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Migrant family language practices and language policies in Finland

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This article investigates the language practices and language policies of an Indian migrant family in their daily life in Finland. The purpose of this paper is to consider the potential of an empirical case study on migration to understand the interrelationship between macro and micro analyses of language policies and practices. Though the migrant language instruction is encouraged and executed under the national language policy in Finland, the second generation of the Indian family was taught their parental languages at home. The family members resort to English as the principle language of communication in their daily life interaction with local inhabitants. The diachronic study further reveals patterns of language shift for the mother toward the Finnish language. This shift has an impact on the language practices of the children.

Keywords: language practices, family language policy, Indian migrant family in Finland, language conflict

Introduction

Migrants either adapt to the norms of immigration policy for successful integration or they are indifferent to all such requirements in their host country. The migratory movement of highly skilled labour has a low language barrier as the working infrastructure is usually provided in a common world language – English. Shachar (2006) draws the attention of challenges for the United States in the shift of highly skilled immigrants lured to Europe, Canada, and Australia, in the “race for talent”, in order to boost their national economies. Different strategies have been implemented by the European Union (EU) to attract highly skilled labour. Most recently, there is in the pipeline the proposal of a “Blue Card” by the EU. Currently, in France, a “scientific visa” has already been implemented, and tax discounts or incentives are offered by Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, and Sweden (Schön 2003; Mahroum 2001; Liebig 2004). The surge of Indian professionals in the sector of information technology, engineering, and medicine has been noted in the Western European countries. Research on the Indian community residing abroad is important, from a

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sociolinguistic perspective, as India is undergoing a strong demographic change. The population of India has been estimated to have a median age of less than 25 years (Dyson et al. 2004). As English is important for upward social mobility in India, note Agnihotri and Khanna (1997), it seems probable that the younger Indian generation will acquire English in their verbal repertoire, prompting tremendous effect on the linguistic community within India and areas where Indians have migrated abroad. It is estimated that there are around 20 million Indian expatriates (Lal et al. 2006: 10), which is roughly equivalent to the combined populations of Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

Within a framework provided by ethnography, this study focuses on the mechanisms of language practices and language policies of an Indian migrant family in Helsinki. The findings can yield vital information about language attitudes at the grassroots level vis-à-vis national language policies. The ideology of the parents about the educational environment and their children's languages is naturally not representative of the whole Indian community, or of other migrant groups of the host country. However, as Ricento (2000: 208) has argued what we need is a discussion of the language practices of individuals in different domains and the impact of language policies from "local to national and supranational". Unless both the macro and micro levels of the nation and the family are taken into account, it is hard to constitute a proper framework for understanding the mechanisms of language policy, language practice, and language transmission.

The structure of this paper is as follows. In section 2, different methods and tools are described which were employed in order to collect and analyse the data. Section 3 provides an overview of the sociolinguistic profile of family members and their language practices. Section 4 examines the language practices, policies, and identity of the Indian migrant family. Further, this section is divided into three subsections: (i) the home language instruction of native languages and identity of the second generation; (ii) the projection of language(s) in time and space; and (iii) the differences in ideology of the language policies of the Indian family and the nation of Finland. Section 5 reviews the language attitudes of the migrant family regarding the Finnish language. The final section concludes.

Methodology

Approaching the topic of micro-level language policy from a broad ethnographic perspective, a range of methods were used for the collection of data as well as for the analyses of data. Three specific tools used in the study were: (i) questionnaire¹; (ii) interviews; and (iii) the recording of conversations between family members. In addition, such ethnographic methods as participant-observation, field notes, and triangulation were further applied in order to comprehend the political and ideological aspects of the multilingual repertoire of the family members.

The questionnaires were sent to the parents by e-mail. The information given in questionnaires was important as it provided a summary of the language attitudes of the family members, although it must be added that, as has been noted in many studies on migrant families (Finocchiaro 2004: 294; Filhon 2006; Auger 2008), the languages reported by family members might in reality contradict their actual language practices in their immediate environment.

Possible reasons for such contradictory reporting of actual language practices to investigators might be the guilt or shame felt by the informants over the fact that they are not speaking the host country languages, or speaking their first language in domains such as the workplace, family residence, and school. In order to try and overcome this potential problem, I asked the family members for a permission to stay at their home for two or three nights in order to interview them and record their conversations during my stay.

