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Introduction

The growing geographical mobility characterising the past few decades has not only increased migration, but also facilitated the formation of binational[1] couples and multilingual families.

While all migrants leave behind their accustomed way of living and enter a new social, cultural and linguistic environment, partners in binational relationships are confronted with the 'other' (person/language/culture) on a much more intimate basis – in their homes. These families are the best example of the effect of globalisation on the emergence of new understandings of identities, with nationality, culture and native language no longer constituting clear-cut categories.

Even though there is a growing body of research on language and identity in various multilingual and multicultural settings, interactional approaches to the study of binational families are still relatively rare. Much of the previous research on binational families is based on interviews and questionnaires. Early studies were typically concerned with questions of language choice and maintenance, such as Varro's (1998) longitudinal study of American women married to French men in France. The interviews conducted in 1972 were followed up by questionnaires in 1991, thus allowing the author to analyse the extent to which bilingualism was passed on to the next generation.

More recent studies tend to shift the focus towards issues of identity in bilingual and bicultural contexts. Pavlenko, for instance, analysed language choice in relation to emotions (2004). She used a large-scale web-questionnaire (designed by Dewaele & Pavlenko), involving nearly 400 parents of bilingual children with different language backgrounds. The first large-scale study focusing on the construction of (hybrid) identities in binational couples was published by Piller in 2002. She collected data from English-/German-speaking couples by giving them a 'discussion paper' (2002: 23) with questions that the couples were expected to use to interview each other, thus following a highly structured interview format.

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1 The choice of the term 'binational' does not mean that nationality is used as the main criterion. It was preferred over alternative terms, such as 'intercultural', as in all the families analysed there was a strong awareness of two cultural/linguistic elements, rather than the family forming an 'intercultural' and 'multilingual' entity.

Gonçalves' contribution to this issue follows a similar research design in that it is also based on interviews. Her interviews, however, are more interactive, allowing the couples to engage in naturally evolving dialogue with the interviewer and with each other. These 'conversations with a purpose' were conducted specifically with the aim of discussing different facets of identity in binational couples. In this respect, Gonçalves' contribution differs from the remaining papers in this issue, which are based primarily on audio- and video-recordings of family interactions.

The conversations Gonçalves analyses focus on the socio-cultural practice of meal preparation, and the recordings used in the remaining papers were all made during meals and meal preparation, making this a common theme shared by all the contributions to this issue. More importantly, the papers all analyse recordings that capture binational families' interactions involving different languages and cultural values; they also provide invaluable insights into the personal lives of binational families in different countries and bilingual settings.

Two of the studies are situated in Switzerland: Gonçalves scrutinises the discourse of Americans married to German-speaking Swiss, while Meyer Pitton looks at speakers of Russian married to French-speaking Swiss. Two studies were conducted in the UK: Marley compares conversations taking place in an English/Moroccan family with the children's online conversations with cousins in Morocco, and Ogiermann analyses the interactions of two English/Polish families. Finally, Kolstrup's study takes us to Denmark and focuses on a Zambian woman married to a Danish man and her relationship with her step-daughter.[2]

The studies provide insights into language socialisation and identity construction at different stages of family life, ranging from couples that, at the time of recording, had been married for up to 12 (Gonçalves and Meyer Pitton) and even 20 years (Marley) to recently formed step-families (Kolstrup and Ogiermann). They show that the amount of time during which the families have existed as a unit and the family members' familiarity with the languages spoken in the home have a crucial impact on language use, participation in family interactions and identity construction.

Meyer Pitton's data show the most balanced use of two languages. She proposes that since language maintenance is achieved within everyday interaction, it should be studied by looking at interaction in bilingual families. Using the language socialisation framework (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986), Meyer Pitton

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2 All the papers analyse previously unpublished data; collected for the authors' PhD theses (Gonçalves, Kolstrup, Meyer Pitton), in their own family (Marley) and within an ESRC funded project (Ogiermann).

shows how parents in binational families manage to provide input in two languages while attending to everyday tasks and raising their children.

In Marley's study, in contrast, the children's limited contact with Moroccan Arabic over the years has led to a rather passive bilingualism, with their preferred language being English. An analysis of the recordings in which the children are addressed in Moroccan Arabic by their father shows a clear distinction between their marked and unmarked languages, making Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (2000) more suitable for the analysis of the data.

While in the family interactions examined by Marley and Meyer Pitton all the family members are proficient enough in the 'other' language to be able to follow all conversations, Ogiermann analyses the parallel use of two languages in a family where not all members are bilingual. She applies Goffman's participation framework (1981) to demonstrate how language choice can affect the discourse identities of those who do not speak the 'other' language (sufficiently well).

