section 4.2 explores how parents talk about the initial challenges of bilingual child-rearing by referring to the long term benefits their children will obtain. Forum members reassure each other that the benefit of bilingualism outweighs any concerns about language delay or confusion. Section 4.3 presents the language-related parenting choices contributors discuss. Specifically, how parents talk about which languages to teach and when. Section 4.4 describes how parents talk about bilingual FLP strategies and the role of 'consistency' in parent-child interaction. This chapter concludes with a summary of the overall findings.

4.2. The bilingual bonus: Initial challenges and long term benefits

Forum threads on bilingual child-rearing primarily serve as a platform for parents to address their concerns and to seek advice on the challenges they are facing. Parents are particularly concerned whether the exposure to two or more languages will initially confuse the child, and consequently result in a speech delay. Parents often reassure one another that the difficulties of bilingual child-rearing – no matter how much of the language is passed on – are worth any concerns in the long run by alluding to social, cognitive, and academic advantages. The belief in the bilingual bonus is evident across the data, however bilingual advantages are often not stated explicitly, nor are they elaborated upon.

4.2.1. 'One of the best gifts'

Across the data, early childhood bilingualism is portrayed as being a 'wonderful gift', a 'fantastic asset' and an 'amazing skill' for life:

Oh, I think one of the best gifts a parent can give a child is another language. (6.7)

We really believe that we have given our children a gift, in being bilingual, it is so easy for DH and I, why would we not pass this knowledge onto our children. (6.25)

Early bilingual child-rearing is associated with giving the child a head start in acquiring an additional language, and a head start in life, thus implying the bilingual bonus. Posters consider bilingualism as one of the most significant and beneficial life skills a parent can impart to their children.

While the bilingual bonus is often implied, concrete examples of the benefits of bilingualism include greater opportunities for future employment overseas and higher education, as well as advantages in cognitive development. The most widely stated benefit refers to children's future careers. Parents seem to associate bilingual competency with economic and academic benefits that monolingual English speaking peers may not have access to:

It also provides extra opportunities to work in that country, to work with tourists or immigrants from that country, to do social, historical, political or cultural studies of that country and gives them advantages that many other Australian's don't have. (12.32)

Plus you never know when a language might be beneficial. You don't have to go and live in that country for it to help. There are advantages to studying a language for university entrance, there may be jobs where it's helpful and employers often regard bilingualism as an asset even if it's not actually required for the job. (12.14)

Here, bilingual competency is portrayed as an asset for job and higher education prospects both within Australia and abroad. It is also believed that language skills are an asset, even if they are not specifically required for a particular job. Other examples mention advantages in brain development and a delayed onset of degenerative brain conditions:

Apparently it's also been shown that bilingual people are less likely to suffer from dementia or other degenerative brain conditions in old age. (3.11)

There's research that shows many benefits to raising children with a second language; something about synapses developing faster and making it much easier to learn a third or subsequent language. (12.4)

These comments refer to vague intertextual knowledge about research findings on the cognitive advantages of bilingual individuals. The latter comment also alludes to the widespread belief that it is easier for young bilinguals to learn additional languages later in life. Therefore, parents also consider early childhood bilingualism as an asset for children's formal language learning in the Australian education system:

Personally, I found being bi-lingual always gave me an advantage over the other kids when it came to subjects like English as well as any languages that we were taught at school (...) (1.14)

Luckily my language is one of those that get taught at school, so she'll eventually reap some benefits from me teaching it to her! (OP14.6)

The latter comment suggests that the particular language involved is worth passing on, as it may later be useful to the child at school, and the mother's efforts will be rewarded in formal education.

Conversely, some parents feel they are unable to impart the 'gift' of bilingualism to their children, and, as a consequence, express shame and regret for not being able to offer them the opportunity to learn several languages within the home domain:

And shamefully I also haven't encouraged my husband or his family to shower my children in Italian. Then they'd have three languages. Ridiculous that I forego giving my children a gift for which others pay good money. (6.6)

DH really regrets not knowing more of his own language, especially now he has a child.

We will organise some language classes for DS, but it won't be the same as what you guys are offering your kids. (13.9)

These parents lament not investing more time and effort into a life skill that is seemingly free. Here, bilingualism is portrayed as a generic intellectual resource, rather than a linguistic resource in its own right. Teaching the second language later in life is associated with higher costs, particularly in monetary terms if parents decide to enrol their children in bilingual immersion programs, or language classes. This highlights the belief that the bilingual bonus is best acquired in the home domain.

While most posters implicitly or explicitly evaluate bilingualism as positive, there is one comment that suggests that the overall academic benefits have been overstated:

The overall benefits are a little debatable and have been exaggerated in the past (i.e your child will NOT be smarter than other children) but might have a better appreciation of the way language works especially if the languages are very different from each other and this might translate to easier language learning. (6.11)

This poster seems to agree that future language learning may be facilitated by early knowledge of a second language, however she is overall sceptical of the extent of the bilingual bonus.

In summary, parents frame bilingual child-rearing as a gift they may impart to their children. Mostly, the qualities of the 'gift' are left unspecified. Where specific benefits of bilingualism are mentioned, they relate to academic advantages for language learning at school and for the children's future careers. Additionally, research regarding advantages in cognitive development is alluded to. Overall, the benefits of bilingualism are largely implied, but bilingualism in general is considered to be a highly valuable asset.

4.2.2. 'They may take a little longer to speak'

For some posters, the bilingual benefit is overshadowed by concerns about possible linguistic challenges caused by the initial exposure to two languages. Some parents subscribe to the view that bilingual children are more likely to experience speech and/or language delay than children who are only exposed to one language. The following comments are representative of others:

The only down side is that they may take a little longer to speak, but once they do they will have the benefit of being bilingual. I'd say go for it -the long term gains are worth the minor speech delay. (2.6)

Maybe speech and language development is a bit slower but not by a great deal and the benefits of knowing more than one language far outweighs the disadvantages in delayed or confused speech. (7.12)

These parents stress that potential speech and/or language delay is compensated for by the overall benefits associated with bilingualism. Alongside speech delay, language confusion is another parental concern:

I was concerned that my kids may find it hard and the two may confuse or delay them..(no evidence of this thus far), however I really think the pros of having two languages (or more!) far outweigh any cons in the long run. (4.10)

Although they may have some initial delays and some confusion, this very quickly resolves itself and is in no way a reason not to do something that is so beneficial. (6.28)

From these comments, it seems that posters may accept that language delay and confusion are expected side effects of bilingual parenting. However, some contributors comment on a lack of scientific evidence of linguistic disadvantages experienced by bilingual children:

DH and I have done a lot of research on raising multilingual children and based on that (as well as our own experience and those of friends with multilingual children), I really

don't subscribe to the widely-voiced view that children with more than one language routinely experience delays in speech. (4.5)

Try not to buy into some of the myths that are out there about multilingual children - there's actually no research to show that children who speak more than one language begin talking later than other children. (2.11)

As a speech pathologist, I have always advised parents to do exactly what you are already doing – (...) If there is a true 'delay' in their language development you will find it across both languages, not just one. (1.3)

By referring to their own expert, or semi-expert knowledge, these parents position themselves as well-informed advisors. Further posters draw on personal experience to demonstrate that parental fears are unfounded:

I saw my nephew just as he turned 2 (for the first time since he was 4m) and OMG his vocabulary and sentence structure was amazing (my DS will be nothing like that in one language by 2). So as PP have said, late/early talking with 2 languages will depend on the child. (2.16)

This mother compares her bilingual nephew's speech/language development to that of her monolingual son's, thus drawing on personal experience to further support previous posters' claims that speech/language delay is rather child dependant.