The Indian family in Helsinki invited me for a three-night stay in September 2007 and for another two-night stay in June 2008. The interviews and conversations referred to in this paper were recorded during these periods at the family's residence. Further fieldwork was conducted from March to October 2009, when I was invited for several more short stays at their home.

The interviews were conducted in an informal manner with the father, the mother and the eldest son. This arrangement had a definite advantage over interviews conducted via the telephone or in a formal setting, because the family members were at ease: they could move around if they needed to perform other tasks at the same time, such as picking up an object, answering a telephone call, or responding to a call from other family members. Such physical movements and verbal interactions further validated their modes of verbal and non-verbal communication. In fact, in such situations I also had the role of the "insider" in addition to the task of being an investigator in the family's home. As I speak the same first and second languages as the parents, Urdu and Hindi, my presence did not alter the mechanism of language practices in the home. Furthermore, as I come from the same region of India as the parents, I had the same culinary and etiquette habits as the family had.

The recording of the family members' conversations was conducted at specific time intervals such as during dinner time in late evenings, before the family members went to bed, at breakfast, and when all the members were together in the room to watch a TV program. In addition, field notes were taken to record other important factors that might have remained unnoticed during the recording sessions. The outcropping method (Fetterman 1989: 61-62) was employed in the interior part of the domicile to notice the presence of different languages across objects such as calendars in English, newspapers and magazines in Finnish, or Koranic verses hanging on the walls. The multiplicity of methods employed helped to cross-check the information provided by the family members.

Sociolinguistic profile of the family members

Families who have migrated from India are presumed to be plurilingual. This is because, as also current statistical data (Ethnologue²) shows, India is increasingly multilingual: the official number of languages in India has increased from 18 in the census of 1991 to 22 languages in the census data of 2001³. Depending on the political features (of the region) and the social and economic factors (of the family), individuals have a chance to learn to speak several languages in India.

The Indian family studied comes from Bihar, a state in the eastern part of India. The official language of Bihar is Hindi and the second official language is Urdu. Some of the state's administrative and judicial work is also conducted in English. In addition, other widely spoken languages in Bihar are Bhojpuri and

Maithili. Both parents' first language is Urdu and the second language is Hindi. The mother (29 years) did her schooling and higher studies in the English language, while the father (37 years) learnt it as a compulsory subject in a Hindi-medium school; he later switched to English for his academic studies. The eldest son (11 years) was born in India and came to Finland when he was three years old. The second son (5 years) was born in Finland. The mentioned ages of the informants correspond to their ages during the field study, which took place between March and October 2009.

The father studied engineering in India and then went to Malaysia to do a Master of Mechanical Engineering. After completing his Master's degree, he continued his studies to pursue for a doctorate in engineering in Ireland. Throughout his higher education trajectory, from India to Ireland, his coursework and interaction with professors was in English. However, in Malaysia, he had to undergo a compulsory learning of the Bahasa Malaysia language in order to get his Master's degree. During his stay in Malaysia, he married an Indian woman from his native town. She visited him occasionally, but lived primarily in India in order to complete her Bachelor's degree in history. When the father got a job offer at a telecommunication enterprise in Finland, he left his doctoral thesis unfinished and invited his wife and three year-old son to join him in moving to Finland.

In Table 1, further details on the profile and language practices of the migrant family are outlined:

Table (1) shows that Hindi is absent from the verbal repertoire of the second generation. Urdu is the main language of communication inside the home and it is reported as the first language by all the family members. English is the language of interaction with the inhabitants of the resident country for the family members, as well as the language of communication at the father's workplace. ARI used to go to an English language daycare centre and was later enrolled in an English-medium school. He is learning FSL (Finnish as a Second Language) and has lessons in it thrice a week. The youngest child, ASH, is enrolled in Finnish-speaking daycare. The mother has been learning Finnish over a two and a half year period since 2007, through Finnish-medium instruction.

The role of Classical Arabic is restricted to religious usage by the family members. The parents were taught the Arabic language during their upbringing in India. The function of the Arabic language is to recite the Koranic Verses during prayers and to be able to read the Koran correctly. The comprehension of text is considered to be of least importance as the translations are available in almost all the languages. Both children were imparted the same competency of reading skills in Arabic by the mother and by the Imam during their vacations in India. However, none of the family members reported the knowledge of Classical Arabic either in the questionnaires or during interview sessions.

