

Research on Family Language Policy in the Baltic Countries: State of Art

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During the last few decades, a new field of family language policy (FLP) emerged through the realisation of a simple fact that language policy is not always top-down, centralised and coming from institutions but every language user may have a personal (implicit) language policy. The same is true about linguistic communities and micro-communities such as family. At the same time, a deeper understanding of multilingualism that is not just a sum of several monolingualisms, the concept of multicompetence and multilingual norms contributed to the studies on multilingual families and their FLP. The now classical model of language policy, elaborated by Bernard Spolsky (2004, 2012) and applied to bottom-up policy cases, describes FLP as an interaction of the following components: language beliefs (ideology, language attitudes, ideas about particular languages and language as such), language management (measures taken to achieve the goals, i.e., to provide input in several languages etc) and language practices (the real linguistic behaviour). There might be a clash between the three components, for instance, if parents believe in separation of languages but in reality switch or use bilingual forms.

The model was elaborated since then, and connections between the three components and sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, sociocultural and sociopolitical context and some other broader societal factors was demonstrated (Curdt-Christensen 2018). A great multitude of case studies from different countries, types of multilingualism, sociolinguistic situations and perspectives has appeared. However, there are relatively few studies on post-Soviet countries: a typical candidate for FLP research would be an immigrant/indigenous minority family in the Western world.

The paper provides an overview of FLP research in the Baltic countries that form a special category within the post-Soviet context (i.e., occupied states from 1940 till 1991 where majority was gradually marginalised and turning into minority). The topics in FLP research include classical studies on mixed families, sociolinguistic normalisation and strive of some Russian-speakers towards better command in or even internalisation of Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian, maintenance of so-called “third minorities languages” (for instance, Tatar), childrens’ agency, language maintenance in old and new émigré communities and many others.



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