J Autism Dev Disord (2016) 46:424–435
DOI 10.1007/s10803-015-2625-0

S.I: DISCOURSE AND CONVERSATION ANALYTIC APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ASD

Bilingualism as Conceptualized and Bilingualism as Lived: A Critical Examination of the Monolingual Socialization of a Child with Autism in a Bilingual Family

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Published online: 30 October 2015
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Abstract This is an ethnographic and discourse analytic case study of a bilingual, minority-language family of a six-year-old child with autism whose family members were committed to speaking English with him. Drawing on *family language policy*, the study examines the tensions between the family members' stated beliefs, management efforts, and their actual practices around language use with their child. The findings show that many assumptions held by family members about language use and bilingualism were inconsistent with their everyday language practices. A practice and discourse-analytic approach to bilingualism offers a theoretical and methodological lens through which to investigate these discrepancies and to recast the interactional achievements between the child and his parents as situated bilingual practices.

Keywords Bilingualism · Autism spectrum disorders · Heritage language maintenance · Family language policy · Cultural and linguistic diversity

Introduction

Many bilingual/multilingual parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in the United States are advised to speak only one language with their children (Harlin and Paneque 2006; Kremer-Sadlik 2004; Wharton et al. 2000; Yu 2013). Minority-language[1] families are especially affected since English is usually recommended as the target language. A common rationale for this advice is that the children might be confused or delayed by the exposure to more than one language. Another rationale is that the demands of bilingualism and multilingualism might compromise intervention efficacy and English acquisition. Whereas in today's global society, the ability to speak more than one language is regarded as an asset, the rhetoric about bilingualism/multilingualism surrounding children with autism has remained strongly subtractive (Stritikus and Garcia 2005).

Much of the research on bilingualism and ASD has focused on examining the effects of bilingualism on children with ASD. The findings have not supported the notion that bilingualism is detrimental for children with ASD. In a survey of parents of children with ASD from 37 families, Kay-Raining Bird et al. (2012) found that over 75 % of the respondents who were raising their children bilingually rated their efforts as successful to some degree. Seung et al. (2006) found that speech-language interventions provided in a family's home language were effective into helping a child with ASD make progress towards intervention goals as well as to develop English. A number of studies comparing children with autism from monolingual and bilingual backgrounds have found that the two groups were comparable in their performance on a variety of developmental measures, including age of first words and phrases, vocabulary size, performance on standardized language tests, severity of autism symptoms, frequency of social initiations, degrees of responsiveness and attention to

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[1] The term *minority-language* is used here not only to refer to numerical representation but also to social and sociopolitical status relative to a societally dominant language (Ramaga 1992).

speech, and functional communication scores (Hambly and Fombonne 2012; Ohashi et al. 2012; Petersen et al. 2012; Reetzke et al. 2015; Valicenti-McDermott et al. 2013). Together, these findings suggest that the argument for speaking only one language with children with ASD is unsubstantiated.

At the same time, studies show that professional advice that is incongruent with the needs of families caused significant problems. Wharton et al. (2000) studied parents of children with ASD from three minority-language families who had been advised to speak English and found that the parents were less effective in expanding the length and complexity of their children's utterances and more muted in their affective displays when using English compared to their native languages. Similarly, Kremer-Sadlik (2004) observed four sets of parents of children with ASD who were advised to speak English and found that the parents' limited proficiency in English prevented them from having a smooth exchange of ideas and shortened their interactions. Furthermore, she observed that some of the children were left out of family conversations conducted in their parents' native languages.

For the reasons above, the answer to the question, "Should we advise parents to speak only one language?" converges on "no." In this paper, I ask a different and more basic question—What does it *mean* to speak only English? In posing this question, I challenge a problematic assumption about language use in minority-language families—that parents are at liberty to choose to speak one or two languages with their children—and question whether parental language choice is a viable object for intervention. The idea that one language can be isolated from another in a speaker's repertoire is a formalistic view of language that only partially corresponds with how speakers experience bilingualism as a lived phenomenon. I argue that the conceptualization of bilingualism as two-languages-in-one-head is inconsistent with speakers' everyday experiences of bilingualism in which languages interact culturally and linguistically to form a dynamic whole that is not reducible to parts. As a consequence, beyond being unnecessary or unhelpful, advising parents to reduce or separate their languages when speaking with their children can set families on a path to pursue a goal that is fundamentally untenable and at odds with their ways of life. A practice and discourse analytic approach to bilingualism offers a theoretical and methodological lens through which to illuminate these discrepancies and to recast bilingual communication between parents and their children with ASD as a joint achievement of sense making that transcends normatively differentiated codes.

The research presented here is an ethnographic and discourse analytic case study of a Chinese/English-speaking bilingual family of a six-year-old child with ASD, Oscar, whose family members were committed to speaking English with him. Drawing on the frameworks of *family language policy* (Schwartz 2010; Spolsky 2012), I examined the family members' stated beliefs about bilingualism, the ways in which those beliefs motivated their language management efforts, and how both their beliefs and management plans converged and diverged from the their practices with Oscar within dinnertime routines. The findings showed that although the family members' ways of speaking with Oscar appeared at first to be consistent with their monolingual plan, a more in-depth, practice-oriented analysis revealed their language use patterns to be much more complex. The findings highlight the need to move the current conversations about bilingualism and ASD beyond whether families should speak one or two languages and to explore what contributes to the meaningful participation of children with ASD within bilingual contexts.