Table 1. The language practices and the sociolinguistic profile of the family members

Family members	YAS (the father)	ERA (the mother)	ARI (the first child)	ASH (the second child)
Age and sex	37yrs, Male	29yrs, Female	11yrs, Male	5yrs, Male
Residing in Finland since	8 yrs	8 yrs	8 yrs	5 yrs
Age upon arrival in Finland	29 yrs	21 yrs	3 yrs	-
Country of birth	India	India	India	Finland
Occupation	Engineer	Student / Assistant teacher	Fourth grade student	Nursery
First language	Urdu	Urdu	Urdu	Urdu
Language spoken with their parents	Urdu	Urdu	Urdu	Urdu
Language spoken with their children	Urdu	Urdu	-	-
Language(s) spoken at work/school	English	English/ Finnish	English	Finnish
Language (s) spoken at home	Urdu/ English	Urdu	Urdu/English	Urdu
Language(s) spoken with the inhabitants of the host country	English	English/ Finnish	English	Finnish
Language(s) spoken with the natives of the country of origin	Urdu/ Hindi/ English	Urdu/Hindi/ English	Urdu/English	Urdu/ English

The entertainment choices of the family members range from Indian films and songs in Hindi and Urdu to English language films and some BBC programs. ARI watches Hindi films and asks his mother to explain the meaning of words and idiomatic expressions, if he does not understand. ASH is fond of cartoons and watches them in either English or Finnish. Both children and their father also watch football matches which are commented on in English by the football commentators while the family members discuss the game either in Urdu or in English among themselves. The children play a football video game and other games in which the instructions are in English. In their hobbies, leisure and sports activities, the family members use English, Hindi, Urdu, and Finnish, but their usage varies from member to member according to her/his choice of language(s) and competency in the language(s). Although ASH and ERA have occasionally conducted some activities in the Finnish language, such as watching television, reading newspapers and books, and other official papers (in particular for the mother), the father and ARI are confined to English, Hindi, and Urdu.

Language policies, practices, and identity

As stipulated in Article 17 of the Finnish constitution, Finnish and Swedish are the official languages of Finland, ever since its independence in 1917. As far as the education of immigrant pupils is concerned, it is divided into three categories: equality, functional bilingualism and multiculturalism” (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi 2002: 132). “Functional bilingualism” is defined by these authors as an opportunity granted to “[...] immigrants [...] to study either Finnish or Swedish as well as to maintain and develop their own language and culture”. Finally, the municipalities in Finland are designated to provide the teaching of minority languages. Recently, their number has risen from 49 native languages (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi 2002: 145) to 60 [native] languages (Tarnanen & Huhta 2008: 263).

Home language instruction and identity

Regarding the instruction of their native languages in Helsinki, the mother replied that there are some municipalities where learning Urdu or Hindi is possible, but they are far from their place of residence and these languages are not taught during regular school hours. Therefore, she herself organises the home language instruction for ARI:

ERA: I bought books in India to teach them Urdu and Hindi. I give them some *homework* in the night and the next day they do the exercise or revision whole day, especially during the *weekend*. I couldn't enrol them in Urdu classes because there are not enough pupils in school, it depends if there are *four or five pupils*, they will search for a *professor* [sic] who can teach Urdu otherwise they won't bother. [Translated from Urdu, words in italics were quoted in English]

This situation reflects a more general problem also noted by Latomaa and Nuolijärvi (2002: 146). They emphasise that the instruction of minority languages is difficult to arrange because, for example, of problems in finding and hiring teachers, creating consensus among parents for language instruction in a particular native language, trying to teach minority languages with only few speakers, and enrolling children in such instruction. In addition, as shown in the report published by Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency⁴, although immigrant parents in Finland receive information on school systems in their languages of origin, the mother tongue tuition is not provided during the normal school hours, or it may not be provided at all because there must be a minimum of four immigrant pupils in the school before it is arranged. The findings of the report are, however, ambiguous because they do not make it clear whether the four immigrant pupils should be of the same or different origin.

