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Bilingual parenting in two Vietnamese families: returning to and leaving Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Bilingual parenting has been identified to be under-researched in monolingual contexts like Vietnam despite its important role in bilingual education and its large body of research under the field of family language policy. Adopting a case study design, this study explores how two Vietnamese families implemented bilingual parenting in the family milieu in transnational contexts. These two selected families featured bilingual parenting in two reverse settings, in which one family returned to Vietnam from Australia and the other left Vietnam for England. The findings show how parents' language beliefs influence their language management and practices in bilingual parenting. Furthermore, they illustrate how bilingual parenting could be successfully implemented in transnational contexts with major changes in language environments. The study thereby emphasises the importance of and implies the need for bilingual parenting in monolingual contexts where bilingualism and multilingualism are deemed essential in today's globalised world.

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Bilingual family; bilingual parenting; bilingualism; family language policy; monolingual context

Introduction

Given a large portion of the world's population speaking more than one language, bilingualism or multilingualism has become one of the principal topics in language education (Grosjean, 2021). According to the UNESCO (2016), bilingual or multilingual education needs to be advocated as 'a key element of linguistically and culturally diverse societies' (p. 8). Indeed, bilingual or multilingual education has been encouraged and implemented for decades in schooling systems across the globe. In addition to schools as main space for bilingual/multilingual development, bilingual education has been exercised in the home domain. Families with members using two or more languages are considered bilingual or multilingual and parents' involvement in developing multiple languages for their children is known as multilingual or bilingual parenting. In this study, we focus on what and how the two selected families were engaged in developing two languages for their children, so bilingual parenting (hereafter BP) is chosen as a key concept. BP in this study is understood as parents' beliefs and practices to promote early bilingualism and deliver bilingual education to their children in the familial milieu (King & Fogle, 2006,

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2013; Li et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2022; Seo, 2022; Wilson, 2020a). BP has been explored by a large body of research through the lens of Family Language Policy (hereafter FLP), which has also been employed as a theoretical framework for the current study. FLP includes language ideology, language management, and language practices (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; King & Fogle, 2013; Spolsky, 2004, 2012). In other words, families pursuing BP are grounded in their beliefs about bilingualism, leading to their strategies and practices for their children's bilingual development. As pointed out by Curdt-Christiansen (2018), the extant literature on FLP tends to lack research on non-Western contexts and also research on families travelling back and forth between their home country and country of residence. These frameworks provide the rationale for this current study, which explores how Vietnamese transnational families have been involved in BP from the perspective of FLP.

This study focuses on two selected Vietnamese families where BP has been adopted for their children at a very young age with specific reference to their circumstances. That is, one family educated their daughter bilingually in Australia for over five years and returned to Vietnam with a continuation of their bilingual education mission. The other family is intermarried, with a British father and a Vietnamese mother; the son was born and grew up in Vietnam and relocated to the father's homeland with the whole family at seven years of age. The current study focuses on two families in Vietnam in two different contexts, i.e. leaving and returning to Vietnam, as there is a large number of migrants overall leaving and returning to Vietnam (nearly 3.4 million and 77 thousand in mid-2020 respectively) (Nguyen, 2024). These figures are pertinent to the question of how some bilingual families maintain both languages, while in many others, only one language survives (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018).

As situated in the linguistic and cultural context of Vietnam, where the majority of the population is monolingual, this study provides important insight into bilingualism in a dominantly monolingual context. In addition to contributions to the extant literature on FLP and BP, the current study aims to provide a source of reference for practitioners, especially an increasing number of Vietnamese parents seeking to develop bilingual competence for their children, both within and beyond Vietnam (Dao, 2018; Nguyen, Tran, et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2020; Normand-Marconnet, 2013).

Theoretical framework: family language policy (FLP)

FLP has evolved as a field of research that foregrounds the family domain in language education (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; King & Fogle, 2013; Spolsky, 2004, 2012). Despite its newly emerged status over the past three decades, the role of family in children's language learning was acknowledged as early as the turn of the twentieth century. Through a study on language practices of bilingual families in South America, Luykx (2003) suggested the concept of language policy be expanded to family and community. Therefore, FLP has for some time been recognised as 'an important area for both research and activism' (Luykx, 2003, p. 39). Specifically, Spolsky (2004) put forward FLP as a concept or a model, which has been regarded as a foundation for subsequent research in the field. Spolsky (2004) expounds on what is meant by FLP through three interrelated components. *Language practices* refer to 'the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire', whilst *language management* is understood as

‘any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management’ (p.5). Language practices and language management are determined by *language ideology* or belief, which involves the beliefs of family members about a particular language and its use beyond the family boundary. In a broader sense, language ideology consists of beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, values, norms, and sociocultural structures that family members or individuals attach to specific languages. In short, the three components of FLP highlight family as ‘a key social institution that offers particular versions of the world’ (Higgins, 2018, p. 307). Therefore, FLP has been employed as a theoretical framework for this current study. However, we have also drawn on Curdt-Christiansen’s (2018) interdisciplinary framework of FLP, which has been suggested for substantiating Spolsky’s (2004) model, as it examines FLP in transnational families in the broader social and educational contexts.

