

**Family Language Policy  
and Intergenerational Heritage Language  
Transmission among Inter-ethnic Families  
in Tanzania: An Interpretive  
Phenomenological Analysis**

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**Abstract**

*This article explores parents' views on languages in inter-ethnic families, how the former influence language practices in the family, and how heritage languages are transmitted to their children. The data for the study were collected using in-depth interviews with five participants living with their partners drawn from different ethnicities. Using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach (Smith et al., 2009; Van Manen, 2016), ten themes emerged from the participants' interviews. These were grouped into three super-themes representing parents' perceptions and beliefs about languages and family language policies. The findings revealed that parents had positive attitudes towards their ethnic languages and the transmission of these to their children. However, such a positive attitude is not reflected in the language practices of the families and in the strategies used to transmit heritage language to their children.*

**Keywords:** *Heritage language, family language policy, inter-generation language transmission*

**Introduction**

Generally, the term heritage language (HL) is used as an umbrella term for indigenous, immigrants, minorities, mother tongue, and ethnic languages (Bale, 2010; Zhang, 2008). These languages are normally spoken at home and their transmission largely depends on the family and communities using them. The association between home context and heritage language is emphasised by Rothman (2009) who argues that a language qualifies as a heritage language if it is spoken at home and is not a dominant language of a given society. The recent development in heritage language research in the Western world has shed light on family beliefs, opinions, motivations, and practices around HL development (Curdit-Christiansen and Huang, 2020; Guardado, 2017; Lanza and Gomes, 2020; Smith-Christmas, 2016; Wilson, 2020). Generally, the above studies have shown that most parents were motivated to transmit their languages to their children. They view the transmission of these languages not only as a way of maintaining cultural identity but also as a means of strengthening emotional ties among members of a community (Curdit-Christiansen and Huang, 2020; Hinton 1999; Kedrebeago, 1998).

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Despite the increasing wealth in HL research, research on inter-ethnic families<sup>2</sup> with parents who were raised in different ethnic groups and therefore did not share the same native language is lagging behind (Braun and Cline, 2014; Jackson, 2007; Okita, 2002; Yamamoto, 2001). As Gardado (2017) points out, the co-existence of more than one HL and culture makes HL socialisation more challenging in inter-ethnic families than in monolingual ones. According to Guardado (*ibid*), these different languages and cultural values may compete and influence family dynamics, including family language practices. Thus, given that inter-ethnic marriages are increasingly becoming common in Tanzania and the world at large, there is a need to understand language policy in these families and how the former influences the transmission of HL.

As pointed out above, the term HL is much broader and encompasses a different learning context. In this paper, however, and generally in the Tanzanian context, heritage will be narrowly used to refer to parents' ethnic languages. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to explore the view of inter-ethnic married parents in Tanzania on languages, language practice in the family and the intergeneration language transmission of HL. Understanding the family language policy of inter-ethnic families is particularly important as it may add valuable insights to inform ethnic language maintenance. The article, therefore, seeks to understand heritage language transmission and family language policy in inter-ethnic families in Tanzania.

### **Ethnic Language Transmission**

Rothman's (2009) definition of HL as the language spoken at home or that is readily available to young children communicates the typical nature of transmission of these languages. Ethnic languages are normally acquired based on interaction with a naturalistic input at home or in a community environment. Since in most cases, ethnic languages and heritage languages, in general, are not the dominant languages of the society, the language practices that would favour the transmission of these languages often compete with one another or are incongruent with language practices and policies in mainstream societies. Thus, the success of inter-generational language transmission depends on the older generation's resolve to maintain their language. Past research has indicated that the majority of HL speakers are eager to transmit their languages (Curdit-Christiansen and Huang, 2020; Guardado, 2017; Lanza and Gomes, 2020; Smith-Christmas, 2016; Wilson, 2020). The determination to maintain HL hinges on several factors such as identity, cultural practice and emotional ties. It has been pointed out that the use of heritage languages can invoke emotions and can make family members feel closer in daily interactions (Curdit-Christiansen and Huang, 2020). A heritage language is often related to an individual's sense of self-actualisation as a member of a family (Heman, Michael and Berbacy, 1996; Kedrebeago, 1998). In addition, the desire to maintain cultural loyalty and certain cultural values and practices add motivation to intergeneration language transmission (Hinton, 1999).

