POWER AND DEFERENCE

Bilingual Decision Making in Inuit Homes

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"Language loss stems not only from the language policies of schools and governments, but also from the daily conduct of both parents' discourse with their small children and with each other."

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Parents in communities where there is rapid language and culture change face particular discourse issues as they construct the language and culture of their homes. Among such issues are decisions about who will speak in what language and to whom, as well as decisions about what patterns of language socialization will be adhered to in the home. Such decisions are sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious. Inside the home, issues such as gender, status, and cultural patterns of deference combine with community influences including the language of education and historical, political, and economic realities. This article is about the particular decisions and influences that families from two communities in Arctic Quebec face as they engage with and in the discourse patterns of their families. Such decisions are a crucial yet little investigated pivotal point in situations of language loss and language maintenance.

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LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION IN SITUATIONS OF CULTURAL CONTACT

Language socialization studies (see, for example, Crago, 1988; Heath, 1983; Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin, 1990) have demonstrated the richly variegated forms that the cultural patterning of young children may take. Through the use of language with and by children, the discourse modes of cultural and linguistic groups are established. Insights into such varied discourse forms have come from cross cultural comparisons of language socialization as it is carried out in a number of different communities. There are only very few studies (Kulick, 1992; Obondo, 1996; Schieffelin, 1994; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon,

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1994) of how language socialization occurs in situations where children are raised bilingually by parents from culturally distinct language groups. Furthermore, there are even fewer studies of how children raised in situations of rapid language and cultural change are being reared to blend or dissociate the patterns of the multiple languages and cultures that surround them (Duranti & Ochs, 1996).

Research on the simultaneous acquisition of two or more languages during the preschool years often makes reference to the importance of the patterns of parental language use, especially with respect to bilingual children's code mixing, that is, the use of both languages in the same utterance or stretch of conversation (for example, see Dopke, 1992; Genesee, 1989; Goodz, 1989; Lanza, 1992). For example, parents raising bilingual children are advised to limit themselves to the use of one language each with their children in order to avoid linguistic confusion and to promote the child's overall linguistic development. There is, however, remarkably little systematic empirical research on these claims (for comparison, see Dopke, 1992; Goodz, 1989; Jarovinskij, 1995). Others have proposed that parental discourse styles as well as their tendencies to code-switch when conversing with their children can have varying influences on their children's rates of code mixing (Lanza, 1992; Nicoladis & Genesee, 1996), although once again, empirical investigations of these issues are limited at this time.

To what extent and how the culturally conditioned patterns of parental language use in bilingual families resemble or differ from their respective monolingual, monocultural counterparts has received no empirical attention to date, despite its evident theoretical importance. Many children around the world are raised bilingually, although we do not know the extent to which the language groups they represent diverge in linguistically and culturally significant ways. Nevertheless, models of language socialization and descriptions of parental language use that are based on monolingual/cultural families present an incomplete picture. The present article describes an investigation that sought to explore issues related to language socialization in bilingual families where the parents were members of culturally varied communities and spoke languages with radically distinct structural characteristics and properties. In particular, we examine the attitudes and decision making that underlay bilingual families' use of language with their children. This aspect of the study was motivated by the fact that we were studying bilingual families in which one member, the mother, was from an indigenous language group that is at imminent risk of losing its language. Although decision making concerning language use in bilingual families that speak dominant and widely used languages may have significant consequences for the offspring of these families, it is not likely to affect the status or survival of the languages themselves. In contrast, decision making in bilingual families where a nondominant, at-risk

language is in question could have serious implications for the survival of the language in the community as well as for the bilingualism of the children in these families (Wong Fillmore, 1991, 1996). Furthermore, Pye (1992) has pointed out that language loss can be seen as a kind of defective bilingual acquisition. Considering the high stakes involved in language loss for the Inuit people, we undertook a study of stated concepts and behavior concerning language use in bilingual families from two Inuit communities in northern Quebec, Kuujjuaq and Quaqtaq.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The two communities represent different demographic and linguistic contexts. One is a large northern community with a multiethnic population; the other is very remote, small, and primarily unicultural.