Across the data, there are two main suggestions in reaction to parental concerns towards language confusion and speech delay: on the one hand, parents advise not to worry too much and to 'go with the flow'; on the other hand, contributors advise each other to follow a systematic bilingual FLP strategy. The latter is further explored in Section 4.4.1. The former advice is based on the assumption that children are particularly apt at acquiring languages. Children are therefore portrayed as 'sponges', a common metaphor used to describe their ability

to learn an abundance of new skills, particularly languages. The following is representative of similar comments:

My one major piece of advice would be to relax and go with the flow. Children are amazing in their ability to soak up language like sponges and having another language is a gift that your DS will have for life. (4.5)

A child that is good at one language will have no trouble mastering a few others. And they learn them quickly, too, if given the right support. They're not sponges for nothing. (8.17)

The possibility of initial delays in children's linguistic development is justified by the belief that they are processing two languages simultaneously. Parents reassure each other that ultimately, any negative impacts on children's linguistic development are outweighed by the benefits associated with bilingualism.

Overall, across my corpus, early childhood bilingualism is portrayed as a valuable gift. When it comes to the bilingual bonus, specific languages are rarely identified; bilingualism is portrayed as a generic life skill that results in equally generic advantages over monolingual peers. Even so, the benefits of bilingualism remain vague and implicit. Often, parents express concerns regarding speech and/or language delay and confusion. In order to counteract these initial challenges, parents encourage each other to either 'go with the flow' and trust that children will 'soak up' the languages, or they insist on a strict language division (this is further explored in Section 4.4.1). Some parents believe that speech/and or language delay may occur as a result of bilingual language acquisition, whilst others argue that language impairments have been proven to be child dependent. Overall, the consensus is that, in the long run, the challenges associated with bilingual child-rearing will ultimately be outweighed by the benefits of bilingualism.

4.3. Making language-related choices

This section explores the choices parents make on raising children bilingually in the Australian context. The main focus lies in how parents talk about *which* languages to teach and *when*. More specifically, the focus lies on how parents make the decision to raise their children as simultaneous or consecutive bilinguals.

4.3.1. 'The beauty of introducing languages so early'

Across the data, parenting choices vary around when to introduce which language. This section is concerned with the belief in 'the earlier, the better', and whether the majority language, English, should be introduced before schooling. Discussion thread 6 particularly exemplifies parental debates about language-related parenting choices. The discussion is initiated by mother OP6 who explains that she and her husband plan to teach their son English first:

DH is from a non-English speaking country. He speaks English fluently and we decided that DS' first language should be English, as he is living and will go to school in Australia. He will learn his father's language when he is a little older, maybe 5. Everyone says now is a good time for him to learn both languages, which I agree with, but I can't help thinking it would be better for him to get English "under his belt" first (OP6)

Her approach contrasts with that of her family friend, who is raising her daughter solely in the minority language until schooling:

I think the mother is being a bit selfish really, and her DD will have trouble when she starts school. DH disagrees - he says she will learn English at school and doesn't need to know it before then. (...) I think she will be disadvantaged though, as the other kids at school will already be speaking English from the start, and she won't. (OP6)

Mother OP6's reasoning for her negative evaluation appears to be based on the fear that her son will experience social and academic disadvantages at school if he has not mastered English

first. OP6 receives considerable backlash from the online community, not only for criticising her friend's bilingual child-rearing approach, but also for her own bilingual FLP strategy. The community's criticism seems to be based on the common belief that 'earlier is better'. This belief is voiced across the data:

With any language learning, the younger, the better. (10.13)

The beauty of introducing languages so early on in children is that they pick them up so easily. (4.11)

Parents agree with each other that children are particularly apt at learning languages at a young age. Therefore, raising children in one language first, and introducing the other later, is not perceived as an appropriate bilingual child-rearing strategy for successful bilingual child-rearing:

You can do what you like and make your own choices regarding your child, but let me encourage you to raise [him] bilingual. It really won't hurt [him], there is lots of evidence and research to prove this (so you know, I have a degree in Early Childhood Education and studied this at Uni...) Then you can encourage your friend to do the same. Do some research yourself so you can show her the benefits of her child learning 2 languages together. (6.5)

You have made the exact same choice as your friend, to deprive a child of their best opportunity to learn a second language. They will still be good if they learn at 5 (my father did it), but it is harder for them. If you grow up with two, there is no confusion, but sometimes there is when it is picked up later. (6.10)

There has been study after study showing that children who are raised bilingually from birth do better academically than their monolingual peers. You are doing your child a disservice by not offering the opportunity to have two true first languages. (6.28)

These comments suggests that being raised bilingually is defined as learning two monolingual varieties simultaneously. Parents who take an alternative approach are thereby seen as denying their children the opportunity to ‘have two true first languages’. OP6 and her friend’s approach are therefore evaluated as inappropriate bilingual child-rearing strategies, as the bilingual bonus does not seem to be associated with their approaches. The latter comment refers to implicit research findings (‘study after study’) to exemplify the belief that bilinguals are academically advantaged to their peers. Further comments also refer to general research findings on ‘the earlier, the better’ using openings such as ‘I have read’, ‘I have been told’ or ‘it is recommended’. ‘The earlier, the better’ seems to be considered by some contributors as scientific fact:

More exposure to both languages early will maximise your child's ability to be fluent in both. Language acquisition theorists seem to agree on an early critical period, your child is smack bang in this period of his life. (6.37)

These parents further suggest that native-like proficiency, evidenced in fluency, is only achievable if both languages are learnt simultaneously from an early age. The belief in ‘nativism’ is therefore presented as scientific fact. This negative evaluation of consecutive bilingualism is not uncommon (Piller, 2001), as parents primarily encourage each other to raise their children as simultaneous bilinguals through the OPOL or HL-vs-CL approaches:

The earlier the better and waiting till 5 is counter-productive. I understand your concern about English not being mastered, but the best way to do this is to ensure one member of the family always speaks in English (ie you) while those that have the other language, always speak that language with your DS. (6.21)

In the end, OP6 rejects contributors’ advice and the so-called expert knowledge they draw on. She maintains that her child will learn some English first, as she believes that some exposure to the language of instruction is imperative before schooling:

I still think it's best for children (or my child, anyway) to learn some English before going to an English speaking school (with or without a foreign language at the same time). No amount of "expert" opinion is going to change my mind on that - sorry. Obviously if others want to do something different, that's up to them. (OP6.40)

In summary, it appears that contributors' discussions around language-related parenting choices are influenced by tensions between language ideologies: on the one hand, parents in favour of 'the earlier, the better' offer intertextual references to support their criticism of OP6 and her friend's approaches. Their references suggest that public knowledge on bilingual child-rearing has incorporated the belief in 'the earlier, the better' and in 'nativism' as validation to implement OPOL to ensure the simultaneous exposure to two languages from an early age. These parents seem to assume that native-like proficiency in both languages is only possible under these circumstances, thus rendering the sociolinguistic and socioeconomic situations within families invisible; on the other hand, other parents, although in favour of bilingualism, are concerned about the disadvantages involved in starting school without English language competency.