Family Language Policy

Despite the fact that bilingual families of children with ASD often seek advice, and professionals just as often give advice, about family language use, there is currently no framework for guiding research or clinical practice in this area. The studies on bilingualism and ASD to date are largely limited to clinical contexts and narrowly focused on the performances of bilingual versus monolingual children with ASD on specific developmental measures. Living across linguistically marked social boundaries is a complex experience even for parents whose children are typically developing (Zentella 1997). Parenting a child with a diagnosis of ASD can both intensify and complicate the experience (Yu 2013). For the purposes of supporting families in their language use with children with autism and other developmental disabilities, there is an urgent need for more contextualized research.

Family language policy (FLP) is an emerging interdisciplinary field that provides a framework for examining issues of explicit language planning in families, typically within the context of heritage language maintenance (Schwartz 2010; Spolsky 2012). FLP draws from and contributes to two distinct areas of study that have traditionally had little overlap: language policy, which has its roots in sociology, and child language acquisition, which has been traditionally situated in developmental psycholinguistics. An aim of FLP is to bridge the gap by investigating the impact of family interactions on child language development while also monitoring how family language use reflects broader social conditions and attitudes. It does so by focusing on three interrelated components of intergenerational language transmission—ideology, management, and practice. The first aspect of

FLP, *language ideology*, refers to culturally organized beliefs about language that involve "common sense notions" and "self-evident ideas" that are "derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experiences or interests of particular social positions" (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, pp. 3–4). Ideologies underlie *language management* efforts, which are calculated interventions for language use among family members. Both ideology and management are related to but distinct from the third aspect of FLP, *language practice*, face-to-face and habitual patterns of language use that may or may not be conscious to the speakers. In other words, FLP is the study of what people think about language, what they wish to do with language, and what they actually do with language. The linkages between the three aspects are complex, non-linear and even conflicting (Schwartz 2010).

In this paper, I will use the FLP framework to examine tensions between the beliefs, management plans, and practices in one minority-language family. In particular, I will examine the family's routine language practices through the lens of *communicative practice*, which offers a way of understanding language use as embodied and culturally-situated social actions jointly achieved by interlocutors through the deployment of language and other mediational means (Hanks 1996). This is juxtaposed with a formalistic description of language use as the transmission and reception of abstract concepts mapping on to referential systems within the mind of individual speakers (de Saussure 1972). Urciuoli (1985) argued that a practice-focused (rather than a code-focused) approach to bilingualism allows us to see beyond two languages and to recognize the languages in the lives of speakers as resources integrated within a unified pragmatic system. A practice view of language has also been shown to expand and deepen the understanding of the unique communicative competencies and challenges of children with ASD (Sterponi et al. 2014).

The shift from a formal to a praxeological conceptualization of language requires a concomitant shift in methodology. Heller (1988) asserts that if we think of language and bilingualism as practice, then we put the speakers, not the systems, at the center of our analysis. Whereas a formal analysis of language and language use categorizes them into formal constituents (e.g., words, utterances, or codes such as English or Chinese), the job of discourse analysis is to analyze the patterning of activities and the actions that speakers perform through language (Gee 2011). Conversation analysis, one particular form of discourse analysis, offers a systematic analysis of the sequential organization of naturally occurring talk in interaction (Schegloff 2007). Its focus is to describe turns of talk and utterances as an interactional achievement between interlocutors and not the outgrowth of purely psychological processes. As such, it offers a way of understanding how interactants use language(s) as a resource to achieve social alignment.

The Current Study

The focal family is that of a six-year-old child with ASD who will be referred to as Oscar. I met Oscar's parents at a support group for families of children with disabilities. Oscar received a diagnosis of autistic disorder[2] at two-and-a-half-years of age at a local medical center. According to the assessment report, he displayed limited joint attention with others at that time, did not speak, and had a narrow range of play behaviors. Oscar began speaking his first words after four-years of age. At the time of the study, his language development and social interaction remained a major concern for his parents. He showed comprehension of simple questions and commands within routine contexts. Most of his utterances were one- to three-words in length and often rote or echolalic.

In addition to Oscar, there were five other members of the family who lived in the household, including his parents, paternal grandfather, ten-year-old sister, and an adult cousin living with the family short-term to attend language school. The family had been in the United States for 10 years and Oscar was born in the United States. He and his sister attended local public schools where English was the language used for instruction. The family's home was in a suburb where residents of Asian descent were in the minority. All of the primary social networks for Oscar's family, however, were within the Chinese community.

At the time of the study, Oscar's family members had been committed to speaking with Oscar in English for approximately 3 years. Mandarin-Chinese remained the primary language spoken among the rest of the family. Some of the family members also spoke another dialect known as Taiwanese. All of the family members spoke English to some degree, but Oscar's ten-year-old sister was the only one who spoke English with native-like proficiency. Except for the occasional use of English words and phrases, the adult members of the family almost never spoke English with each other. Of the adult members, Oscar's father was the most fluent in English. He worked as an engineer in an English-speaking company and was the only family member employed full-time outside the home. Oscar's mother described her English proficiency as being fine for daily activities and for conversations with her children and their teachers, but she did not always feel she could communicate adequately in English in all contexts.

