Home and away – Implications of short-term sojourning of young Australian bilinguals

Abstract

This study investigates the transnational experiences of young Taiwanese-background children living in Australia, who sojourn to their parents' homeland during the school holidays to improve their linguistic and cultural skills, as reported by their mothers. Although this appears to be a frequent practice in the Taiwanese diaspora, showcasing the agency of this community, little research has systematically investigated this practice, and in particular its impact on the children and their families. Data for this study were obtained through online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with mothers who engage in this practice, to gather information on family histories and participants' backgrounds, family language policies, and parents' perceptions of children's experiences and challenges. The data show that parents aim to enhance their children's proficiency levels in the home language as well as their Taiwanese identity. Children, however, take an agentive role with regard to identity choices, so parents' aims are not always fulfilled. Sojourning is presented as a clear example not only of enacted family language policy, but also as an explicit management practice, positioning the Taiwanese diaspora within both their new as well as their old homeland.

Keywords: Taiwanese diaspora; agency; language management; sojourning; Australia; schooling

1. Introduction: Agency in a diasporic community

This study focuses on the sojourning experiences of young Taiwanese-background children living in Australia, as reported by their mothers. Sojourning to their parents' homeland during school holidays appears to be a frequent practice undertaken by the Taiwanese diaspora in Australia, alas one that has hardly received any attention in the literature to date (but see Kwon, 2017, for the Japanese/Korean-US context, and the mention of the phenomenon in Orton, 2016:78 for the Chinese-Australian context). It has neither been systematically investigated within the context of family language policy (King et al., 2008), nor has it been contextualised within the discussion of diasporas and their agentive efforts.

As argued by Gabriel (2011) and Albury and Schluter (this issue), there is a need to widen the understanding of the notion of diaspora beyond "the shared experience of displacement, a sense of common origins, and a material or symbolic attachment to the 'original' homeland" (Gabriel, 2011:341). Albury and Schluter (this issue) argue that diasporas should also been seen as positioning themselves in the socio-cultural dynamics of both their new and their old homeland. This is in line with Woldemariam and Lanza (2015), who emphasise how linguistic landscape can contribute to the construction of a diasporic identity in the new homeland.

This paper does just that – it discusses one example of how members of a diasporic community manage their socio-cultural situation in a creative and agentive way, thereby providing ongoing transnational experiences for their families. The sojourning experience is presented as an explicit management strategy (Spolsky, 2009) within the framework of family language policy in the diaspora. Tensions between nostalgic desires and educational goals of the parents on the one hand and the impact of the sojourn experience on the children's identity on the other are discussed.

Thus, our paper links two hitherto unconnected areas: family language policy, with a focus on language management activities, and perspectives from diasporic sociolinguistics. More specifically, the aims of this exploratory paper are

- to identify parents' goals and motivations for the sojourn activity and examine their perceptions of its usefulness;
- to explore some of the linguistic, socio-cultural, attitudinal, and affective factors that facilitate or hinder the sojourn experience; and
- to gauge parents' perceptions on the success of this language management activity.

In line with these aims, the concept of family language policy is introduced in section 2, while section 3 presents research on sojourning to date and related background information on the Taiwanese diaspora. Our study's methodology is outlined in section 4, followed by an in-depth presentation of the study's results in section 5 and their discussion in section 6. Finally, section 7 concludes this paper by highlighting some of this strategy's implementation challenges, identifying the limitations of the study and indicating directions for future research.

2. Family Language Policy (FLP)

From the supranational level to the individual, 'language policy is all about choices' (Spolsky, 2009:1). For migrant and refugee families, one of the most critical choices is which language their children should use at home. The last decade has seen growing recognition of the crucial role of the family as 'the critical endpoint in many language management activities' (Spolsky, 2009:22), particularly in contexts where there is little institutional support for languages other than the mainstream. Families thus become the principal language managers, ultimately responsible for intergenerational language transmission or shift (Fishman, 2001).

With this recognition, research has proliferated on family language policy (FLP), defined as "explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home among family members" (King et al., 2008:907). Like Language Policy more generally, FLP includes three interrelated but independent components (Spolsky, 2004, 2009) that help account for language choices: language ideologies, language practices, and language management activities.

Language ideologies are beliefs about the value and status of languages and their varieties (Spolsky, 2009). Such ideologies concern, for example, questioning whether particular languages are resources, problems or rights (Ruiz, 1984); recognising language maintenance as important for promoting family ties (Guardado, 2008) and/or emotional attachment and display (Pavlenko, 2005); promoting child bilingualism as an expression of good parenting (King and Fogle, 2006); and shifting to the mainstream language to enhance children's adaptation to new linguistic environments (Barkhuizen, 2006). Importantly, language ideologies are "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein, 1979:193), and as such form an important link between language use and social organization, a "much-needed bridge between linguistic and social theory" (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994:72; see also Piller, 2015).

Language practices are "observable behaviours and choices – what people actually do" (Spolsky, 2009:4). The focus here is "the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its [the speech community's] linguistic repertoire" (Spolsky, 2004:5). In the context of the family, these practices set up the environment for language acquisition and development by providing linguistic opportunities both inside and outside the home.

Language management has been defined as an "explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their [language] practices or beliefs" (Spolsky, 2009:4). Management is carried out by one or more people as, effectively, managers, and for FLP this role is usually performed by parents or caretakers. Curdt-Christiansen (2012:57) makes this explicit, in that she defines family language management as "the implicit/explicit and subconscious/deliberate parental involvement and investment in providing linguistic conditions and context for language learning and literacy development".