Faced with these kinds of difficulties, the mother thus took the responsibility of teaching her children the Urdu and Hindi languages in her own time and with her own resources. Regarding the importance of native languages for the children, the mother said during the interview that the children should be taught inside the home if there is no adequate infrastructure to teach these languages

otherwise. In her view, the native languages are primordial to maintain cultural identity. But her husband YAS disagrees:

ERA: One must teach the native language to the children in the home. One can also teach English. It can be useful for his studies or for his career if he goes in a *foreign country*. It will be useful but it is also very important that the mother tongue should be also very good. As you make him work in English language, one must work for his improvement in the mother tongue, otherwise it is a shame, it affects *culture* and *identity*.

YAS: But there will be no change in *identity*. ARI will be ARI.

ERA: There will be lots of effects on their *identity* if they do not learn it.

YAS: They should learn only because if they return or come back (to India) they should not face any problem.

[Translated from Urdu, words in italics were quoted in English]

The mother thinks that the native languages are a prerequisite for projecting one's identity, while the father, who communicates in Urdu with both of his sons, believes that the absence of these languages in the repertoire of the second generation will not have any repercussions on their identity. Furthermore, for a migrant family, the choice of a particular language and its significance in terms of social identity become even more accentuated with the cultural and religious affiliations of the country of origin. As was shown above, for this family based in Helsinki, their native languages comprise Urdu, Hindi and Indian English, as well as Classical Arabic, through the parent's affiliation with Islam as their religion. Though Urdu is the mother tongue reported by all family members, parents often use Hindi words and Hindi expressions in their communication with the second generation thus prompting Hindi as a second language for their children.

In ERA's view, one's identity is directly related to one's native languages; to preserve one's identity one must speak the languages of the country of origin. YAS, however, does not echo the same viewpoint. The situation in the family may, in fact, reflect more general attitudes by immigrants. For example, it has been shown by Billiez (1985) how language is instrumental in marking one's identity among second generation migrants of Algerian descent. She gives an example of a young adolescent of Algerian origin who puts forth his views as, "(...) my language is Arabic but I don't speak it" (my translation). Even if parents are unable to transmit their native language(s), children are conscious of their parent's mother tongue and might draw a link between identity and language.

None of the three languages, Urdu, Hindi, and Classical Arabic, transmitted to the children through home language instruction have any particular value in Finland and they are of no use for upward mobility, higher earnings, or building effective social networks in the host country. It could be argued that what we see here is a situation characterised by Blommaert et al. (2005), in which *space* controls and organises different patterns of multilingualism. Indian languages have little value in Finland – reversely, Finnish would have little value in India. However, in both countries English enjoys a prestigious status and is an important workplace language for migrants.

Even on a micro level, we can appraise the importance of English when YAS tends to prime its learning over the Indian native language(s) for his children.

For the father, the native languages have no use in the *space* he is living. He portrays himself as an example: in his view his residence in Cork for two years and in Helsinki for seven years has not caused any significant change in his identity even though he employed, and still employs, English all the time with his colleagues or other interlocutors in his precinct. However, the argument of YAS draws from his cultural knowledge which he accumulated during his 20 years of residence in India before migrating elsewhere. If there is no change in his identity as he evaluates it, it is merely due to his solid native Indian background.

The children, in turn, in their current migration trajectory, are already exposed to different cultural settings at an early age. For example ARI has some rudimentary knowledge of the religious festivals and national events in India. In ERA's view it is imperative to know these cultural and religious events of the country of origin in order to shape the identity of the second generation. This belief is also shared by other Indian families in Helsinki. The family is often invited by other Indian families in Helsinki to celebrate Indian festivals, for example *Diwali* and *Holi* together. In these events the main language of communication is English, and they function as a platform for interaction for migrants, as well as a means for cultural education for young children.

Planning and projection of languages

The socio-historical background and linguistic ideologies of the parents are the key factors in the implementation of the family language policy. Important analytic question here include the following: what are the languages which were imparted to the parents, under which circumstances, and under what surroundings; have they maintained the language(s) of their parents or do they speak to them in other languages? Both parents speak in Urdu with their own parents; thus, as reported by them in the questionnaire and the interviews, the transmission of this language to them was thus "natural". Also the children are exposed to Urdu speaking environments in the homes of both grandparents during their visits to India.

