



Style sheet - ENG

Multilingual families as discursive spaces: The children's perspective

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Symposium format:

- **Symposium Multimodal**

Symposium mode:

- **Hybrid**

Sub-themes (multiple choices - delete the others):

- ☐ **LANGUAGES IN SOCIETY:** bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism, multilingual classroom, translanguaging, literacy & literacies, heritage language, home language, migrants, deaf, sign/gesture

Short summary in English (15 lines):

This colloquium understands multilingual families as discursive spaces where the family language policy, as well as orientations towards languages, are constructed and negotiated. Such a negotiation occurs in the communicative practices of the families, including daily interactions and the stories produced by its members. The literature on family language policy has mostly focussed on parents' language decisions. For that reason, we will pay attention to the children's views and their experiences with languages, in order to understand how they negotiate and navigate what are often presented to them as givens or commonsense courses of action. We will discuss these issues in the life stories of multilingual young people, from different backgrounds, collected in four sociolinguistic ethnographies. For the discussion, the colloquium will draw on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines concepts from sociolinguistic ethnography with youth studies. "Social generation", as understood by Woodman and Wyn (2015), will allow us to capture the situated nature of the children's aspirations and orientations emerging in their life stories, and to link them with the socioeconomic conditions in which they are produced.



Argument (2 pages maximum, i.e. about 500 words or 3000 characters including bibliography):

ReN symposium: *no specific requirements.*

Multimodal symposium: *it is advisable to specify clearly the thematic orientations so as to best guide future individual submissions.*

On-the-ground symposium: *the scientific framework relating to this practical proposal should be described precisely . The proposal should also describe how the symposium will be organized.*

This colloquium aims to bring a new perspective to the exploration of multilingual families based on the notion of “discursive space” (Heller 2001). In these spaces, language practices, ideologies, and orientations, including affective stances, towards language use are produced and negotiated in the family’s daily life interactions. Such a negotiation occurs against the backdrop of each family member’s life trajectory and their experiences within and outside the home. These views are connected to the material realities of the families since social origin and socio-economic backgrounds shape their present and their future aspirations for their children’s lives.

There is limited scholarship on young people’s stances on language(s) in the family language policy literature. In this colloquium, language policy is viewed as a dialogical endeavour. For this reason, it is of utmost importance to understand how children negotiate and navigate what are often presented to them as givens, or commonsense courses of action. In particular, we will focus on the role of language(s) in the life stories produced by multilingual young people, from different social backgrounds, in four sociolinguistic ethnographies. In their stories young people construct an account of their language socialisation processes, their families’ experiences with languages, and the reasons that they give for their own language choices and uses. These practices are understood in the light of the future aspirations that their families hold for them, and the ways in which the children position themselves in relation to those aspirations (either accepting, contesting, or “adapting” them). As stated by Flanagan (2008), visions of the future and the possibilities young people imagine frame the personal choices they make today, and class-based differences in the paths young people’s lives take are in large measure shaped by what they imagine is possible for people “like them”.

For the discussion, we will borrow the concept of “social generation”, from Woodman and Wyn (2015), who call for a situated understanding of “generation”, connected to socioeconomic processes. This concept will allow us to make sense of the dialogical endeavour when negotiating family language policy and to explain the role of families’ expectations in young people’s language practices.

The questions that will guide our discussion will be:

1. What views of language use are produced and distributed in the narratives of young multilinguals from different sociocultural backgrounds?
2. In what sense are aspirations shaped by the past experiences of parents and other adult relatives?
3. To what extent do current language practices index what young people, from different social backgrounds, perceive as available to them?



References

- Flanagan, C. A. (2008). Private anxieties and public hopes: The perils and promise of youth in the context of globalization. *Figuring the future: Children, youth, and globalization*, 125-150.
- Heller, M. (2007). Distributed knowledge, distributed power: A sociolinguistics of structuration. *Text & Talk*, 27(5-6), 633-653
- Woodman, D., & Wyn, J. (2015). Class, gender and generation matter: Using the concept of social generation to study inequality and social change. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(10), 1402-1410.