The literature discusses many examples of parents' efforts to promote language practices at home through language management (for an overview see Schwartz and Verschik, 2013). Underlying these efforts are parents' implicit or explicit language ideologies. Most of these management activities illustrate the level of parents' commitment to additive bilingualism, against the tide of monolingual

mindsets in societies such as in Australia, which not only withhold institutional support for languages other than the mainstream one, but also actively attempt to discourage their use in the private domain (Eisenchlas and Schalley, 2017). Thus, language management activities can be seen as internal forces (parents) reacting to external (and oftentimes non-linguistic) circumstances, and – important in the context of this paper – as agentive practices by community members which help them maintain their diasporic relationships to language.

Family management activities can be organised along a continuum that involves different levels of organisation, starting from the home domain and extending into the local target diasporic community and beyond. Examples reported in the literature include controlling the home language environment (Spolsky, 2009) (determining which language is spoken when, used in media, on computers, and so forth); bringing speakers of the target language into the family (e.g., grandparents, au-pairs, nannies) (Pauwels, 2016); providing home language resources such as books, foreign language materials, readers, access to websites and online videos (Little, 2017); using new media technology to communicate with relatives overseas (Szecsi and Szilagyi, 2012); living in neighbourhoods demographically concentrated with speakers of that language (Fishman, 1991); organising playgroups (Spolsky, 2009); participating in complementary schooling such as Community Language Schools (Nordstrom, 2016), often depending on community efforts or foreign government support; and attending bilingual/immersion schooling (García et al., 2006).

The focus of this paper is on a language management activity that has not received the attention it deserves: sojourning to the target country for schooling to further children's cultural and linguistic competence. Initiated at the family level, this strategy directly engages the target community overseas to offset, at least temporarily, local environmental impediments to promoting home language maintenance and development.

The activity we discuss in this paper illustrates Spolsky's concept of organised management, "where the prospective manager notes the existence of language problems in a situation for which he is in some way responsible, evaluates the phenomenon, and may choose to plan for and implement an adjustment" (2009:12). Spolsky thus directs attention to the initiator of the management

rather than the results or targets. Likewise, for reasons explained later, in this paper we focus on mothers, the actors who usually manage and implement these activities, and on their motivations, rather than on the targets of these activities, the children.

3. Sojourning and the Taiwanese diaspora

Research on the cultural adaptation of adolescent and adult sojourners who cross borders – typically for extended periods of time, to advance their education, increase career prospects, or ensure long-term security for their families – is considerable (e.g., Krayushkina, 2012; Kuo and Roysircar, 2006; Pinter, 2010; Wu, 2008). However, a group of sojourners has not received systematic attention to date, namely young sojourners and their families who return to the host country periodically, but only for short periods of time. The purpose of these movements is usually associated with education. Yet, contrary to the phenomenon of Korean "wild geese families"[i] (Park, 2012; Reed, 2015), children are not taken out of their home educational system. Rather, they access another country's educational system in addition to their home educational system, to improve their linguistic skills and cultural understanding. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have investigated what motivates parents to embark on short-term sojourn experiences for their children, or how they perceive the impact of this activity on their children's linguistic development, identity formation, and adjustment to new educational and social environments.

The phenomenon of parents sending (usually unaccompanied) children to English-speaking countries during vacations for short-term English language education has become a trend in Asian countries. Our study, however, focuses on sojourning in the opposite direction: parents taking their children back to their own homeland (Taiwan in the present paper) and immersing them in the target country education system during the Australian school holidays, to foster linguistic and cultural skills development in their home language (Mandarin in this case).[ii]

Sojourning for children's education appears as a frequent phenomenon in the Taiwanese community in Australia, as anecdotal evidence corroborated by our questionnaire data (see section 4.3) indicate. Several demographic, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical factors may facilitate this practice. First,

according to the 2011 census data, more than 70 percent of Taiwan-born diasporic community members in Australia were under the age of 44 (with around half aged 25–44; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2014), and thus belong to the age group most concerned with child-rearing practices. Second, close to 50 percent of this community hold bachelor's degrees or higher (compared to around 20 percent of the total Australian population; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2014) and it is thus safe to assume that education is highly valued in the diaspora. The proliferation of Community Language Schools imparting Mandarin language and Chinese culture also attests to the appreciation of education by Mandarin speakers, including those from Taiwan. Third, many Taiwanese-background families hold dual citizenship, which allows them as Taiwanese citizens to take their children to schools in Taiwan, without paying a fee. This fee-free schooling helps defray the costs involved in such sojourning activities. Notably, this does not apply to other communities included in the survey data. Finally, Mandarin is a highly relevant language in the Australian context, as the minority language with the largest number of speakers (2.5 percent of the population) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017) and as the language with the highest number of native speakers in the world. It is also the language spoken by the majority of people in China, Australia's main trading partner. Thus, Mandarin is one of the very few languages that enjoys the status of being a priority language in Australia (in economic and political terms), and thus being taught in schools, and of also being a community language.

4. Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2015), including qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection involved two stages: a quantitative online questionnaire and qualitative in-depth interviews.

4.1. Stage 1: Quantitative online questionnaire

Volunteer questionnaire participants were recruited through a number of avenues: via targeted schools who advertised the questionnaire in their newsletters; emails and visits to Chinese Saturday schools by the Mandarin-speaking then Australian-based researcher; targeted social media posts, and email invitations to Asian friends and acquaintances, who were asked to forward the invitation to others who may qualify. An introductory paragraph to the

invitations explained that we were interested in the experiences of bilingual families from a variety of Asian backgrounds.