Despite the determination of many communities to maintain their languages, current research indicates that language shift overshadows language maintenance (Kandler & Steele, 2017; Matthews, 1983; Zhang, 2008). The common cause of language shift is the pressure that HL/ethnic languages experience from more dominant and prestigious

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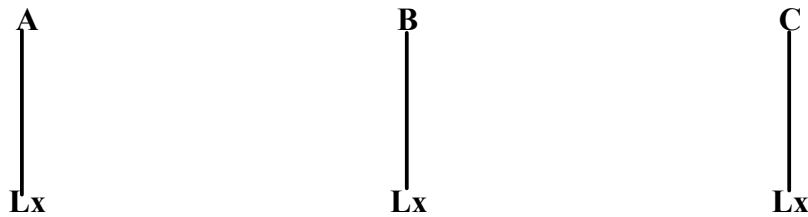
<sup>2</sup> Various terms are used to refer to these families in the literature. They include interlingual families, linguistically exogamous families, and linguistically intermarried families.

languages in society. The above pressure may be caused by social-economic attraction, political predominance or cultural forces associated with the dominant language (Batibo, 2005). Recently, it has been noted that intermarriage plays a role in the language shift process of minority languages. Igboanus and Wolf (2009) pointed out that intermarriages tend to favour the use of a common lingua franca instead of parents' (minority) languages. Bodomo et al. (2009) also reported that over recent years, there has been a tendency for many children born and raised in urban areas in Ghana to acquire English as their first language. According to the above authors, this is because children's parents do not share the same mother tongue and have no common language apart from English. Thus, English ends up becoming the home language for such parents and their children.

### **Intergenerational Transmission of Heritage Languages in Tanzania**

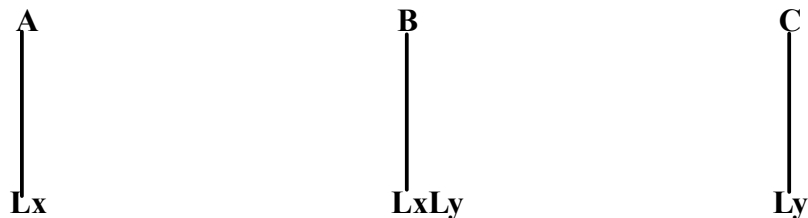
Intergeneration language transmission refers to a process through which a language is taught and learned formally or informally and makes its way from one generation to another (Borland, 2006; Purkharthofer, 2020). There is no formal education for HL in Tanzania. The transmission of these languages, like in many parts of the world, depends on the determination and efforts of older generations to maintain their languages. The process of HL transmission in Tanzania is interrupted by Kiswahili (Rosenda, 2016). This is evident as the proportion of Kiswahili speakers as the first language is increasing.

Ngonyani (1995) characterises this interruption as a kind of language shift that occurs progressively, resulting in the first language of previous generations thereby becoming different from the first language of the later generations. He uses the following illustrations to explain this type of language shift.



Fig

1: Language Maintenance



Fig

2: Progressive Language Shift

Considering **A** to be the oldest generation of grandparents, **B** to be a generation of parents, and **C** a generation of children, Fig. 1 illustrates the pre-contact scenario where all generations have the same language and where there is no indication of language shift. Fig. 2, on the other hand, shows a progressive language shift resulting in language **x** of **A** becoming different from that of **C** who shifted to language **y**. According to Ngonyani (*ibid*), this is what is observed in the Tanzanian case. Research has also shown that the majority of those who prefer to speak ethnic languages in Tanzania are the grandparents' generation

(Msanjila, 1999; Ngonyani, 1995; Ström, 2009). The parents' generation uses both ethnic languages and Kiswahili and finally, children end up using Kiswahili only.

