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Abstract

The article explores the mutual relationship—or reflexivity— between language socialisation and child agency. Framing this exploration within the sociolinguistic subfield known as ‘Family Language Policy’ (‘FLP’), this article will begin by discussing two respective models developed (a) to better theorise successful language acquisition in an FLP context and (b) to conceptualise how children construct their agency through language. These models will be implemented in analysing interactions in a family in which the mother is making a great effort transmit the autochthonous minority language Scottish Gaelic to her children. It will show how although initially her attempts in fostering her son Billy’s linguistic development in Scottish Gaelic appear to be ‘unsuccessful,’ later in the interaction, Billy actively uses Scottish Gaelic in playing a card game, evidencing his competency in the language not only in the linguistic sense, but in his embedded knowledge of the power of language in achieving certain interactional functions. The article also highlights Billy’s association between Scottish Gaelic and the school context, and how this reality adds a somewhat paradoxical layer of complexity to viewing his use of Gaelic in an agentive light.

Introduction

Within the last decade, the sociolinguistic subfield known as ‘Family Language Policy’ (‘FLP’) has forged a path in exploring the interrelated nature of the social, emotional, and ideological dimensions of child language acquisition (Luykx, 2003; King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry, 2008; see also Curdt-Christiansen and Huang, 2020), framing perspectives on child

language socialisation (e.g. Ochs and Schiefflin, 1986) within a language policy framework (e.g. Spolsky, 2004). Generally, FLP studies focus on families in multilingual environments and/or families who use more than one language in the home; and in the early years of the field especially, emphasis lay in the factors which lead to the child's successful (or unsuccessful) acquisition of a minority language(s), i.e. the lesser-used language in the child's immediate sociocultural environment (King, 2016). These factors in turn can be distilled into two main overarching categories: the child's *input* and *output* in the minority language—for example, in terms of input, how much of the minority language does the caregiver speak to the child; in what circumstances; and to what extent is the caregiver's decision to use the minority mediated by particular realities in their wider sociocultural milieu? Similarly, caregivers' management of the child's linguistic output (*cf.* Spolsky's 2004 language policy model) can also have a profound impact on the child's linguistic development, as illustrated for example in Lanza's (1997) well-known study of the discourse strategies that caregivers may use when the child uses the 'wrong' language in a particular context. Lanza underscores how practices which reify a particular utterance in the 'wrong' language as 'faultable' (Goffman, 1979)—such as not answering the child or repeating the word in the 'right' language—tend to lead to more successful linguistic development outcomes than those practices in which the caregivers take a more *laissez-faire* approach to the child's language use.

In recent years, however, FLP research has interrogated the concept of 'success,' especially in terms of using the child's linguistic output as the main or sole benchmark by which 'success' is gauged (Schwartz and Verschik, 2013; Smith-Christmas, Bergroth, and Bezcioğlu-Göktolga, 2019; Wilson, 2020; Espinoza and Wigglesworth, 2022). One critique is that FLP tends to rely on a tacit understanding of 'successful' language acquisition as the child's age-

appropriate carbon copy of the caregiver's language use (Smith-Christmas and Ruiséal, 2022). In tandem with this critique, a further development in the field has been a far greater emphasis on the child's agency in shaping the contexts and outcomes of language use in the family (e.g. Fogle, 2012; Gyogi, 2015; Bergroth and Palviainen 2017; van Mensel, 2018; Said and Hua, 2019; Danjo, 2021). Although language socialisation has long acknowledged the reflexive relationship between caregivers and children in this process (e.g. Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Duranti, Ochs, and Schiefflin 2011), in its initial outcome-oriented approach, FLP has lagged behind, and is now only fully coming to terms with the important role that children play in shaping the language policies of everyday family interactions.

The purpose of this article is to continue these lines of questioning and will begin by discussing two models I developed to better theorise 'success' in intergenerational language transmission and child agency in FLP respectively. I will then apply these models to interactions in a family in which the mother is making a great effort to use the autochthonous minority language Scottish Gaelic as the main language of interaction. It will show how although her attempts for foster her son's linguistic development in Scottish Gaelic appear to be 'unsuccessful' (i.e. he answers her using English), later in the interaction, he actively uses Scottish Gaelic with me the researcher in playing a card game. The article will discuss the association between Scottish Gaelic and the school context for this child, and how this reality adds a somewhat paradoxical layer of complexity to viewing the child's use of Gaelic in an agentive light. The article will conclude by how this analysis sheds further light on the intricate reflexivity between language socialisation and child agency.