The questionnaire aimed to identify important details about parents' ideologies, language practices and management of the home language, as well as demographic information on the responding families and their children. For insight into language ideologies, the survey asked parents about the value they attribute to both mainstream and home language and culture, and about expectations for their children. To gauge home language practices, questions concerned domains of usage of the home and the mainstream languages, percentage of time parents and children spent in contact with target language speakers, parents' and children's level of proficiency in each language, and potential for formal home language schooling experiences in Australia, such as attendance at Community schools or language immersion programs. A final section of the questionnaire collected information about home language management, including the implementation of sojourning to the native country of the parent(s) for educational purposes. Responding parents who engaged in this practice were invited to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview conducted face-to-face or via Skype/telephone. If this was inconvenient, parents were asked to proceed to an online version of the face-to-face interview where they could write their responses to the interview questions.

Two restrictions were imposed on our study by the ethnicity and gender of survey respondents. First, while we directed the survey to parents living in Australia from a variety of Asian ethnicities, only Taiwanese respondents answered that they engage in sojourning for their children. Second, although the invitation to participate in the interview was extended to either parent, only mothers volunteered to participate. This resulted in mothers' perspectives becoming the focus of this study.

4.2. Stage 2: Qualitative in-depth interviews

Interviews with six mothers who had agreed to participate were conducted in Mandarin (with frequent code switching into English) by one of the research team members who is a native Mandarin speaker. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 40–50 minutes. The topics extended from responses provided to the survey questions, aiming to further explore

participants' backgrounds and family histories, and particularly their family language policies, such as parental attitudes and expectations towards the languages involved. The bulk of each interview focussed on the mothers' reflections on and overall evaluation of the sojourning activity, their motivations for taking their children to Taiwan for schooling during Australian holidays, their perceptions of the challenges and benefits of this practice, and their evaluation of the outcomes of the experience vis-à-vis their initial expectations. In this paper we focus on the qualitative data obtained from the mothers through the in-depth interviews.

The interview data were transcribed and coded, and then analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) based on the emergent recurrent themes and categories across the interviews with the six participants. The following careful procedure of coding, translation, recoding, and verifying was implemented: The interviews were transcribed by the research team member who conducted the interviews (a native speaker of Mandarin). Initial coding and theme identification were based on original interview data (i.e. overwhelmingly in Mandarin). The interviews were then translated to English, and the coding was further developed by two other research team members, based on the translations. The resulting specific coding and fine-grained analysis were mapped back on the Mandarin data, and results were verified in the Mandarin data by the second native speaker of Mandarin. The most salient themes, which relate to the mothers' motivations in pursuing the sojourn experience for their children, and to the linguistic, social, and affective impact of the sojourn experience, are explored in section 5.

4.3. Interview participants

The six women who participated in the interviews for our study were Taiwanese-born Australian-resident mothers who travelled regularly to Taiwan to further their kindergarten/school-aged children's education in Mandarin and in Taiwanese culture. They were identified through the online questionnaire discussed in section 4.1, which was completed by 79 participants from a variety of Asian backgrounds. The Taiwanese heritage participant pool comprised 23 couples in which one or both parents were Taiwanese. Around 40 per cent of these respondents (10) acknowledged sojourning to Taiwan for their children's

education, which strongly suggests these are not isolated cases.[iii] Of those 10 respondents engaging in the sojourning activity, eight agreed to be interviewed in person, while two declined to participate in the interview or complete it online. Two of the eight mothers who volunteered for the interviews were excluded, as their children were already in their twenties and hence their sojourning took place too long ago, and in different social contexts, for the interviews to generate comparable data. Even so, these excluded cases show that Taiwanese-background families have engaged in sojourning activities for a significant period of time.

All six interview participants and their families lived in Brisbane, the capital of the Australian state of Queensland, and the largest target for Taiwanese immigrants in Australia (SBS Cultural Atlas, 2016). Three were homemakers, not employed and not looking for employment, and three were employed as teacher-aids. All held bachelor's degrees, had lived in Australia for more than 10 years, ranged in age from 36 to 45 years old, and spoke English competently. Only two had Taiwanese spouses; the other four were married to native English speakers from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. All six husbands (the children's fathers) also held university degrees. Thus, the level of education of all these couples was relatively high. This is consistent with the community profile, as presented in section 3.

Table 1 provides some background on the children's sojourning experiences. For privacy reasons, pseudonyms are used in the table and in the mothers' quotes and statements in the following sections. The children's ages ranged from five to ten years.

TABLE 1: Background of the children sojourning to Taiwan for educational purposes

Children	**Frequency of visits to Taiwan**	**Taiwanese school attendance**		**Language used with parents**		**Accompanying adult**
		Frequency	**Length each time**	**with mother**	**with father**	
Gao's son	annual	3 times	1 month	Mandarin/English	English	mother

An's daughter	annual	3 times	1 month	Mandarin	English	mother
Liu's son	annual	once	4 days (piloting)	Mandarin	English	mother
Wen's daughter and son	once	once	6 weeks	Mandarin	Mandarin	mother
Sha's son	once	once	2 weeks	Mandarin	Mandarin	mother
Mei's sons	annual	3 times first child, twice second child	4–5 weeks	Mandarin	English	mother, once with father

As shown in Table 1, three of the mothers had engaged in the educational sojourning activity regularly, while the other three had had only one experience each to date. However, they indicated that they are planning to repeat it annually.

5. Interview results

The Taiwanese mothers' management of their children sojourning to Taiwan may indicate how they perceive their role and responsibility as parents to maximise their efforts to ensure intergenerational language transmission. Anticipating the discussion, this belief may stem partly from the fact that four of the six participants had non-Mandarin speaking spouses. Their stated motivations were both instrumental and integrative (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

All the interviewed mothers explained that their main aim was to develop their children's linguistic skills, in particular, their literacy. However, the excerpt that follows, from discussion with one of the mothers, makes clear that attending school in Taiwan was seen as an opportunity to further develop basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) through authentic interactions with native Mandarin speaking classmates rather than developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (see Cummins, 1979, for a discussion). Even though this distinction has been criticised as an oversimplification (Valdés et al., 2015; MacSwan and Rolstad, 2003), it captures the objective of Gao and the other mothers very well.