The interactions analysed by Kolstrup are almost entirely in Danish, with only a few instances of borrowing from English. She discusses the applicability of Tannen's dimensions of control and connection (2007) to interactions in binational step-families. Her analysis illustrates how a Zambian woman struggles to establish a relationship with her Danish step-daughter; while having to rely on a language which she has only recently started to learn.

The five studies further differ in their focus on different family members: Meyer Pitton and Marley focus on the children, while the remaining three studies focus on the parents, with Gonçalves and Kolstrup providing the perspective of the immigrated partners and Ogiermann that of the immigrants' spouses in their home country. At the same time, all the studies link identity construction with bilingual language practices, with Gonçalves placing a particular emphasis on the former and Meyer Pitton on the latter.

Identity is most central to Gonçalves' paper, her study being the only one based on conversations that have been conducted with the purpose of analysing identity and explicitly addressing it. Using Bucholtz & Hall's sociocultural linguistic model (2005), Gonçalves shows how individuals who live 'between different cultures' interactively position themselves and each other as hybrid.

Kolstrup's study illustrates the difficulties a Zambian woman experiences in trying to take on the role of a step-mother to her Danish husband's daughter, who perceives her as somebody who is 'not in charge'. While legitimacy is a major factor limiting her interactional options, these are constrained even further by her limited knowledge of Danish.

Ogiermann analyses recordings of Polish/English step-families and shows how the Polish mothers' concern with preserving their children's linguistic and

cultural identity effects the identity of the English step-parent. The data illustrate the impact of language choice on the English participants' discourse identities. On the one hand, the use of Polish can exclude them from conversations taking place in their own family and their own home. On the other hand, the use of English can be perceived as a form of exclusion from the rest of the Polish-speaking family. While the study shows that participation in bilingual interaction can be constrained by macro-factors such as language competence and preference, it also illustrates the dynamic and emergent nature of participation frameworks in a bilingual setting.

Meyer Pitton focuses on the bilingual socialisation of children in Russian-/French-speaking families. While the parents largely follow a one-parent/one-language approach when interacting with their children, a detailed sequential analysis of the recorded conversations shows that language choice is locally negotiated and serves a range of interactional functions.

The children, in particular, use the languages available to them strategically; in order to align themselves with different members of the family, redefine rules and challenge parental authority. The parents, on the other hand, accomplish implicit and explicit 'medium requests' (Gafaranga 2010), and sometimes even initiate an explicit language lesson to ensure that the children practice both their languages.

This is what tends to happen in Marley's recordings of dinner conversations, which the father uses as an opportunity to teach his children Moroccan Arabic. Her case study illustrates a common situation where bilingual children grow up separated from the community of one of their parents and, as they get older, lose interest in their 'other' language and culture.

However, Marley's paper contrasts the interactions in which the father assumes the role of a language instructor with online chats the children have with their cousins in Morocco. She shows that computer-mediated communication, which enables the children to use Moroccan Arabic with their peers on a regular basis, has had a crucial impact on their language competence and the perception of their bilingual identity.

On the whole, this special issue provides a collection of real-life case studies illustrating the multi-layered nature of identity and the manifold functions of language alternation. These studies demonstrate that despite the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of most Western societies, moving to another country and sharing one's life with the 'other' (person/language/culture) is challenging – as much as it is rewarding.

It involves acquiring new habits and social practices and redefining one's identity. The use of two languages in newly formed binational families can restrict the ways in which different family members can participate in family

interactions and even feel part of the family. In binational step-families, the step-parent can face constraints not only on what they can say but also on who they can be within the family. Established families raising their children bilingually have to juggle the need to provide input in both languages with everyday tasks. Eventually, they may find that their children lose interest in their 'other language' – and then find ways to reconnect with it.

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Appendix

Symbols used in the transcripts of recorded interactions

.	falling, stopping intonation
,	continuing intonation
¿	weak rising intonation
?	strong rising intonation
↑kawę	higher pitch
<u>abso</u>lutely	emphasis
the:se	lengthening
MAMA	louder speech
°du skal ikke°	quieter speech
<right>	slower talk
>jeg synes det er<	rushed talk
grusz-	cut-off
AGA: [synek	overlapping talk
CHR: [mama nie odkła:daj	
DEN: *n:et*=	latching
STE: =c'est pas vrai	
£no co ty£	words said in a smiley voice
.hhh	audible inhalation
hhh	audible exhalation
(.)	micro-pause
(0.8)	measured pause/gap in seconds
(du skal)	words that cannot be clearly heard
( )	words that cannot be heard at all
(je;j'ai)	possible alternatives
((*swallows*))	non-verbal behaviour, author's comment
@@@	laughter (interview data only)

Whenever the transcript involves two languages other than English, italics are used for one of the languages to distinguish them (see, e.g., Meyer Pitton's paper where italics are used to distinguish Russian from French.

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