Towards a deeper understanding of 'successful' language acquisition and child agency in FLP Research

In order to have a fuller understanding of the following analysis in the following sections, I will briefly introduce two models that I developed in previous publications (Smith-Christmas, 2021; 2022). The first introduced was designed to address the problem of opaqueness in defining 'success' in FLP, especially when using children's output as the means to gauging this success. *Saibhreas* means 'richness' in the Irish language (a close linguistic relative of Scottish Gaelic, the language under scope in this paper). This model grew out of work in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht in Ireland, in which it became clear caregivers' language development efforts for their children centre around the overarching goal of the children possessing *saibhreas*—that is, 'richness' of language. *Saibhreas* in turn can be delineated into three components: linguistic competence; local use of language; and embodied language use. These three components are meant to be read as porous and intersecting and are illustrated in the diagram below:

[Figure 1 Goes Here]

The first of these components is *competence*, which, consists of phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.—in other words, language acquisition in the traditional sense. The second component is use of *local* linguistic forms. In the context in which the model was originally developed, it was clear that caregivers wanted their children to use the local dialect of Irish—in this case, Corca Dhuibhne Irish). (In extending the *saibhreas* model beyond autochthonous minority language context to other relevant contexts, such as be as immigrant heritage languages, the goal of 'local speech norms' can be seen as analogous to caregivers' desire for children to speak their heritage language as a 'native' of that country for example). This third component—embodiment— is

perhaps the most ephemeral of all three components. My use of this term is intended to transcend the relationship of language to physical choices (e.g. Pennycook, 2009), and in this context it means the speaker's use of the language as an embodied part of being and worldview, somewhat similar to Agar's (1994) notion of 'languaculture' or Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'habitus.' For many children in minority language contexts, it is not necessarily the case that the children see the language as one through which they can experience the entirety of their social and emotional worlds. Instead, it may operate as an artefact, its use limited to traditional activities, performances, or the school context, which in turn impacts the child's relationship with the language (Meek, 2007; Will, 2012; Smith-Christmas, 2017). Embodiment therefore is the idea that the children *want* to use the minority language and that it functions as a normal vehicle of communication, forming an inalienable part of how children shape their worldviews and modes of being. Embodiment therefore forms a bridge between the linguistic nature of language acquisition and the less tangible though no less important, social and emotional aspects of 'knowing' a language, related to Taylor's (2010, p. 25) concept that 'reflexive enculturation' is the means by which 'the child crosses the categorial gap from the behavioral and physical properties of linguistic development to those properties whose cultural reality is reflected in the metalinguistic ''truisms" of commonsense.'

Drawing on the rich sociological perspectives on agency (e.g. Giddens, 1979; Taylor, 1985; Bourdieu, 1997), the second model integrates FLP research (e.g. Gyogi, 2015; Revis, 2016) with vantage points from the interdisciplinary field of children's studies (e.g. Prout, 2005; Esser, Baader, Betz, and Hungerland, 2016; Moran-Ellis and Tisdall, 2019). The purpose of this model is to help illuminate *how* a child's particular linguistic choice in a given instance can be considered agentive and the repercussions of such agentive work within the interaction. As

Punch (2002, p. 126) emphasises, there are many reasons why a child may make a particular choice—linguistic or otherwise— and the multitude of factors of which influence that certain choice, as well as the weight of certain factors opposed to others—can be difficult to delineate. This model sees a particular linguistic choice as a manifestation of four components, which, parallel to the *saibhreas* model, are intended to be read as porous and intersecting. The first component is compliance regimes, which refers to *how* a caregiver sets up a particular language as the compliant choice—for example, Lanza's 1997 study mentioned earlier, in which the the caregiver could reify a child's linguistic choice as the non-compliant choice through various means, i.e. silence. Conversely, the caregiver could choose *not* to mark the child's choice as non-compliant, as shown in Gafaranga's (2010) study of the Rwandan community in Belgium, where children and caregivers often found themselves in what the author refers to as 'parallel mode'—that is, the caregivers would speak in Kinyarwanda, the children would consistently answer speak in French, Over time, the accretion of interactional practices over space and time can become a linguistic norm, as Gafaranga shows in his study. He always shows the reflexive nature between such practices and the child's linguistic competence, which parallel to the *saibhreas* model, also refers to the linguistic dimensions of language: the less the child is spoken to in Kinyarwanda, the less opportunity there is to develop their Kinyarwanda, which thus solidifies their preference for the majority language, French. Finally, generational positioning refers to the expected power differential between caregiver and child. The double-pronged arrows illustrate the reflexivity inherent in a particular instance of language choice and the structures in which this choice is embedded: in this case, the accreted family interactions (inner circle) and the interactional milieu of wider society (outer circle), as seen below:

[Figure 2 Goes Here]

The purpose of introducing these two models here is that they will come to bear on the discussion of the conversational excerpts to follow in this paper. This article will analyse how firstly how a Scottish Gaelic mother will try to foster her child's development of Scottish Gaelic, yet how in spite of these efforts her child continually answers her in English. Rather than see this as a failure, however, the in spite of what could be characterised as a failure on the FLP front, the article then looks at how the child does indeed use Scottish Gaelic with me, and it will discuss components of the agency model to illustrate the importance of the child's agentive use of the language.

Background: Scottish Gaelic in Steòrnabhagh

This article is based on a larger FLP study supported by an Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship entitled 'The Challenges of Minority Language Maintenance: Family Language Policy in Scotland and Ireland' (GOIPD/2016/644). Overall, six families were involved in the study, three of whom live in the three of whom live in the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, an officially designated Irish-speaking area in the west of County Kerry, and three of whom live in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, an archipelago of islands off Scotland's west coast. The Outer Hebrides of Scotland are considered the 'heartlands' of Scottish Gaelic, an autochthonous language spoken by less than 58,000 speakers in Scotland as of the most recent census (National Records of Scotland, 2011). Like other endangered languages worldwide, this minoritised position follows from centuries of disenfranchisement and oppression of its speakers (see McLeod, 2020, for the most recent and thorough analysis of this trajectory). The Outer

Hebrides have a population of 27,684 people, 52.2% of whom are Gaelic speakers. A recent report by Ó Giollagáin et al. (2020) underscores the dire situation of the Gaelic language in terms of intergenerational transmission in its core areas, which in turn echoes a report nearly a decade ago which stated that intergenerational transmission of Gaelic had 'all but ended' in Siabost, a core Gaelic-speaking community on the Isle of Lewis, the largest of the Outer Hebrides islands (Munro, Taylor, and Armstrong, 2011, p 4).

The family that is the focal point of this article is located in Steòrnabhagh (in English, Stornoway), which is the main centre for civic and commercial life on the Isle of Lewis as well as the whole of the Outer Hebrides, with 43.5% of the population of 6,200 having the ability to speak Gaelic (National Records of Scotland, 2013). Community use of the language, however, is very low: Birnie (2018) for instance finds that interlocutors use Gaelic in less than 10% of their encounters with each other in the public arena, a finding also underscored in the 2005 WILPP report (pp. 23-24), which discusses how even though speakers may know that they *can* use Gaelic in a particular public space or with a particular speaker, little than half actually do so.

One area that has been a particular area of *positive* development for the language has been the immersive model of Gaelic education known as Gaelic Medium Education' ('GME'). However, it is important to note that GME exists only as 'units' within wider English-speaking schools. Although currently children in the Outer Hebrides are automatically opted in to GME, they still have the choice to attend English Medium. Historically, enrollment in GME is low compared to English-medium education: for example, in Stockdale, Munro and MacGregor's (2003) study of parental choice and GME, they found that Laxdale Primary in Steòrnabhagh had only 14% of pupils enrolled in GME, compared to 86% of pupils enrolled in English-medium education. This is despite 51% of Laxdale parents reporting some ability in Gaelic, with 19% of these parents

classifying themselves as ‘fluent or native’ speakers of the language. Further, because of the low use of Gaelic in the community and the low number of parents transmitting the language to their children, English is the peer group language for GME children. The fact that Gaelic is *not* spoken frequently within the community but *is* spoken in school means that Gaelic can have the association of ‘school language’ for the children (Smith-Christmas, 2017). This point will play particular importance in considering the agentive dimensions of the child’s language use in the excerpts to follow.