[2] Diagnosis consistent with the criteria of the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* (American Psychiatric Association 2000).

Both parents stated that they did not need and had never requested an interpreter for their son's Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Within the family, Oscar's cousin and grandfather had the most limited English proficiency. Both said they felt comfortable speaking English in transactional routines (such as communicating with a cashier at a store) but did not feel comfortable engaging in extended conversations.

Data Collection and Transcription

The data in this study included participant observation fieldnotes, video-recordings of naturally occurring mealtime interactions in the family's home, and an audio-recorded interview with the mother. The data were collected over 22 visits between January and May 2007. Video recordings of family interactions took place one to three times per week and were completed on weekday evenings or weekend afternoons when family members were likely to be home together. The average length of each video-recording was 70 min. At different points over the 4 months, I conversed with each of Oscar's family members about their language choices with Oscar. His mother was the only one who was available for an extended interview. The final data included (a) a total of approximately 30 h of video, half of which were transcribed for detailed analysis, (b) fieldnotes, (b) research memos, (c) video content logs, and (d) an interview transcript.

11 of the 22 video recordings (or every other recording) of family interactions were transcribed along with a 90-min audio-recorded interview with Oscar's mother. Transcriptions were completed by bilingual research assistants and at least 25 % were independently transcribed by a second research assistant. Discrepancies were reviewed by the group until agreement could be reached. Transcriptions of the video-recorded family interactions were adapted from Schegloff (2007) and included both linguistic and paralinguistic details (see "Appendix").

Data Analysis

Family language policy involves the investigation of related but distinct phenomena, which necessitates the triangulation of more than one type of data and different methods of analysis (Schwartz and Verschik 2013). Two layers of analysis were conducted for this study. The first focused on family members' ideology and management of language use with Oscar and the second focused on their language practices within dinnertime routines. Interviews with family members were analyzed thematically for patterns in beliefs and plans related to language policy (Seidman 2005). All instances of talk about deliberate language choices with Oscar were highlighted in fieldnotes and transcripts. In addition, views expressed about bilingualism and language use as they related to Oscar were also identified. Examples included any justifications about language use choices with the child; stated beliefs about the effects of bilingualism on the child; and agreement or disagreement with others' views on the topic. These instances were examined for similarities and discrepancies across individual family members, as well as how they related to the patterns of language ideology and management that have been identified in the existing literature.

The themes that emerged from this first layer of analysis then informed the second layer of analysis, which was the main focus of the study. In this stage, I examined the family members' actual language use with Oscar. The goal of this portion of the analysis was to examine the ways in which the family's intended practices were aligned and/or misaligned with their actual practices. Another related goal was to illustrate the ways in which those alignments/misalignments could be obscured and/or made visible by methods that contrast in their orientations to language and language use. In order to accomplish this, two contrasting methods of analysis were applied, which will be referred to respectively as the formalistic approach and the practice approach.

My research assistants and I first conducted an utterance-level language sample analysis, a conventional method in child language research (Lahey 1988). Each utterance directed to Oscar and spoken by Oscar was counted and then assigned as being in English, Chinese, or mixed. An utterance that had words from English and Chinese were counted as mixed, even if only one word from a second language was represented. The utterances were also categorized according to their pragmatic functions (e.g., directives, protests, comments) and whether they were contingent to the utterances of the previous speaker (Owens 2010). Each of these analytic moves (i.e., segmenting talk into utterances; assigning the utterances to language categories; and categorizing utterances by functions) was aligned with a formalistic approach to language analysis because they involved the extraction of language elements from an ongoing context and also the attribution of elements based on predefined categories.

A practice approach involves several methodological departures from a formalistic approach, two of which were of particular relevance for this study. The first was a shift of the unit of analysis from utterances to activities, in other words, from the discrete units of what people said towards the social actions they were trying to accomplish through speech. The actions of interest were those embedded in localized activities that held meaning for the participants (Cole et al. 1997). We identified activities that occurred recurrently in the family's mealtime routines, in other words, the *linked practices* that gave a predictable shape to

dinnertime in Oscar's household (Scollon 2001). These included: preparing dinner; calling family members to dinner; urging Oscar to eat; commenting on food; and taking leave from dinner. A second shift was moving from seeing speaking and listening as something that occurred dyadically between an addressor and an addressee and adopting a *participation framework* (Goffman 1983), in which listening and speaking were presumed to include any individuals who were present for and who were in position to perceive ongoing verbal exchanges. The findings from these multiple layers of analysis are described below.

Findings

Language Ideology and Language Management

According to Oscar's mother, she and the other members of the family occasionally spoke to Oscar in Chinese but tried to avoid it. The management plans reported by the other family members were consistent with this account. Oscar's mother reported that they began speaking English with Oscar approximately 6 months after he received the autism diagnosis. They did not speak much English at home prior to Oscar's diagnosis.