Researchers have drawn on the model of FLP promoted by Spolsky (2004) to explore how language policies were formed and enacted in the home domain. In turn, the research findings have contributed to substantiating the interrelated components of the original model. In particular, language ideology has been manifested in studies of the impact of macro-political systems and sociocultural contexts on the beliefs of parents and children about language status. That is, a large body of studies have been undertaken to explore the beliefs of families about the value of bilingualism and multilingualism (Alipour et al., 2023; Gogonas & Kirsch, 2018; King & Fogle, 2006; Piller & Gerber, 2021). Participants in those studies recognised the benefits of being bilingual or multilingual inherent in labels like ‘asset,’ ‘cultural capital,’ and ‘social capital’ for their families (Revis, 2019; Sims et al., 2017). Many research studies have also explored the language ideologies of families in relation to family members’ construction of multiple identities in multicultural and multilingual contexts. Compared to the original definition of language ideology that focused on explicit beliefs of privileged families, researchers have expanded the concept to implicit ideologies of underprivileged parents (Wilson, 2020a). As explained by Wilson (2020a), language learning in general and bilingualism in particular is a ‘planned affair’ in affluent or privileged families, whereas it is implicit and unplanned in many less privileged families.

Underpinned by their language ideologies and beliefs, parents employed appropriate strategies to manage language use among family members, raise their children bilingually or multilingually, and assist their children in language learning. While language management in Spolsky’s (2004) original model focuses on parents as policy makers or planners and children as passive recipients, the findings of recent studies show the active roles of children (Sun et al., 2020; Wilson, 2020b). Therefore, language management as part of FLP needs to be seen as a multi-actor phenomenon, involving all the participants in planning and managing language use and acquisition in families (Wilson, 2020a). In terms of language practices, the extant literature shows how families used languages in their daily interactions. Most studies explored the amount of input received by children in multilingual or bilingual families and the relationship between the amount of input (quantity) and the quality of language development (Cantone, 2022; Kostoulas & Motsiou, 2022; Sun et al., 2020). The study of language practices at home also provides insights into the specific actions taken by each generation of family members to maintain minority languages at home while conforming to majority languages used in mainstream society (Antony-Newman, 2022; Bohnacker, 2022; Fogle, 2013; Kaveh, 2018). In

particular, parents in many bilingual families place emphasis on using their heritage languages for daily interactions and forging closer ties among the members at home, and simultaneously encouraging their children to maximise the use of majority language at school and in the community (Huang & Liao, 2023; Lee, 2021; Surrain, 2021). In these studies, language use both in the family and in the wider society is an advantage for bilingual or multilingual development. However, FLP has been under-researched in monolingual contexts where one language is used both at home and in society.

In the sociocultural context of Vietnam, parents play significant roles in investing in their children's L2 education (Nguyen, 2017, 2018, Nguyen & Trent 2020; Nguyen, Trent, et al., 2023). However, only a small number of studies have explored how parents were engaged in planning their children's L2 learning. As reported in one study, parents in a three-generation family showed their language ideologies, management, and practices in maintaining and learning L2s, including English, French, Russian, Japanese, and Korean (Nguyen, Tran, et al., 2023). Though their family was not deemed bilingual, the parents' efforts and investment highlight the importance of family locus in planning languages, especially in the Vietnamese context. One reason for the lack of parental engagement in planning their children's L2 education may be that most families in a monolingual context use Vietnamese, the majority language, for all interactions. However, remarkable efforts have been made to overcome this contextual constraint when parents begin to show their concern and interest or investment and engagement in the mission of FLP. This necessitates our study, which aims to fill the gap in research on FLP in the Vietnamese context.

Bilingual parenting from the perspective of family language policy

Linked to the model of FLP (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; Spolsky, 2004), BP encompasses three integrated elements, i.e. ideology or belief, practice, and management. In other words, parents in bilingual families are influenced by their ideologies or beliefs about two languages connected to their families. Grounded in their beliefs, parents develop appropriate strategies and practices to engage their children in bilingual development. By looking at how children develop two languages, i.e. with or without parents' efforts, choice and decision, King and Fogle (2006) emphasised 'additive bilingualism,' which refers to 'contexts where families choose to maintain and develop two languages' (pp. 695–696). From the perspective of FLP, BP is related to 'additive bilingualism' because of great efforts and investment from parents and family members.

The literature on FLP shows a large body of research on BP in transnational families where children were involved in both acquiring the majority language and maintaining their minority heritage language. This area of research can be further divided into two specific scopes. First, transnational families with a long history of migration through different generations who seek to maintain their heritage language as part of their journey towards building bilingual families (Cantone, 2022; Huang & Liao, 2023; MacLeod et al., 2022; Smith-Christmas et al., 2019; Spyrou Ntetsika et al., 2022; Surrain, 2021; Wilson, 2020b). Second, newly migrated families in new countries of settlement, notably Western or developed countries, who align themselves to the majority language used in mainstream society and engage their children in maintaining their own language (Gogonas & Kirsch, 2018; Kostoulas & Motsiou, 2022; Lee, 2021; Liu & Lin, 2019; Revis, 2019; Said, 2021). Though not categorised as transnational mobility,

many ethnic minority families have been involved in BP by maintaining their own languages in addition to aligning with the majority language (Cui & Zheng, 2021; Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Shen et al., 2021; Wang & King, 2022; Zhang & Tsung, 2019). As their language background is different from the majority language, BP is a necessity for their children to engage in mainstream society. Overall, the research on BP provides insights into how families, whether in transnational or local contexts, manage and practise their languages in the familial milieu from the perspective of FLP (Spolsky, 2004). However, according to the interdisciplinary framework substantiated by Curdt-Christiansen (2018), the broader cultural and educational complexities tend to have been overlooked in the studies reviewed above.

Given the global status of English, an increasing number of studies show that families in non-English speaking countries have been adopting BP by investing in their children's bilingual education. That is, children acquire and use their first language (L1) in the community and engage in English as a medium of instruction at school or home. In this way, 'additive bilingualism' is manifested in parents' investment in developing a new language for their children. From the perspective of FLP, the ideologies or beliefs held by parents centre around the necessity of English for their children's education and career prospects. For example, a study by Alipour et al. (2023) shows that Iranian parents chose English for their children's additive bilingualism for immigration plans, international posture, and career aspirations. In China, parents' beliefs about BP are influenced by the high status of English as indicated in the educational policy and in society (Curdt-Christiansen & Gao, 2021; Li et al., 2022; Liu & Lin, 2019; Zheng & Mei, 2021). Therefore, English is often chosen as the most popular L2 for their children's additive bilingualism in this country. Similarly, BP or additive bilingualism (Korean-English) in South Korea is influenced by the family's social status and parents' ideologies about language as a social and cultural capital for their children's development (Seo, 2022, 2023).