The above illustration portrays a general trend in the process of HL transmission in Tanzania. There are, of course, some variations across the country. Batibo (1992), for example, observed that Hangaza and Haya parents at the University of Dar es Salaam ensure that their children learn their ethnic languages first as opposed to Zinza and Pogolo whose children are likely to learn Kiswahili first. In another study, Ström (2009) reports that Ndegeleko children learn their heritage language in a very limited way and that almost all children learn Kiswahili first at a very early age. She attributes this to the parents' negative attitudes towards their language. On the other hand, Ström (*ibid*) contrasts this with Matumbi parents living in the same area who are more inclined to pass their language to their children even though they live outside the area where Matumbi is spoken natively.

### **Family Language Policy and Intergenerational Language Transmission**

The community has traditionally been seen as the focus of language maintenance studies. Fisherman (1989) for instance argues that in a stable indigenous society, the mother tongue of parents is passed down to their children. Recently, however, the family has come to the attention of language maintenance researchers. This is attributed to the rapid development in the field of family language policy (Lanza and Gomez, 2020) and probably because in recent times, the stability of society according to what Fisherman (1989) meant is increasingly becoming rare.

Family language policy (FLP), as an independent field of study draws on language policy and child language acquisition fields. FLP has been defined as explicit and implicit planning about language use within the home among family members (King et al., 2008). Its concerns, following Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy, include the analysis of language beliefs or ideologies, language practices and efforts to modify or influence these practices through any kind of language intervention, planning, or management in the micro context of a family (King et al., 2008). Thus, the fundamental question that FLP seek to account for deals with the factors that lead some children raised in a bilingual environment to achieve success in acquiring both their minority/heritage language(s) and the dominant language (Smith-Christmas, 2016).

The importance of the family in intergenerational language transmission is well-documented in the literature. Fishman (1991), for example, pointed out the use of ethnic language at home as the most important point in intergenerational language transmission. Several publications, following Spolsky's (2004) components of the language policy model, have addressed a range of issues related to language use in the family such as language practice and management at home and the strategies for HL maintenance. Various variables have been identified to influence family language policy and home language maintenance. These include factors such as emotion, sense of identity, cultural practice, and social norms. Curdit-Christiansen (2009) labels these as internal factors since they are language-related variables that can maintain or break a close family bond and intimate the relationship between family members. These factors interact with external factors such as linguistic capital, language policies, and symbolic cultural value which the language represents to influence family language policy and decisions on language transmission (Curdit-Christiansen, 2009; Curdit-Christiansen and Huang, 2020).

One of the important determinants of FLP is the type of family. The consideration here is between linguistically monogamous and linguistically exogamous families. It is conceivable that language socialisation in exogamous families is more challenging than in endogamous families. The family is seen as an intragroup context where personal relationships are supported by the perception of solidarity and inclusiveness. However, recently the family has also been seen to be influenced by intergroup dynamics. As such, the nature of communication in these families may vary among members depending on the perceived sense of common affiliation or distinctiveness (Soliz et al., 2009). Since language is a significant index of ethnic identity, choosing a language to use and transmit it to the children in an interlingual family may be challenging as the competing language may affect the language policies of these families. The decision as to which language to be used may become more critical since it may influence the children's relationship with each parent's extended family.

### **Heritage Language Transmission Strategies in Linguistically Exogamous Families**

Research in FLP shows that there are three common arrangements for language transmission. These include the One parent – one language (OPOL), Minority/Heritage language at home (MLAH/HLAH), and mixed language strategy (Guardado, 2017; Smith-Christmas, 2016; Wilson, 2020). In OPOL, each parent speaks a different language to their children with the expectation that the child will use a different language to communicate with each parent. For the MLAH/HLAH arrangement, both parents select the minority language for family communication. This strategy assumes that the dominant language is the native language of one of the parents and therefore only one minority/heritage language is promoted. In the case where both parents speak a non-dominant language, one of the two heritage languages may be selected for family communication, provided that both parents are proficient in this language. In a mixed-language strategy, all family members use both parental languages for communication.