KUUJJUAQ: A HETEROGENEOUS MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY

Kuujjuaq is an Inuit community of about 1,100 people located in Nunavik (northern Quebec) about 1,000 kilometers from Montreal. Kuujjuaq is accessible only by a 2-hour jet plane ride and by ship for a few summer months. Despite this geographic remoteness, it is, nonetheless, the gateway community to the Ungava Bay section of Nunavik and, as such, it is one of the largest and most ethnically mixed communities of Nunavik. The population of Kuujjuaq is increasingly interethnic, with people who now speak a mixture of Inuktitut, English, and French. Population statistics from 1991 (Dorais, 1992) reveal that Inuit make up 81% (865 people) of the population. All of the Inuit in Kuujjuaq can speak Inuktitut; 58% can also speak English and/or French, and 42% speak only Inuktitut. The non-Inuit population of Kuujjuaq includes 200 people or 19% of the total population; 60% of them speak French, 40% speak English, and virtually none of them speak Inuktitut. The English language is actually the *lingua franca* of the community, and the Inuktitut language appears to be decreasing in use (Taylor & Wright, 1990).

QUAQTAQ: A SMALL, REMOTE COMMUNITY

Quaqtaq is located some 700 kilometres north of Kuujjuaq. It is also accessible only by plane and ship. This community has about 300 permanent inhabitants, living on a vast expanse of tundra. Their nearest neighbors are more than a day's trip away by skimobile or an expensive half-hour trip by plane. All but a half dozen of Quaqtaq's permanent residents are Inuit who

speak Inuktitut fluently. Unlike Kuujjuaq, all aspects of community life still function in Inuktitut, which 98% of the people in the community speak (Dorais, 1992). Young children are fluent speakers of their language and come to school with their mother tongue well established. The non-Inuit living permanently in Quaqtaq are men who have married Inuit women. One of these men has lived in the community for over 20 years, another two have been there for the last 10 to 15 years, and the remaining three are relative newcomers. None of these non-Inuit men speak more than rudimentary Inuktitut, and none of them write or read the language.

In summary, despite their remoteness from southern Canada and despite the fact that 100% of the Inuit population in both Kuujjuaq and Quaqtaq speak Inuktitut, these communities are nevertheless undergoing rapid social and linguistic change with considerable potential for language loss. This means, then, that the important question is not who *can* speak the language, but rather who *does*, *to whom*, and *in what ways*. To understand fully the processes of language loss and language maintenance, it is necessary to study, among other things, how children in such a communities go about acquiring their language and how their families create the language learning environment of the home.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

In a first stage of our research project, the 23 couples in Kuujjuaq who had children between the ages of 9 and 24 months were contacted. The ethnic composition of these partnerships was as follows:

Inuit with Inuit—56%
Mixed heritage or Inuit with white—40%
All white—4%

However, it turned out that language use in these homes did not correspond to ethnicity. For instance, in homes where both parents were Inuit, 24% of the families spoke a mixture of Inuktitut and English. The remaining 76% were reported to speak predominately Inuktitut in their homes.

Actual language use in the 23 families, then, was different from ethnic composition, reflecting the language mixing in certain of the families with both an Inuit father and mother. The breakdown of families by language use was as follows:

Inuktitut only—44%
Mixed Inuktitut with English and/or French—52%
English only—4%

These figures imply that language is used in various ways in the different families. For instance, Inuk-Inuk couples may either speak Inuktitut only or a combination of Inuktitut and English. Couples where both partners themselves grew up in mixed language homes often speak a combination of Inuktitut and English. Finally, partners where one member is non-Inuk and the other is Inuk or of mixed heritage speak predominantly English even if the non-Inuk father's first language is French.