Compared to transnational families where parents and children can use two languages easily, additive bilingual families in non-English speaking countries have considerable difficulties when choosing English as L2 for their children (Alipour et al., 2023; Seo, 2022; Zheng & Mei, 2021). Therefore, parents in these families need to have specific strategies to assist children in using and developing English in such a disadvantaged context. For example, a Korean family implemented the 'one language, one environment' strategy, which meant the exclusive use of English at home and Korean outside (Seo, 2023, p. 7). An extended family in China had a similar strategy, i.e. expecting their children to use English with their parents and Chinese with their grandparents (Liu & Lin, 2019). For language practices in China and Korea, parents who were educated and proficient in the English language tended to provide extensive language input and developed multiple learning resources at home. However, BP in the monolingual context of Beijing in China, as shown in the findings of a quantitative study by Li et al. (2022), is mainly characterised by a lack of a bilingual home environment or explicit family language policy (90.1%). Language management and practices failed to enhance bilingualism as aspired because parents, whether profiled as high or low educational level, did not construct a home environment conducive to bilingual development, e.g. providing no extra curricular activities, a lack of English books, extensive use of L1, and emphasis on L1 literacy.

In the Vietnamese context, bilingual education, i.e. Vietnamese and a foreign language, has been implemented in some metropolitan cities. For example, bilingual

Vietnamese-French programmes have been offered at various levels, from primary to higher education (Normand-Marconnet, 2013). Due to the global spread of English in Vietnam, there has been an increasing number of bilingual Vietnamese-English schools or international schools with English as the medium of instruction (Nguyen, 2020). In this sense, many of the children attending these schools are engaged in additive bilingual learning. However, the role of parents who chose additive bilingualism or BP for their children has been under-researched. As reported in recent studies (Nguyen, Tran, et al., 2023; Nguyen, Trent, et al., 2023), Vietnamese parents show both interest in and concern about their children's language learning, especially English. Outside the country, many Vietnamese families living overseas have been involved in BP by using Vietnamese as a medium of communication at home and making their children use the majority outside the home milieu (Dao, 2018; McLeod et al., 2023; Yeh et al., 2015). However, BP in those studies was not examined from the perspective of FLP. Motivated by this research niche in BP and a dearth of research on BP and FLP in Vietnamese families, this study was conducted to explore how two Vietnamese families practised BP in two different contexts, namely Vietnam and overseas. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research question:

How have the two selected families fostered bilingual parenting in Vietnam in two different contexts: returning to Vietnam and leaving Vietnam?

The study

This study adopted a case study design, in which each family is considered as a case forming a 'bounded-system' for the researchers to systematically gather information about how each family practised BP to foster their children's bilingual development in their own context (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Under this design, the researchers could explore the 'real-life' investigated case through 'detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports)' (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

This case study employed convenience sampling to recruit participants who were willing and interested to participate in this research project (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Through their own networks, the researchers sent an invitation email to five Vietnamese families with bilingual children. After thorough discussions about the details and purposes of the research projects, two families agreed to participate. These two families met our participant recruitment criteria: BP-practicing, Vietnamese, and transnationally mobile. More importantly, each family represents a main group of Vietnamese migrants, i.e. in and from Vietnam (Nguyen, 2024). These features are congruent with Creswell's guidelines for recruiting participants in case study research to select 'individuals who can provide an understanding of the phenomenon [because they] are critical to study [and] have experienced a specific issue or situation' (Creswell, 2009, p. 523).

To ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, i.e. the accuracy and credibility of the research findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2012; Suter, 2012), the researchers applied the following three strategies in this study:

Triangulation: Data for this study were collected from two families using various sources (see the Data Collection section below) to provide sufficient evidence and information for the themes discussed in the Findings section (Creswell, 2012).

Member checking: According to Merriam (2009), it is essential that researchers solicit feedback on their findings from the participants interviewed. In this study, we sent the interview transcript to the participants to check for accuracy, and after creating the themes, we emailed them to ask if our interpretations were accurate, fair, and representative.

Thick description: Although case studies and qualitative research do not aim for generalisation, this study provides detailed descriptions of the participants' backgrounds to offer an in-depth understanding of BP within the investigated transnational contexts and to 'enhance the possibility of the results of a qualitative study transferring to another setting' (Merriam, 2009, p. 227).

The participants

The participation of the two Vietnamese families in this study involved the two mothers Anne and Ulrika (pseudonyms), who were the main informants, and their children, Mary and Peter (pseudonyms), the research subjects. Although the two fathers did not participate in this study directly due to their work commitments, their roles in bilingual education for their children were reported by their wives. Their demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Since their youth, Anne and Ulrika had intended to raise their future children to be bilinguals due to their love for languages and their awareness of the multifaceted benefits of being fluent in more than one language. Anne's family left Vietnam for Australia when Mary was 1.5 years of age. During their five years in Sydney, Anne applied various strategies to develop Mary's bilingual ability in English and Vietnamese. Upon returning to Vietnam, Anne continued with her strategies to maintain and further enhance Mary's bilingualism in the two languages.