(1) 那如果你去学校的话，你又有很多同学可以一起玩。可以一起讲话，然后就会对这个口语方面就可以进步很多。但你在这里，讲中文的机会真的太少

了。可能就在家就只跟我可以讲一讲。所以，我们都觉得说, 但如果可以花一点时间去台湾读书，他一下子可以进步很多。这就是为什么我想要他去那边。(Gao)

If you go to school, you have many classmates to play with. You can talk to them, and then you can improve your spoken language. But if you are here [in Australia], there are not many opportunities to speak Chinese. Most likely, it will be with me at home. Therefore, we think that he [the son] can improve a lot within a short period of time if he can spend some time studying in Taiwan. This is why I'd like him to be over there [in Taiwan].

The second most listed reason for the sojourn was to develop closer bonds with the extended family in Taiwan. The third was for their child to develop greater appreciation of Taiwanese culture, a point to which we shall return later in the paper.

Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned the perceived economic value of their children developing proficiency in the language, even though pragmatic reasons are usually presented in support of selected foreign language learning. Only one mother mentioned future benefits, and these were enhanced intercultural communication (see Excerpt (4) below). Also absent from the discussions were issues concerning the children's national identity and linguistic rights.

The following discussion roughly follows the general structure of the six interviews, which we designed to address the aims of our research project. First, we explore what the mothers identified as the benefits of the educational sojourning experience, followed by the challenges encountered through the sojourn experience. We then discuss the advice that the interviewee mothers offered to parents considering implementing this language management activity.

5.1. Benefits

Our qualitative analysis of the mothers' responses indicates that, except in one case, their views of the sojourning experience were overwhelmingly positive. Further testament is that most of the families repeated the activity or are planning to repeat it on a regular basis. This is also corroborated in the literature,

as Kwon (2017) reports that mothers had been repeating this practice for seven years. We categorised the benefits reported during the interviews to include linguistic, socio-cultural, attitudinal and affective gains, and discuss some typical comments offered by mothers during the interviews in the remainder of this section.

Overall, there was consensus among the mothers that this experience helped further develop their children's linguistic skills at a rate that surpasses what a child would typically acquire over a much longer period in Australia, although one parent (Sha) mentioned that the gains were obtained just from exposure to Mandarin spoken in the mainstream society.

(2) 在那边上一个月，我觉得可以抵这边一年吧 (Gao)
One month of language acquisition over there [in Taiwan] affords the same as one year of language learning in Australia.

(3) 但是到台湾以后，几个星期就可以用比较多的中文。回到澳洲来，连钢琴老师都说，她的中文变比较好哦。(Wen)
After only a couple of weeks in Taiwan, she could speak more Chinese [than when she left Australia]. When [she] returned to Australia, even her piano teacher complimented her that her Chinese had improved.

Among the specific gains mentioned were improvements in literacy skills. Wen, for instance, commented that she had in particular been pleased to see improvements in writing and reading, as it was quite challenging for her and her husband to teach these skills to their daughter at home.

The mothers perceived improvement of linguistic skills as potentially having a long-term impact on their child's confidence, and on his/her motivation to continue using Mandarin upon returning to Australia. Liu, for instance, reported that her son would greet Chinese people in Mandarin, something he did not do before the sojourn. Similarly, Mei reported that the sojourning experience motivated her son to continue learning and speaking Mandarin after his return to Australia.

In addition to language development, the sojourn activity helped develop the children's socio-cultural understandings and afforded the children opportunities to learn about a different culture in an experiential way, thus enhancing their intercultural competence.

(4) 文化上的话，我目前还没有考虑这么多。可是她在那个环境，她自然而然就会有文化上面的影响。像我妈她是佛教徒，我们家楼下有佛堂，她每天跟我妈去念佛，在那边拜拜。(An)
With culture, I haven't considered this too much yet. However, in her [the daughter's] living environment, she has gradually experienced cultural influences. For instance, my mum is a Buddhist, [therefore] our home has a worship room on the ground level. Every day she [An's daughter] goes with my mother [grandmother] to recite Buddhist sutras, and worship there.

As illustrated in An's excerpt and also further elaborated by her in the remainder of the interview, such experience prepared the child to have an intercultural outlook, so she could better understand and be aware of the differences between East and West and develop critical views with mutual respect of differences.

Being exposed to a different academic culture also impacted on the children's attitudes. Gao, for instance, reflected on Taiwanese school practices which improved her child's independence:

(5) 自主能力比较好一些。因为台湾的话，很多事情都要你自己做，例如说，吃完饭，你要自己擦桌子啊，然后要帮忙老师扫地啊。老师都会要求你要自己会收拾和打扫，这方面的种种。(Gao)
[The child develops] better autonomy. In Taiwan, children in schools are expected to do many things by themselves, such as cleaning up the table after having lunch, and sweeping the floor for the teacher. Teachers also expect you to tidy up your personal belongings, and so forth.

Liu also commented that this unique experience can help children to develop their self-reflection:

(6) Such a unique experience can assist children to reflect on their life and be appreciative of what they have in Australia. (Liu) [English in original]

A similar observation was made by An, who stated that her daughter learned a hard lesson from studying overseas:

(7) 因为她在澳洲的时候实在是太轻松了，所以她去台湾以后就知道，哇原来亚洲的小孩都是怎么样在念书的。(An)

It was because while she was studying in Australia, she was so laid-back. After she had been to Taiwan, she learned wow, this is how kids in Asia study.