Studies in different settings have shown that, of these three minority/heritage language transmission strategies, OPOL is the most widely used followed by HLAH and mixed strategies arrangement. In terms of their effectiveness, other studies (Takeuchi, 2006; Dopke, 1998; Billings, 1990) have identified that the success of these arrangements depends on several factors including consistency in using the strategies, interactional style of the parents, and the quality and quantity of language input. HLAH has been identified as the most effective of the three (Guardado, 2017). According to Guardado, this is because the use of minority/heritage language by all family members makes it more prevalent, increases linguistic exposure, and conveys an explicit message about its significance.

Other studies have further revealed that one of the influential variables in language policy in interlingual families is the power-relation between couples (Piller, 2001; Jackson, 2007, 2009; Gordon, 2008). As Piller (2001) states, in these families, one of the parents is often positioned in an unfavourable position in the relationship, be it as a non-native speaker, a migrant, female, economically dependent, or any other positioning based on national or cultural background. Given that gender is a salient status variable in many ethnolinguistic groups, studies have explored the influence of gender on family language policy in interlingual families. It is noted that gender is one of the most persistent factors influencing the decision-making process regarding family language policy in interlingual families. Research in various settings has shown that in interlingual families, the language

spoken by the mother influences the language developed by children at home (Guardado, 2017). This may be largely attributed to the fact that in many families, mothers are primary caregivers, socialisers, and transmitters of mother tongue (Tannen, 2003; Guardado, 2017). In some contexts, such as Wales with Welsh/English families, as reported by Lyon (1996), mothers tend to accommodate the language of the father. Thus, the father's language determines the home language and subsequently, the language that is most likely transmitted to the children.

The discussion of gender power-relations among interlingual couples often suggests a disadvantageous position against women (Guardado, 2017). However, given some contextual factors, the power-relationship may shift in favour of the woman in the family. In his study, Jackson (2009) observed that power-relations in one interlingual family in Japan, with a Japanese mother and an American father, seemed to be shifted in favour of the mother. According to Jackson, the mother in this family was the primary income-earner in the family and a more active bilingual compared to the father. This elevated her to the position of a communication gatekeeper controlling both the amount and degree of interaction between the father and children. Accordingly, she even banned her husband from studying Japanese so that he could consistently provide English input to the children. Jackson's study (Jackson, 2009) highlights the importance of understanding family dynamics in comprehending family language policy. Family theorists conceptualise a family as a system comprising spousal, parent-children, and sibling subsystems with independent but coordinated elements (Schermerhorn & Cummings, 2008). These elements interact, influence, and shape each other. This understanding of the family shifts the focus on how we should view family behaviours from individual members and their rigid power relationship to their interaction and relationship with each other.

### **The Current Study**

The literature on FLP is growing and much is known about family beliefs, motivation and management of heritage language development (Curdit-Christiansen and Huang, 2020; Guardado, 2017; Lanza and Gomes, 2020; Smith-Christmas, 2016; Wilson, 2020). This literature has indicated that language policy in interlingual families is a contentious issue and that parents tend to adopt strategies to ensure that their languages are transmitted to their children. However, most studies in this area have been carried out in Western countries, especially the USA and Britain. The current study on language policy in linguistically exogamous families in Tanzania seeks to provide further insights into family language policy literature.