In contrast to Anne, Ulrika built up her bilingual family in Vietnam after the birth of her son, Peter. Unlike Anne's family whose both parents were Vietnamese, Ulrika's husband was an English native speaker coming from England. Therefore, they were naturally a bilingual family, in which Peter communicated with his mother in Vietnamese and his father in English. When Peter turned seven, Ulrika's whole family moved to the UK, and she applied her own strategies to maintain her son's bilingualism in English and Vietnamese.

Data collection

At the time of participating in this study, Anne's family had returned to Vietnam from Australia for 6 months, and Ulrika's had left Vietnam to live in the UK for one month. Data for this study were collected via three sources:

Table 1. Participants' demographic information.

Participant	Age	Nationality	Languages spoken	Qualification and occupation
Anne	38	Vietnamese	Vietnamese, English	PhD, University lecturer
Mary	7	Vietnamese	Vietnamese, English	Grade 2 student
Ulrika	36	Vietnamese	Vietnamese, English	BA, Office worker
Peter	7	Vietnamese and English	Vietnamese, English	Grade 2 student

1. An in-depth interview with the parent,
2. Videos of interactions between parents and children from each family,
3. Children's samples of writing in English and Vietnamese from each family.

The data collection process began with the second researcher's one-hour semi-structured interview with each mother. The interview questions were self-developed by the researchers revolving around the three main topics of language ideology, language management, and language practice. The interview was conducted in Vietnamese to maximise understandings between the interviewer and the participants.

After the interview, each mother was asked to send the second researcher one audio-visual recording of the child interacting with their parents, as well as two written samples of the child's work in both English and Vietnamese. For the videos, the researcher requested that each mother record a 10–20 min daily conversation between the child and both parents at home. This was to allow the researcher to study the actual language practices of the parents in the family environment and assess the bilingual abilities of the children. As a result, the researcher received a nearly 16-minute video from Ulrika, showing Peter having a natural conversation with his parents over dinner, and two ten-minute videos from Anne, capturing Mary's separate conversations with her father and mother. As for the children's written work, the researcher instructed both mothers to choose the most recent samples that best demonstrated their children's literacy skills. This led to three pieces by Mary: a diary entry in English, a Vietnamese poem, and an email in English explaining the poem to a friend (see [Figures 1 and 2](#)). Peter, on the other hand, had only one piece written in Vietnamese (see [Figure 3](#)).

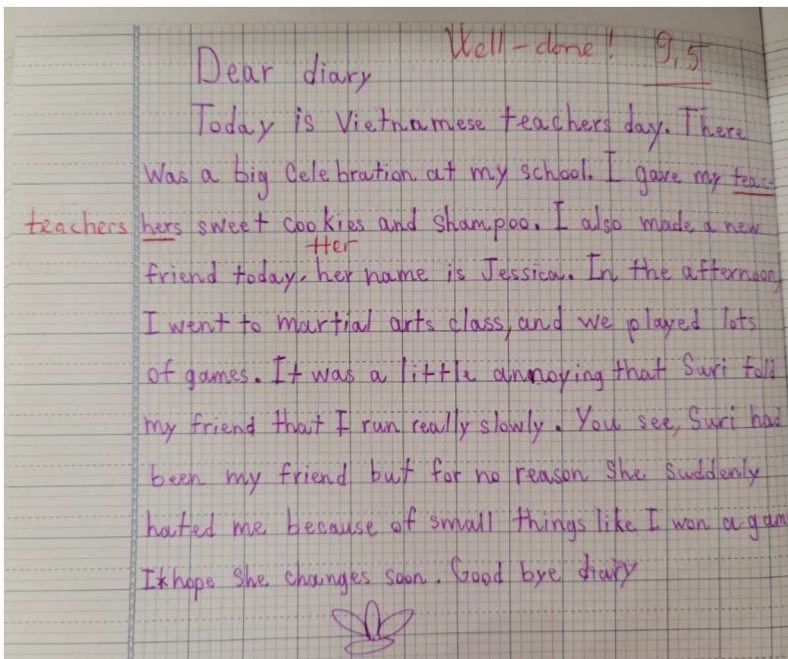


Figure 1. Mary's entry of diary with her mother's correction and feedback.



Figure 2. A poem in Vietnamese written by Mary and her explanation in English sent to a friend in Australia.

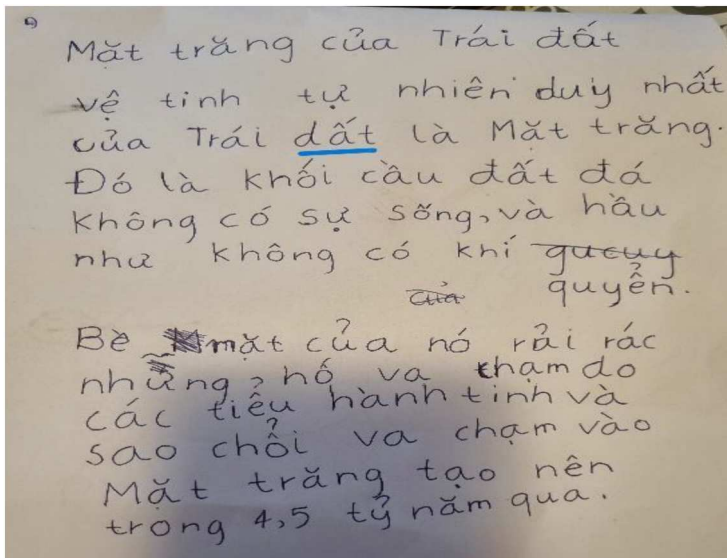


Figure 3. Peter's science homework written in Vietnamese.