4.3.2. 'I'm not going to make the same mistake'

Parents also talk about bilingual child-rearing in terms of the mistakes others, or they themselves make or have made. Particularly so-called 'immigrant' parents are cautioned by contributors to teach their children their native language first, as opposed to making the mistake of passing on 'broken English':

Children have to learn at least 1 language well and there have been big problems with well intentioned immigrants who tried to raise their children to speak only English without being able to speak it well themselves. This is very bad for the children's language development and they would have done better to teach them their own 'mother

tongue' and left English for school (but they of course don't know this, so it isn't really their fault). (6.5)

'Immigrant' parents seem to be defined as having a lack of English proficiency on the one hand, and a lack of knowledge about bilingual child-rearing on the other. Across the data, children from immigrant families who have little or no exposure to English are perceived as being at a disadvantage compared to children of families who have had *some* exposure to English:

I agree that children pick up English quickly once in school, but they cannot be at the same level as children who have had five years of English speaking. I see it every day at work. I am only speaking about families that ONLY speak another language and surround themselves who only speak that language. Those families that surround themselves in English at times, along with nurturing their home language are a different story. (6.14)

This contributor differentiates between children with little to no, and children with some exposure to English, arguing that the latter group will face fewer linguistic challenges upon schooling. As shown in Section 4.3.1, in my corpus, migrant parents' bilingual child-rearing strategies appear to be primarily evaluated negatively:

I think what often happens with common community languages (such as Turkish) with a relatively recent migrant population (ok, 35 years of Turks in Australia, but still), that using the language at home is a sign of 'old' ways, and the 'old' culture, and children are keen to look cool and use the cool language (English) at school. I think this is particularly exaggerated if their entry to school is complicated by needing to learn English, and if the parents' behaviour suggest that the community language is something private, to be concealed or kept for home. The kids we know who spoke Turkish at home and English at school quickly lost Turkish. Their parents still speak to them in Turkish but they always reply in English and their Turkish is terrible. (10.11)

In the discourse around migrant parents' mistakes, specific languages are rarely mentioned. The above comment is an exception. This contributor suggests that children's 'terrible' Turkish language skills result from their parents' inappropriate bilingual FLP strategy. She suggests that the HL-vs-CL bilingual FLP may create a language division that is detrimental to children's motivation to speak both languages. Additional comments also allude to potential difficulties children may encounter when not given the opportunity to learn English before schooling:

I grew up in a high ethnic neighbourhood and saw all too many kids attending special ESL (english as a second language) classes at school and suffering setbacks due to their parents not speaking any English at home. My own parents used to speak our mother tongue at home all the time until we were at school when they decided that they were in Australia now and spoke to the children in English and each other in native tongue. But I am sad now because this meant that I cant speak their language more than a few words. (And I can't teach my own DS!) (5.2)

This comment appears to be caught between the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus. On the one hand, this poster suggests that children with no English exposure prior to schooling are at a disadvantage, on the other hand, however, she suggests that her own parents' decision to switch to English has resulted in her no longer being able to speak their language, nor can she pass it on to her son. Across my data, there is a widespread discourse about immigrants' language-related parenting mistakes. This comment exemplifies how their desire to learn English and to assimilate is in conflict with the desire to maintain the home language.

Across the data, the mistakes parents discuss are all influenced by the dominance of English. One area of mistake-making, as perceived by parents, involves the use of English for the facilitation of social inclusion:

I made the mistake of only teaching my daughter turkish. i kept telling dh to talk in turkish to her while we always speak english to each other recently ive noticed she cant

verbally communicate with other kids at parks. so now we are speaking/teaching both to her (...) im not going to make the same mistake with [daughter] #2 (1.11)

Some parents are concerned that no English knowledge prior to schooling will affect their children's ability to socialise with monolingual English speaking peers. This fear seems to contribute to the re-evaluation of some parents' language choices. The above mother regrets not exposing her child sooner to English. In contrast, another poster regrets not ensuring that her eldest son had maximum exposure to the minority language:

I only speak chinese to my twins. (...) I know they will learn eng sooner or later (...) I made the mistake with my ds1 and I spoke to him in eng and chinese, more so eng without even realizing it and now at 6y.o, he doesn't really know chinese. Even if he can understand, he refuses to speak chinese. (11.16)

The mother attributes her son's lack of Chinese proficiency to her initial language choices. With her younger children, she tries to ensure more Chinese input, because English may be acquired elsewhere. Other mothers also feel their initial language choices have been challenged by the dominance of English:

We moved to Australia when DS was 2.5 years old. I have always tried my very best to only speak Dutch to DS but believe me, it is very hard to keep it up sometimes. Or maybe I just failed LOL. It is hard because over here I speak English to everyone (naturally) and DS knows that. (...) It is hard for me to keep it up all the time, eg. when DS is being naughty in the shops and I reprimand him in Dutch, then people around me look at me as if I'm an alien and as if I let him get away with it?? Whereas if I reprimand him in English, at least they know what I'm doing. (...) I'm pregnant now, and with the next child I will try my very best again, and in the end that's all you can do. (2.3)

This mother mentions a sense of failure for not using the minority language consistently due to the dominance of English in interaction with others, and in public. This mother is also worried

about being perceived as a ‘bad’ parent for publicly disciplining her son in Dutch. The mothers in all three previous comments reposition themselves as ‘good’ parents by emphasising that they will, or have, put more effort into making the ‘right’ language choices with their younger children.

In summary, it appears that the migrant parents’ choices are condemned as inappropriate regardless of whether these parents expose their children to English or not. Migrant parents are primarily framed as being deficient in English, and as being unaware of appropriate bilingual FLP strategies to employ. Overall, the mistakes that forum members discuss are primarily influenced by the dominance of English: on the one hand, parents express regret for not providing enough language exposure to English so their children can socialise with their peers; on the other hand, parents express regret for not providing enough language exposure in the minority language to ensure their children learn their language before schooling. By confessing to their language choice mistakes, parents position themselves as ‘good’ parents who have learnt from their parenting errors, and who strive to increase their bilingual parenting efforts with their younger children.