Language socialisation in inter-ethnic families in Tanzania may be more complex than in linguistically exogamous families in Western countries. It may involve the two parental languages and Kiswahili, which is the dominant language in Tanzania. However, in some cases, the number of languages involved may go up to five with the addition of English which is the official language and other ethnic language if the family is living beyond the areas where one of the parental languages is autochthonous. The understanding of FLP, as King et al. (2008) argue, is important as their implementation shapes children's development and determines whether a particular language will be maintained. Given that in Tanzania, like the rest of Sub-Saharan countries, the rate of inter-ethnic marriage is on the rise (Bandyopadhyay and Green, 2021), the study on language policies in these families would contribute significantly to the FLP and language maintenance literature. Thus, this paper explores the views of parents in inter-ethnic families about language beliefs,

language practices and heritage language transmission. Understanding parents' views on these issues is essential in understanding FLP as a whole.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach (Smith et al., 2009; Van Manen, 2016) in that it explores the views of the participants on family language policy in inter-ethnic families. It examined the strategies used by parents to transmit heritage languages to their children. IPA is a qualitative research methodology grounded on three philosophical underpinnings: phenomenology, which focuses on the worldview or things as they appear; hermeneutics, which concerns the interpretation of meaning about phenomena; and ideography, which has to do with understanding how particular phenomena have been understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context. These foundations make IPA a strong methodology in human science research. IPA allows for a deeper understanding of phenomena by collaborating the participants' experience of the phenomena and the researchers' perspectives. Its emphasis on obtaining the perspective of the phenomena for a particular individual in a particular context can capture the dynamics of the phenomena. Thus, for purposes of the present study, IPA can facilitate a deep understanding of intergenerational heritage language transmission through the parents' perception of language practices in the family.

### **Sampling**

The participants in this study were three male and two female ordinary Tanzanians. The ages of the participants ranged between 26 and 52 years. These samples were selected from Magu, Mwanza in north-eastern Tanzania. The indigenous language of this area is Kisukuma which is the largest ethnic language in Tanzania. The study setting is relatively urbanised, and there are people from other ethnic groups living in the area. Five parents were purposefully selected as respondents for this study. The selection was based on three criteria: (i) living with a partner from a different ethnic group (ii) having children and (iii) being proficient in one's ethnic language. Table 1 below provides a summary of the participants' information. For research ethical considerations, the names of the participants were changed to ensure anonymity.

**Table 1: Participants' Information**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gander</b>	<b>Ethnoligual</b>	<b>Children</b>
1	35	M	Chagga	2
2	43	F	Sukuma	3
3	32	M	Sukuma	1
4	26	F	Muha	2
5	52	M	Jita	3

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The method of data collection adopted in this study was an in-depth interview. The interviews were conducted in January 2023 and were guided by an interview schedule developed according to Spolsky's (2004) language policy model. These interviews allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information on language use in respondent families as well as the parents' perceptions and beliefs about ethnic language transmission of these heritage languages.

In the data analysis, interview recordings were transcribed. The transcripts were analysed according to the selective or highlight approach described by van Manen (1997). The transcripts were read several times to identify statements and phrases revealing the perception of participants on language practices and the family language policy. This process was iterative, focusing on each participants' text. The next stage involved the identification of emergent themes within the transcripts and the development of an interpretive account of what these themes meant for the participants. The last stage involved establishing a relationship between themes by developing connections between them (themes) to form a cluster or superordinate themes.

### **Findings**

Several themes emerged from the analysis of data. The themes were classified into three superordinate themes. The superordinate themes are: (1) the perceived importance of ethnic languages (2) dynamics of identity (3) language use in inter-ethnic families and (4) Heritage language transmission. Each of these themes has several sub-themes as illustrated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Emergent Themes**

<b>Language Beliefs</b>	<b>Language Practices</b>	<b>HL Transmission</b>
1. Cultural identity	1. Language choice	1. Attitude towards heritage language transmission
2. Social harmony and solidarity	2. Children agency	2. Responsibility for heritage language transmission
3. Social approval	3. Language use and psychological insecurity	
4. Language and affiliation	5. Emotions and language and language use	

### **Language Beliefs**

#### ***Cultural Identity***

All the participants in this study reported that ethnic languages are an important index of ethnicity and are closely tied to a person's culture. They also reported that ethnic languages facilitate the transmission of traditions and customs; therefore, losing an ethnic language is like losing the identity of a corresponding ethnic group. This is stated by Participant 5 as follows:

One of the importance of understanding tribal language is to be able to identify oneself at any place where one is. You will be able to say I am *Msukuma*, *Mjita*, *Mnyamwezi* or *Mhaya*. That is what identifies us. If we lose this ethnic identity, we will be hopeless (interview, own translation).