Twelve of the 23 families were interviewed in depth about their language use, their perceived language competency, decisions about language use, and their language socialization patterns. From them, three exemplar families who used at least two languages in their homes were chosen for more in-depth analysis, including videotaping and/or observations in the home. In addition, the one bilingual, bicultural family in Quaqtaq with a child between 15 and 24 months was included in the in-depth investigation.

PROCEDURE

Interviews of the 12 Kuujjuaq families and the one Quaqtaq family took place in their homes at a time convenient for the family. Interviews were conducted by a pair of researchers, one Inuk and one non-Inuk. Parents were asked which language they preferred to speak, and the interview was conducted in that language, sometimes with one interviewer speaking to one parent in French or English and the other speaking to the other parent in Inuktitut. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed in their entirety by native speakers of the languages used by the parents. Interview data and family descriptions were shown to each of the families for confirmation as to their accuracy. Following analysis of the interviews (Chen, 1997), three families from Kuujjuaq and one from Quaqtaq were selected as representative of various patterns of language use in the homes (see Tables 1 and 2). The four families were asked to participate in a second stage of the research. These families were then either videotaped or observed in naturalistic situations in their homes. The information reported on in this article comes from at least 2 hours of tape or observation in each home.

THE FOUR FAMILIES

FAMILY 1: AN EXAMPLE OF CONSCIOUS DECISION-MAKING

This young couple lives with their first-born girl child (see Table 1). Both parents have been educated through college level in French and English. They

TABLE 1: Participant Characteristics

	Family 1	*Family 2*	*Family 3*	*Family 4*
Mother's ethnicity	Mixed	Inuk	Inuk	Mixed
Mother's language				
Home	Inuktitut, English	Inuktitut	Inuktitut	Inuktitut, English
School	French	English	English	English
Fluent	Inuktitut, English, French	Inuktitut, English	Inuktitut, English	Inuktitut, English
Father's ethnicity	Inuk	English-Canadian	French-Canadian	English-Canadian
Father's language				
Home	Inuktitut	English	French	English
School	English	English	French	English
Fluent	English, Inuktitut	English, French	French, English	English

TABLE 2: Reported Language Use

	Family 1	*Family 2*	*Family 3*	*Family 4*
Mother				
to focal child	Inuktitut	Inuktitut	Inuktitut, English	English, Inuktitut
to other children		Inuktitut	Inuktitut, English	English, Inuktitut
to father	English	English	English	English
Father				
to focal child	Inuktitut	English	French, English	English
to other children		English	French, English	English
to mother	English	English	English	English
Child				
to mother	Inuktitut	Inuktitut	Inuktitut	Inuktitut, English
to father	Inuktitut	Inuktitut	Inuktitut	Inuktitut, English
to other children		Inuktitut	Inuktitut	English

have consciously decided to speak English to each other and Inuktitut to their child (see Table 2). When asked about this decision, the mother said,

> We mainly spoke English at home when I was a child. My Dad hardly understood a word of Inuktitut and my Mom knew more English than my Dad knew Inuktitut . . . when I was five I lost my language in NWT [Northwest Territories] and had to relearn it. That's why I don't feel as comfortable in Inuktitut as I should. [I speak to my child in Inuktitut] because I want to preserve my native language and my Mom made a conscious effort with her youngest child. She told my Dad she would only speak to her in Inuktitut and that was to make sure she had a good understanding of Inuktitut.