4.3.3. ‘I don’t see the point’

This section is concerned with parents who choose not to raise their children bilingually in the Australian context. The focus lies on thread 12, the only thread in which contributors discuss why they plan to raise their children monolingually. OP12 seeks advice from the online community asking how other families reached a decision on which languages to teach:

DH doesn't feel that he wants to teach our child/ren his second language. It is only spoken within his home country which is far away from here. Our child/ren would have limited opportunity to speak it with anyone but him. (...) It's really looking like we'll end up with English only in our household, but I just want to make sure that is the right decision for us and for them. (OP12)

Across this thread, there are only a few parents who are also choosing not to pass on their language:

My family is bilingual, we originate from another country, however both my children will be speaking English only. I don't see the point in teaching them a language they will never use here in Australia. We are not returning to our country, so there is no need for it. (12.8)

This poster argues that there will be little opportunity for her children to use the language within or beyond the Australian context, thus devaluing her language as being useless outside her country. Parents who choose not to raise their children bilingually appear influenced by the underlying monolingual mindset that devalues other languages and renders them invisible. However, one contributor argues in favour of the minority language despite the monolingual mindset:

The language is virtually useless outside his home country but I don't see that as a reason not to teach DS something that is part of his heritage. (12.24)

This poster also evaluates the LOTE as being worthless in the Australian context, however it is nonetheless considered an important component of her son's cultural identity. This poster is one of only two contributors in thread 12 who mentions the connection between language and identity. Across the data, none of the parents explain their language-related parenting choices in relation to their own linguistic identities. Cultural and linguistic identity therefore do not seem to be important factors.

Across thread 12, the majority of contributions express sympathy towards OP12's husband's point of view. One contributor also explains to OP12 that the challenge of raising children bilingually lies in parental attitudes towards promoting the minority language:

If they don't really care one way or the other, the child will only speak the majority language. If they really want it, but believe it's sort of impossible, or that monolingualism is inevitable, then it will be. (12.14)

This data appears to support the minority language-speaking father's attitude – if the second language will not be useful, why try to teach it. Nevertheless, the majority of contributors encourage the family to 'give it a go':

I'm of the view that no harm can come from teaching children a second language, and any extra language skills they have are an advantage, so why not try it? (12.15)

This comment implies that providing children with additional language skills, enriches them in terms of the associated benefits of languages.

Overall, those parents who decide against bilingual child-raising, base their decision on the perceived usefulness of their language within Australia. Few parents express the desire to transmit their cultural identity. Some parents argue that they do not plan to return to their country of origin, so children would only have limited opportunities to use the language. Commenters typically validate these parents' positions, particularly if the mother, as the primary caregiver, is not the minority speaker. Even so, some contributors argue in favour of providing even minimal additional language skills, as this is first and foremost believed to enrich the child's development.

In summary, Section 4.3 has explored the choices parents make on which languages to teach, and when to teach them. The majority of parents seem to agree that children need to be exposed to both languages from an early age to ensure bilingual competency later in life. Consecutive bilingualism therefore appears to be associated with social, linguistic and academic disadvantages. This is particularly evident in contributors' negative evaluation of immigrant parents' bilingual child-rearing decisions. The consensus appears to be that 'good' parents, who

are proficient in English, expose their children to some English in early childhood to ensure that children experience fewer difficulties upon schooling. Yet, other contributors express regrets for not fostering the minority language more. Therefore, parents reassess their language choices if they perceive that their child is either struggling to communicate with peers in English, or refusing to use the minority language. Overall, OPOL appears to be associated with the positive evaluation of the ‘the earlier, the better’ argument, whereas the HL-vs-CL strategy seems to be associated with a detrimental language divide that may work towards the child choosing English over the minority language. Across the data, very few posters mention cultural identity as a reason to pass on their language. Lastly, there is a small group of parents that have decided to raise their children as monolingual English speakers. Such decisions are the clearest expression of the monolingual mindset and contrasts with other posters’ recommendation to teach their children *some* of their language, as even minimal second language skills are believed to enrich children.

4.4. Bilingual child-rearing strategies and realities

Across the data, it is widely agreed upon that bilingual language skills, and the bilingual benefit can only be obtained if parents make a conscious effort to teach their children two languages from an early age. Such efforts are believed to be realised only by strictly following a bilingual FLP strategy. In their initial discussion posts, OPs largely seek advice on whether their current strategies are appropriate. The following OP comments are representative of others:

I am keen to know how your family goes about speaking another language and what is recommended by the experts! IE Do you mix English and the other language or is this bad? Should I just stick to English only as it is not my native language? (OP2)

So I guess my question is if we are confusing our boy? - or will it effect him somehow??

I just really want him to understand and speak Danish - so should I be really hardcore and ONLY speak Danish to him?? (OP8)

Respondents to these questions seem to stress that the key to bilingual child-rearing is to employ a consistent bilingual FLP strategy. However, mothers admit that being consistent is not as easy as it seems, and fathers are often blamed for inconsistent parent-child interactions in the minority language, particularly if they are not the primary caregivers. This section explores how parents talk about bilingual FLP strategies, and the role of ‘consistency’ in bilingual child-rearing.

4.4.1. ‘The key is consistency’

Across the data, variations of the phrase ‘the key is consistency’ are the prevalent expressions that parents use to stress the importance of a systematic bilingual child-rearing approach:

It seems the key is to be consistent and not panic if it looks like it's taking a while! (3.7)

From what I've heard, consistency is the key. If you're the English speaker, you should always speak English with your daughter (don't dip in and out of English and Norwegian when you talk to her), and your partner should always speak Norwegian with her. (9.4)

The ‘key’ to bilingual child-rearing is believed to lie in the consistent use of one language by one person in parent-child interactions. The latter comment also exemplifies the belief that even if one caregiver is bilingual, parents should nonetheless use only one language. Specifically, contributors posit that if the bilingual parent is perceived as being less proficient in the LOTE, then they should not speak this language in parent-child interactions so as not to confuse the child:

The approach we've taken is that my wife and I speak English to our children and their maternal grandmother speaks Spanish to them. The key is consistency - ensuring that the language from a parent or guardian remains the same. We chose not to have my wife speak Spanish to our children because her Spanish isn't fantastic and we thought

it might confuse our children if their mother is speaking Spanish to them and their father is speaking English to them. (7.7)

This comment was posted by the only self-identified father in the forum threads. Although he voices the belief that caregivers must be consistent in their bilingual FLP strategy, he fears that his child will be confused if both parents speak a different language. Despite this fear, Spanish input from his mother-in-law does not seem to be perceived as being problematic, nor potentially confusing. Overall, the focus lies on the management of language division by each parent:

I have been told that each parent should speak their respective mother tongue to their child in order for the child to be bi-lingual. We are expecting our first and I will speak English and my husband will speak Turkish. (...) Stick to what you are doing. It seems to be what the professionals would recommend. (8.7)

As a speech pathologist, I have always advised parents to do exactly what you are already doing - each parent only speak one language to the child, to help the child by providing a clear 'division' between the languages. (1.3)

Here, child language acquisition professionals are referenced to justify the strict separation of languages by person, place or context. The most frequently mentioned strategies are the OPOL and HL-vs-CL strategies:

I'm not expert either but I've done a fair bit of reading about bilingualism, since we are raising bilingual kids. The key is that you be consistent. The "one parent one language" model is common because so many families are bilingual because the parents speak different native languages. But there are other models, and the "we speak one language at home and the other outside the home" one is, I understand, the next most commonly used one. (10.8)

We are not bilingual but I went to a talk by our local Speech Therapists re: Helping Toddlers to Talk & they gave advice on this topic. They said you do need to have rules but you can switch between the 2 languages. The rules can be:

- Only speak your native language at home & let children learn English in the community.
- One parent speaks each language to child.
- Speak only native language at home, English when out.
- Speak native language at set time of the day for example you could speak your language to the child when you are home alone but switch to English when your partner is home.