Although the family members were in agreement about how to talk to Oscar, they did not share the same motivations for it. Professional advice was a major factor in Oscar's mother's decision to speak English with him. She referred to two instances in which professionals made recommendations for them to speak English to their child. The early intervention therapist was the first to tell the parents that Oscar's language progress could be hindered by his bilingual exposure. Oscar's mother said, however, that the interventionist did not insist the family speak English, only that his progress might be slower if they spoke two languages. Based on the mother's report, this therapist's assessment of the effects of bilingualism was delivered with a relatively soft epistemic stance. In the mother's retelling of the therapist's advice, she included linguistic hedges such as "ke neng" (*might*) and "bi jiao man yi dian" (*a little more slowly*). The mother reported that it was not an imperative "mei you yao qiu" (*did not demand*), but a recommendation "ru guo ke yi de hua" (*if it is possible*) "jin liang" (*to the extent possible*). The message was clear, however, that bilingualism was seen as a potential problem.

Upon Oscar's transition into preschool at age three, his parents were again cautioned about bilingualism, more sharply this time, by the speech-language pathologist (SLP):

Excerpt 1

Shang xue zhi hou, ta jui mei you yi dui yi de speech therapy le. Ta dou shi zai, uh, na zhong group. Ran hou dao wo men kai hui de shi hou, tong chang jui hui you speech therapist chu xian. Ran hou na ge speech therapist jui shuo, uh, wo men jiang hua, yong liang ge yu yan, ying xiang ta de yu yan fa zhan. Ta jui yi zhi gen wo men jian chi bus hi yi dui yi speech therapy de wen tis hi wo men yao zai jia gen ta jiang ying wen.

After starting school, he didn't have one-on-one[a] speech therapy anymore. He was always, uh, in groups and such. And when we had meetings[b], usually a speech therapist would appear. And that speech therapist would say, uh, the way we talk, in two languages, affects his language development. She kept insisting to us that it wasn't the problem of having or not having one–one–one therapy but that we need to speak English at home.

[a] One-on-one refers to the ratio of therapist to students. Oscar's mother had expressed in previous conversations that she felt Oscar needed one-on-one speech therapy

[b] Individualized Education Plan Meetings

The warning about bilingualism this time was unequivocal. Oscar's mother indicated that she and the school speech-language pathologist differed on what they believed to be the barriers to Oscar's progress. Oscar's mother said that she felt his difficulties were due to his disability and not because of bilingual exposure. She stated,

> Wo men gen wo nu er ye jiang zhong wen. Zhen chang de xiao hai jiu hui gao de qing chu. Wo men bu guan gen Oscar jian shi me ta dou yao hui you wen ti xue jiang hua de.
> *We talk to my daughter in Chinese too. Normal children can figure it out. Oscar was going to have trouble learning to talk no matter what we spoke to him.*

She reported feeling guilty and hurt over this experience, saying,

> Suo yi, wo jui yi zhi jue de hen shou shang. Wo jiu jue de, uh, wo jiu jin liang. Wo men jiu jin liang, yin wei lao shi zhe yang gen wo men shuo.
> *So, I just always felt very hurt. And I felt, uh, well, I just do my best. We just do our best because that's what the teacher told us.*

While the SLP reportedly saw the family's bilingualism as the reason for his speech difficulties, Oscar's mother felt the problem was the absence of one-on-one speech therapy. She described the SLP as "appearing" at IEP meetings,

suggesting that the SLP was not someone she considered a regular member of the educational team, but an institutional gatekeeper. She felt that if she had insisted on speaking Chinese with Oscar, she might have been blamed for the difficulties in his language development. She might also have jeopardized the chances of him getting services that she believed to be valuable.

Oscar's mother was unique among the family members for describing her way of speaking with Oscar as an accommodation to the professionals, rather than as an accommodation to Oscar. Oscar's father stated that he felt it would be less confusing for Oscar to hear just one language across settings. Oscar's grandfather said that he used English with Oscar because Oscar understood more English. Oscar's cousin gave a similar response, namely, that Oscar seemed to know more English, so he tried to use English with him. Oscar's ten-year-old sister's motivation was not as deliberate as the adults. She said that she spoke English with Oscar because her parents told her to.

As Oscar's mother's report suggested, feeling the need to accommodate other people's beliefs was not the same as subscribing to them. Her decisions about language management were also shaped by other factors, which in this case, was a power differential between her and the professional. Nevertheless, one belief that the family members all expressed was the notion that speaking English afforded Oscar the opportunity to hear and speak one consistent code across contexts and that this consistency would simplify communication for him and his teachers and therapists. Underlying this belief are suppositions about the nature of monolingualism, speaking and listening, and simplification. We will examine each of these suppositions as we shift our focus from the family's beliefs and management goals to their routine language practices.

Language Practice

From Utterance to Activity: Rethinking Monolingualism and Bilingualism

When observed through an utterance-level analysis, the family members' patterns of language use with Oscar seemed well aligned with their language management plan. Each of the family members was consistent in using English whenever he or she directly spoke to Oscar. Often, this involved codeswitching from Chinese, which was the primary language used among the rest of the family. The following is an example.