The parents' plan is that the medium of instruction for both children in their schooling is carried out in English, much in the same manner as it could have been envisaged in India. In the interview, the father emphasised the importance of English for his children as follows:

YAS: In my opinion they should concentrate a lot on English. They have already Finnish as one of their subjects and I think that is enough.
[Translated from Urdu]

What also makes English a useful medium of instruction for both children in Finland is that the parents anticipate a possible return to the country of origin. A similar phenomenon is observed by Collins and Slembrouck (2007: 17) who refer to Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of *chronotope* and *voice*; they describe a situation where a Mexican migrant family in the United States, "(...) treats English and Spanish as metapragmatic emblems for the kinds of lives their children might have, in a future in the new country, or a potential return to the old (...)". Similarly, the Indian migrant family under investigation here projects English as

an important language for their children's future careers anywhere in the world, while Hindi and Urdu are seen as important for social networking if they went back to India. However, YAS's opinion does not only reflect his concern with the children's future, but also the perception that the learning of the Finnish language is of no use.

However, after the birth of the second child, the parents decided that he would attend Finnish daycare before starting an English-medium school. The mother gave the following reasons as to why the parents chose not to have English-speaking daycare for their second son:

ERA: There are two or three big factors for putting ASH in the Finnish daycare. All English daycare in Finland are getting more and more *popular, very very demanding*.

ARI: *Very very expensive*.

ERA: Sure they are *very expensive* and moreover one has to queue for over three years. It means that the child is not born or the children of immigrants are still in the womb and that they (the migrants) must decide to put them in the English daycare. There are lots of migrants who are moving to Finland and English is getting popular among Finns too.

[Translated from Urdu, words in italics were quoted in English]

As ERA said in a conversation recorded with her elder son ARI, the enrolment in English daycare was getting difficult because of the growing demand from migrant families in Finland. ERA explained that the costs of tuition fees are around €600 per month in the English daycare, while it was around €200 per month in the Finnish daycare. The demand of English language among Finns is another reason cited by ERA for the long waiting lists and the difficulty in gaining admissions into English daycare. The popularity of English in Finland has also become evident in the studies conducted by Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency⁵ on foreign languages in primary schools in Europe: they suggest that around 68.9% of school going pupils in Finland have taken English as one of the main foreign languages in preference over German and French. In another study, McRae (1997: 229) found that the rise of English as an obligatory international language in the matriculation examination in Finland is significant in both Finnish and Swedish schools from 0% to 97.6% between 1911 and 1992.

According to ERA, her in-laws protested against ASH's enrolment into Finnish daycare as they were not favourable to Finnish language instruction. YAS's parents were, in fact, projecting the future of their grandson in an English-laden world in the same way as YAS did. The intervention by YAS's parents in the making of the language-learning decisions for the grandchildren affirms the relevance of another hierarchy level in the language policy of the family. However, YAS supported ERA's decision to get their second son enrolled in Finnish daycare, but they also decided that later on the second child could be sent to an English-medium school. According to the parents, his schooling should be in English, but he could interact and continue to learn Finnish in school premises. In addition, ERA said in her interview that three years of Finnish daycare would give her second child a strong exposure to the Finnish language and it would allow him to build his own Finnish network, i.e. friends,

teachers and other acquaintances, which he could continue to develop even if he moves to an English-medium school.

Family language policy and national language policy – conflicts and discrepancies

Despite the fact that the parents had different language attitudes, they had a shared family language policy. This family language policy (FLP) was designed so as to transmit the parental native language(s) to the children. It was put into practice by the mother in her role as teacher during home language instruction and enforced by the father speaking in Urdu with their children. The family language policy plays a pivotal role in preserving the family's own native languages and cultural heritage. This is also noted by Haque (2010b):

As the national language policy (NLP) is controlled by government authorities, it is in the same manner that there is a language policy in each house governed by the parental authorities who take decisions for all the family. (My translation from French)