This mother has followed her mother's pattern of language use with her child and yet has continued the bilingual nature of her own upbringing by speaking English to her husband. Parental report was borne out by behavioral data (see

TABLE 3: Language Use by Mother 1

	Addressee			
Language	*Child*	*Father*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	304	6	2	1
English	3			
Mix[a]	3			
Other[b]	20	7		

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

TABLE 4: Language Use by Father 1

	Addressee			
Language	*Child*	*Mother*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	225	9		
English	13			
Mix[a]	4	1		
Other[b]	14	2		1

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

Tables 3 and 4). Indeed the parents spoke Inuktitut to their child almost all the time. The particular taped segments analyzed quantitatively did not include a great deal of mother to father discourse, so the quantity of English spoken in the home is not apparent from this data. The paternal grandparents speak Inuktitut to the child. The mother's parents, both of whom are now non-Inuit due to her natural mother's death, speak English to each other and yet try hard to speak only Inuktitut to the child. Their Inuktitut proficiency is limited but, nonetheless, they were the *only* non-Inuit relatives in our study who decidedly attempted to speak Inuktitut to a child. Family 1 watches Inuktitut-language television and listens regularly to local Inuktitut radio programs.

The outcome of language use in this child's life is apparent on Table 5. Despite the mix of languages in her own home and in her grandparents' home, this child, at the age of 2, is very dominantly an Inuktitut speaker.

This child's mother expresses optimism about language in her community. When asked whether she thought the patterns of language use had changed in Kuujjuaq, she said,

> I think there was more Inuktitut before. It looked like we were losing it for a while, but it's coming back again because we have realized that it is important and because of that realization, kindergarten to Grade 3 are taught in Inuktitut.

TABLE 5: Language Use by Child 1

	Addressee			
Language	*Mother*	*Father*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	133	77	4	1
English	9	11	2	
Mix[a]	2	1		
Other[b]	44	63	10	3

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

The importance of the Inuktitut language is clear in both this mother's behavior and in her concepts. It has guided her conscious decision making about structuring language in her own home. When asked about the importance to her of the Inuktitut language, she said,

> I can't imagine not speaking Inuktitut. I don't feel as confident as I do in English but it's really important to me. If I didn't speak Inuktitut how would I speak with my grandparents or to my aunts and uncles? How would I learn to make traditional clothing or learn anything about fishing or hunting? Like there's knowledge that my grandparents have but if they can't pass it on to me, what use is it? I think language is the most important thing because with language you teach other things.

On the other hand, at the same time, this mother underlined the importance of being trilingual, both for herself and her child, and related this importance to economic realities. At one point in the interview, she succinctly summed up the issue by saying, "French looks good on your *curriculum vitae*."

FAMILY 2: AN EXAMPLE OF CULTURES AND LANGUAGES IN COEXISTENCE

Family 2 lives in Quaqtaq (see Tables 1 and 2). The father is an English Canadian from the Maritime region of eastern Canada, and the mother is an Inuk who has lived all her life in Quaqtaq, except for a few years when she attended a health care worker's course in Kuujjuaq. There are five children living in their home; the youngest two are the children of this father. In her own childhood, the mother was raised in an all-Inuktitut speaking home, but she went to school completely in English. The father grew up speaking English at home and at school, but he has learned French as a second language and reports himself to be a fluent speaker of that language. This father has also learned a small repertoire of commonly used Inuktitut vocabulary and stock

TABLE 6: Language Use by Mother 2

	Addressee			
Language	*Child*	*Father*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	77	1	1	1
English		2		
Mix[a]	5		1	
Other[b]	10	2		1

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

TABLE 7: Language Use by Father 2

	Addressee			
Language	*Child*	*Mother*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	4			
English	24	3		
Mix[a]	3			
Other[b]	3	2	1	4

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

TABLE 8: Language Use by Child 2

	Addressee			
Language	*Mother*	*Father*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	53	2	3	
English		1	2	
Mix[a]	3			
Other[b]	45	14	33	1

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

phrases. In general, the parents speak to their children, each one in their own first language, the mother in Inuktitut and the father in English. With each other, they speak only in English. These parental reports are borne out by quantitative counts of language use patterns shown on Tables 6 and 7. The impact on their 2-year-old child is evident in Table 8. He speaks almost exclusively in Inuktitut to both his parents, and when he does use English, it is addressed to his father.