Excerpt 2

1.	((Oscar, sister, and cousin sitting at table, starting to eat. Mother is preparing food. Father walks into the kitchen/dining room.))
2. Father:	/Hẽ/, lao ba ne?
	Eh, where's dad?
3.	((Cousin mimes showering.))
4. Mother:	Xi zao
	Showering ((Sits down at table and starts eating.))
5. Sister:	Wo qu jiao ye ye
	I'll go get grandpa.
6. Mother:	Hao, xie xie
	Ok, thank you. ((Sister gets up from table.))
7. Mother:	You want this? ((Brings a forkful of food near Oscar's mouth.))
8. Oscar:	Eat it. ((Pushes the fork away. Picks up food with hand.))
9. Mother:	Ah-uh, Use fork! ((Moves Oscar's hand and points at his fork.))
10. Sister:	Ye ye! ((Shouting off-camera))
	Grandpa!
11. Grandfather:	/hã?/((Shouting off-camera))
12. Sister	Chi fan le! ((Shouting off-camera))
	eat rice PERF
	Time for dinner!
13. Grandfather:	Hao! ((Shouting off-camera))
	Ok.

In the excerpt above, a total of eleven utterances were spoken. Two of the utterances were directed at Oscar and spoken in English (lines 7, 9). Oscar directed one utterance at his mother, which was also in English (line 8). All of the other utterances were spoken in Chinese and none of them were directed at Oscar. What the family members meant then, by speaking English with Oscar, was that they used English utterances whenever they spoke *directly* to him. Using this method of counting and categorizing utterances, we counted a total of 1350 utterances that were directed to Oscar across all transcripts, 92 % were in English, 5 % were in Chinese, and 3 % were mixed. His mother accounted for 90 % of the use of Chinese utterances with him. Of the total 372 utterances spoken by Oscar, 98 % were in English and only 2 % were in Chinese. In contrast, over 95 % of the utterances used between the other family members were in Chinese. Viewed through this lens, the family was remarkably consistent in speaking English with Oscar. In other words, they seemed to be accomplishing what they set out to do and what they were advised to do.

The picture changed, however, when we examined the data through a practice approach. Focusing on *activities* rather than *utterances* as the primary unit of analysis, we see the contextualized meanings of the utterances used. From this view, the interaction above represented a sequential alignment of social actions in the performance of a routine, which in this case was calling family members to dinner. In line 2, Oscar's father inquired about the whereabouts of Oscar's grandfather. His question was met by nonverbal and verbal responses from Oscar's cousin and mother (lines 3 and 4). It also triggered an offer from Oscar's sister (line 5) to call grandfather to dinner. The phrase she used to do so was "chi fan le" which literally translates to "eat rice" (line 12). It is in light of this contextualized activity that we see the intended meaning of the utterance. In Chinese, the phrase "eat rice" can refer to the general act of eating and not only to the literal consumption of rice. It can be used to refer to the taking in of a meal or the act of coming together over food. In many cases, "Have you eaten rice?" can be used as a form of greeting, on par with "How are you?" (Hong 1996). The shift in methodology presented a particular challenge in terms of assigning family members' talk to a particular language. It was relatively easy for us to describe an utterance as being English, Chinese, or mixed based on its lexical composition, but as we moved away from an analysis focused on structures and towards activities, the linguistic resources being drawn from each language to perform meaningful social actions became much more hybridized and interpenetrating.

To encourage Oscar to eat his dinner more quickly, his parents frequently urged him to "eat rice," often when Oscar had no rice on his plate or in his bowl.

Excerpt 3

1.	Father:	Okay, okay, okay, go sit nice.
2.		((Oscar looking for something in a drawer.))
3.	Father:	((Raises voice)) Oscar! Sit down.
4.		((Oscar looks at dad and sits down. Eats broccoli.))
5.	Father:	Eat rice. Sit nice.
6.		((Oscar looks at dad. Continues eating broccoli.))

In the excerpt above, although glossed in English, the father's phrase "eat rice" (line 5) was semantically and indexically Chinese. When family members spoke with Oscar, they infused "Chineseness" into their English utterances in ways that made it difficult to say when one language ended and another began. The phrase "eat rice," for example, channeled indexical meanings associated with Chinese beyond what is typically thought of as mixing or codeswitching (Urciuoli 1985). This sense of speaking Chinese through English was also evident in the speakers' syntax, phonology, and prosody, especially those of the adults. Examples of utterances that utilized Chinese syntax included: "Use fork" (excerpt 2, line 9) and "Go sit nice" (excerpt 3, line 1). The utterances tended to follow a staccato prosody and stress envelope typical in Chinese speech. They also used exclamatory particles common to Taiwanese and Mandarin, such as/hẽ/(excerpt 2, line 2).

