



Talking language ideologies into being in parent-child conversations in Singapore

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how language ideologies are implicitly constructed and negotiated in the social interactions between two three-years-old children and their parents in Singapore. Conversation analysis shows that complex and competing varietal ideologies in the broader Singaporean society were present in family discourse at the micro level. Further, while the parents socialized their children into their values and norms and the children often conformed to these ideologies, the children also occasionally resisted them and asserted their own varietal preferences. The findings contribute to the understudied area of varietal ideologies in language socialization and shed light on the making of language ideologies in parents' conversations with children.

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1. Introduction

Language ideologies—understood broadly as socially constructed beliefs about language and language use (Irvine and Gal, 2000; Kroskrity, 2004) and more specifically as beliefs about the value of linguistic forms (Riley, 2012)—are created and maintained through not only language planning and policies at the macro level but also in everyday discourses and social practices at the micro level. In this sense, language ideologies “are intrinsically implicated in all language socialization processes and vice versa” (Riley, 2012, p. 493). That is to say, language ideologies not only directly shape socialization practices, but are also part of values and practices that are socialized through language (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1987). Riley (2012) distinguishes between three types of language ideologies: *language acquisition ideologies* (beliefs regarding how and to what extent children need to be explicitly taught language), *semiotic and contextual usage ideologies* (beliefs regarding the appropriate norms of language use associated with speakers' roles and identities) and *hegemonic ideologies* (beliefs regarding the value of specific modes of communication, languages, dialects, genres and so on). Hegemonic ideologies about the relative status of a language or variety over another is also referred to as *varietal ideologies* (Riley, 2012, p. 499). A related term is *standard language ideology*, “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language” (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 67) that is believed to be correct, legitimate, authoritative, and prestigious (Milroy, 2006).

Over the past few decades, there has been a substantial body of research on language ideologies in children's language socialization (Ghimenton, 2015; Kheirkhah and Cekaite, 2015; Meyer Pitton, 2013; Ochs, 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Platt, 1987; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1987; Schieffelin, 1987; Zentella, 1997; also see Riley, 2012 for a comprehensive review). With reference to varietal ideologies, for example, parents' beliefs about the superiority of a dominant language or language variety in a multilingual society may directly impact the family language policy and practices and in turn, children's language

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acquisition (Curdtt-Christiansen, 2016; Ghimenton, 2015; Zentella, 1997). At the same time, caregivers' beliefs about the symbolic capital and local or ethnic identity embodied in a local dialect or an indigenous language may influence their active use of the local dialect or indigenous language in interactions with children (Fellin, 2001; Makiyara, 2005). Ideologies regarding which forms of language are pragmatically appropriate are also often taught to young children (Fogle and King, 2013; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1987).

There have also been numerous studies on parents' and children's explicit expressions of varietal ideologies, mainly through self-reports, surveys, and interviews (e.g., Almér, 2017; Bae, 2015; Curdtt-Christiansen, 2016; Gogonas and Kirsch, 2018; Kang, 2012; Nakamura, 2016; Park and Bae, 2009). In contrast, the literature on the socialization of children toward varietal ideologies is much scarcer. Most of these studies involve school settings (e.g., Friedman, 2010; Howard, 2009; Netz et al., 2018; Weaver, 2019), while few studies have analyzed how varietal ideologies are talked into being and negotiated in family conversations with children (e.g. Ghimenton, 2015; Song, 2016; Zentella, 1997). To contribute to this understudied area, we examine the socialization of two young children (aged 3;7 and 3;10) into the language ideologies about local English in Singapore in conversations with their parents.

We adopt Ochs and Schieffelin's (2012, 2017) theory of language socialization, which views language socialization as an interactional process in which "all parties to socializing practices are agents in the formation of competence" (2012, pp. 5–6). That is, we see the child not as passively receiving the parents' beliefs and values, but as actively participating in the invocation and negotiation of language ideologies. Using conversation analysis (CA) with a focus on formulation in turn design, we will demonstrate that the parents in our data implicitly expressed complex language ideologies. In these ideologies, (a) linguistic correctness is important and valued, (b) variants that align with Singapore Standard English were considered the norm while variants aligning with American English were not acceptable, and (c) Singapore Colloquial English (Singlish) is both non-conforming to standard norms and worthy of appreciation and pride.

Pertinent to our inquiry is previous research on language ideologies in children's language socialization, particularly in the home context, and language ideologies in Singapore. We will discuss these two topics in the next sections.