Apparently kids adapt really easily but they have to 'know' what to language they're speaking hence the 'rules'. Problems arise if you switch back & forward & the child gets confused. (14.3)

The latter contribution to the forum reiterates bilingual child-rearing 'rules' that echo common bilingual FLP strategies such as HL-vs-CL, and OPOL. This parent discloses that she is not raising bilingual children, nor is she bilingual herself. Her comment alludes to the belief that children easily adapt to the bilingual FLP strategy, as long as parents do not confuse their children by switching between languages. Overall, references to expert knowledge exemplify how the mixing of two languages is not accepted in wider discourses about bilingual child-rearing. Across the data, language mixing is therefore discouraged:

I think the key is consistency. You can't mix in english with the other language or vice-versa. You speak to your child in one language at a time and you can't go wrong. (4.8)

[Mixing both languages with the children] is actually not necessarily the best thing to do, it's usually easier for them if they have the constancy and parents not switching back and forth between 2 languages. Our kids have no problem with english whatsoever and

no accent at all either, they picked it up from everywhere else without a problem (of course we also speak english at home if we have visitors) (7.4)

Our 5 year old speaks perfect Spanish and English, with the correct accents without mixing the languages. Up to last year, she was still mixing a bit, or if she didn't know the Spanish word, she would just say it in English with Spanish accent! LOL! (8.4)

Parents appear to believe that a lack of language mixing and accent are the main indicators of bilingual proficiency. The above comments suggest that successful bilingualism is reflected in a lack of 'accent', which in turn implies monolingual competencies in each language. Language mixing and a non-native accent are therefore deemed detrimental for the classification of a bilingual speaker.

Due to the dominance of 'consistent' bilingual FLP strategies across the data, alternative approaches that deviate from the norm are rejected by contributors. One mother is separating her languages primarily by time:

I am the one spending most time with our 9.5 months DS, my approach is speak to him in English for a week, and then my language in the second week and so. When DH/someone else is around, i will speak English, so that they can understand. However, DH will only speak his language to him regardless whether i'm there (i can't speak and don't understand DH's language) as he is only get little time with DS and he wishes DS can master in his language. (8.14)

Both parents appear to be implementing different bilingual FLP strategies. In reaction to this, one contributor recommends that the family implement the OPOL approach, arguing English will take care of itself once the child is exposed to the wider community:

We are raising our kids bilingual too, one parent/one language. That's the way it seems to be recommended these days, consistency is key. With that in mind, [poster 8.14], I wouldn't go down that path. You're better off keeping your language separate, as in you

... speak only it to him, while your husband uses his own language - you obviously speak English together? That will be enough for the child to learn that eventually too, especially since English is the dominant language around him elsewhere too. (8.17)

This poster suggests OPOL as a more appropriate bilingual FLP strategy, primarily due to this strategy's dominance across bilingual child-rearing discourses.

In summary, the majority of contributors believe that a systematic division of languages in parent-child interaction is the key to successful bilingual child-rearing. Parents also appear to believe that bilingual competency is reflected in a lack of accent and language mixing, and that language confusion is counteracted by a consistent approach. OPOL is by far the most frequently mentioned bilingual FLP strategy, as it is strongly associated with 'consistency' and the strict separation of both languages in parent-child interaction. As a result, bilingual language acquisition is believed to be realised successfully via monolingual practices. Alternative approaches are generally dismissed.

4.4.2. 'I often catch DP speaking English'

Despite the fact that the majority of contributors describe consistency as the key to successful bilingual child-rearing, parents may not be able to invest the amount of 'hard work' required, and several contributors voice their frustrations over the difficulties associated with maintaining consistent language practices. When some posters perceive their bilingual FLP strategies as failing, they often blame their partners' inconsistent use of the minority language:

DP is Norwegian and I am Australian, we do one parent one language. Although I often catch DP speaking English with DD which really annoys me as her Norwegian has really slipped lately. He says he always forgets to speak Norwegian which I find really strange since it's his mother tongue. (13.4)

Elsewhere in the data the same mother remarks:

I also speak Norwegian (almost fluent), but we decided that i should stick to English and DP stick to His. (OP9.2)

As the designated majority language speaker, this poster blames her husband, as the designated minority language speaker, for not adhering to their bilingual FLP strategy. In response to this mother's frustration another contributor writes:

It took my DH a good couple of years to learn to be consistent in speaking Spanish with DD1. It's hard to do, because he tends to respond in English when she speaks to him in English. He's better at it now, though not 100%. Like you, I used to "catch him out" speaking English to her and have to remind him to switch them into Spanish. (13.5)

The prevalence of English in parent-child interactions appears to affect fathers' minority language use. Therefore, as the designated English speakers, the above mothers feel additional responsibility for the implementation of their bilingual FLP. These posters are not alone in experiencing frustrations caused by their husbands' forgetfulness:

DH is supposed to speak always in Hungarian to our sons but sometimes doesn't remember. (...) At a young age I try to do all the "teaching" of language in Hungarian (...) as that is my level of Hungarian. I've also got the "motherly" type commands down pat in Hungarian like "come here" and "don't touch that" or "lunch is ready" etc that I repeat multiple times a day. Other than that I speak 90% of the time to them in English. (2.9)

By providing repetitive input in Hungarian, this majority language-speaking mother tries to reinforce and promote the presence of the minority language in the home domain. In contrast to the findings in Section 4.4.1, the use of two languages by one person is not evaluated negatively by the online community. Here, the majority language-speaking mother's use of the minority language appears to be valued as language enrichment. The designated minority language-speaking parents, too, encounter implementation problems, however, they continue

to persist using OPOL. This persistence suggests that the monolingual mindset is entrenched in these parents' bilingual child-rearing practices. Some contributors therefore feel that they are making more of an effort than their partners:

My DH is German and doesn't speak Dutch. He sometimes does speak German to DS, but to be honest I think he can't be bothered to do it consistently, which is a shame. I will get some more books and surf the net for more info. Until then I'll keep it up the way I am doing things. So I speak Dutch to DS and English to DH. I will also have to remember to speak Dutch to him in front of English speaking people as that is where I slip up! (5.15)

Despite persisting with OPOL in the home domain, the prevalence of English in the public domain compels this mother to accommodate her language use towards English (as with poster 2.3 in Section 4.3.2). The poster further hopes to help encourage German, however she seems unsure how to do so, and appears to accept her husband's reluctance. In contrast, another contributor hopes that her husband may accommodate his language practices when confronted as being a 'bad' bilingual parent:

I want this for DS and was what we had planned before he came along. If only DH would speak his native language to him more. Maybe when his parents visit in a couple of weeks and DS has no idea what they are saying to him, then maybe he'll feel guilty. (1.4)

The use of guilt is considered a possible solution to force her husband to use his language more often. Across the data, it appears that whenever parents encounter issues with their bilingual FLP strategy, the strategy itself is not reconsidered.