Equally important were affective gains that resulted from the experience. As mentioned by all the mothers, the sojourn was a mother-child bonding experience. Gao reported that she and her son travelled around Taiwan and experienced many interesting things together. This increased his willingness to return to Taiwan and he was looking forward to his next trip. Gao was proud that her son still treasures those good memories and often told his father, with whom he interacts in English, that he 'really wanted to go to that place again'.

Another gain mentioned by participants was the child's bonding with the overseas extended family, in particular during traditional festivals. An remarked that the sojourn was an opportunity for her daughter to get to know her mother's background and communicate with other family members and relatives in Taiwan.

5.2. Difficulties and challenges

Not every child, however, appreciated the experience, with one child openly rebelling and refusing to attend school in Taiwan during his Australian school holidays. The most challenging part for this child was waking up at around 6 am as school starts at 7 am. He repeatedly asked his mother:

(8) '为什么我回到这里还要上课？不想上课不想上课!' (Reported by Sha)
Why do I have to attend school when [I] come back here? I don't want to go to school! I don't want to!

He therefore refused to follow teachers' instructions and his mother had to stop sending him to the school after only two weeks, although her plan was for a four-week study experience. Similar instances have been reported by Gafaranga (2010), who observed that constant albeit indirect requests by children to switch to the mainstream language French could lead to a language shift in the Rwandan families and community under investigation, and by Kheirkhah and Cekaite (2015), who in a study of a Persian-Kurdish family residing in Sweden describe children's resistance to the family's language policy by refusing to participate in the family's language practices.

As with the benefits mentioned above, the difficulties and challenges included linguistic, socio-cultural, attitudinal and affective issues:

Although most of the sojourning children had adequate linguistic and communicative skills for school in Taiwan and attended formal or informal Mandarin language tuition in Australia, their skills were not on par with their Taiwanese classmates' skills. This was true in particular, but not only, with regard to literacy. Limited linguistic competence could lead children to feel impatient and frustrated when negotiating with others, resulting in conflicts with classmates, as reported by Gao in regards to her son.

The understanding of verbal and non-verbal socio-cultural norms of interaction (e.g., hugging, greetings, terms of address, eye contact) posed challenges to the children in the Taiwanese setting. Liu reported that her son experienced some misunderstandings when he was trying to greet others. He was used to hugging people to show his friendliness, while Taiwanese people prefer more indirect ways of showing emotions and friendliness. Differences also were found in the amount of eye contact in exchanges between teachers and students (i.e., more restricted in Taiwanese culture than in Australia), or in the terms of address used for teachers (i.e., "Mr/Ms" in Australia vs. "Teacher" in Taiwan). This led Liu and her son to engage in discussions about intercultural differences.

Similarly, adjusting to a new academic culture and different educational practices proved a challenge for some children. An's daughter, for instance, was uncertain

about what “exams or quizzes” mean in the education system in Taiwan, and questioned some Taiwanese educational practices in the Taiwanese kindergarten system, asking:

(9) ‘为什么台湾的小孩都在念书呢？我想念澳洲的幼稚园!’ (Reported by An)
Why are children in Taiwan studying all the time? I miss my kindergarten in Australia!

When An asked her daughter why she felt that way, the daughter replied:

(10) ‘因为都是在吃和玩’。’ (Reported by An)
Because they [children] only eat and play [in Australian child care centres].

A different challenge related to attitudes of Taiwanese classmates. Gao reported that her son, whose father is Caucasian, became very embarrassed and upset when other children referred to him as “foreign face”, which happened occasionally and led to Gao intervening on her son’s behalf. No other parent reported such an incident.

This raises the issue of identity, and the question of whether these children consider themselves as Australian, Taiwanese, or both or neither. De Houwer (1998) identifies several factors that are relevant to identity formation. For the sojourning experience, these factors include:

a) attitudes towards the target language and culture;
b) domains of usage (social context);
c) percentage of contact with target language speakers (social network);
d) age of experience (exposure to language and culture);
e) linguistic proficiency (language ability);
f) cultural attachment.

Since identity formation in turn can have an impact on children’s linguistic development (e.g., as a motivational factor for language acquisition), these

factors may also influence the development of the target language. From the discussion so far, we expect that during their sojourn in Taiwan the children should experience not only linguistic development but also a stronger identification with and attachment to the target culture, given their young age when they are intensively exposed to Mandarin across domains and social networks. Nevertheless, the mothers' comments indicate that this expectation was not met. While children's experiences of identity proved very diverse, the data show that children do not see themselves as Taiwanese.

Gao, for instance, reported that her son had a strong sense of Australian identity, rather than Taiwanese or Chinese. This can be seen in his use of the distal demonstrative pronoun "that place" to refer to Taiwan, potentially indicating a perceived distance to Taiwan in terms of belonging, at least while in Australia. Gao further reported that her son knew he was different from other children in Taiwan. This may or may not stem from his experience of not feeling accepted as Taiwanese by his classmates ("foreign face"), which in turn may be related to his mixed-race physical appearance.[iv]

Similarly, Liu reported that when discussing his identity, her son often replies:

(11) '对啊，我是外国人，我会讲中文.' (Reported by Liu)
Yes, I am a foreigner, and I can speak Chinese.