Each family has its own language policy; it may not be an explicit one and it may vary from one family to another. Nevertheless, the head(s) of the family have certain predetermined tenets as to what role and function each language shall be assigned. Questions to which they need to find their own answers as they implement their language policy in their home and on their children include, for example, which language(s) should be learnt, where they should be learnt and why; what is the place of host language(s) in the household; which language(s) should be spoken in the home, outside, and among the family members; and whether there is an additional language (English, for example) which can fulfil the role of host language partially. In migrant families, for the purpose of maintaining the native language(s), the FLP may become very important, and it may be in conflict with the NLP (Haque 2008). However, as indicated by many studies (Dabène & Billiez 1984; Lüdi & Py 2003; Shohamy 2006), there are also incidences of convergence with the language policy of the host country, leading to the loss of the native language(s). In my own work (Haque 2008), I have made an attempt at explaining why there may be a discrepancy between NLP and FLP:

[the parents] perform as linguistic models for their children and carry out the language practices which are distinct from the language practices of the natives. However, (...) there is a national language policy derived from language ideologies [of the host country] with different language practices (...), and this language policy tends to influence the language practices [of the migrants], especially their children during the school education. (Haque 2008: 58, my translation from French).

Similar observations on family language policy have also been made by Deprez (1996). The specific example discussed by Deprez relates to the Catalan language. Although the language was banned during the Franco regime, it survived because speakers of Catalan continued to speak their language among family

members, hence discarding the language policy from higher authorities. Not all minority or immigrant languages are able to survive in this way, because, as Fishman (2006: 314) argues, "(...) immigrant languages are bereft of power and are at the mercy of languages and authorities that are far stronger than they". The degree of conflict between the family and national language policy thus depends on how much the host nation gives concessions, freedom, and infrastructure for the development and maintenance of indigenous, ethnic and migrant languages.

The conflict between family and national language policies, especially in the context of migrants, can take at least three forms. Firstly, as illustrated by the situation in France, the official language, French, dominates in every domain, leaving little scope for regional languages. In addition, for over three decades, "Enseignement des langues et cultures d'origine" (ELCO) has been used as a tool to exclude North-African migrants from the French territory and as a means of inverse integration (toward the country of origin). In this case, the conflict between the NLP and the FLP can be termed as *flagrant*. Secondly, in Sweden, Norway and Finland, the national language policies make room for migrants' native languages in their educational frameworks and the conflict can be regarded as *latent*. This conflict is thus less severe than the conflict in France, but, in the same way as in France the host languages are nevertheless an important criterion for citizenship. The above two cases of conflict have other similarities, such as the sole or dominant presence of host language(s) in the fields of commerce, media, science, etc., and the teaching of these languages as mandatory in schools. The third type of conflict is the *minimal* one: in this case the host languages are not viewed as a threat over the migrant language(s) and the latter are given recognition and scope to develop on their own or with the help of government agencies. As an example of this scenario the situation in Miami could be cited: there the Spanish language has successfully competed with English and emerged as a dominant language (Resnick 1988: 89).

Representation of the Finnish language and language attitudes

It has been argued (Shohamy 2008: 364-5) that language tests "used by governments [and] ministries of education [...] perpetuate de facto language policies". Furthermore, critiquing the role of language tests, Shohamy (2008: 365) argues that "[their] implications [...] are very detrimental since they can lead to high-stake decisions such as granting permission to reside and obtain basic rights". According to Tarnanen and Huhta (2008), such power over immigrants is exerted in Finland through Integration Act (493/1999) and the Nationality Act of 2003 which prescribe the standards for the language skills required for acquiring Finnish citizenship. In the same way, the Finnish Immigration Service⁶ postulates that competence in Finnish or Swedish, or in some cases oral skills in Finnish Sign Language, are mandatory before applying for the Finnish citizenship.

The main earning member of the family studied in this study, YAS, told during an interview that such integration based on host language(s) skill discourages him from pursuing his career in Finland. Further, according to the family members, the Indian community is reluctant to learn Finnish when the language at workplaces and daycare or schools for children is usually in English.

In a situation like this, it could be asked whether a multilingual structure of the society could be a better solution: in it, migrants could have a choice to preserve their native languages and to work in another language (English) at the peril of host languages. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to reproach the “English-only bilingualism” by this migrant family, i.e. speaking English and their native languages, because the trend shows that English is regarded as the new lingua franca of the Nordic countries (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005: 402). One indication of this is also, as noted by Phillipson (2006: 356), how Americanisation has influenced Finland to such a point that “a Finnish prime minister is pressing for a single-language regime at EU meetings, an English-only solution”.