The ways of speaking English found among the adult members of this family can be best described as hybrid language practices, which according to Gutiérrez et al. (1999) "are not simply codeswitching as the alternation between two language codes. They are more a systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process among those who share the code, as they strive to achieve mutual understanding" (p. 88). The hybridized nature of the family's language practices raised questions about what it meant to speak one language and whether monolingualism should be equated with uniformity. Monolingualism and bilingualism might have seemed, at first blush, to be straightforward concepts—monolingualism was the state of using one language and bilingualism was that of using two. Heller (1988) argued that this conceptualization perpetuated what seemed like a common-sense but was in fact a highly ideologized view of bilingualism. It turns out that neither the oneness of monolingualism nor the twoness of bilingualism can be taken for granted. From a practice perspective, languages are better understood as "normatively differentiated codes" that do not necessarily correspond to closed and wholly describable systems (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998; Garrett 2007). What is implicit in the advice for parents to speak one uniformed language is really an expectation for them to speak a standard language (i.e., Mainstream American English), a demand that is both unreasonable and inequitable since access to standard languages (or any language) is not equally available to every speaker (Bourdieu 1991).

From Dyadic to Multiparty Talk: Rethinking Speaking and Listening

The boundaries between language(s) were further tested with the shift of analytic focus from individual utterances to multiparty participation frameworks. Participation framework was defined by Goffman (1983) as a cross-sectional view of the roles of all of the members of a social encounter who are oriented to the ongoing talk whether or not they are actually talking or directly being addressed. When viewed through this lens, we see that Oscar was constantly immersed in bilingual family interactions and

behaved as an active participant, even though he was not always directly addressed.

Excerpt 4

1. Sister:	Mama, nib u shi shuo you meat ma? Gei wo.
	Mama, didn't you say there was meat? Give it to me.
2. Mother:	Ni zi ji bu yao de/a/. Wo-dou zai di di zhe.
	You didn't want it. I- it's all here with brother. ((Points to Oscar's plate.))
3. Sister:	Wo shuo wo yao [(…)
	I said I want [(…)
4. Mother:	[Ni yao ni jiu na ma. Ni jiu- ((Points to A's
5.	plate))/nã/(0.5) Ni yao bu yao?
	[If you want then take it. You- here. (0.5) *You want it?*
6. Sister:	But I want it with ketchup.
7. Mother:	Na pan zi na lai.
	Then bring the plate over here.
8.	((Grandfather hands mother Oscar's plate. Oscar watches him and the plate. Mother transfers some meat from it to sister's plate.))
9. Mother:	Gou bu gou?
	Enough?
10. Sister:	No
11. Mother:	((Puts more meat on sister's plate.)) Gou bu gou?
	Enough?
12. Sister:	Yes ((Mom returns plate to Oscar.))
13. Oscar:	((Stands up)) Meat
14. Mother:	Uh oh oh, what do you want?
15. Oscar:	I want ((Walks to cabinet))
16. Mother:	What do you want?
17. Oscar:	Ketchup ((Sits down with ketchup))

In the example above, the conversation started with an exchange between Oscar's mother and sister (lines 1–7). The two of them occupied the roles of what Goffman (1983) called *ratified participants,* which refers to those who are oriented jointly to and expected to participate in a state of talk. Although not directly addressed, Oscar and his grandfather both occupied *bystander* roles, whose access to the encounter was perceivable by the ratified participants. In line 8, grandfather's participated actively by handing Oscar's plate to his mother, and Oscar coordinated his attentional focus to the ongoing interactional flow by watching the transfer of the plate. It was difficult at this point to say whether Oscar understood why his plate was being taken, but he did not show signs of surprise. When his plate was returned to him, Oscar referenced the meat (line 13) and went to get ketchup (lines 15 and 17), frame-tying his own utterances to those of his sisters earlier in the conversation (line 6). This shows that even when Oscar was not the direct recipient of address, he still demonstrated signs of sequential responsiveness to the ongoing talk.

The excerpt above illustrated what Goffman argued was a limitation with traditional analyses of spoken interaction. When speaking and listening is assumed to involve only the speaker and the direct addressee(s), we miss the full significance of the social situation to all of the persons present. A participation framework approach reveals that "an utterance does not carve up the world beyond the speaker into precisely two parts—recipients and non-recipients—but rather opens up an array of structurally differentiated possibilities" for engagement (Goffman 1983, p. 137). This expanded view of speaking and listening further problematizes the notion that a child who is embedded in a bilingual or multilingual environment can be sheltered from any of the languages in his/her environment.

From Simplification to Alignment: Rethinking Language Accessibility

As demonstrated, when we took bilingualism out of the realm of abstraction and saw it in the context of practice, even the most basic assumptions about bilingualism came into doubt, including its nature and use. Similar questions arose for the notion of accessibility. Although the intended goal of speaking English was to make language more accessible for Oscar, it was unclear what that meant. A turn-by-turn investigation of the family's talk concretized the notion of accessibility by making visible what interactional moves made by family members actually contributed to Oscar's participation. This is also known as *recipient design,* which refers to the ability of participants to design interactional moves in relation to perceived identities, abilities, and dispositions of ratified participants (Gee 2011). Ochs et al. (2004) argued that recipient design anchors the social competencies and difficulties of children with ASD in what is expected and demanded by their interlocutors within particular sociocultural contexts. Looking at the family members' design of interactions with Oscar, we found it was their moment-by-moment efforts at maintaining interactional alignment as well as the contextual relevance of the ongoing activities, and not their choices to use English or Chinese, that most strongly predicted his successful participation.