Data analysis

Data analysis began with transcribing all interviews and recordings. All transcriptions were kept in their original languages, i.e. Vietnamese for interview transcripts and both English and Vietnamese for recordings ones. Excerpts used in this paper were

translated into English if they were originally in Vietnamese. All data were analysed using NVivo 12. Data analysis followed a thematic approach to coding, which is a type of qualitative analysis involving the identification and categorisation of text or image passages that share a common theme or idea (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis enables researchers to develop a framework of thematic ideas for their findings (Gibbs, 2007). Throughout this process, themes were reviewed and refined in an iterative process that ‘alternates between emic, or emergent, reading of the data, and an etic use of existing models, explanations and theories’ (Tracy, 2013, p. 184).

During the data analysis process, the researchers looked for information that answered the research question, revolving around Spolsky’s (2004) theoretical framework of FLP and Curdt-Christiansen’s (2018) interdisciplinary framework of FLP. Simultaneously, the thematic analysis process allowed new themes to emerge from the data. Thus, analysis proceeded iteratively as follows:

1. Becoming familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts while listening to the recordings and making memos on each transcript;
2. Coding the data based on the research question and the two previously mentioned FLP frameworks (e.g. the family’s language ideology, the family’s language management, the family’s language practices, the three components examined in the broader social and educational context, and the three components examined regarding transnational families travelling back and forth between their home country and country of residence);
3. Creating new codes for emerging topics (e.g. better competence in the secondary language, different language development trajectories).

Findings

Beliefs about the importance of bilingual or multilingual competence in today’s world

Data obtained from the interviews with Anne and Ulrika show that they both considered multilingual competence as a precious asset for children in the current increasingly globalised world. Being bilingual speakers and seeing the benefits and convenience of being able to communicate in more than one language, they nurtured the dreams of raising bilingual children even before their children were born. In their words,

I was born into a family who has a tradition of learning foreign languages. [...] my success in the English language has brought me many fruitful achievements in my life. Therefore, when I was still single, I had thought of raising bilingual kids. (Anne)

After I became capable of communicating in English, my confidence level grew a lot. I could communicate with foreigners, I could do a lot of travelling, etc. Therefore, I have always thought that my kids must be bilingual and even multilingual. (Ulrika)

On the basis of their own experience of being bilinguals, they saw bilingual ability as essential value that people need to accumulate to be successful in life, and monolingualism as a constraint and even a barrier that could create difficulties for people in their daily activities. Anne used such words as ‘a decisive factor of our success,’ ‘unlock many doors,’

‘empower us to build good relationship,’ and ‘widen our world’ when talking about her perspectives of bilingual ability. She said:

Metaphorically speaking, I consider communication as a decisive factor of our success in every aspect of life, and so language is the key that helps us unlock a lot of doors to our success. This is because our use of language could empower us to build up good relationships with others or cause us to create barriers and conflicts that are very hard to resolve. Regarding the ability of knowing another language, I could say that it really widens our world. Thinking about my own case, I could see how much English has shaped my personality, viewpoints as well as opened many doors for my study and career development. (Anne)

Similarly, Ulrika thought of monolingualism as a constraint and even a barrier that could create difficulties for people in their daily activities. She said:

If we only speak one language, it is really a limit. Because now, even in shopping centres for example, English is used a lot such as: in goods’ packages, signs, billboards, etc. In Ho Chi Minh City, I see that people use English a lot. [...] If I am still young, I would learn even more languages. Because the more languages we know, the better networks we can have. We can also widen our knowledge. We know more cultures. (Ulrika)

As such, both Anne and Ulrika thought of bilingualism as a useful means for enhancing knowledge and an indispensable tool for people’s daily functioning in life. Furthermore, they shared the belief that learning multiple languages at a young age could improve people’s intelligence quotients. Anne cited research findings that bilinguals could have better cognitive abilities than monolinguals whilst Ulrika reported that research claims children could be more intelligent by learning another language at an early age.

In sum, these two mothers spoke with one voice on the necessity of bilingual and multilingual competence in our contemporary world. On the basis of these beliefs, each of them had specific methods and strategies of developing their children’s bilingual abilities since birth as could be seen in the following findings.

Parents’ engagement in specific practices

Data from the interviews with both parents and their provided videos reveal their strategies and practices in BP. One commonality of these two participating families in their practices of raising bilingual children is that they assigned each parent to oversee their children’s acquisition and development of one language. Specifically, in Ulrika’s family, she was responsible for speaking Vietnamese to her son whilst her husband, a native speaker of English, spoke English exclusively to their son. Ulrika reported that her son sometimes talked to her in English despite her speaking in Vietnamese to him; however, she tried to be persistent in using Vietnamese with him. The following extract from a conversation between Ulrika, Peter, and her husband over a family’s dinner provides an illustration.

Ulrika: Ăn thử miếng sườn đi. Ngon không? (Try the roasted pork ribs. Is it delicious?)

Peter: Good. It’s good. I like Takoyaki sauce. Did you make it?

Ulrika: Không. Ba mua ở siêu thị đó. (No. Dad’s bought it from the supermarket.)

Dad: Nice sauce, right? And everything is good, huh?

Peter: This Takoyaki sauce is nice.

Similarly, in Anne's family, Anne, as a fluent English speaker, was responsible for speaking English to her daughter. Her husband took the responsibility for communicating with their daughter in Vietnamese. However, Anne reported that her daughter, Mary, was very cooperative in speaking the assigned language with her parents. The following extracts also from Anne's recorded videos of the conversations between her daughter and herself after school, and her daughter and her husband after dinner demonstrate this.

Extract 1:

Mary: Mom, you know what, X (the name of her friend) is angry with me again, for no reasons.

Anne: What did she do today?

Mary: She kicked me out of the Nature group. And she told me that she won't play with me any more. I created this group, you know.

Anne: Do you know the reason why she did so?

Mary: Yes! Because I won her in a game.

Extract 2:

Dad: Hôm nay con có chuyện gì kể cho bố nghe không? (Do you have any story to tell me today?)