In summary, those posters who voice frustrations associated with a lack of consistency in their bilingual child-rearing strategies often blame the inconsistency on their partners, who are the designated minority language speakers. Overall, these contributors express a desire to raise their

children bilingually, and take measures to enrich the minority language by encouraging forgetful partners to speak their language, contributing to language exposure, or providing additional resources. Overall, when encountering difficulties with their bilingual FLP strategy, parents feel their circumstances are primarily to blame.

4.5. Summary

This chapter has explored discourses about bilingual child-rearing in an Australian online parenting forum that is not specifically devoted to bilingualism. In Section 4.2, I discussed how parents value bilingualism as a generic skill that is constructed as a gift to impart to their children. However, the advantages associated with bilingualism often remain vague and implicit; where they are specified they relate to academic or economic gain. Contributors encourage each other to pursue bilingual child-rearing primarily for the bilingual bonus, thus indexing bilingual parenting as ‘good’ parenting, despite fears and concerns related to language delay and confusion.

In Section 4.3, the analysis shifted to parents’ language-related choices. The majority of parents argue in favour of teaching both languages simultaneously by implementing OPOL. ‘The earlier, the better’ is often presented as scientific fact, and associated with the acquisition of native-like proficiency. However, parents disagree on the appropriate amount of exposure to English, and bilingual parenting mistakes are primarily attributed to consequences of English dominance in the wider society.

Lastly, the analysis in Section 4.4 found that, among this online community, there is a widespread belief that the ‘key’ to bilingual child-rearing is to ensure the consistent division of languages in parent-child interactions. Across the data, there is only one counter-example that recommends ‘going with the flow’, as opposed to strict language division. However, this English-speaker is raising her children in Switzerland. In the Australian context, OPOL appears

to have been accepted as the most appropriate strategy, as it promotes double monolingualism, and has been widely disseminated as being recommended by language experts. Contributors are therefore doubtful of the effectiveness of alternative approaches. Overall, posters say they are frequently faced with their husbands' inconsistent minority language use. These parents then take responsibility for enriching the language and for reinforcing the bilingual FLP strategy, rather than objectively re-evaluating their approach. Across the data, the bilingual bonus validates the belief that any level of bilingual competency enriches the child, yet native-like proficiency is above all associated with a consistent bilingual child-rearing approach. Parents' persistence with their bilingual FLP strategies, as well as their decisions to not to raise children bilingually both appear to be expressions of the monolingual mindset.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter critically addresses key findings from the analysis in Chapter 4 and relates them to the research questions and existing research as discussed in Chapter 2. This section first provides a brief summary of the study's rationale and key findings followed by a roadmap of the remaining chapter.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the inspiration for this thesis was a thank you note written over two decades ago. Although I am sincerely grateful to my primary school for investing in my English language skills, I am equally grateful to my mother for not taking their advice to only speak English at home. The context in which this note was written indicates a tension between the dominance of English and the valorisation of bilingualism. It further exemplifies a persistence of the monolingual mindset across time. To further explore this tension, this thesis set out to explore how parents talk about bilingualism and bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context.

The present study has focused on publicly available conversations on bilingual child-rearing in one of Australia's largest online parenting websites. My method of data analysis is a combination of thematic and critical discourse analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3, this methodological approach best illuminates underlying language ideologies that inform bottom-up discourses and parental decisions about bilingual child-rearing. The online forum was chosen because, as identified in Chapter 3, an analysis of how individuals, without a specific interest in languages, talk about bilingual parenting is relevant to understanding broader societal attitudes towards bilingualism. This approach provides a broader picture of dominant beliefs and ideologies that reinforce and contest each other in the discursive construction of bilingual child-rearing among parents in the Australian context.

It has been found that due to the prevailing monolingual mindset within languages education, parents adopt bilingual parenting strategies in the home domain. Within this domain, the bilingual bonus underpins the discursive construction of bilingualism as a highly valued skill, and bilingual parenting as an investment in children's futures. However, the monolingual mindset still validates English over other languages, and constrains language-related parental decisions about how to raise children bilingually. Consequently, bilingualism is primarily linked to low-level ambitions among mainstream parents, whereby it is regarded as a generic resource that is first and foremost believed to enrich children's skill set, as opposed to being a language skill in its own right. Overall, due to the dominance of the monolingual mindset in education, 'good' bilingual parents invest in English first, whilst concurrently providing the bilingual bonus by enriching the child's skill set with an additional language. In summary, this study has attempted to illuminate the interrelationship between language ideologies and individual discourses about bilingual child-rearing.

The discussion in Section 5.2 is in response to the first research question on how parents talk about bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context. Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 explore how the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus are manifest in contributors' discursive construction of bilingualism. Section 5.3 is in response to the second research question and discusses how bilingual child-rearing is linked to the notion of 'good' bilingual parenting. This chapter concludes with the implications of the key findings and with considerations of possible areas for further research.

5.2. Monolingual discourses shaping bilingual parenting

This section discusses what the analysis of online parental conversations reveals about how prevailing language ideologies underpin the discursive construction of bilingualism and bilingual child-rearing in the Australian context.

5.2.1. The monolingual mindset

An initial key finding is that the monolingual mindset systematically shapes parents' understanding of bilingualism and their choice of bilingual FLP strategy: first, parents have a very narrow definition of bilingualism; secondly, parents believe that bilingual competency can only be achieved by implementing a bilingual FLP strategy that promotes double monolingual language acquisition.

The analysis of conversations on bilingual child-rearing has shown that parents agree on a very narrow definition of *what* bilingualism is. As shown in Section 4.3.1, parents conceive of bilingualism as the simultaneous acquisition of two linguistic varieties from an early age. The expected outcome of simultaneous bilingualism is what Heller (2002, p. 48) terms 'double monolingualism' – the use of each language as if they were learnt as a "homogenous monolingual variety". Heller argues that bilingualism is only valued if it amounts to double monolingualism. This belief is exemplified in Section 4.3 by parents' negative evaluation of consecutive bilingualism.

The monolingual mindset is specifically tied to the valorisation of English over other languages. The analysis has shown that contributors positively evaluate language-related parenting choices where the primary focus is on acquiring English. In my data, the monolingual mindset operates indirectly: it does not render the acquisition of additional languages invisible, but sees bilingualism through a monolingual lens and reinforces the importance of learning English over additional languages. The monolingual mindset therefore paradoxically undergirds contributors' understandings of bilingualism as the simultaneous yet separate acquisition of English and an additional language.

Bilingualism is believed to best be achieved via monolingual language practices. Intertextual references to expert advice reinforce the interpretation of particular beliefs as scientific facts.

Sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.1 have shown that public knowledge on bilingual child-rearing refers to theories and hypotheses such as ‘the earlier, the better’, or ‘consistency is key’ as scientific facts. These supposed facts are used to validate monolingual language practices. Both beliefs are closely associated with the OPOL strategy. HL-vs-CL is the second most frequently mentioned strategy; however, it is mostly evaluated negatively due to parents’ narrow definition of bilingualism as ‘English, plus one’. HL-vs-CL is believed to foster the reverse constellation of ‘minority language, plus English’. Across the data, OPOL is therefore the most widely disseminated and frequently mentioned strategy, as it is believed to neutralise language delay and confusion by ensuring that both languages are learnt autonomously from one another. While contributors are highly familiar with OPOL as an effective bilingual parenting strategy (see Section 2.5), the main criticism towards OPOL seems to have been obscured from public attention. This main criticism of OPOL is its constraints on natural interaction between multilinguals (Döpke, 1998; see Section 2.5). Generally, parents in my data do not consider multilingual interactions as ‘natural’ but as something to be afraid of: the ever-present danger of language mixing is regarded as an impediment to successful bilingual child-rearing.

