

Frederik H. Bissinger (2021). Family Language Policies and Immigrant Language Maintenance. Lithuanian in Sweden. Stockholm Studies in Baltic Languages 13. Stockholm: Stockholm University. PhD Thesis.

The book focuses on family language policy (FLP) among recent Lithuanian immigrants in Sweden. The abstract in the beginning is written in four languages: English, Lithuanian, German, Swedish, and it is not just one or two paragraphs long but 1.5-2 pages in each language. This conveys the spirit of the whole book: the author is fluent in all these languages, and this gives him significant advantages in research on maintenance of Lithuanian in the new diaspora in Sweden. This sounds as something self-evident that a researcher should have at least a working proficiency in the languages of the community they study, yet this condition is not always fulfilled.

In Lithuanian linguistics, the field of FLP and language attitudes studies (including diaspora) has been rather popular recently and, quite naturally, as a rule, the researchers are speakers of Lithuanian as L1. The fact that the author has mastered Lithuanian to a degree that allows him to interview Lithuanian speakers is impressive. The footnote on p. 55 informs us that the Lithuanian participants tended to complement the researcher's command of Lithuanian and in this way put (in)direct pressure on their Swedish spouses who had not made any efforts to learn Lithuanian.

This brings us to the eternal question in humanities about the status of a researcher: insider, outsider or a bit of both, and how the status affects the participants, speech situation, and what is being said in the interview. I am inclined to think that the in-between status (speaker of Lithuanian and Swedish but not an ethnic Lithuanian and not a member of the Lithuanian diaspora community) is advantageous: one does not need to explain why proficiency in Lithuanian is a huge asset in the study on discourse about the maintenance of Lithuanian; at the same time, the presence of an outsider is likely to elicit some relevant metalinguistic reflections that otherwise would be absent.

The book consists of five chapters, bibliography and appendices (semi-structured interview guides and transcription conventions). Chapter One (Introduction) describes the sociolinguistic context of minorities in Sweden and the Lithuanian minority in particular. Chapter Two (Family Language Policy) discusses theoretical foundations of FLP research (the well-known model by Bernard Spolsky and its interpretations and developments). The chapter also introduces the concept of harmonious bilingualism (De Houwer 2015) and elaborates on the importance of (linguistic) well-being. In Chapter Three (Methodological Framework), the author provides a detailed account on data collection. The data for

the study was obtained by the means of various techniques, that is, not only semi-structured interviews, common in FLP research, but also the parents' self-recordings, language maps and family language trees the participants were asked to draw. Chapter Four (Family Language Management Practices) analyzes macro-sociolinguistic aspects (the status of Lithuanian in Sweden, problems facing small and lesser used languages, and the perception of endangerment vs. safety) as well as language use and language ideologies. This chapter contains excerpts from the interviews (in the original and in the English translation), followed by a thorough analysis of the parents' discourse on language. Importantly, children occasionally participate in the interviews, too, and their voice is also taken into account (on the importance of child's agency in FLP see Smith-Christmas 2020 and references within). Various language management strategies are visualized, represented as graphs, which facilitates the reading.

The final Chapter Five (Discussion and Conclusions) points out that, despite de jure support of heritage languages in Sweden, there are still tendencies of exclusion. Some educators still believe that speaking another language at home may hinder the acquisition of Swedish, the majority language. As a side remark, it is interesting that in Estonia (the country of the reviewer) many teachers and members of general public often express quite an opposite opinion and think that a proper education is possible in the mother tongue only although the mainstream opinion is that a united school with the space for heritage language education is needed instead of the Soviet-time model with two separate school systems, which has been preserved to some extent and continues reproducing segregation. Here one can observe the difference in attitudes between discursively "small" and "big" countries.

The rest of the chapter emphasizes the importance of explicit language maintenance practices in the family and the difficulty in what may be called "horizontal" communication in Lithuanian (i.e., with peers and not only parents and older family members), and some recommendations for language maintenance are provided.

In sum, the work by Frederik Bissinger may be seen as both an introduction to the field of FLP in general and a closer examination of a particular case of language maintenance policies in the Lithuanian diaspora.

De Houwer, Annick (2015) Harmonious bilingual development: Young families' well-being in language contact situations. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 19 (2): 169–184, first published online June 11, 2013. doi:10.1177/1367006913489202

Smith-Christmas, Cassie (2020) Child agency and home language maintenance. In: Andrea C. Schalley and Susana A. Eisenchlas (Eds.), *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 218-235.

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