2. Adults' socialization of children into language ideologies

As children learn to use language resources, they are also exposed to the social, cultural, and political values and norms attached to those resources. Child language socialization research has amply shown how cultural knowledge (and thus language ideologies) regarding norms of interaction and behavior and literacy practices is embedded in language socialization practices (e.g., Burdelski and Mitsuhashi, 2010; Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2017; Ochs, 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Platt, 1987; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1987; Schieffelin, 1987; Zentella, 1997). For example, Ochs (1988) and Platt (1987) showed how Samoan speaking children acquired knowledge of status and role behavior as they learned the appropriate use of deictic forms that were associated with different speakers' socially defined roles (e.g., high versus low power). Ghimenton and Riley (2020) discussed how through exposing the child to terms for good behavior in both the dominant and home languages, Italian-French bilingual parents facilitated the child's development of a bilingual-bicultural metapragmatic awareness of norms of speaking and behavior in each cultural setting. Further, studies have also demonstrated that through talk about language and positioning themselves toward language norms, parents and children renew, perpetuate, or challenge ideologies about acceptable linguistic behaviors and values. For example, in a longitudinal study of family talk, Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2021 showed that a child changed over time to orient to correctness of language usage as part of his socialization into the families' values regarding language and language learning. Blum-Kulka (1997, p. 216) described how an Israeli father, in a conversation with his child, criticized American Israeli speakers' overuse of superlatives as a deviation from the expected pragmatic norms for Israeli. Parents are also found to engage young children in metalinguistic talk about appropriate language behavior (Becker, 1988, 1994; Fogle and King, 2013), thus socializing them into metapragmatic ideologies associated with particular language forms (see Riley, 2012).

In multilingual families, adults' beliefs about the values of one *language* over another are often expressed in their language preference practices in interactions with children, which in turn contributes to the children's own language use and multilingual development. For instance, believing that English facilitates integration into the dominant Anglo culture, Puerto Rican bilingual mothers choose to interact with their children predominantly in English, thus failing to foster conditions for the children's successful acquisition of bilingual competence (Zentella, 1997). In another example, Quichua-Spanish bilingual parents are found to speak in Spanish, the dominant language, to their children and correct their children's Quichua words by replacing them with Spanish words, thus socializing the children into a preference for Spanish (Rindstedt and Aronsson, 2002). Similarly, in an Italian bilingual family, although the parents may speak the local dialect with other adults, they choose to speak mainly Italian with their child, which leads to the child's more extensive use of Italian than the dialect in his everyday interactions (Ghimenton, 2015). On the other hand, Russian bilingual parents may speak and accept only responses in Russian from their children, thus socializing the children into appropriate language choice for interaction in the home context (Kopeliovich, 2010). The values and stances assigned to a language by adults have also been documented to be taken up by children elsewhere. An example is Smith-Christmas's (2014) study of a Gaelic-English bilingual family in Scotland. Although the mother and grandmother actively used Gaelic in interaction with the children, the fact that adults conversed in English among themselves and the fact that the father employed Gaelic to discipline the children led the children to only use Gaelic with each other in disciplining contexts and to associate Gaelic with negative emotions.

One type of varietal ideologies that is particularly relevant to the present study concerns beliefs about the different statuses of language *varieties* in a diglossic society,¹ where one variety is typically considered more powerful and prestigious than another. Similar to language socialization found in multilingual families discussed above, parents' views on language varieties have been shown to influence their children's. For example, [Park and Bae \(2009\)](#) and [Kang \(2012\)](#) reported that Korean migrant parents in Singapore, while upholding the dominant view of 'standard' English as the most important linguistic capital for their children to acquire, considered Singlish (a 'unique blend' of English and local languages, also known as Singapore Colloquial English) as an essential tool for social interaction in the local context. Although they viewed Singlish as a 'non-standard' or less 'refined' variety, they believed it might be an appropriate register in certain interactional contexts and valued speakers' ability to consciously select and switch between Singlish and 'standard' English appropriately. As a result, their children appreciated Singlish for its usefulness, especially in their daily interaction with local peers, and held a negative view toward speakers who failed to adhere to the norms of social appropriateness in language choice between Singlish and 'standard' English. These studies, however, rely on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and questionnaires. To our knowledge, there has not been any discourse or conversation analytic study on the socialization of children into ideologies about language varieties in actual family social interactions. Instead, the little interaction-based research in this area has focused on school settings. [Howard \(2009\)](#) showed how teachers modeled Standard Thai to socialize students into ideologies about the expression of respect through this variety. Similarly, [Netz et al. \(2018\)](#) revealed how teachers in Hebrew-speaking classrooms in Israel used language corrections to socialize their students into a monolithic standard language ideology. In particular, by showing that there is only one correct way of speaking Hebrew, the teachers essentially de-legitimated the students' linguistic variants and enforced the prestigious status of the language that is used by the majority.

