

# **Family Language Policy: Gaelic Maintenance Efforts on the Isle of Skye, Scotland**

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Although language policy is often commonly associated with the higher echelons of social organisation, such as government and education, a recent vein of inquiry has turned its attention to examining policy at the level of the family. Known as Family Language Policy (FLP), this developing field seeks to bring together two previously separate disciplines: language policy and child language acquisition (see King, Fogle and Logan-Terry, 2008). Based on ten hours of conversations recorded in the home environment in July 2009, this paper discusses the role that language ideology plays in the FLP of an extended bilingual Gaelic-English family on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. In particular, the paper examines how the family's practice of using Gaelic when directing speech towards the children (aged three and seven) is reflective of the caregivers' belief that the children should be raised as Gaelic speakers, even though the second generation members in the family (i.e. the children's parents, aunts, and uncles) use English as their intragroup language. The paper takes a microinteractional approach to discussing how caregivers try to designate Gaelic as the 'child-centred code' and will further examine how this language designation is collaboratively constructed: certain family members, namely the children's maternal grandmother and the children's parents, act as leaders in negotiating Gaelic as the child-centred code, while other speakers, such as the children's aunts and uncles, follow this lead. The paper will further look at the family's tendency to use Gaelic in disciplining the children, and will discuss the possible detrimental effects of this practice in terms of language maintenance. It will conclude by assessing the family's overall success in terms of their language maintenance goals with the children and will further discuss the implications of this study in terms of other FLP and language maintenance studies.

## **References**

King, K. A., Fogle, L., & Logan-Terry, A. (2008). Family Language Policy. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 2(5), 907–922