Methodology

The methodology of ‘The Challenges of Minority Language Maintenance: Family Language Policy in Scotland’ and Ireland’ (2016-2018) focuses primarily on valorising the children’s voices, and thus, employed spontaneous audio recordings of the children engaged in different activities. Sometimes the children’s caregivers, such as parents and grandparents, took part in the interactions, while at other times I interacted with the children on my own. Activities included games, decorating cookies, playing in the snow, playing with toys, jumping on the trampoline, family meal times, etc.—in other words, the range of the children’s home activities outside of the school day. For each family involved in the study, I would visit each of the families approximately three to five times, resulting in recording times of approximately three to seven hours per family. At least three hours per family interactions were then transcribed, either by me or by a research assistant fluent in Irish or Scottish Gaelic. Parallel to my previous research in FLP (Smith-Christmas, 2017), I employ a Conversational Analytic approach (CA) to language choice (e.g. Auer, 1984) as well as a quantitative element in exploring the transcribed corpus. The quantitative element is intended to show children’s *overall* language choice and, as in my

previous work, employs the turn as the unit of analysis in coding for language choice: Minority Language (Irish or Scottish Gaelic); English; Mixed; or Undecided. Although recent trends in sociolinguistics such as 'translanguaging' (Li Wei and Garcia, 2015) have steered away from discussing 'named languages,' I deem this overall picture in terms of coding for language choice in the traditional sense as useful for a number of reasons. First of all, it provide a concrete means for me to validate one of the key observations arising from the recording sessions with each of the families: the Irish children spoke much more Irish than the Scottish children spoke Gaelic: out of 962 conversational turns, the Irish children used the minority language in 798 turns (82% of their overall turns), while out of 776 overall turns, the Scottish children used Scottish Gaelic in 265 of their turns (34% of their overall turns). One striking element of this overall language use dimension is that while I spoke Scottish Gaelic proficiently, my Irish was limited at the time I met the Irish families. Irish however remained the *de facto l*anguage of communication between the Irish children and me as a researcher, and they did not switch to English even in cases where I clearly did not understand what they were saying. My lack of proficiency in Irish seemed to mean that I took on the role of 'big kid,' where for the Scottish children, I appeared to occupy a sort of 'teacher-friend' role in their homes With the Scottish children, although it was clear in some cases Scottish Gaelic was the language they actively *wanted* to use, in other instances, their use of Gaelic appeared to be a manifestation of them using the 'polite code' with the teacher-friend figure. The following will show how the mother in the Steòrnabhagh family tries to facilitate *saibhreas* through her language use, especially in trying to support her son's embodiment of the language. However, in spite of these efforts, he still uses English with her, which could be taken to suggest that her FLP has not been a success. However, in the section following, I will detail how in spite of this apparent lack of success, the focal child does evidence

his success in other ways, namely, in enacting his agency in contributing to establishing Gaelic as the 'game language.'

'Guess Who': The interplay of *saibhreas* and agency

The following excerpts focus on interactions centred around playing the game 'Guess Who,' a card game where players ask questions of each other to guess which person card the other player has. The interactants in these excerpts are me the researcher ('Cassie' in the transcript); Billy[1] (aged 9) and his mother Jenny. The opening of the conversational excerpt illustrates Jenny's efforts to facilitate her son Billy's *saibhreas*, which is emblematic of Jenny's long-term perseverance to maintain Gaelic in the home. Originally from Glasgow, Jenny is a heritage speaker of Scottish Gaelic (see Armstrong, 2013), meaning that while she was not socialised in the language as a child, her father (from the Isle of Skye) is a speaker of the language. As described in another publication (Smith-Christmas, Bergroth, and Bezcioğlu-Göktolga, 2019), Jenny went to great lengths to learn Scottish Gaelic to fluency as an adult. As well, upon the family's move from Switzerland (where she and her husband were working at the time) to Steòrnabhagh, the Jenny made a concerted effort to make Gaelic the language of the home and especially to rear her youngest child (Billy's younger brother Pàdraig, aged 6) through Gaelic. Her husband is originally from Limerick, Ireland, and approximates what Carty (2018) terms a 'potential new speaker' in that although in some cases he lacks fluency in the language, he is steadily building his ability to use the language in a variety of situations.

[1] All names of the family (including the dog) are pseudonyms.