It should be noted that, although adult discourses tend to valorize one language or variety and stigmatize another, children do not always conform to these linguistic ideologies. For instance, a toddler on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia may insist on using the local Afro-French creole language despite his mother's repeated modeling of English, due to the child's early exposure and higher proficiency in the creole ([Garrett, 2012](#)). During playtime with peers, Dominican children have been reported to use Patwa in role plays to enact certain social roles (e.g., farmers, pig hunters, bus drivers) and scenes (e.g., gardens, banana fields, roads), despite the fact that adults banned them from speaking Patwa due to the stigma associated with it ([Paugh, 2005, 2012](#)). These studies have shown that children are not passive recipients of adults' linguistic ideologies but play an active role in their own language socialization processes.

To understand children's socialization into language ideologies in conversations with their parents, it is also important to keep in mind that children's socialization is embedded in their communities. According to [Rogoff \(2003\)](#), children's development is a process of "changing participation in sociocultural activities of their communities" and therefore needs to be analyzed in the community and interpersonal and individual planes simultaneously and holistically (p. 52). We will therefore describe community-level language ideology regarding the local English variety in Singapore.

3. Language ideologies in Singapore

The English language plays a pivotal role in many domains of language use in multi-ethnic and multilingual Singapore. Despite the fact that English and the local major languages (Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) are all recognized as official languages of the nation, English has always enjoyed a higher status and prestige ([Curd-Christiansen, 2016](#)). It serves as a lingua franca for Singaporeans of different ethnicities. It is also a dominant home language for an increasing part of the population ([Deterding, 2007](#); [Starr, 2019](#)). It is the primary language of laws, administration, commerce and education, and has often been regarded as a major factor contributing to Singapore's economic success and global competitiveness ([Leimgruber, 2014](#)). At the individual level, English is also linked to better career opportunities and greater socio-economic advancement ([Curd-Christiansen, 2016](#)).

As a result, there has been a great deal of emphasis and pressure for Singaporeans to achieve high levels of English ([Curd-Christiansen, 2016](#)). That is, to acquire Singapore Standard English, the highest variety that is close to British English ([Platt and Weber, 1980](#)). On the flip side, the informal use of Singlish has been strongly disapproved by policy-makers because it is considered as an impediment to proficiency in Standard English ([Cavallaro et al., 2014](#); [Leimgruber, 2014](#); [Rubdy, 2007](#)). In political discourses, for instance, Singlish is often portrayed as "a corrupted form of English" and speakers of Singlish as being less competent ([Bokhorst-Heng et al., 2010](#), p. 138).

Despite the government's negative stance towards Singlish, however, this variety seemed to enjoy covert prestige widely in Singapore ([Lim, 2015](#)). In the educational context, for example, although teachers regarded 'standard' English as the only appropriate teaching model in Singapore, they also expressed respect for Singlish as a means of building rapport and bonding with their students in informal contexts ([Farrell and Tan, 2007](#); [Rubdy, 2007](#)). These teachers' responses clearly indicated an awareness of the appropriate audience, purpose and context for each English variety. Singlish also seems to be highly regarded for its solidarity traits by Singaporean school children ([Rubdy, 2007](#); [Tan and Tan, 2008](#)). However, while school children favorably viewed Singlish as a means for maintaining interpersonal relationships with their peers and claimed identity attachment to the language, they still rated Singapore Standard English higher in terms of status and prestige ([Rubdy, 2007](#); [Tan and Tan, 2008](#)). [Rubdy \(2007\)](#) argued that these contradictory views reflect the

¹ A diglossic society is one where two varieties of the same language exist, each serving distinct social functions ([Ferguson, 1959](#)).