Like many emerging language users with ASD, the degree to which Oscar understood his conversational

partners and what they expected of him was heavily dependent on the availability of contextual and interactional cues (Adamson et al. 2012). Oscar's family members used a variety of strategies to establish and maintain interactional alignment with him, including for example, drawing his attention to a particular focus; moving to be in his attentional focus; adapting talk to child-initiated or contextually relevant topics; repeating utterances in whole or in part; and physically demonstrating what they expect Oscar to do. The following excerpt illustrates the use of some of these cues.

Excerpt 5

1. 2. 3. 4.	((Oscar is playing with train and train tracks on the floor. Grandfather sits on the floor in front of Oscar, picks up Oscar's hands, and leans in. He shakes Oscar's hands and waits for Oscar to look up at him before speaking.))
5. Grandfather:	Tonight you want to with who sleep?
	/tunai ju wãta tu h^{w}ɪtʃ hu səli:/
6. Oscar:	Oscar sleep. ((Looking at train tracks))
	/ɔskɚ slip/
7. Grandfather:	Oscar with who Gr– sleep?
	/auska h^{w}ɪtʃ hu guru səli:/
8. Oscar:	Play with train. Play with train. ((Looks down at the trains))
	/plei wɪθ treɪn. plei wɪθ treɪn/
9.	((Grandfather shakes Oscar's hands until he looks up again.))
10. Grandfather: 11.	You want with who sleep? You want with grandpa? You want with daddy?
	/ju wã h^{w}ɪtʃ hu səli:? ju wã h^{w}ɪtʃ gurampa? ju wã h^{w}ɪtʃ dedi?/
12. Oscar:	With daddy. ((Looks down))
	/h^{w}ɪtʃ dedi/
13. Grandfather:	With daddy. ((Lets go of Oscar's hands. Looks at trains.))
	/h^{w}ɪtʃ dedi/

In the excerpt above, although Oscar's grandfather spoke English, Oscar did not seem to understanding much of what he was trying to say. Interactional alignment was achieved only with significant effort from his grandfather. In lines 1–4, grandfather positioned himself face-to-face with Oscar, held and shook Oscar's hand, leaned in, and waited for Oscar to look at him before asking, "Tonight you want to with who sleep?" (line 5). Oscar responded with a partial repetition, "Oscar sleep" (line 6), a strategy that he used frequently when not fully understanding a question. His grandfather rephrased the question (line 7) by incorporating a part of Oscar's previous utterance, to which Oscar offered a non-contingent comment about playing train, perhaps asserting his wish to do so (line 8). Grandfather did not accept this as a satisfactory response and repeated his question, this time, modeling two possible responses (lines 10–11). Oscar responded by repeating the last option, "With daddy" (line 12) which his grandfather took as an acceptable interactional progression. In this turn, Oscar pronounced "with"/h^{w}ɪtʃ/the way his grandfather did, rather than the way he usually did/wɪθ/, suggesting that he still did not fully understand what was being asked. Nevertheless, his grandfather appeared satisfied and brought the conversation to a close (line 13).

The effortfulness of the English-speaking interaction above stands in contrast with the following interaction between Oscar and his mother, which involved a great deal of Chinese.

Excerpt 6

1 2	((Oscar is using a shovel in the backyard to dig up flowers. He swings the shovel and hits a large flowering plant.))
3 Mother:	Oscar! Ni yao mama da pi gu le?
	Do you want mama to smack your bottom?
4	((Oscar looks at mother. Frowns. Puts the shovel down and walks away.))
5 Mother:	Mama yao da pi gu. Na ni gei mama da pi gu. Wo jiu gei ni hua
	((Using a sing-song prosody and smiling))
	Mama's going to smack your bottom. Let me smack your bottom and I'll give you the flowers.
6	((Mother reaches for a plastic bat. Laughing, Oscar hands her another bat.))
7 Mother:	Gimme the pi gu, ok? Where is the pi gu?
	bottom *bottom*
8	((Oscar covers his bottom with his hands, laughing))
9 Mother:	Show me pi gu.
	bottom
10 Oscar:	Show me pi gu ((Uncovers his bottom, then quickly covering it again))
	bottom

Unlike the conversation with his grandfather earlier, which was topically distant and unrelated to his ongoing focus of attention, Oscar's conversation above was both contextually and topically salient. In line 3, Oscar's mother gave him a warning for damaging the flowers, threatening to hit his bottom, to which Oscar responded immediately (line 4). His mother then changed footing, employing several contextualization cues that suggested a shift of the

affective frame from punishing to teasing (e.g., smiling and using a more melodic prosody) (line 5). Oscar responded to these contextualization cues by participating playfully in the nonverbal banter (e.g., handing his mother a bat and covering/uncovering his bottom while laughing) (lines 6–10). The juxtaposition between this interaction with his mother and the previous one with his grandfather showed that conversations in English were not necessarily easier for Oscar. Contextual relevance and moment-by-moment supports for interactional alignment were more important to his successful participation than what language was being used.