In terms of Billy's own use of Gaelic, Gaelic accounted for 77 of his overall 276 conversational turns (28%), while English accounted for 165 of his total 276 turns (60%). A further 32 turns were coded as 'Mixed' (12%) and two were coded as 'Undecided' (0.1%). Billy generally uses English with his younger brother Pàdraig as well as his older sister Catriona (16), both of whom also use English with him. As seen in the following excerpt, Billy also tends to use English with his mother Jenny, in spite of her consistent use of Gaelic:

Excerpt 1[2]

1	Billy	STÒR! Ah! (you're all-) @@ lick-y licks all over me he licks all over me is that all you do is that all you can do, Storr? Is that all you can do- lick? Very sure it <u>is</u> very sure it <u>is</u>
((Stòr sneezes))		
2	Jenny	*dè tha sin mu dhèidhinn* eh? (.) mmm*?*=
		what's that about eh?
3	Billy	=I think that was a sneeze Mum
4	Jenny	*Uill, tha ise ag ràdh, am b' urrainn dhomh bruidhinn-*
		well she's saying can I speak
		bruidhinn ri Cassie airson a bith air an recording *aice air clàradh*
		speak with Cassie to be her recording recorded
5	Cassie	yeah *bidh thusa a' bruidhinn riumsa*
		<u>you</u> speak to <u>me</u>
		bidh thusa a' bruidhinn riumsa
		<u>you</u> speak to <u>me</u>
		(.) tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil tòrr agad ri ràdh-
		I think you have a lot to say
		a bheil tòrr agad ri ràdh? { }Tha
		have you a lot to say? You do
6	Jenny	[[(?) Cassie mmm-hmm] *tha mi a' bruidhinn le- leis ag imlich*
		I'm speaking by licking
		duine, a' toirt còrgaire [[yeah]
		people, giving a paw
7	Cassie	[[yeah]
8	Billy	[[okay]
9	Jenny	oo-oops
10	Billy	so *am bi mi a' tòirt duine bhon* pile *sin airson*
		am I dealing people from this **pile** for
11	Cassie	yeah, *agus bidh mise a' faighinn duine bhon uh-*

[2] Transcription conventions listed at end of the article.

		and I am getting people from
12	Billy	((inaudible)) *an duine seo*?
		this person?
13	Cassie	yep (.) okay (.) *a bheil thusa airson tòiseachadh*?
		do you want to start?
14	Billy	[[okay *a bheil- tha a bheil* uh *ad air an duine agad*?]
		is is is there a hat on your person?
15	Jenny	[[okay *tòisichidh mi dìnnear a-nis*]
		I'll start dinner now
16	Cassie	*chan eil*
		no
17	Billy	okay so *a h-uile duine le adan*
		everyone with hats
18	Jenny	*Cassie faodaidh tu ((?))* ((pats cushion)) *tha sin nas cofhurtail=*
		Cassie you can it's more comfortable
19	Cassie	=oh *tapadh leat=*
		thank you
20	Jenny	*=an àite am fear aig Stòrr ach tha fear aice fhèin*, eh*?*
		instead of Storr's one but she has her own one, eh?
21	Billy	right *an* turn *agadsa*
		your turn
22	Cassie	um *a bheil- speuclairean air an duine agad?=*
		does your person have glasses on?
23	Billy	*=tha*
		yes

At first glance, this interaction may look peculiar, particularly in Turns 1-6. This is because each interactant is participating in the conversation through speaking to a non-responding interactant: the dog Stòr. Consistent with research on speech directed at dogs (e.g. Mitchell, 2001), the speech of the interactants shares a number of features with child-directed speech, including a higher intonation, increased emphasis on words and frequent repetition, as seen for example in Billy's Turn 1 (e.g. the repetition of 'very sure it is' with emphasis on the word 'is') or Cassie's Turn 5 ('*bidh thusa a' bruidhinn riumsa*' 'You are speaking to me' with the '*sa*' grammatically marking emphasis on 'you' and 'me'). Another feature of dog-directed speech in this particular excerpt is role substitution, where the human interactants take on the 'voice' of the dog (cf. Tannen's 2006 concept of 'talking the dog'), such as seen in Jenny's Turns 4 and 6 (e.g. '*tha mi a' bruidhinn le- leis ag imlich duine'* 'I'm speaking by-by licking