conflict that Singaporeans often experience between the need to use Singapore English to express their culture and the need to conform to a more standardized form of English for the sake of Singapore's economic development, an ideology that is clearly promoted by Singaporean policy-makers. Indeed, as demonstrated by [Starr \(2019\)](#), young Singaporeans who were more aware of global varieties of English were less likely to adopt Singlish norms in their speech, as a way of “constructing a more cosmopolitan identity” (p. 268). Regarding how Singapore English is viewed in relation to Inner Circle varieties such as British or American English ([Kachru, 1986](#)), [Kamwangamalu \(1992\)](#) found that although Singapore Standard English was viewed positively by his participants, British and American English were nevertheless highly valued for their social prestige. Between these two Inner Circle varieties, young Singaporeans appeared to consider American English less foreign and more natural than British English ([Saravanan and Poedjosoedarmo, 1997](#)), and tended to increasingly display American English features in their pronunciation, perhaps because of the influence of the dominant American mediatic culture as a symbol of globalization ([Tan, 2015, 2016](#)).

The above studies show that language ideologies are closely connected with issues of identity and prestige, and are continually reviewed and reinterpreted. In the case of the local English variety in Singapore, the speakers' multiple and sometimes contradictory stances may also suggest the complexity of language ideologies as people simultaneously orient to different linguistic marketplaces ([Bourdieu, 1991](#)) and their hierarchical relationships ([Bae, 2015](#)).

To date, very few studies have examined language ideologies in Singapore using interactional data. In a rare study using audio-recorded classroom interactions, [Farrell and Tan \(2007\)](#) illustrated how Singaporean teachers enforced Standard English ideology by correcting their students' usages of Singlish. In another study, [Kang \(2012\)](#) employed focus group interview data to demonstrate how Korean students playfully mocked speakers of Singlish, thus ideologically co-constructing Singlish as a ‘non-standard’ language. To our knowledge, there has been no study on the construction and negotiation of complex and sometimes competing language ideologies in family social interactions.

Our study aims to contribute to understandings about language ideologies ‘in action’ and ‘in the making’ by examining how two preschool children and their parents display and negotiate orientations to values and beliefs about language varieties in their daily conversations. To do so, we focus on the participants' expressions of stances through the design of their formulations. The next section will describe this interactional practice in detail.

4. Formulation in talk-in-interaction

Participants in conversations make choices in how they refer to people, objects, places, and events ([Schegloff, 1972](#)). They do so by selecting different lexical items, grammatical structures, articulation manners, discourse strategies and embodied actions. Referent formulation via linguistic and non-linguistic resources is not random but is designed to implicitly convey a stance, participation framework, or membership category, through which an ideology may be constructed (e.g., [Bolden, 2010](#); [Jaffe, 2009a, b](#); [Hepburn et al., 2012](#); [Koschmann et al., 2007](#); [Ohara and Saft, 2003](#); [Schegloff, 1972, 2007a](#); [Stokoe, 2009](#); [Stokoe and Edwards, 2007](#)). In a classic paper, [Jefferson \(1974\)](#) analyzed a court testimony in which the witness self-repaired to replace the in-progress production of the word *cop* with the word *officer*, the latter indicating membership in an educated and institutional category. [Ohara and Saft \(2003\)](#) showed that in a Japanese call-in talk show, the host's use of the verb *oitsumeru* ‘pester’ (versus other correct verbs such as *kiku* ‘ask’ or *shitsumon suru* ‘question’) to formulate the action by a wife (the caller) to her husband indexed a negative stance toward the action. This was then used to build an ideology in which a husband's violent behaviors were construed as being caused by a pestering wife and were thus normalized.

Formulation routines are not only used by competent members to index their stances and values but can also serve to socialize children into language ideologies and practices. In classroom setting, for example, [Burdelski and Mitsunashi \(2010\)](#) discussed how, through employing affect words such as *kawaii* to formulate children's non-verbal actions as socially appropriate, Japanese preschool teachers socialized the children into affect display as an important Japanese cultural practice. [Jaffe \(2009b\)](#) described how teachers in a bilingual Corsican-French school indexed their appreciative stances towards both the majority (French) and minority (Corsican) languages, hence promoting bilingual practice among students, by formulating the students' ability to use nuanced expressions in each language as being desirable as well as positioning the students as legitimate speakers of the minority language. In the family context, [Nguyen and Nguyen, 2017](#) showed how a parent may formulate the child's behavior as belonging to the category ‘good boy’ or ‘good girl’ in compliments in order to indicate approval of those behaviors, and vice versa, they may formulate the child's behavior as belonging to the category ‘naughty boy’ to signal a negative stance. [Fogle and King \(2013\)](#) demonstrated that a parent may disapprove the child's language behavior by formulating the child's use of taboo language as ‘bad language’ (p. 9), thus construing the child's language behavior as non-conforming to the family language policy. In sum, formulations are an important action that participants in conversation can exploit to achieve their social goals.