Mary: Có. Có chuyện về một con bạch tuộc rất thông minh. Để bố, con bạch tuộc có máu màu gì? (Yes. There is one story about a very smart octopus. Dad, I want to challenge you with this riddle. What colour is the octopus' blood?)

Dad: Bố không biết. Màu gì? (I don't know. What colour?)

Mary: Màu xanh dương. Bố có biết vì sao máu con bạch tuộc màu xanh không? (Blue. Dad, do you know why the octopus' blood is blue?)

Anne and Ulrika further explained that this practice was implemented in their families with one strict rule, that is, the members with less expertise in one language were not allowed to teach that language to their children. Specifically, Ulrika prevented her husband from speaking in Vietnamese to their son whilst he could speak Vietnamese with her and other people. In the same vein, Anne asked her husband not to speak in English to their daughter. The rationale behind their rule was their preference for their children to be exposed to correct pronunciation and language use. They said:

In my family, I always remind my husband not to speak in Vietnamese to our kid. So he always speaks in English to him. And I talk to him in Vietnamese. We do so in order for our kid not to get confused or have wrong pronunciation. (Ulrika)

My husband and I agree with each other on our task of teaching languages to our daughter. I have very good English, so I teach her English. Meanwhile, my husband teaches her

Vietnamese. When we communicate together in both English and Vietnamese, I will correct my husband if he mispronounces a word or makes other mistakes in English. (Anne)

In addition, both Anne and Ulrika reported to allocate time on a daily basis to provide their children with linguistic input in both languages. In their words,

Although my husband works from morning till late afternoon every day, he spends the whole evening to interact and communicate with our son in English. And my husband always reads him a book or tells him a story before bedtime. [...] For me, whenever I communicate with my son, I use Vietnamese. (Ulrika)

In Australia, our daughter was exposed to English speaking environment at school and in her playgroups. But my husband talked to her in Vietnamese and taught her Vietnamese when she was with him. [...] At home, I played with her and talked to her in English every evening. During this time, I always tried to teach her new English words. Before bedtime, I always read her children's books. After finishing the book, I always asked her some simple questions about the book to check her comprehension. (Anne)

These quotations show very cooperative practices of both parents in each family in implementing BP via communication with parents at home for their children. Noticeably, both families used the reading-before-bedtime technique to teach their children literacy skills. Anne reported that she had taught Mary how to read and write in English since her preschool age (i.e. four years old). She also used an Australian online reading programme for children to learn English and maths called *ABC Reading Eggs* for Mary to engage in all activities designed for kids at her age when she reached five. As Mary enjoyed all learning activities in this programme and made much improvement in both her English and Maths knowledge and skills, Anne continued to use it even when they returned to Vietnam.

As for Vietnamese, Mary started to learn how to read and write at school when she started Grade 1 at six years of age at an international bilingual school based in Vietnam. Anne said that due to the Covid pandemic outbreak, she decided to remain in Australia with Mary and enrolled her in the above-mentioned school for temporary online learning. During this time, Mary studied online at home in Sydney. At home, Anne still paid close attention to developing Mary's English. She explained that the priority for English in her family was her aim to enable Mary to develop her English proficiency before they returned to Vietnam.

When we were in Australia, my goal was to provide her as much English input as possible so that she could communicate fluently with her teacher and other kids at school and in our community. I didn't concern much about Vietnamese as it is our first language. I think that as long as she can communicate in Vietnamese with us, she will learn how to read and write in Vietnamese later when she attends primary school in Vietnam.

On these two points, Ulrika's family employed different practices. According to Ulrika, they did not place priority on any language. Her family used both English and Vietnamese with their son in Vietnam combined with clearly assigned tasks as mentioned above. Ulrika said that they developed their son's bilingual ability via a natural process of interaction between them and their son. They did not teach him how to read and write in both languages until he entered Grade 1. In the following section, the two children's development of the two languages is discussed.

Dominant language in mainstream society versus secondary language

One interesting finding from this study is that the children from these two families had better command of English than Vietnamese despite their different settings. Mary spent her early years (from 1.5 to 7 years of age) in Australia where English is the dominant language. As Anne mentioned, Mary attended childcare, preschool, and kindergarten in Australia before starting Grade 1 in Vietnam. The first semester was conducted online in Australia, while the second semester took place onsite in Vietnam, as previously reported. Therefore, it was totally understandable that she had better command of English than Vietnamese. Nonetheless, Peter, who was born and grew up in Vietnam where English is a foreign language, was also reported by his mother and observed through his mother's sent video to have better English than Vietnamese. As Ulrika commented during the interview,

I can see that my son's English ability develops better than his Vietnamese one. Although I want him to be more Vietnamese regarding his linguistic ability and his behaviours as well, he seems to be more English. For example, when I ask him to greet his uncles and aunts in the Vietnamese way, he only says 'Hello'. I want him to be more aware of Vietnamese politeness and etiquette. (Ulrika)

Data obtained from the conversation between Peter and his family members over dinner as previously presented also showed that he was able to understand both Vietnamese and English, but only replied in English even when being asked in Vietnamese by his mother. Although both Peter and Mary were better at English than Vietnamese, data collected from her written artefacts as presented below illustrated her better English development than her peer – Peter. Unlike the previous finding, this one highlights the importance of the dominant language used in the society.

As Anne reported, Mary's Vietnamese writing sample (see [Figure 2](#)) was her self-composed poem about the flowers that she saw in Vietnam. She wrote and emailed it to her friend in Australia to showcase her Vietnamese handwriting (see [Figure 2](#)). In this work, Mary made two spelling mistakes about the Vietnamese tones, which were corrected in red by Anne. Similarly, her English sample, which was her personal story on her diary, received two corrections from Anne, including capitalising the initial letter of the first word of a sentence, and rewriting the word 'teachers' in the same line. Meanwhile, at the time of data collection for this research project, Peter could not yet write in English. Therefore, Ulrika only sent out his Vietnamese writing sample, which was his rewriting of a page from his reading book (see [Figure 3](#)).