#### ***Social Harmony and Solidarity***

All the participants in this study were of the view that the use of an ethnic language created unity and bonding among members of a particular ethnic group. They reported that they used their ethnic languages with their relatives in the villages when a relative paid a



visit at home and when talking over the phone with a relative. Participant 3 explicitly stated that the use of the local language created unity among the people in the village. However, Participant 1 stated that the benefit of speaking an ethnic language was that one may get different opportunities and/or favours from a person from the same ethnic group just by speaking the language.

### ***Social Approval***

All the participants noted the importance of learning their partners' ethnic languages which enabled them to communicate effectively with their relatives in case they visited their villages. Participant 5, for instance, noted that the elders in the villages normally did not accept Kiswahili greetings and had to be greeted in their language. Participant 3 stated that speaking an ethnic language facilitated the process of gaining acceptance or approval from other members of the same ethnic group. This was illustrated by the following citation from Participant 3:

In some communities, they will speak to you in their language. They will feel bad if you do not respond. They will assume that you are arrogant but if they talk to you in their language and you can respond, they feel good and see you as one of them. (Interview)

### ***Language and Affiliation***

The majority of the participants perceived themselves as being different from people of other ethnic groups. Participants 2, 4 and 5 stated that they had indifferent attitudes towards people from other ethnic groups. However, the majority of the participants reported that Kiswahili facilitated their decision to enter into relationships with partners from different ethnicities. However, they reported that their negative perception towards other ethnicities changed after living with their partners and they realized that all people are the same. The female participants, in particular, stated that after living with their partners, all the negative perceptions and scepticism towards the idea of marrying outside their ethnic groups turned out to be misapprehensions. This view was expressed by Participant 4 as follows:

At first, I thought that endogamous marriage was the best option. I thought that I would be mistreated in a marriage with a person from another ethnic group. However, that is not what I found. (Interview)

## **Home Language Use**

### ***Language Choice***

All the participants in this study stated that they had no explicit language policy in their families. However, they reported that Kiswahili was their major home language and that they used it in almost all their interactions. However, three participants stated that they were not proficient in their partners' ethnic languages and therefore spoke Kiswahili, which is Tanzania's common language.

### ***Children's Agency***

This is the second sub-theme that emerged in the home language superordinate theme. Musa stated that they used Kiswahili because the children had not yet mastered their languages. Neema and Miche also stated that they used Kiswahili to help their children with school language needs. The language of instruction in primary schools in Tanzania is

Kiswahili. Its use at home is perceived as creating environments that are facilitative to help children master their ethnic languages.

### ***Language Use and Psychological Insecurity***

A sense of insecurity and isolation was reported by Participants 1, 3 and 4 whenever partners communicated with relatives using an ethnic language. As mentioned previously, these participants were not proficient in their partners' ethnic languages. Hence, whenever ethnic languages were used by a partner to communicate with relatives at home or over the phone, they felt isolated and insecure as they could not understand anything. For instance, Participant 1 stated that he found it awkward whenever his spouse spoke with her relatives in her ethnic language:

I cannot understand when she speaks in her language. Sometimes you get the feeling that they are gossiping about you. There is a feeling that you want to understand what they are speaking. (Interview)

### ***Emotion and Language Use***

Some of the participants stated that they normally used their or their partners' ethnic languages at home to make jokes or engage in sarcasm with other family members. Yet others, as stated by Participant 2, felt that sometimes they found themselves using ethnic languages, especially whenever they were in a particular mood.