The mother reports that she and her children sometimes watch TV in Inuktitut, and the mother listens to Inuktitut radio. The father will listen to the

radio when the mother has turned it on. As mentioned previously, Inuktitut is a very dominant language in the community of Quaqtaq. All the older children in the home speak it to their 2-year-old brother and their baby sister. Both parents are optimistic about the future of the Inuktitut language in their community. The mother does not think that it will disappear in her lifetime. The father attributes the strength of the language to its use in schools and in books.

> They have their own school system, they have texts, they have books written in Inuktitut. The language of the present is still very strong and still very much on record. I don't think it would be lost in our generation, because I guess historians are trying to keep some of the old languages alive.

When asked about their own decision-making relative to keeping the Inuktitut language alive, the parents seemed to have almost stumbled across their decisions.

> Interviewer: Did you think out your decisions about what languages you would speak to your 2-year-old son?
> Mother: I guess we just decided to talk both languages . . . because we speak both languages.
> Father: Yeah, he'll go to school in French so he's trilingual.
> Mother: I never thought about him taking French. . . . I guess that is his [the father's] idea.

In summary, in this home the language of the community and of the mother have had a strong impact on the language of this 2-year-old boy, despite the erstwhile approach the parents have taken to determining what the structure of language in their child's life will be. As the mother said about working out their cultural and linguistic differences, "We just take it a day at a time."

FAMILY 3: AN EXAMPLE OF A THIRD LANGUAGE IN THE HOME

This couple has two girls under 4 years of age who are exposed to a mixture of languages (see Tables 1 and 2). The mother and father speak their second language, English, to each other. Neither of them is a fully proficient speaker of this language, because the mother's first language is Inuktitut and the father's is French. The mother speaks English and Inuktitut to the children, whereas the father speaks English and French to the children (see Tables 9 and 10).

The mother speaks no French, and the father speaks no Inuktitut. Their 2-year-old daughter speaks Inuktitut to her mother and a majority of English and some French to her father (see Table 11). The 3-year-old sister of this child

TABLE 9: Language Use by Mother 3

	Addressee				
Language	*Child*	*Father*	*Sister*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	42		42		
English	5	13	7		
French	1				
Mix[a]					
Other[b]	16	8	15		

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mix of Inuktitut and English.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

TABLE 10: Language Use by Father 3

	Addressee				
Language	*Child*	*Mother*	*Sister*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	1	1	5		
English	2	13	11		
French	49		98		
Inuktitut and English[a]					
Inuktitut and French[a]			2		
English and French[a]	1		1		
Other[b]	18	7	36	2	

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mixes.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

also speaks Inuktitut to the mother, and to her father, she speaks half French and half English (see Table 12).

The parents in this family report that they have not consciously made a decision about language use in their home, nor have they communicated any such decision to their extended families. The maternal extended family speaks in Inuktitut to the children. The paternal grandparents see the children only rarely, when the father takes them south to visit. In this home, the television is on 16 hours a day in either French or English. The mother listens to the local Inuktitut radio but only when the father is at work because "he hates it." Unfortunately, the father has long periods of time when he is not at work due to seasonal unemployment. The mother in this family is not sure about the future of her language. When asked if she thought there would be a time when no one would speak Inuktitut, she said simply, "I don't know." The father describes his beliefs about the eventual language proficiency of his daughters in the following way:

TABLE 11: Language Use by Child 3

	Addressee				
Language	*Mother*	*Father*	*Sister*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	16	2	11	6	
English	5	21	1	1	
French		13	1		
Inuktitut and English[a]	1	1			
Other[b]	35	29	14	22	

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mixes.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

TABLE 12: Language Use by Sister 3

	Addressee				
Language	*Child*	*Mother*	*Father*	*Self*	*Unknown*
Inuktitut	7	50	3	6	
English		8	43	2	
French			42		
Inuktitut and English[a]		1	1		
Inuktitut and French[a]					
English and French[a]			3		
Other[b]	25	50	68	16	

NOTE: Numbers represent counts of intelligible utterances on tape recordings.
a. Code-mixes.
b. Interjections, vocalizations, unintelligible utterances, nonverbal communication in isolation.