On the other hand, An stated that her daughter was aware of her identity when her classmates asked her where she was from:

(12) 她会说她是一半一半，她知道。我说，「你是小混混」。问混哪里的，她会说，「混澳洲跟台湾的。」开玩笑这样子。同学问她也是这么说的。她不会说她是澳洲或是台湾，她都说她是一半一半。人家问她哪里来的，她就说，「澳洲」。她不会说她是澳洲人。她这个还是蛮清楚的。(An)
She would say she is half-and-half. She knows. I say to her, "you are a little *hunhun*." [Here, An made a pun. *Hun* literally means "to mix." *Hunhun* is a ruffian. An used *hunhun* to refer to her child as a mixed racial person and continued using phrases related to gangsters]. When asked where she *hun*s (hangs out, or what races she is mixed of), she

would say “Australia and Taiwan.” Just being funny. She gives the same reply to her classmates too. She would never say that she is Australian or Taiwanese. She always says that she is half-and-half. When people ask her which country she comes from, she says “Australia.” She wouldn’t say she’s Australian. She is quite clear about this.

The only partial exception seems to have been Sha’s son, although his sense of identity was undergoing changes over time. Sha reported that when her son was very young he always claimed he was Taiwanese and he would introduce himself to others as Taiwanese. Sha believed that this might be due to both her husband and herself coming from Taiwan and always introducing themselves to others as Taiwanese. Nowadays, her son says that he is half Taiwanese and half Australian. Additionally, he would explain to others:

(13) ‘她是澳洲人，我是台湾人，我是在台湾出生的’ (Reported by Sha)
She [his sister] is Australian. I am Taiwanese. I was born in Taiwan.

Mothers with Caucasian partners thus report that their children display more of an Australian identity (e.g. Gao and Liu) than children of mothers with Chinese-background partners convey (e.g. Sha). Interestingly, a change over time was only observed by Sha’s mother, pointing to the majority (i.e. Australian) culture’s increased relevance and influence for Sha.

The data show that the mothers reacted to their children’s identity issues differently. Gao, for instance, became very upset about her son being labelled “foreign face” and tried to counteract this by rebuking those who used this term. On the other hand, An adopted a light tone when discussing this topic, describing her daughter as multiracial. Liu mentioned that they always introduced themselves as “guests from Australia” rather than as Taiwanese.

While the children’s sense of identity varies, identity is an undeniable factor in the mothers’ perceptions. All the interviewed mothers used the Mandarin word 回 ‘return’ when they referred to both their trip to Taiwan and the one back to Australia. This shows a shared sense of belonging to Taiwan as well as Australia among these mothers. The word 回, which mothers used, is usually followed with

家 for ‘going home’ in the interview data, whereas the generic verb 去 ‘go’ is used for going to places other than “home”.

5.3. Advice to other parents

Participants’ were asked what advice they would offer to other parents considering sojourning with their children to Taiwan. This question aimed at both imparting practical recommendations, but also at indirectly assessing potential negative experiences associated with sojourning. More importantly, the answers provided evidence of which factors were conducive for the success of this management activity.

All participants agreed that parents should be encouraged to take their children overseas to attend school during the Australian summer holidays to improve their Mandarin and other skills, and all were keen to repeat the experience. Even Sha, who had to remove her son from school, expressed her wish to attempt educational sojourning again with her younger daughter when she reaches school age.

A common piece of advice was to start as early as possible, as indicated in the following excerpt from Gao:

(14) 我还建议是越小去越好。如果小四小五才去的话，在澳洲又没有学中文，肯定会跟不上。幼稚园也很好，学拼音什么的，还有认识国字。(Gao)

I also suggest the earlier [children attend], the better. […]. If they were to go to Taiwanese schools in Years 4 and 5 but had not been learning Chinese in Australia, they would certainly not be able to keep up. Kindergarten is also quite good, as children can learn pinyin and learn to recognise Chinese characters.

Two mothers, Gao and Liu, also recommended piloting in kindergarten to see how the children adapt to a different environment, before enrolling children in primary school.

Although all the mothers nominated the development of linguistic skills as the main aim of the activity, it seems obvious from their advice to others that the mothers adopted a very easy going, relaxed approach to schooling in Taiwan, as

we discuss below in section 6. Gao, for instance, advised parents not to push children too hard. She suggested:

(15) 你就是让孩子愉快的去学习就好了。(Gao)
You just let your child enjoy learning.

Similarly, An had no high academic expectation (e.g., high grades in exams). While she hoped her daughter could cope with the school curriculum, and therefore required her daughter to complete all tasks allocated to her during her short period of study in Taiwan, her primary goal was that her daughter "does not hate Chinese". In other words, she envisaged that the sojourning experience would develop positive attitudes towards Mandarin in her daughter, and hence result in a higher motivation to use the language. This, in turn, would feed positively into her daughter's sense of linguistic belonging. Anything else (i.e., Mandarin proficiency across the macro-skills) was considered a bonus.

Despite the easy-going attitude while in Taiwan, the mothers' advice indicates that the success of the sojourning depends at least partially on thorough planning. First, Taiwanese-heritage children born overseas are not eligible for free tuition unless they hold dual citizenship. Thus, to be able to attend Taiwanese schools without incurring high tuition fees, children born in Australia have to be registered as Taiwanese citizens (in addition to being Australian). Second, all the children involved received formal instruction in Mandarin in Australia, either by attending Chinese schools as an extra-curricular activity or through private tutors at home. This was to guarantee that the children attained sufficient levels of proficiency in Mandarin before the sojourn so that school attendance was a positive rather than a frustrating experience. Third, parents prepared their children to understand academic differences and expectations to facilitate the experience. This was summarised by Liu:

(16) 如果决定要送的话，可能需要打个预防针 要让他知道不一样的有些什么。(Liu)
If you decide to send them [to school], you may need to give them an 'immunisation shot' [i.e. to take necessary precautions] to let them know about the differences [between the countries].

Fourth, parents need to negotiate with teachers, schools and even district officers in both countries, to enlist support for the sojourning experience. Thus, when Wen decided to take her children to Taiwan, she initiated the process nine months before the trip by contacting the Taiwanese district office and education committee. She further liaised with the district office one month before the schooling started. Thus, despite the often-mentioned gap between school and home (Spolsky 1974), the success of the sojourn experience partly has to be attributed to a partnership between schools and teachers at both ends of the sojourn.