The analysis of Peter's and Mary's language use through the above conversations and samples of writing (see [Figures 1, 2, and 3](#)) showed that Mary's English competence was better developed than Peter's. As reported in the section of Parents engagement in specific practice, Ulrika said that although her son could understand almost everything spoken in English to him, he did not often respond in full sentences. Rather, he often replied in single words such as: 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Yummy,' and the like. This could be due to three factors.

The first one could resonate with the impact of the dominant language used in the mainstream society. Obviously, Mary was exposed to more interactions in English in her daily activities in Australia compared to Peter's acquisition of English mainly through the communication with his father. Secondly, each family's specific bilingual parenting practices clearly had impact on their children's bilingual development. Whilst Anne reported starting teaching her daughter literacy skills at the age of four

via her instruction and an English programme, Ulrika did not apply these practices (see the section of Parents engagement in specific practice). The fact that Mary received more input and guidance in English from parents than Peter could have resulted in her better English competence. Another possible factor is the difference in children's personal linguistic development trajectories. The fact that Peter was not yet able to compose text independently whilst Mary could write her own poem illustrates that children develop differently. Although Peter lived in Vietnam since his birth and must have received more input in Vietnamese than Mary, his Vietnamese competence did not develop at the same level as Mary.

In sum, whilst input from dominant language in mainstream society together with family's orientation towards bilingualism could explain Mary's bilingual development, it could not be applied to Peter's case. It is interesting to note that despite living in Vietnam, Peter's English was better than his Vietnamese. This underscores the importance of linguistic input from the familial milieu. The prominent role of family in fostering children's bilingualism is further highlighted in the following finding about how the two families maintain their children's bilingualism in new countries.

Bringing existing practices to the new context

Moving transnationally, both Anne and Ulrika expressed their concerns about the maintenance and further development of their children's bilingual abilities. Living in new contexts, they both felt and saw the challenges caused by the changes of the dominant language. As Ulrika moved to the UK, Vietnamese became the heritage language. In the case of Anne's family, English is only a foreign language in Vietnam. This required them to apply specific strategies and initiatives to continue with their goals for their children. Anne reported that her key action upon their returning to Vietnam was to enrol Mary into a bilingual school where she could undertake both English and Vietnamese programmes. She said:

My greatest concern is how to maintain and enable my daughter to continue developing her English in Vietnam. As English is just a subject at public schools for students to learn, I need to opt for international private school for her although it costs a lot of money. [...] At school, she spends half a day studying in Vietnamese with Vietnamese teachers, and the other half studying in English with English-speaking teachers. This maximizes the time she uses English. [...] At home, I continue with what I have been practising with her. (Anne)

Interestingly, in both Australia and Vietnam, English always received Annes' focus and emphasis with her absolute willingness to invest in her daughter's English proficiency development. Similarly, Ulrika had a clear set of activities to enable her son to maintain his Vietnamese in the new society of the UK. She said:

I have brought many Vietnamese books with us to the UK for him to read. I will continue to speak Vietnamese with him. And he will continue to use Vietnamese to communicate with grandparents and all relatives in Vietnam. [...] As I have just settled in here (the UK) for one month, I have not known any Vietnamese groups. But in near future, I will look for them so that he can have an environment here to practise Vietnamese. (Ulrika)

Noticeably, both families are consistent in their BP objectives and practices for their children. Anne's family was willing to invest their time, money, and effort in ultimately

developing their child's English proficiency, leaving Vietnamese to progress naturally through communication with one parent at home in Australia, and subsequently via learning at school in Vietnam and immersion into its society. Meanwhile, Ulrika's family nurtured their child's bilingualism mainly through natural interaction with both parents and communication in the mainstream society.

Discussion

The findings show how the two selected families have been engaged in BP in order to develop their children's bilingual competence. More specifically, both families have been involved 'additive bilingual parenting' (Alipour et al., 2023; King & Fogle, 2006), which means they chose to maintain and develop their children's English and Vietnamese. From the perspective of FLP as the theoretical framework underlying this study, their BP is based on the three interrelated components of language ideology, language management, and language practices (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; King & Fogle, 2013; Spolsky, 2012).

BP grounded in a strongly held belief about bilingualism and multilingualism across sociocultural contexts

As regards language ideology, parents of the two families, especially the mothers, hold a very strong belief about the importance of bilingual and multilingual competence in today's world. Based on their educational background and life experience, the parents placed emphasis on English in addition to Vietnamese as part of their children's future education and work prospects. Overall, these findings are consistent with previous studies wherein language ideology underpins the mission of BP and building bilingual families across sociocultural contexts (Cantone, 2022; Kostoulas & Motsiou, 2022; McLeod et al., 2023; Said, 2021; Wang & King, 2022). In addition, as with many families in non-English speaking countries (Curdt-Christiansen & Gao, 2021; Li et al., 2022; Seo, 2022; Zheng & Mei, 2021), the participating parents have positive attitudes towards English as an integral part to their children's bilingual development, while Vietnamese as their L1 needs to be adequately developed.

