

Workshop

FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY: MULTILINGUAL  
AND MULTILITERACY PRACTICES AND  
IDEOLOGIES IN HOME ENVIRONMENT

26th April, 2024

09:30-16:30

Salons Borel

INALCO, Maison de la recherche, 2 rue de Lille, 75007, Paris.



# **Family language policy: multilingual and multiliteracy practices and ideologies in home environment**

**Workshop organized by Nanfei WANG (SeDyL, CNRS-INALCO-IRD)**

Recent research in the realm of family language policy (Spolsky, 2004; King, Fogle et Logan-Terry, 2008; Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023) has extensively examined language practice and ideologies within bi-multilingual transnational families (Schwartz & Verschik, 2013; Curdt-Christiansen et al., 2023). Despite this, the academic discourse has given limited attention to the multiliteracy development of children (Marsh, 2003; Kirsch & Bergeron-Morin, 2023). However, it is noteworthy that many parents within transnational multilingual families come from historically literate societies, where the written language holds a privileged position across social spheres. Consequently, the transmission of home language literacy becomes a cornerstone of language socialization for these families (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). Concerns about their children's home language literacy development are prevalent, prompting some to introduce informal immersion methods at an early age, while others opt for formal complementary language schooling to ensure efficient access to literacy.

This workshop aims to discuss the intricate family language literacy practices and ideologies. The discussion will revolve around key themes, including the multilateral home environment (Melo-Pfeifer, 2022), attitudes of parents and/or children toward home language literacy transmission, adult ideologies concerning children's tri-literacy development, the agency of children in multiliteracy practices, and family strategies of multiliteracy development (Little & Murry, 2022). By addressing these nuanced aspects, the workshop aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding family language literacy in transnational multilingual contexts.

## Program

- 9:30 Welcome coffee
- 9:45 Workshop opening
- 10:00 **Prof. Dr. Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen**, University of Bath, UK  
*“来来，大家一起玩” (C'mon, let's play together): Grassroots Planning from a Bourdieusian Perspective*
- 11:00 **Prof. Dr. Silvia Melo-Pfeifer**, University of Hamburg, Germany  
*Beyond a logocentric relationship with the heritage language: Material culture and the development of multisensory, spatial and material literacy practices at home*
- Lunch break
- 14:00 **Dr. Sabine Little**, University of Sheffield, UK  
*Rivers of multilingual reading: tools to explore multilingual children's literacy development through reading for pleasure*
- 15:00 **Yin Yu**, Georg-August University of Göttingen, University of Duisburg Essen, Germany  
*Changes and continuities in homescapes during children's transition from kindergarten to school*
- 15:30 **Dr. Nanfei Wang**, SeDyL (CNRS-INALCO-IRD), France  
*Parental agency in designing homescape: Chinese home literacy environment in Franco-Chinese families*
- 16:00-16:30 Discussion and closing words

## Abstracts

### **“来来，大家一起玩” (C'mon, let's play together): Grassroots Planning from a Bourdieusian Perspective**

**Prof. Dr. Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, University of Bath, UK**

This paper presents an on-going study of grassroots language-planning engagement in the Chinese transnational communities in the UK. It explores how a group of Chinese mothers organise playgroups for their children to socialise with each other in linguistic and non-linguistic plays to enrich their children's cultural and linguistic environment. Guided by Bourdieu's signature concepts of habitus and capital, this study attempts to understand grassroots organisations in the Chinese communities through a socialisation lens. It examines how organisers'/mothers' sociocultural disposition about, practical knowledge of, and cultural attitudes towards socialisation become unintended forms of social and cultural capital for heritage/community language development. Data sources include observations, recorded playing activities, and unstructured interviews. Using discourse analysis and narrative enquiry as analytical framework, the study focuses on the types of activities organised, language functions and forms in socialisation, and the sociocultural dispositions articulated by the parents. The study highlights how heritage languages can be developed despite symbolic structural constraints that are unfavourable for heritage language learning. The study contributes to the field of FLP by illustrating how parents use their social, cultural and economic capital in locating and using accessible resources to help their children build a transnational cultural capital.