An example of teachers' support mentioned by Liu include a Taiwanese teacher allocating a classmate every day to sit next to her son and help him with the content. Similarly, An reported that the Taiwanese teacher usually allocated a classmate to sit next to her daughter and help her by reading the content to her, because she was able to understand oral speech while having difficulties with reading materials. An also provided an example of the Australian school support. The school allowed her to extend her daughter's two-week holiday in September into a whole month holiday on an annual basis, given that the child was still attending school, albeit in a different country. Finally, but critically, there was the support of the fathers who facilitated the activity. There is evidence that in families with only one home-language speaking parent, the majority-language speaking parent plays an important role in the successful development of the home language (Venables, Eisenchlas and Schalley, 2014). Two of the fathers accompanied their children on one of their trips to Taiwan. One of these fathers was not a Mandarin speaker, and thus his spouse (Mei) reported that during that trip the children did not fully immerse in the Mandarin-speaking environment. As a result, Mei rated the experience as less positive than when the children travelled only with her.

Although none of the mothers mentioned any family tensions resulting from the sojourning, one wonders about potential drawbacks of a yearly trip that takes mothers and children overseas for four to six weeks at a time. However, that the sojourning takes place on a regular basis seems to suggest that the fathers support this activity.

6. Discussion

The language management activity we have described in this paper provides strong evidence of the parents' language ideologies and their additive view of bilingualism, which is also highlighted in Curdt-Christiansen and Lanza (2018). The educational sojourn they have implemented demonstrates the importance they place on home language maintenance and development. It also illustrates the extent to which they will go to ensure that their children acquire the home language against the backdrop of a societal monolingual mindset.

Although Taiwanese citizens do not pay for school tuition, sojourning requires a big commitment from parents, both in terms of financial resources (e.g., travel costs, Mandarin language classes in Australia to prepare the child for schooling in Taiwan, in some cases lost wages during the sojourn) and time (e.g., sacrificing time together and whole-family holidays). Discussions with parents not intending to provide sojourning experiences for their children indicated that, for families who did not register dual citizenship for their children, tuition fees were a factor impacting on their decision. This may also explain why mainland Chinese families appear to not provide this experience to their children either. China does not accept dual citizenship and thus mainland Chinese-background families would have to pay high school fees during the sojourn. For the non-participating families, weekend language tuition was considered sufficient, particularly when both parents speak Mandarin at home.

While, as mentioned above, Mandarin is supported in the Australian mainstream education system (with different language curricula for second language learners, background language learners, and first language learners, see the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013), home language students usually share lessons with second language learners (Orton, 2016:78). They generally do well in these lessons, "but their potential for [further linguistic] development is often neglected" (Orton, 2016:78–79), and their educational needs are rarely met. These children might thus become bored and disengaged from language classes in schools. The sojourn activity is thus a countermeasure parents can take to foster motivation and excitement in their children.

In section 2 we provided several examples of family management activities that parents implement to cater for their children's linguistic needs and we identified

sojourning as an individual strategy. However, further discussion has shown conclusively that rather than being an individual management activity, successful sojourning rests on the managing parents' abilities to establish partnerships with spouses, schools and teachers at both ends of the sojourning, and with the extended family and community abroad. Without the collaboration of these people, a successful sojourn experience could not be achieved, which is very much in line with the observation that "families alone cannot produce multilingual speakers and multicultural individuals" (Curdt-Christiansen and Lanza 2018:128). The interview data provided clear evidence of the considerable investment of time and effort in managing this activity.

The question therefore can be asked as to what motivates these families to engage in this costly management activity. Ren and Hu (2013:65) posit that "Language management efforts in the home domain are often motivated by important others', especially parents', past experiences, current projections of their children's language and literacy needs, and future-oriented aspirations for their children." This is partially borne out in the mother's reports, as mentioned in section 5, as they all stated development of their child's linguistic skills as the main aim of the sojourn. However, the mothers' easy-going approach to schooling in Taiwan, and the low expectations they claimed to hold about their children's academic performance, seem to be at odds with this claim. A clue that other factors are at play may be seen in a comment from An (in section 5.3) on her hope that her child 'does not hate Chinese [language]', which points to outcomes that are affective and attitudinal rather than purely linguistic. It is positive attitudes towards Mandarin and its speakers that mothers seem to be keen on cultivating in their children, and which could determine their children's maintenance of, or shift from, Mandarin in the long haul.

A second aim of all the mothers was to ensure their children would be able to communicate with their extended family in Taiwan. This aim appears to have been reached as the mothers expected. The mothers also saw that schooling in Taiwan can give the children a glimpse of their mothers' upbringing, thus fostering family cohesion and an understanding and a stronger sense of cross-generational shared experiences. This is in line with Schwartz (2010:175), who suggests that home language maintenance (and thus language maintenance

activities such as the one described in this paper) provides a link between the generations and to the cultural values of the diaspora (also see Tannenbaum 2005).

The data indicate that by engaging in sojourning, the mothers – not just those married to non-Mandarin speakers – take primary responsibility for linguistic and cultural transmission of the home language, which they see as a component of 'good parenting'. The idea that bilingual parenting is 'good parenting' was initially discussed by King and Fogle (2006) in the context of affording children the opportunity to become proficient in a foreign language, not necessarily the language spoken by their parents. This idea is still relevant to our discussion. The parents interviewed by King and Fogle (2006) displayed a pragmatic orientation towards the additional language, seeing it as an addition to the children's education and future career prospects. Similarly, Kwon (2017) suggested that educational and future career options are main drivers for home language maintenance efforts. Yet unlike these parents, none of the Taiwanese mothers mentioned the financial benefits that could potentially result from their children developing competence in the home language – neither in the survey nor in the interviews. Nevertheless, for them language can still be seen as a resource, even if not in the economic sense that Ruiz (1984) envisaged.