Another language ideology related to the monolingual mindset that contributors consider as scientific fact is the belief in ‘nativism’. This is expressed in the idea that successful bilingualism should be measured by the absence of an accent that would indicate the presence of another language in the speaker. Additionally, the absence of language mixing in each variety is another indicator that bilinguals are double monolinguals. The principle of fractal recursivity is present by mapping the understanding of monolingual proficiency as ‘pure’ language use onto double monolingual competencies. The main objective of successful bilingualism is therefore to precisely render the presence of two languages invisible.

In summary, the way parents talk about bilingualism is heavily influenced by the monolingual mindset. Parents believe that bilingual native-like proficiency is only reflected in double

monolingualism. Accent and language mixing are deemed indicators of low-level proficiency. As a result of these beliefs, OPOL, as the most widely disseminated bilingual child-rearing strategy, is believed to be the most effective strategy as it circumvents flexible multilingual interactional practices. Instead, OPOL creates an artificial separation that allows for the valorisation of bilingualism in monolingualism.

5.2.2. The bilingual bonus

As identified in Section 5.2.1 and in the introduction to Chapter 5, the monolingual mindset and the bilingual bonus are closely intertwined in the data. The second key finding is that the bilingual bonus is apparent in how parents justify their decisions to raise children as simultaneous bilinguals in the Australian context: first, although bilingualism is highly valued, it is portrayed as a generic skill that is believed to only be accessible to simultaneous bilinguals; second, the realisation of the bilingual bonus is underpinned by monolingual constraints, thus reinforcing the belief that bilingualism is not a linguistic resource in its own right.

Early bilingual child-rearing is, overall, highly valued as a ‘gift’ that parents may impart to their children. This gift is believed to be best passed on in early childhood. During this time, language transmission is perceived as being effortless and worthwhile in terms of mediating the bilingual bonus, and in terms of achieving native-like proficiency. As shown in Section 4.2, most benefits of bilingualism are implicitly stated. Therefore, bilingualism is primarily portrayed as a generic skill, in which competency in a language is associated with cognitive, academic and economic advantages, as opposed to a linguistic resource in its own right. Across the discussion threads, bilingualism is portrayed as a low-level parental ambition that is valued similarly to early Maths, or to learning an instrument. It appears that the gift of bilingualism relates to a parental investment believed to have homogenous outcomes for all children with bilingual competencies. Put differently, the investment is not in a specific minority language.

Primarily, parents invest in bilingualism to provide their children with an academic advantage over their monolingual peers. However, mothers are often confronted with realities that make the implementation of their bilingual FLP strategy difficult. Findings in Section 4.3 and 4.4.2 extend Okita's (2002) observations that mothers feel responsible for the implementation of bilingual parenting strategies by presenting how majority language-speaking mothers aid minority language transmission and maintenance. The data indicates that although these mothers highly value early childhood bilingualism in the home domain, their language-related parenting choices are influenced by two factors: first, a lack of own experiences with bilingual language acquisition; second, a lack of institutional support which, as discussed in Section 2.3, is due to the prevalence of the monolingual mindset in languages education. Despite believing in the bilingual bonus, these parents nevertheless value the acquisition of English over the additional language. This evaluation is based on fears illustrated in Section 4.3 that children will be disadvantaged upon schooling if English has not been acquired beforehand. Therefore, majority language-speaking parents justify their preference for English by explaining that even minimal exposure to the minority language will give children an academic advantage upon schooling. Here, the bilingual bonus indexes 'good' bilingual parenting as imparting 'English, plus one'.

In summary, the key finding is that monolingual constraints underpin the realisation of the bilingual bonus in two ways: first, in the Australian context, bilingualism is valued as a generic skill, thus erasing the value of a language as a linguistic skill in its own right; secondly, parents favour an 'English, plus one' approach for its perceived academic advantages upon schooling and beyond, arguing that even minimal bilingual skills enrich a child's academic skill set.

Overall, Section 5.2 has shown that the discursive construction of bilingualism is characterised by the interrelationship between contested languages ideologies that shape and reinforce each other. The prevailing monolingual mindset reinforces the bilingual bonus as a justification for

bilingual child-rearing in the home domain. In turn, the bilingual bonus, and the way in which parents portray bilingualism, are underpinned by the belief that bilingual competencies are manifest in double monolingualism. As a result, the implementation of OPOL, as the most widely popularised bilingual FLP strategy, is influenced by monolingual practices.

5.3. Bilingual parenting as 'good' parenting

As shown in Section 5.2, key findings suggest that: first, the monolingual mindset systematically shapes parents' understanding of bilingualism and bilingual child-rearing strategies; second, the bilingual bonus is instrumental in how parents justify bilingual child-rearing. In relation to the gap in the research literature outlined in Chapter 2, this study also set out to explore how the notion of 'good' parenting is linked to bilingualism as a child-rearing strategy in the Australian context. The final key finding is that bilingual parenting is conceived of as a 'good' parenting strategy as long as it confers a competitive advantage. There are two aspects to this: first, 'good' bilingual parenting is primarily conceived of as imparting the bilingual bonus as an investment that provides a competitive advantage over monolingual peers; second, if the LOTE is not perceived as valuable, then deciding against bilingual parenting is also considered a 'good' parenting strategy. This is believed to ensure the monolingual acquisition of English without the interference of an additional language.

Across my data, parents conceive of 'good' bilingual parenting as imparting the bilingual bonus as a competitive advantage. Alongside the belief that imparting the 'gift' of bilingualism in early childhood is an investment (see Section 5.2.2), it has been shown that parents consider the bilingual bonus as an asset for their children's future academic and economic trajectories. By investing in a skill that enriches their children's development, parents hope they secure them an advantage over their monolingual peers upon schooling and beyond (see Section 4.2). However, as shown in Sections 4.3.3, within this discourse of bilingualism as a competitive advantage, the bilingual bonus renders cultural identity invisible. The perception that

bilingualism, as a generic skill, is unrelated to particular languages appears to render its connotation as an identity marker invisible. Within the research, the prevalence of the monolingual mindset in languages education promotes children's shift towards English upon schooling (Rubino, 2010; see Section 2.3). In my data, it appears that home language maintenance is only perceived viable if the language can be commodified as a competitive advantage within and beyond languages education. Overall, there appears to be a shift from understanding language maintenance in the home as a means of fostering a linguistic and cultural identity, to understanding language for its perceived economic value. Heller's (2003) study of language practices in francophone Canada also identifies a shift from understanding language as an identity marker to "a marketable commodity on its own" (p. 474). As discussed in Section 5.2.2, for the contributors in my data, parents are conceived of as 'good' bilingual parents if the investment is not in a specific language, as any linguistic variety appears to be associated with a competitive advantage resulting from 'good' bilingual child-rearing.

