

The mediating role of English in multilingual families with diverse heritage languages in non-English-speaking countries

This study examines the use of English as an L3 among heritage speakers in Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Israel, and Sweden, focusing on its impact on Family Language Policies (FLP) and its role as a *lingua academica* and *lingua emotiva*. A total of 50 multilingual families (ten from each country) were investigated. The study used a qualitative approach, including case studies and interviews with parents from immigrant and minority backgrounds to understand their beliefs and explore English's influence on FLP. It also examined the effects of English on the use and maintenance of heritage languages (HLs) and minority languages (MLs), as well as its impact on literacy development in multilingual contexts.

The findings suggest that English's presence in multilingual households is closely tied to its societal role. Exogamous families often use English as a tool for language brokering, facilitating communication between parents and children. The use of English at home is also shaped by the educational system, with the COVID-19 pandemic further increasing English-mediated online activities.

While English can help families access global knowledge, it also poses challenges for HL maintenance. In some families, English supports HLs by providing access to educational and digital resources in those languages. However, in others, English's dominance may risk overshadowing HLs, making it harder for families to maintain them across generations.

This study highlights the dual role of English in multilingual households: as a bridge to global communication and a potential challenge to preserving HLs. It reflects broader trends in language shift, identity negotiation, and digital literacy in a globalized world, suggesting the need for strategies that balance the use of English with the maintenance of HLs. Ultimately, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of multilingualism and the complex dynamics between global and local languages in diverse multilingual families.