Rather than future economic gain, for the Taiwan educational sojourners language seems to be related to the mothers' affective and emotional needs and nostalgic desires, providing a crucial link to their identities (Norton, 2013) as "good Taiwanese–Australian mothers" who see themselves as returning (回), no matter which direction they travel between Taiwan and Australia. The sojourning experience may well help to create a joint sense of dual identity between mothers and children, or at least be a way of doing their best to ensure that the Taiwanese element of their identity is not lost to the next generation. This is the case for An's daughter, who does not define herself as Australian or Taiwanese but as 'half and half', as indicated in excerpt (11). However, the mothers' plans do not always yield the outcomes they expected for their children, as the data show. Even at these children's young age, identity choices and agency (as also reported on in Gafaranga, 2010 and Kheirkhah and Cekaite, 2015) can result in the children expressing a rather limited sense of belonging to the parents'

homeland culture, thus distinguishing themselves from Taiwanese culture and identifying instead with elements of the country of residence. Evidence for this claim can be seen in Gao's son's references to Taiwan as 'that place', and Liu's son referring to himself as a foreigner in Taiwan (i.e., non-Taiwanese) (Excerpt 10).

7. Concluding remarks

This paper has discussed one type of family language activity in diasporic communities, the short-time educational sojourning of children to the parents' home country. This type of sojourning is a creative language management activity, which to the best of our knowledge has not been systematically investigated in the literature before, although it has been noted by Kwon (2017) for the Japanese/Korean–US context, and by Orton (2016) in her discussion of the Chinese language curriculum in Australia. The insights that our discussion offers help to enrich understanding of the repertoire of parents' language management efforts to ensure intergenerational transmission of home languages. The data showed that several types of linguistic and non-linguistic benefits can result from this activity. At the same time, educational sojourning to the home country is costly and time-consuming, and requires elaborate pre-planning and preparation. It can only be implemented through the provision of sufficient socioeconomic means by the families, coupled with established and ongoing cultural and familial ties to the homeland, and the transnational support from the educational systems in both countries. Sojourning is hence a clear example not only of enacted family language policy, but also of the positioning of the Taiwanese diaspora within both their current residential settings as well as their homelands (Albury and Schluter, this issue).

While the results of the sojourning explored in the study are a very promising outcome, the study itself was small scale. Of the 10 parents who reported in the survey that they engage in educational sojourning, only six mothers could be included in the interviews for this study. We also recognise two further caveats. First, what the mothers expressed in the interviews may not be the whole story but only what they decided to share with an interviewer unknown to them, given that some of the questions were very personal (e.g., the effect of the sojourning

on the family). Second, while the mothers' perceptions on the sojourn were informative, it would have been useful to also explore the children's perspectives, since it is ultimately the children who decide whether to maintain and develop the home language (also see Gafaranga, 2010 and Kheirkhah and Cekaite, 2015). As we saw in Excerpt (8), Sha's son refused to continue attending school in Taiwan and thus derailed his mother's best-laid plans. The topics of identity formation and intergenerational cohesion that emerged from the interviews would have warranted further in-depth investigation, but would have needed to feature the perspectives of the children, which we could not access. Including children's voices as receivers of language management activities would have allowed our study to present a more balanced view, and to carry out a more in-depth discussion of the agentive forces in this transnational language maintenance activity, which appears to be rather frequent in the Taiwanese diaspora in Australia.

Finally, there is the matter of the sustainability of this activity for any particular child. Some mothers expressed their willingness to continue educational sojourning as long as their children can cope with the academic content. This suggests the activity may best suit children at kindergarten and initial primary school levels. Once the content of schooling in the home country becomes too challenging, the children could become frustrated by their inability to catch up and thus could exercise their agency and refuse to continue. In any case, we have reason to expect that the educational sojourning activity is likely to be conducive to establishing the foundations for successful acquisition of home language in children's early years. While the longer-term results of the sojourning are outside the scope of the present study, they deserve further investigation to advance knowledge of this potentially useful approach to fostering children's home language acquisition.

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[i] This term, used initially in the South Korean media, refers to families in which parents live separately, sometimes for years, to have their children schooled in English-speaking countries. The term alludes to the lengths these parents will go in order to give their children what they consider to be the best possible education (Reed, 2015).

[ii] We are aware that Mandarin is not the only language spoken natively in Taiwan. However, it is the language of schooling in Taiwan, and it also appears to be the home language of Taiwanese-background Australian residents. In our data, Mandarin was the only language that was mentioned by the Taiwanese-background respondents.

[iii] It should be noted that the figures are most likely not representative at the national level due to the self-selection of participants. However, this kind of sojourning has been reported as a "'popular practice' among Korean and Japanese mothers in the United States", with one of the Korean mothers stating: "'Some schools in the areas that are known for good schools prohibit children from coming from the United States, because there are too many.'" (Kwon, 2017:503)

[iv] This latter aspect was pointed out to us by an anonymous reviewer. The reviewer also suggested that Sha's son may find his sojourn experience very challenging because of him not differing in his physical appearance from the other children in the Taiwanese classroom, resulting in both teachers and peers expecting him to behave like a native Taiwanese and also speaking Mandarin with a high degree of fluency. His sojourn experience could thus differ substantially from the other children's, who received additional support (see below discussion), and this might have led to his refusal. While this is a valid hypothesis, it can unfortunately not be corroborated by our data and hence would have to be further investigated in a follow-up study.