Nevertheless, despite parents' belief in this competitive advantage, bilingual parenting is influenced by various monolingual constraints: first, the fear that children may be disadvantaged if English is not acquired before schooling (see Section 4.3.1 and 4.3.2); second, the belief that bilingualism is only achieved via monolingual practices (see Section 4.4.1); and third, parental hesitation towards using the minority language in public (see Section 4.3.2 and 4.4.2). These constraints exemplify why parents are compelled to evaluate whether their language is worth the hard work and commitment that is associated with achieving the bilingual bonus. Contributors' evaluation of parenting mistakes have been found to be shaped by the dominance of English (see Section 4.3.2). Therefore, not all parents perceive bilingual parenting as a 'good' parenting strategy. The analysis in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 has shown that some parents base their language-related parenting choices on whether they perceive their language to be valuable, or 'useful', in the Australian context. The contributors who decide

against bilingual parenting argue that they do not plan to return to their country of origin, nor do they believe that their children will have much opportunity to use the language within Australia (see Section 4.3.3). When the minority language is perceived as not sufficiently valuable to confer a competitive advantage, parents decide to raise their children monolingually (Section 4.3.3), thus conceiving ‘good’ parenting as deciding against bilingual parenting. They believe that due to the perceived value of their language, focussing on English will provide a more competitive advantage than raising their children as ‘insufficient’ bilinguals. Such decisions are the clearest expression of the monolingual mindset.

Across my data, parents who use ‘broken’ English may be indexed as ‘bad’ parents for passing on insufficient English language skills; however, in my data, the parent who uses ‘broken’ Hungarian may be indexed as a ‘good’ bilingual parent for providing additional minority language support. The principle of fractal recursivity is displayed here by portraying the former parents’ low level language skills as insufficient to qualify as language teachers, whereas the latter parent is portrayed as an invested language teacher trying her best to impart the bilingual bonus. The ideological values that underpin these beliefs therefore result in tensions in what is understood as a ‘good’ bilingual parenting strategy. This tension is a further expression of the monolingual mindset. Raising children monolingually due to a lack of perceived competitive value (as shown in Section 4.3.3) is seen as a widely accepted, and non-contested justification, even if the parents in question would be in the position to pass on an additional language in the home domain.

In summary, the key finding is that the notion of ‘good’ parenting is linked to bilingualism as a parenting strategy in which parents make smart language-related choices that will confer a competitive advantage. Across my data, these choices are largely underpinned by the monolingual mindset which not only renders cultural identity invisible, but also indexes ‘good’

language choices as those that provide a competitive advantage without interfering with the successful acquisition of English.

5.4. Implications

This concluding section discusses the implications of this study and possible areas of further research. The implications include: first, in extension to existing language ideology research, the monolingual mindset has been found to operate even in discourses about bilingual parenting where bilingualism is viewed in positive terms; second, contributors are often faced with monolingual constraints that impede bilingual parenting, particularly upon schooling. This study concludes that languages education is a site for potential improvement to provide parents with additional support and resources.

The study contributes to the existing research literature by examining how language ideologies operate for individuals who wish to raise their children bilingually in a context where the ONOL ideology, as the monolingual mindset, renders bi-and plurilingualism largely invisible. As discussed in Section 2.3, existing research has shown that the monolingual mindset is the prevailing language ideology that operates within Australian languages education (Clyne, 2005; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009; Nicholas, 2015). Concurrently, within language-in-education policies, LOTEs are primarily chosen for their perceived economic advantages for Australia's future generations (Clyne, Fernandez & Grey, 2004); for instance, the increasing prioritisation of Asian languages over the past three decades (Lo Bianco, 2004; Djité, 2011). The belief that additional language competency gives children a competitive advantage over their monolingual peers is not only found on an institutional level; this study has shown that also within the home domain, parents wish to raise their children bilingually for a competitive advantage. Previous studies demonstrated parental desires to communicate in their native language and to pass on their cultural identities (see Okita, 2002; Takeuchi, 2006a; Kirsch, 2012). However, the findings in Section 5.3 show that among the contributors in this online discussion forum, bilingualism

is viewed as a generic skill, and not as a linguistic resource or identity marker in its own right. This finding extends Heller's (2003) observations of a shift from language as an identity marker to language as a commodity. As existing research has shown, bilingualism is often seen through a monolingual lens (Clyne, 2005), and therefore primarily conceived of in terms of double monolingualism (Heller, 2002). Hence, language is only conceived of as a competitive advantage if neither language interferes with the other in the form of accent or language mixing. Consequently, the majority of parents implement the OPOL approach, as it is specifically designed to inhibit language mixing and to limit actual bilingual interactions where language mixing in interaction might occur naturally (Döpke, 1998; see Section 5.2.1). The discussions in my corpus also show that the monolingual mindset prevails not only on a macro-, but also on a micro-level within Australian society. This study extends existing language ideology research that focuses on the family unit by demonstrating that the monolingual mindset is not only evident in language-in-education policies but also operates in the language policies and practices of multilingual and multicultural families.

Because the monolingual mindset works on an individual level in a way that inhibits the effective promotion of languages within the home domain, this research also has implications for languages education. Languages education is currently not sufficiently supporting parents in their bilingual child-rearing efforts. Across my data, parents express a desire to raise their children bilingually and they believe in the value of bilingualism from an early age. However, parents are often unsure how to approach bilingual parenting beyond a consistent OPOL approach. As discussed in Section 4.4.2, when encountering difficulties with their bilingual parenting strategies, parents often blame their situational circumstances, as opposed to reconsidering their bilingual FLP strategy. Previous research has found that parents often reassess their strategies over time (Okita, 2002; see Section 2.4). This study only offers a snapshot of language-related parental decisions discussed at the time of posting. Even so,

findings indicate quite strict and rigid bilingual parenting strategies that are largely influenced by monolingual constraints (see Section 5.2.2). For example, despite the belief in the bilingual bonus, parents largely conceive of bilingualism as competency in ‘English, plus one’. Due to these constraints, the dominance of English is prevalent even within bilingual homes. Furthermore, existing studies on language maintenance suggest that parents need to reassess their bilingual child-rearing approaches upon schooling (see King & Fogle, 2006). Due to the prevalence of the monolingual mindset, and insufficient provision of languages education (Nicholas, 2015; see Section 2.3), school has been identified as a significant site for language shift among young bilinguals (Rubino, 2010; see Section 2.3). Based on these findings, parents’ bilingual efforts may be tested and questioned upon schooling. From this study, it appears that the monolingual mindset may further impede language-related parental decisions, and that parents are not sufficiently prepared for the challenges ahead. Therefore, the findings of this study provide a further impetus to improve the provision of languages in Australian education.

Overall, public conversations offer a site where prevailing language ideologies that operate on an individual level become more accessible, thus revealing beliefs about language and bilingualism among the wider public. This also serves to make the dissemination of academic knowledge more visible, and the discursive construction of bilingualism as a ‘good’ parenting strategy among the broader public more tangible. Although key findings are not generalizable for all parents and carers wishing to raise their children bilingually across the Australian context, they nevertheless provide an insight into the underlying language ideologies that perpetually shape language-related parenting decisions.

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