Effective language management through specific and flexible strategies at home and beyond

The success of bilingual upbringing in the two families partly results from their language management. An effective strategy followed by both families is to make the best use of the dominant language in mainstream society and to focus more on the secondary language, which is limited to daily use at home. Specifically, Mary while living in Australia was engaged in English at her kindergarten, in community, and at home with her mother. Her Vietnamese-speaking environment was created at home through her Vietnamese conversations with her father. This strategy was also implemented in Ulrika's family. That is, Vietnamese was the dominant language for Peter outside home, and English and Vietnamese were used at home by his father and mother respectively. When relocating to a new country, both families employed the same strategy, but there was a change of

focus on the target language. That is, since Peter was relocated to England, English has become the dominant language in society and at school. Though officially recognised as his L1, Vietnamese needs more attention and support from his mother at home. The language mobility of Mary is the opposite, so a viable strategy was devised for her to continue building up her English repertoire, namely enrolment in an international school and regular talks in English at home.

Language management in the two families in our study is similar to other studies in transnational contexts where parents chose to maintain their heritage language and align themselves with the dominant language (Huang & Liao, 2023; Revis, 2019; Wilson, 2020b; Zheng & Mei, 2021). Another strategy used by the two families is ‘one parent with one specific language,’ which is consistent with the choice of many parents in non-English speaking countries (Li et al., 2022; Liu & Lin, 2019; Seo, 2022). Specifically, Anne was responsible for overseeing Mary’s English while teaching Vietnamese was the responsibility of the father. In the other family, Peter communicated with Ulrika in Vietnamese and with his father in English. Despite the strategy of ‘one parent, one language’ as reported in some previous studies, the two families have a substantial difference, which explains why they are more successful in BP than many families in non-English speaking countries. Specifically, Mary spent most of her early childhood in Australia, so she had a great chance to develop English as her first language. Later, when resettling in Vietnam where English is a foreign language or simply a school subject, she still has opportunities to nourish her English. Peter was born and spent his childhood in Vietnam, but his father is British. In this sense, English should be deemed his heritage language rather than a foreign language.

A wide range of language practices at home

From the perspective of FLP, both families have engaged their children in a wide range of practices in order to achieve the goal of bilingual competence. First and foremost, as with most families pursuing BP, flexible communication and interaction in both languages have been encouraged in the family domain (Cantone, 2022; Huang & Liao, 2023; Lee, 2021; Sun et al., 2020). To reiterate the aforementioned findings, both families included Vietnamese and English language use at home with clear-cut roles for the mothers and the fathers. In addition to natural language use, the BP of the two families has been grounded in various forms of instruction or teaching. The two families’ language practices have become more diverse and sophisticated since they resettled in new countries, Mary returning to her home country (Vietnam) and Peter migrating to his father country (England). In response to this mobility, Anne designed various activities at home for Mary to both stay fluent in her ‘natural English’ and enhance her ‘formal or academic English.’ In addition to formal English learning at an international school, Mary was involved in writing poems, diaries, emails, and stories in English. Anne understood that when they returned to Vietnam, it was impossible to create an English-only environment at home. Therefore, she sought to engage Mary in talks or conversations in English whenever possible. Likewise, Mary could use and improve her Vietnamese through various activities with her father. In Ulrika’s family, the activities for Peter to develop English and Vietnamese were, to some extent, less sophisticated. In other words, Peter is mainly involved in interactions with his mother in Vietnamese and with his father

in English although there is formal instruction from the two parents. The difference in parents' educational and professional profiles led to differences in the language practices and ultimately the bilingual competence of the children.

The language practices of the two investigated families are consistent with those of families in other countries as a variety of practices were used to engage children and other family members in BP. Compared to many parents in non-English speaking countries, especially those in Asia, who adopt bilingual BP (Alipour et al., 2023; Seo, 2022; Zheng & Mei, 2021), both families have many advantages, as the children are involved in daily use of two languages. Based on the advantages or favourable conditions, the parents of two families developed various practices to develop their children's bilingual competence, whereas, many families in Asian countries like China (Curd-Christianen & Gao, 2021; Li et al., 2022; Liu & Lin, 2019; Zheng & Mei, 2021) or Korea (Seo, 2022, 2023) can only learn English with their children at home.

Conclusion and implications

This study has aimed to contribute to the current research gap in BP (as mentioned in the section of Bilingual parenting from the perspective of family language policy) by comprehensively illustrating how the two selected Vietnamese families nurtured their children's bilingual abilities in two different transnational contexts. The success of Mary and Peter in acquiring and maintaining both languages (Vietnamese and English) at an early age highlights the crucial role of parents in BP. In this study, both families faced the challenges of transnational movement in which the two languages changed in their respective statuses of majority and minority language. However, with consistent language management and practices in each family, they were still successful in their goal of raising bilingual children.

The participants' nearly decade-long journeys with BP demonstrate how parents' language beliefs significantly influence their language management and practices within the family environment. Specifically, both mothers in this study perceived bilingual and multilingual competence to be a precious asset and essential value for children, whereas being monolinguals to be a constraint. This motivated them to effortfully apply various strategies to facilitate their children's bilingual development despite contextual changes.

The findings of this study provide insights into BP in transnational contexts, especially the participants' BP experience in Vietnam where the majority of the population is monolingual. Therefore, the language beliefs, management, and practices of the two studied families should be seen as resources for parents who seek to pursue BP in Vietnam and other similar contexts. In addition, families leaving Vietnam to migrate to a new country or returning to Vietnam may consider the strategies and practices of BP presented in this study a resource for their own BP mission. As regards language policy, the findings about BP suggest that decisions and practices made in the home domain (meso level) need to be taken into consideration in addition to top-down policies (macro level). Likewise, researchers in the field should pay more attention to BP in contexts where there are adverse conditions for bilingualism. Although our qualitative research provides in-depth findings about BP, we acknowledge that the data gathered from the two selected families is small. This shortcoming may be overcome by future research exploring a large number of families and participants. Also, future research may expand BP to various

languages to further explore the relationship of the three interrelated components: language ideology/belief, language management, and language practices in BP and FLP.

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