people’). Another facet of role substitution is that human interactants answer their own questions directed at the dog, such as Cassie’s in Turn 6, where she answers ‘*tha*’ (‘yes’), which is preceded by an ingressive sound, (which is a typical feature of older speakers’ Gaelic; see Smith-Christmas, 2012). It is clear from these turns that both Jenny and Cassie choose to use Gaelic in addressing Stòr, which aligns with Jenny’s strongly pro-Gaelic FLP and Cassie’s desire to align with Jenny’s strongly pro-Gaelic FLP while in Jenny’s house (and in conducting the research with all the families involved in this project). Billy on the other hand chooses to use English, which aligns with his general preference for using English in the home. In another conversation in the corpus, Billy details how he sometimes speaks to Stòr in Gaelic using simply commands such as ‘*suidhe*’ (‘sit down’) or *laigh* (‘lie’); however, for the most part he uses his habitual code—English—in addressing Stòr.

It is argued that rather than just talking *to* and *for* the dog, what Jenny is doing here is attempting to foster Billy’s embodiment with Scottish Gaelic. Billy is extremely fond of Stòr, and by speaking to the dog in Gaelic, Jenny is contributing to his positive emotional relationship in the language. Gaelic is a language used in a positively emotionally-valenced interaction, which helps to delaminate the language from a strict association with school, as discussed earlier. Additionally, Jenny is providing other avenues for Billy to build his *saibhreas* in her use of Gaelic to and for the dog; it provides a source of input in the language and it also models the use of certain lexical items more specific to animals, such as *còg* (‘paw’). Thus, even though Billy may not evidence his own *saibhreas* in terms of Gaelic in addressing the dog—as he uses English to achieve this particular interactional task—he at least is given the means by which to further develop his *saibhreas*.

In Turn 10, Billy breaks his habitual code of English in using Gaelic to shift the conversation back towards the game we have just set up together: "Guess Who." Here, his code-switch has a dual function: as Billy's habitual code is English, the use of Gaelic draws attention to his utterance, thus achieving his goal of re-centring the interaction on the game, rather than on Stòr. It also works to establish Gaelic as the language of the game, which is another facet of the interaction that, at first glance, makes this interaction look strange: here, we refer to the cards simply as 'people' as each card has a picture of a person on it, and we are asking questions about each other's 'person' ('*an duine agad*') in order to work out who is on each other's separate card. Gaelic functions as the language of interaction for all components of the game—first in clarifying how the game is played (Turns 10-12); establishing and continuing turn-taking in the game (Turns 11 and 21); and then the playing of the game itself, which involves asking and answering questions about the person on each other's separate card, such as whether or not the person wearing a hat or glasses (Turns 14, 16; Turns 22, 23). Billy also uses Gaelic in his self-reflection talk in Turn 17, in which he eliminates all the cards where the people are wearing hats ('*a h-uile duine le adan*' 'everyone with hats'). Thus, it is clear that Gaelic is the language of interaction for the game, rather than being a dual-lingual conversation (Saville-Troike, 1987) where I speak Gaelic and Billy answers in English (e.g. the adjacency pair in Turns 2 and 3 where Billy speaks to his mother in English while she has used Gaelic in her previous turn).

By taking an intersectional view of agency as discussed in the previous sections, we are able to more completely see *how* Billy uses language to construct his agency within the frame, and how this in turn impacts the interaction. In terms of his linguistic competency, overall, Billy is a competent Gaelic speaker, but is much more competent in English. However, what is significant here is that Billy effectively uses his competence to establish Gaelic as the 'game

language.' In doing so, Billy also achieves drawing the attention towards the game after I have become distracted by Stòr. Thus, Billy exhibits his competence not only in the linguistic sense, but also in terms of his knowledge of the power of the effect that language can have in shifting the dynamics of a particular interaction. By using Gaelic in initiating the game and then sustaining the use of Gaelic throughout the game, Billy and I co-create a norm with the game (Gaelic as 'game language'), which in turn relates to other dimensions of a child agency model discussed previously. First, it relates to both the 'generational positioning' and the 'compliancy regimes,' as I argue that part of the motivation for Billy's use of Gaelic here relates to my status as a 'teacher friend' and the concept that the use of Gaelic with this 'teacher-friend' complies with established politeness norms in this particular context (*cf*. Brown and Levinson, 1978). Billy therefore is only indexing Gaelic as the 'school code' and its relationship to my status in the interaction, but he is also appealing to my 'positive face' by using my preferred of Gaelic.