As was mentioned above, the first child of the family did not go to Finnish daycare and, subsequently, he was enrolled in an English-medium school. His competence in the Finnish language is poor, as he himself reports in the questionnaire. For him, as became very clear in his interview, the main language of communication with friends at school is English:

SZN: In which language do you speak with your friends?

ARI: In English.

SZN: Are your friends Finns or they are English speakers?

ARI: They are all Finns.

SZN: Then why do not they speak Finnish?

ARI: I do not understand so much Finnish.

SZN: Then they speak Finnish among themselves?

ARI: Yes.

SZN: Okay, let us imagine if you are all together and they are talking in Finnish, will you ask them about what they are talking?

ARI: Yes, if it is very important, I will ask them.

[Translated from Urdu]

The language of communication for ARI on school premises is the same as for his father during his office hours. In contrast, the second child understands Urdu and English, but since he goes to Finnish daycare, his main language of communication is Finnish. However, Finnish also has a role in the mother’s and the children’s free time. During the fieldwork in 2009, it was observed that ERA participates in cultural or religious events in Finland with her two children. Whether it is the early Christmas party held in the schools of two boys, or other events such as *Vappu* (May the 1st), or baking cakes with Finnish friends, the main language of communication during all these events is Finnish.

The couple disagrees on the learning of the Finnish language for their children. For YAS, the learning of Finnish serves no useful purpose, while ERA grants an equal importance to the learning of the Finnish language as to the learning of her native languages:

ERA: Yes, it is very important. If there is written something anywhere or there is some administrative document so there is no need to ask someone what is written. And we want to be literate. I mean to say that there is something called language literacy. [Translated from Urdu]

In the above interview extract, ERA speaks about the importance of the host language. Thanks to her Finnish language competency, she has successfully

enlarged her social network in Finland with local inhabitants and found a job in a local municipal school in Helsinki. The differences in opinion among the parents about the role and utility of the Finnish language are related to the differences in the level and kind of academic studies they have undergone. While YAS is a skilled professional who started working in Finland without any resort to learning the Finnish language for seven years at his workplace, ERA joined her husband as a “tied migrant”⁷, and had the role of a housewife. She was not the main earning member of the family and as a graduate in the field of history studies, she was unable to find a job in Helsinki. Her Finnish language course over two years was aimed at finding a job and building a *real* social network with local inhabitants. In the year 2009, ERA passed the national test of Finnish language and scored B1 in the CEFR scale, the proficiency level required for applying for Finnish citizenship (Tarnanen & Huhta 2008: 269).

Conclusion

The conflict of the family and national language policies identified in the present study relates to the problem of native language maintenance and its instruction to migrants. Although 60 native languages are taught in Finland (see Tarnanen & Huhta 2008), it seems that minority language instruction is not as pervasive as one might think. The criterion of the minimum number of pupils required for minority language instruction at school should be more flexible and they should be taught within the school hours. Some ludic activities could also be introduced so that the migrant children have more opportunities to use their parental languages.

The present study revealed friction in the language attitudes between the father and the mother concerning the role and utility of English and Finnish. Two opposing poles concerning language practices and language choices were thus forming in the family: one represented by the father and the elder son, for whom English is the main language of interaction, work, and communication with the locals, while the other is represented by the mother and the second child who both interact and communicate most of the time in Finnish with their Finnish interlocutors.

It also became apparent in this study that the children were not stigmatised as strangers in India or as migrants in the host country. The second generation was found to have developed a *balanced identity*, acquiring the languages of both the host country and of the country of origin. Thus they demonstrate allegiance with both countries by having their own social network and acquaintances, and by partaking in the daily life and festivals of India and Finland.

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Endnotes

¹ Questionnaire and Interview guides were borrowed from PNR 56, Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, Neuchâtel.

² http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=IN (29 January 2009)

³ http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/gen_note.htm (8 April 2011)

⁴ See <http://www.euromedalex.org/node/10822> (29 January 2009)

⁵ Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, 2008 Edition. For full report see http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key_data_en.php (8 April 2011)

⁶ See www.migri.fi and for further details http://www.migri.fi/download.asp?id=kielitaitoedellytys_eng:1077;%7Bc1f03a0c-e064-464f-a74e-716681d6d115%7D (20 December 2009)

⁷ Defines Raghuram (2004: 304), “tied migrants are those who accompany or join partners who are labor migrants”.

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