Any time, and that happens frequently, especially when talking to a child who has either excited or angered you. You find yourself using your language or their father's language or sometimes both. (Interview)

## **Heritage Language Transmission**

### ***Attitude Towards Heritage Language Transmission***

The findings of this study revealed that the participants had a strong positive attitude towards their ethnic languages. They believed that it is very important for children to learn both their mother's and father's languages and that they would feel happy if their children mastered these languages. However, one participant had a contradictory opinion. He said it was not very important that children should learn ethnic languages. He viewed the latter as having limited utility. He felt that communication in these languages was only restricted to relatives in villages. This is how Participant 3 summarised the above point:

The child will gradually learn because relatives from the village come and don't understand the language (Kiswahili) very well. Languages are used as tools for business or work. If you establish that the child must learn this language or that, there is a chance that he will go somewhere and not be able to communicate. (Interview)

### ***Responsibility for Heritage Language Transmission***

Despite the desire for children to learn their languages, two participants (Participants 3 and Participants 4) stated that they did not have any explicit strategy to teach these languages to their children. Participant 2 insisted that children should use ethnic language greetings in the morning and that she sometimes talked to her children in ethnic languages. Insistence on the use of ethnic language greetings was also reported by Participant 5 who, in addition, insisted that children should use ethnic languages at home. The other explicit strategy reported was using grandparents and relatives in villages to

teach heritage languages to their children. Participant 1, for instance, consented that he often sent his children to the village to their grandparents to learn their ethnic language. Consequently, Participant 2 conceived grandparents and relatives from villages as being more competent in teaching the heritage language to the children. He had this to say:

If maybe my mother visits me here, she will start talking to the children using her ethnic language because where she is coming from, she frequently uses that language and she is experienced. Therefore, when the children interact with their grandmother and other relatives from the village, they learn that language. (Interview)

### **Summary of the Findings**

What emerged from the data generated is that the participants demonstrated a lot of pride in their ethnic languages. The participants demonstrated that they had a strong attachment to their ethnic languages. However, despite this attachment, the participants rarely used these languages at home and did not have any explicit strategies to teach their children these languages. As a result, Kiswahili remains the dominant language in the participants' families. The reason for using Kiswahili is to help children learn it and because it is the language that is common in the family.

### **Discussion**

The findings of the current study support several findings in the literature. They present new insights into this literature. The participants perceived ethnic languages as custodians of culture and social cohesion among clan members. These findings are consistent with several other previous studies which have shown that ethnic languages play an important role in maintaining social cohesion and intergenerational relationships by strengthening emotional ties between group members (Okita, 2002; de Houwer, 2015).

In addition, ethnic languages helped to index group membership and served as a vehicle through which cultural practices, customs and norms are transmitted from generation to generation. Ideally, this pro-ethnic language belief system was perceived as a determining factor for home language practices and management in favour of ethnic languages (Curdt-Christiansen and Huang, 2020; de Houwer, 1999). Such beliefs subsume what Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) called internal variables that determine FLP. According to the above language scholars, internal variables influence language policy since they have the potential to break or maintain a close family bond and intimate relationship between family members. Contrary to the expected outcome of pro-ethnic language beliefs, the finding revealed that Kiswahili is the main language used in the participants' families. These findings coincide with Ström's study (Ström, 2009) which observed that the Ndengeleko expressed pride in their language although they had given up its usage in favour of Kiswahili. This mismatch between beliefs and language practices puts to question the link between language beliefs and language practices. However, echoing Woolard's contribution (Woolard, 2021) on the interplay between language ideology and other social phenomena, language beliefs forge relationships with other social phenomena such as identity, parenting, success and macro policies.

These factors interact with language beliefs to shape family language policy.

Language use in the family is inextricably related to family dynamics. Generally, the family is perceived as an intergroup context with members sharing a common identity (source). Patterns of interaction in the family are considered to be one of the important factors that

establish and maintain this intergroup identity. Research has shown that individuals tend to adjust their communication behaviour to engender a common identity or distancing themselves (Giles and Ogay, 2007; Harwood et al., 2006; Mahadir et al., 2014). Thus, the use of Kiswahili in the participants' families may be seen as a communication accommodating strategy which projects the common identity of the family. This may explain the insecurity they experience when their partners communicate using their ethnic languages. The majority of the participants had limited proficiency in their partners' ethnic languages; therefore, the use of these languages excluded them from communication.