Throughout the interaction, Gaelic continues to be the language that functions as the 'game language,' both in all aspects of the game, as well as in discussing other games, such as when I explain the similarities between 'Guess Who' and 'Twenty Questions.' Billy asks a number of follow-up questions in understanding my explanation 'Twenty Questions' and does so using Gaelic. In embarking on our last round of 'Guess Who' however, we become distracted by the fact that it is hailing and Jenny, who has been preparing supper, joins in the conversation again, as seen below:

Excerpt 2

1	Cassie	^okay^ *nì sinn sin*=
		we will do that
2	Billy	=okay *aon* round *eile*=
		one more round
3	Cassie	yeah *aon* round *eile agus 's dòcha* (.) *nach dèan mi mearachd mar sin @@*
		one more round and perhaps I won't make a mistake like that
		°ok *ceart* (.) *am faca tu an dealan+ a-muigh*? oh *tha clachan-meallain ann*!

		right did you see the lightening[3] outside[4]? there's hail!
4	Jenny	[[*tha Pàdraig taobh a-muigh fhathast*]
		Pàdraig's still outside
5	Billy	[[I think it's supposed to be snowing tomorrow]
6	Cassie	*tha e taobh a-muigh <u>fhathast</u>?*
		he's still outside?
7	Jenny	yeah:::
8	Cassie	*a' cluich?*
		playing?
9	Jenny	yes *a' cluich*=
		playing
10	Cassie	*=anns a' chlachan m-* =
		in the hail-
11	Jenny	*bha mi ag ràdh sin*
		I was saying that
		sin an adhbhar a bha mi ag ràdh nach eil thu ag iarraidh cluich outside=
		that's the reason I was saying you don't want to play outside
12	Billy	=apparently it's supposed to be snowing tomorrow
13	Cassie	wow
14	Jenny	*Càit a bheil- càit a bheil Pàdraig*? Uhhh. [[(?)]
		where- where's Pàdraig?
15	Billy	[[he's probably like in L's house or something]

Here, Billy and I have just decided to play one more round of the 'Guess Who' game. We use Gaelic in jointly making this decision (Turns 1-3), but before we embark on the game, I turn the topic of the conversation to the weather, first asking Billy if he saw the lightning (which from the recording sounds as if I incorrectly use the word '*dealan*' meaning 'electricity' instead of '*dealanach*' meaning 'lightning'), then, following the barrage of hail that can be heard on the roof, I exclaim that it is hailing (Turn 3). Jenny, who has been in the other room, then comments that Pàdraig is still outside (Turn 4) while Billy simultaneously announces that snow is predicted for the next day (Turn 5). Parallel to the last example, where Jenny used Gaelic and Billy used English, here we see the emergence of the same dual-lingual pattern. This is highlighted most

[3] I have glossed it here as 'lightening' because that is what I meant- however, on the recording, you cannot hear the 'ach' at the end of the word ('dealanach'), so it actually sounds like I have said ('electricity').
[4] This should be 'taobh a-muigh' (as we see in Jenny's Turn 4) instead of simply 'a-muigh.'

clearly in the adjacency pair in Turns 14 and 15: Jenny, who has gone back into the kitchen/dining area and is presumably looking out the window, asks about Pàdraig's whereabouts. Pàdraig has been playing with a friend in the shared garden area and Billy suggests that Pàdraig and the friend have gone into the friend's house. Billy uses English to do so, even though his mother has asked him the question in Gaelic. Gaelic therefore is clearly reserved for the game, while English fulfils most other roles in Billy's communicative repertoire.

In considering the motivations behind Billy's strong reification of Gaelic as the 'game language,' there several factors at play here. First, as previously mentioned, there is the element of politeness associated with me as the 'teacher-friend' figure in the house. However, I argue that although this may play some part in his linguistic choices to use Gaelic in game-related language, if it was solely a matter of politeness, there would be more use of Gaelic with me in non-game-related language. I posit that this is therefore related to his agency and a type of self-scaffolding mechanism. As can be seen from the excerpts, the language use in the game is very simple. Thus, it affords a comfortable way in which Billy can use Gaelic. Gaelic as a game language therefore is a way in which he enacts his agency: he can speak this language, but he does so on his terms, and together, we build solidarity with each other by using this shared language in playing 'Guess Who.'