> [When they are 5] they will play around in all three but they are not gonna be perfect in one of them. [They learn these languages] because we are speaking like that. The mom speaks Inuktitut, the father speaks French, and we speak English at home and we speak English outside everywhere. The English they are going to learn in the school and everywhere. So we have to show them all three. The Inuktitut is from her [points to mom].

His comments reflect how English is the *lingua franca* of the community and the workplace in Kuujjuaq. This family and the next one both look to the mothers and to the school to provide substantial Inuktitut input to their children.

FAMILY 4: AN EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH DOMINANCE IN THE HOME[1]

This couple also has two children under 4 years of age, a boy and a girl. Both parents speak English to each other and to the children. The mother, who

has lived all her life in Kuujjuaq, grew up in a bilingual home where her mother spoke Inuktitut and her father spoke English. Her schooling took place entirely in English. The father speaks only English and grew up in southern Canada. In his childhood, he was exposed to the Innu (North American Indian) language and culture when his family lived for a time in Labrador. His schooling was entirely in English. The father speaks to his wife and children only in English. The mother speaks Inuktitut to the children, but not all of the time and often she mixes codes. She speaks Inuktitut "when she remembers it" and when the father is not present. The father does not approve of his wife and children speaking in Inuktitut in his presence because he cannot understand what they are saying. He has lived in Kuujjuaq for 7 years but does not speak or understand Inuktitut. Up until the time of the interview, the children spent all day 5 days a week with a French-speaking baby-sitter. They had just begun attending a community day care where Inuktitut was the primary language spoken. The father described what he considered to be the family's strategy for language use, although his wife said she was not aware that they had a conscious strategy. The father's concept is that the children will learn Inuktitut from the mother and at school, although he admits he does not like his wife to speak Inuktitut or play Inuktitut-language radio or television in his presence because it makes him uncomfortable.

In the interview, the parents expressed their perspectives and their emotions concerning their situation in this way:

> Mother: I feel like I failed [this interview], just listening to [my husband's] answers.
> Father: I think people, not to belittle you dear, but I think where I have come from in the south and now I am living here I can look at things more than [you]. . . . I'm not as limited in what I'm thinking. Do you now what I mean?
> Mother (somewhat shortly): Not exactly, no.
> Father: You are thinking more like here because you have been here all your life. They could go south.
> Mother: So where I am scared to move down . . .
> Father: You do not think about [it] as much as I do because I lived there all my life so I tend more to think about any possibility rather than limiting ourselves to staying here, depending on . . . everything changes with time, situations.
> Mother (in an angry voice): OK, I think I am done.

The two children in this family speak only very limited Inuktitut and this only to their mother. Yet, both parents are optimistic about the future of Inuktitut in their community. In response to a question about whether there will come a time when nobody will speak Inuktitut in Kuujjuaq, the mother replied, "No, not the way we are going, no. It's getting better, stronger." The father put his faith in the future of the language with the school board:

> No, I don't [think it will disappear]. Not as long [as] the school board continues to teach [Inuktitut] to the kids. You know language will die out through neglect and as long as it is not neglected . . .

This expression about language neglect is striking because it is in this very same father's home that Inuktitut is the most neglected by the parents and the least spoken by the children. The neglect is, in part, related to the father's dislike of having Inuktitut spoken in his presence. Clearly, stated concepts and behavior do not always coincide, and individual responsibility is not always recognized.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

These case presentations of four families point to a number of issues. They are issues that concern boundaries, strategies, and power. In most of the homes, there were fluid boundaries with no conscious decisions about strategies for language use. Some of these families could be characterized as openly and naively optimistic. They expressed the belief that their children would learn at least two languages and that this would be accomplished with no systematic exposure to the different languages in question. Although all of the families we interviewed thought that language was learned according to what language children heard around them, this knowledge was not often connected to structuring the environment of overheard language. Furthermore, the relationship of Inuktitut to Inuit identity was not clearly defined by most of the families we interviewed.