This study also noted that the parents' beliefs about the learning of their children's heritage language and their roles as parents in this process can determine language practices in the family. This 'impact belief' in de Houwer's (1999) strict sense of the term, may be instantiated through parents' efforts to transmit heritage languages and language use in the family. De Houwer (1999) sees the beliefs of the parents' impact as having a substantial effect on parents' linguistic behaviours. The impact beliefs, for example, can be strong and therefore result in parents providing a supportive environment for the learning of languages such as making deliberate decisions to use a particular heritage language with their children and encouraging them to learn it. In contrast, impact beliefs may be weak with parents believing they cannot influence their children's language learning process.

The data in this study indicate that the participants had weak impact beliefs regarding the transmission of their ethnic languages to their children. The first relates to their responsibility in transmitting the heritage language. As the findings revealed, two participants reported not having explicit strategies for teaching their children their ethnic languages. This suggests they did not see themselves as responsible agents for their children's heritage language development. They believed that the children would gradually learn their heritage languages even though no explicit strategies were used to attain that goal. The other reason which indicates the participants' weak impact belief is their dependence on children's grandparents and relatives in the village to socialize the children in the heritage languages. Although these relatives living in the villages may be more suitable candidates for heritage language socialisation as ethnic languages as they still speak these languages predominantly, this strategy may not be sustainable as it does not guarantee exposure to ethnic language input and socialisation. The participants' weak impact belief coincides with Ström's (2009) findings. The participants in her study expressed regret that their language was disappearing. They believed they had no power to change the situation. They blamed the older generation for not making enough effort to pass the language to the younger ones. Others even complained about their children not knowing the languages.

As earlier mentioned, one of the determinants of family language policy is at the macro policy level. The predominance of Kiswahili in Tanzania and the apparent parents' weak impact belief is closely linked to the language macro policies in Tanzania. Kiswahili has been successfully promoted as the main language of communication in Tanzania as well as a symbol of nationalism and national unity. It has been perceived as and has become a language for all Tanzanians; it is a functional language in government business, education, mass media and popular culture. In contrast, ethnic languages are restricted in their use and are normally associated with a tribalistic discourse. It is therefore not surprising that some interviewees in Ström's (2009) study stated that it was in their interest to abandon their backward culture and language in favour of Kiswahili, the national language. This

contrastive position between Kiswahili and ethnic languages favours the use of Kiswahili in families. As Curdt-Christiansen (2009) argues regarding home language practices for intergenerational language transmission, parents usually want what will strengthen the family's social standing and usually do their best to support their children. It is therefore unlikely, as demonstrated by the findings in this study, that parents will make an effort to teach their children a language they see will not bring social economic benefits. Despite expressing a positive attitude towards their ethnic languages and their transmission to their children, no efforts have been made in Tanzania nor have explicit strategies been employed to teach the children their heritage languages.

### **Conclusion**

This study's objectives were to explore parents' views in inter-ethnic families about their languages and home language use. It sought to examine the language strategies used to transmit their ethnic languages to their children. The participants in this study were clear about the significance of ethnic languages in maintaining cultural identity and forging family ties. The study has reflected the participant's pro-ethnic language beliefs, language practices and management in the family. However, it has been found that Kiswahili is predominantly used in the families under investigation and that generally, no efforts have been made as demonstrated by the use of non-sustainable strategies to transmit heritage languages to their children. Minority language survival is dependent on the success of intergenerational language transmission at home, as is demonstrated in the cited language maintenance literature. Parents who are proud of their ethnic languages should do more to ensure that their children learn those languages. Parents should be informed that using heritage languages at home and adopting explicit, more sustainable strategies is the most sustainable method of transmitting ethnic languages to their children.

In conclusion, macro policies have a significant impact on the influence of parents' language beliefs on the family language policy. Thus, for a family to effectively function as a focal point for intergenerational transmission, there is a need for Tanzania to adopt pro-ethnic language policies.

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