Discussion

Although limited to two excerpts, the analysis following each of the excerpts has hopefully highlighted some facets of the interplay of language socialisation and child agency in an autochthonous minority language context, and the value of exploring these facets in terms of how we view 'successful' language acquisition. In terms of looking at the excerpts in light of

Jenny's FLP and efforts to facilitate her son Billy's Gaelic on multiple fronts (which I have framed in terms of the *saibhreas* model), one could argue that at face value, Billy's language acquisition does not appear that successful, as he replies to his mother's use of Gaelic with English. Further, although the study did not set out to assess Billy's linguistic competence on any formal dimensions, by looking at Billy's turns in the corpus as a whole, his competence in English is far greater than his competence in Gaelic, a situation very common in minority language contexts. However, through the excerpts we have also seen how Billy is able to use Gaelic to serve certain interactional purposes, and to use his competency to best effect. This use of language demonstrates not only his agency, but further illustrates how examining language acquisition from a purely linguistic lens ignores the additional sociocultural acquisition that is occurring simultaneously (*cf.* Taylor, 2010). By choosing to focus on a child whose acquisition is asymmetrical in comparison to the majority language (which again I should emphasise is more the norm than the exception), the article has shown how in spite of this asymmetrical acquisition, there is quite a lot that Billy has acquired in terms of the sociocultural aspect of his linguistic acquisition trajectory. One of the key aspects is the association of Gaelic as 'polite code,' and thus as the appropriate code to use with me, the 'teacher-friend.' As previously explained, part of this lies in the association of Gaelic with the school context, as well as an understood politeness norm of answering an interlocutor's utterance with the same code choice. Thus, the politeness norms are dictated by his outside experience (i.e. his experience in a GME classroom), as well as the co-creation of these norms *within* the interaction. However, simply seeing Billy's use of Gaelic as a reflex of adhering to politeness norms obscures *how* he manipulates this polite code to suit his interactional purposes. He successfully uses Gaelic in turning my attention from the conversation involving the dog to the game, for example, and his maintenance of Gaelic as

'game language' serves as an important way to him to build solidarity with me, the other player in the game. Thus, Billy is enacting his agency through the use of Gaelic and is signalling his *saibhreas*, especially in terms of embodiment (i.e. actively wanting to use Gaelic to play the game, as well as the positive emotional valence embedded in playing a game). He also capitialises on what linguistic competence he *does* have to make this game a success. Therefore, in spite of what may look like a lack of success on the part of his socialisation through Gaelic in the home (i.e. answering his mother in English when she addresses him in Gaelic), what can be seen here is some degree of success, and the sociocultural knowledge embedded in how this 'success' plays out in the interaction.

Conclusion

Earlier, I described the context for Billy's acquisition as a less clear-cut case than other studies of children's linguistic development. However, it should be noted that Billy's context for acquisition of is not necessarily unrepresentative of other children's context for acquisition, especially in autochothonous minority languages undergoing extreme shift, where the lack of the autochthonous minority language in wider spheres means that the child's acquisition might be limited to the home and school context. For some children, the minority language may be solely limited the school context, as language shift within the family means that the caregivers do not feel they have the competence to speak the language to the children (which would have in fact been the outcome for Billy's family had Jenny not made such a concerted effort to reclaim her heritage language and integrate it into the family sphere). Rather than simply subsume children in these situations' language use under the umbrella term 'translanguaging,' what this article has hopefully shown is how looking at children's use of language in terms of *saibhreas* can uncover

the nuanced and multifaceted nature of how children use language in interaction. It has also hopefully illustrated how understanding children's agentive use of language can further uncover more of the intricacies of the reflexivity inherent in how sociocultural milieu are acquired and embedded into children's use of language.

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Transcription Conventions

Gaelic conversation is written Times New Roman and italicised. Translations of the Gaelic speech are written in Courier New. English speech is written using Times New Roman.

:	Elongated Sound
@	Laughter (pulse)
-	Cut-off
°	Decreased Amplitude
^	Bilabial Click
=	Latching speech
[[ ]	Overlapping Speech
(.5)	Pause (seconds)
(.)	Micropause (less than two-tenths of a second)
(?)	Uncertainty in Transcription
(( ))	Non-verbal action
{ }	Word/sound said ingressively

(?) Uncertainty in Transcript

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