Discussion and Clinical Implications

The goal of this study was to critically examine the conceptual premises about language and language use underlying the advice for parents to speak only one language (specifically, English) with their children with ASD. The study drew on the frameworks of *family language policy* and *communicative practice* to investigate the relationships between language beliefs, plans, and practices within one bilingual family committed to speaking English with their child with ASD, Oscar. The findings showed a complex and often conflicting relationship between what the family members believed about language use with their child, what they set out to do with him, and the language practices in which they were actually immersed.

The first thing to highlight was that the family's language choice with their child did not emerge in a vacuum. For at least one member of the family, Oscar's mother, the choice was a constrained and unhappy one. From her perspective, not speaking English with her child would have put him at risk for being denied services that she perceived to be valuable. While she did not believe speaking more than one language would be detrimental to her child, she was fearful that any lack of intervention progress could be attributed to their use of Chinese. She was also concerned it would absolve the school of the responsibility to provide more interventions. Her report shows that professionals not only have a strong influence, but that advice given in unequal power relationships can cause parents significant distress.

It was also found that the family members were diverse in their motivations for adopting the English management plan, with the desired outcomes ranging from decreasing confusion, increasing communication efficacy, to creating better institutional access. The findings underscored the gravity of the language management investment for Oscar's family and the many hopes his family members carried for his wellness. They highlight the need for professionals to understand each family of a child with ASD as a complex entity with diverse needs within. Listening to and exploring family members' beliefs about language use could be a powerful entry into understanding and addressing the different priorities within a family.

Despite differences in their motivations, Oscar's family members were in synch in terms of how they spoke with Oscar. Whenever they addressed him directly, they tried to use English. Chinese was used with him only rarely. When their language use patterns were analyzed in a formalistic way—as individual utterances spoken directly to Oscar—they appeared quite successful in their implementation of the plan. The picture shifted, however, when their language practices were examined through a practice-oriented analysis. As we shifted from utterance to activity, and from dyadic exchanges to participant frameworks, we began to see that the family's ways of speaking were better described as diverse performances of a hybrid language practice. The interactions in Oscar's family were saturated with practices that could not be easily assigned to one or the other language. Instead, they represented a set of normatively differentiated linguistic resources that took on different forms for different speakers. Even when Oscar was not being directly addressed, he was continually immersed in bilinguistic frameworks of participation. Language hybridity and participatory immersion both defy the sort of rigidity that the advice to speak English was meant to impose. The findings suggest that instead of being given advice, families need to be understood, informed, and encouraged to arrive at dynamic ways of speaking among family members that are self-enhancing and that can adapt flexibly to their changing needs over time and across contexts.

The last major finding showed that contextual salience and moment-by-moment interactional supports were more predictive of Oscar's participation in conversations than whether his family members spoke to him in English or Chinese. He participated most successfully in interactions that were relevant to the ongoing context and that aligned with his attentional focus. In addition, when conversational partners were attuned to his interactional attempts, coordinated with his interactional moves, and provided him with contextualized interactional scaffolds, he was also more likely to maintain interactional alignment. This is consistent with a well-established literature showing the significance of caregiver coordination and scaffolding for joint engagement in children with ASD (Adamson et al. 2012). These findings suggest the need for viewing bilingual interactions between parents and children with ASD as an interactional achievement not primarily defined by the management of two codes, but by the coordination of meaning within a unified pragmatic field.

This study represented an effort to explore the clinical and research implications of a practice approach to bilingual research in the context of minority-language families

of children with ASD. It invites an expanded investigation of bilingualism as a lived experience. There is currently only a small body of studies on bilingualism in ASD and they have been largely conducted within clinical contexts. Given the sociocultural complexities inherent in both minority-language and autism experiences, we need to understand their intersectionality. Family language policy may provide a useful broad-based framework for examining autism and bilingualism by connecting child outcomes to societal influences via the domain of family.

There is also a pressing need for research on how children with ASD develop bilingual/multilingual competencies over time. Development of heritage languages and bilingual competencies may be especially important for children with ASD given their core challenges in socialization, communication, and relational development. In bilingual contexts, choices in language are important pragmatic resources and means of affiliation (Zentella 1997). It is unknown at this time how children with ASD navigate bilingual contexts and acquire bilingual competencies and whether they face unique needs. An examination of this kind would represent a shift in framing—from a focus on assumed deficits to potential competencies—offering new directions in the conversation about bilingualism in ASD.

Acknowledgments I wish to thank the family who participated in this study; research assistants VoonFee Leow, Dorcas Yap, Jennifer Shiao-Chen Chen, and Haiyang Yu for their invaluable assistance; Dr. Susan Holloway at the University of California at Berkeley for her mentorship during the Spencer Foundation Mentored Doctoral Research Fellowship; and Dr. Gloria Soto for her ongoing mentorship.

Author Contributions As the sole author on this paper, I was responsible for the design of the study reported in this paper; to the acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of the data; to the drafting of the manuscript, and to all revisions made.

Appendix: Transcription Notations

Italics	English translation
°	Quiet compared to surrounding speech
(())	Gestures, non-speech vocalizations, environmental details
(…)	Skipped or unintelligible speech
[	Marks the beginning of overlapping speech between speakers
=	Speakers' utterances latching on to the utterance of the previous speaker
–	Abrupt cutoff
__	Emphasis indicated by underline
//	Phonetic transcription
PERF	Perfect tense

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