## **Beyond a logocentric relationship with the heritage language: Material culture and the development of multisensory, spatial and material literacy practices at home**

**Prof. Dr. Silvia Melo-Pfeifer, University of Hamburg, Germany**

Following the seminal work by L. Aronin on the material culture of multilingualism (2012 and 2018), I will revisit the concept of “homescape” (Melo-Pfeifer, 2022), proposing a multisensory and less logocentric definition of multilingual and multiliterate practices in relation to heritage language maintenance. In my previous work, I focused my attention on how bilingual children perceived the role of family in the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015a), the constitution of children’s plurilingual repertoires (Melo-Pfeifer, 2017), and children’s multilingual awareness (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015b). In these previous studies, the main epistemological assumption was that the cognitive and affective relationship to language(s) is constructed through interaction with the language(s) and speakers, based on a logocentric standpoint. Nevertheless, recent theoretical advances posit that material culture is of paramount importance to explore the mediated construction of such a relationship and is an important affordance in language development (Aronin, Bylieva & Lobatyuk, 2023). In this presentation, I will explore the connections between material culture of the heritage language and the development of multisensory, spatial and material literacy practices (Mills, 2016) at home.

## **Rivers of multilingual reading: tools to explore multilingual children's literacy development through reading for pleasure**

**Dr. Sabine Little, University of Sheffield, UK**

Reading for pleasure is a vital component of multiliteracy development (Little and Murray, 2022), yet research shows that asynchronous biliteracy development can have a significant impact on children's continued engagement with, and enjoyment of, reading across all their languages (Little, 2021). Parental choices, gatekeeping, and availability of resources all become vital components that influence where and how multilingual children engage with reading materials (Krashen, 1993; Worthy, Nuñez and Espinoza, 2016).

This workshop introduces the concept of "Rivers of Reading" (Little, 2021) as a research methodology aimed at understanding how multilingual children engage with multiliteracies throughout time. Through a child-led process, children create a somewhat chronological multimodal artefact about what reading materials and experiences have been important to them throughout their lives, and how this importance is distributed among their languages. Crucially, "importance" here highlights emotional attachments to reading experiences. Rivers of reading are offered as a specific, literacy-focused research tool, joining existing multimodal approaches in research with multilingual and plurilingual children (see. e.g. Melo-Pfeifer, 2015, Soares et al, 2021). In the workshop, we will explore, in brief, our own Rivers of Reading, before considering how to code and interpret the data gathered as part of multiliteracy research.

## **Changes and continuities in homescapes during children's transition from kindergarten to school**

**Yin Yu , Georg-August University of Göttingen , University of Duisburg Essen**

Situated at the intersection of Family Language Policy (FLP) and Linguistic Landscape (LL) studies, this work extends the notion of linguistic landscape to the private family domain and discusses the impact of children's school entry on the literacy environment within transnational families. The transition into school brings about changes in the family's homescapes, influencing language and literacy practices among family members. The paper highlights that during this transition, both changes and continuities are observed.

The emerging signs and activities related to children's schooling become increasingly significant parts of family dynamics. These signs play a role in celebrating and indicating the child's entry into school, providing information about school routines, and supporting literacy learning both at home and in school. The design of the homescape reflects parental support for children's education and language learning, showcasing new management strategies in response to the evolving situation.

The mentioned signs, whether highly visible, semi-visible, or multimodal, mark the significant event within the family. Additionally, these signs not only regulate and influence family language practices but also serve as important literacy resources in certain cases. Overall, the study emphasizes the dynamic nature of homescapes during the transition into formal schooling.

## **Parental agency in designing homescape: Chinese home literacy environment in Franco-Chinese families**

**Dr. Nanfei Wang, SeDyL (CNRS-INALCO-IRD)**

This presentation discusses a study of the homescape (Boivin, 2020; Melo-pfeifer, 2022) of Chinese home literacy environment (Niklas, 2020; Harris et al., 2020) among Franco-Chinese families in France. Inspired by prior research in family language policy (King et al., 2008; Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023), this study analyzes the homescape (Boivin, 2020; Melo-pfeifer, 2022) related to children's Chinese literacy development in Franco-Chinese transnational families through the lens of linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). The research entails a two-year ethnographic study of nine Franco-Chinese families residing in France. Data comprises sound recordings of family interactions, photographs of families' homescape, and in-depth interviews and field notes from informal discussions with family members. This study explores how parents exercise their agency (Ahearn, 2001, Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006) by designing, creating and adapting the homescape within their families, and how Chinese literacy resources within the multilingual homescape can be categorized. Through analyzing the degree of visibility, intentional and unconscious positioning, actual usage frequency, and various forms of Chinese literacy resources, this study proposes categorizing the Chinese literacy homescape as highly visible in active use and not in active use, semi-visible and multimodal, encompassing heritage language soundscape and digital landscape. Additionally, the study demonstrates how parents embed their beliefs and goals regarding their children's language and literacy learning within the design of the Chinese literacy homescape and how new forms of home literacy environment offer children novel lived literacy experiences.



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