At the other end of the continuum were examples of rigid boundaries. English-speaking fathers had the clearest boundaries. They only spoke their first language, English. Certain of them did not like Inuktitut spoken in their presence because they felt uncomfortable not being able to understand it. Another form of rigidity was when fathers had made decisions about language use but had not communicated them to their wives. Some of the non-Inuit fathers felt they had more knowledge on issues of language use in the world than did their wives (even when their wives had grown up in bilingual homes themselves). The rigidity of these men's boundaries, the compliance of the wives, and the stated superiority of certain men indicate to us a power and/or gender differential. It is also possible that Inuit cultural values make Inuit wives deferential to their husbands' ways and wishes.

Finally, there were couples who made compromises, some of which may be misguided. French-speaking fathers and their Inuit wives chose to speak English, a language in which they were not proficient. In one family, the parents spoke English to each other but not to the child. This strategy effectively means

that English is overheard and could become a desirable and high-status language in the home. In all the families, the parents looked to the school to strengthen their children's Inuktitut. The non-Inuit fathers, in particular, felt as if they did not have a role to play in their children's acquisition of Inuktitut. Instead, they saw the language as maintained through their Inuit wives' efforts, through books, school, and even scholars' efforts. Anyone, it seems, except themselves.

At the time of our study, all of the children except those of Family 4 appeared to be learning Inuktitut very proficiently for their age. Their general grammatical abilities paralleled those reported for monolingual Inuit children (Allen, 1996; Crago & Allen, in press).

This reflects the strength of the mothers' input to their children, the use of language in the community, or, in the case of the parents in Family 1, a striking and strong decision to use Inuktitut with their child. Yet, these children's linguistic future is still uncertain. What is clear for the children of Kuujjuaq, at least, is that once these children develop a sphere of contact wider than the home (e.g., the school and the community at large), and especially if they do not study in the heritage language stream at school, the English language is likely to become more and more dominant in their lives (Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 1997).

In conclusion, these findings indicate a variety of patterns of language use in the bilingual homes of young children in Nunavik. The strategies for language use that were adopted reveal a lack of understanding of both bilingual acquisition and the conditions that favor the simultaneous learning of two languages. They also indicate a host of pressures that impinge on individuals living in a situation of language and culture contact. There are economic pulls, schooling concerns, media accessibility, cultural patterns, and gender and power differentials, all of which impose themselves on the daily lives of people who are simply trying to create linguistic expression and comprehension with their partners, in their children, and across their extended families. However, the danger in this situation of unclear, undecided, and underinformed discourse boundaries is one of loss.

As in the work of Wong Fillmore (1991, 1996) on immigrant and Native American families in the United States, we felt in Nunavik the threat of that kind of uncertain environment. It is crucial to realize that language loss stems not only from the language policies of schools and governments, but also from the daily conduct of both parents' discourse with their small children and with each other. Following our study, we held a widely advertised workshop for the participating parents in Kuujjuaq to discuss our findings. Few parents came. Those who did were Inuit mothers. No matter how optimistic and how salutary it is that most of the preschool children of Nunavik presently learn Inuktitut proficiently, whether in monolingual or bilingual homes, there is a risk of

complacency on the part of parents. Homes in which one of the two languages is not tolerated because a father does not manifest respect for it and has not made any effort to understand or speak his wife's native language will not be likely to lead to the long-term use of Inuktitut. In fact, the long-term survival of this language must be cradled in the home, in *both* parents' hands. If Inuktitut is to be spoken by tomorrow's Inuit children, it cannot be only the responsibility of Inuit mothers, the community's schools, and scholars' journal writings.

NOTE

1. Tables of quantitative data are not included for this family because its members did not agree to be tape-recorded.

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