This paper focuses on formulation practices in parent-child interaction when negotiating home language varietal ideologies. Specifically, we aim to address these questions:

- 1 What language ideologies do the parents construct through social actions in conversations with their children?
- 2 What formulation practices do the parents use to socialize their children into these language ideologies?
- 3 How do the children respond to their parents' socializing actions?

5. Methodology

The data for this paper are drawn from 40 h of everyday conversations between two children and their parents in two middle-class Singaporean families. The parents audio-recorded the conversations themselves. Audio recordings were used because they were considered less intrusive than video recordings, hence minimizing the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972). This method also allowed us to collect data in a wider range of locations, covering the car, elevator, and various rooms in the house, including tight spaces where intimate activities (e.g., bedtime routines, tooth brushing, and nail clipping) take place. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that important visual information such as the participants' non-verbal behavior could have further enriched our analysis.

At the start of the study, the boy (pseudonym Jayden) was 3;7 and the girl (pseudonym Cheryl), was 3;10. In each family, the recordings were made twice a month for eight to twelve months. In both families, the parents were of Chinese heritage and spoke English to the child and English and Chinese to each other. The parents were only told that the researchers were interested in what the parents often did and talked about when they were together with their child. Our focus on language socialization and linguistic corrections emerged after data collection and transcription.

The six excerpts presented in this paper were part of a larger collection of language-focused episodes in the data (see Nguyen, 2016, 2021, Nguyen and Nguyen, 2017, 2021 and were selected because they contained talk related to language varieties. The transcripts follow Jefferson's (2004) conventions (see Appendix). We conducted conversation analysis (Have, 2007; Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 2007b) with special attention paid to formulation practices in order to understand how talk about language variation emerged and how the participants co-constructed their stances and values about language varieties (see, for example, Bonacina-Pugh, 2012, on the advantages of using conversation analysis to investigate ideologies in language socialization).

6. Findings

We found that issues related to language varieties were initiated by the parents in explicit teaching or exposed correction sequences (Jefferson, 1987) concerning the children's pronunciation, word formation, or grammar. In these moments, the parents socialized their children into complex and fluid language ideologies in which (a) Singapore Standard English is the overtly prestigious norm that is superior to Singlish, (b) variants of external sources such as American TV is inferior to Singapore Standard English, and (c) Singlish and spontaneous language inventions, though considered 'non-standard,' are appreciated with covert pride. The children mostly cooperated and accepted the parents' language variants, but they also sometimes transgressed and insisted on their own language use.

6.1. Subscription to correctness norm in a standard language ideology

Throughout the data, the parents issued frequent corrections of the child's language, maintaining an ideology about the value of linguistic standards while rejecting features of the local colloquial variety. The parent's subscription to this ideology can be seen in cases where the correction was not prompted by an actual trouble-source by the child in the immediate discourse, as shown in Excerpt 1.

In Excerpt 1, Mum and Cheryl were heading out, and part of the preparations involved Cheryl putting on her shoes. After this task was already completed, Mum used it as the occasion to initiate a linguistic correction of the common expression in Singapore Colloquial English, "to wear your shoes."

Excerpt 1: "Put on your Shoes" Cheryl (age: 3;11)

```
01 Mum: kay. put on your shoe?
02      (0.4)
03 Mum: do you want this one?
04 Che: uh::.
05 Mum: you want the biscuit? or cookie?
06 Che: uh::.
07 Mum: kay put on your shoe now,
      ((Mum and Cheryl talk about choice of snacks))
30 Che: ((sing-song voice)) ↑o:kay. ↑let's ↑go.
31 Mum: mm.
32 Che: ↓down↓stai[rs.
33 -Mum:      | must tell your friend,
34      |it's ↑put on your shoes ↓not ↑wear your shoes ah?
35      (0.4)
36 Mum: understand?
37 Che: stand.
      ((Mum and Cheryl get in the elevator, Mum gives Cheryl snack))
44 Mum: remember what mama yi- mummy says right.
45      it's (.) <put on your shoe>. say <put on your shoe>.
46 Che: put on your shoe.
47 Mum: excuse me:::.
48 Che: excuse me:::.
49 Mum: ↓co:↓lleague.
50 Che: ↓co:↓lleague.
51 Mum: ↓co:↓lleague.
52 Che: ↓co:↓lleague.
53 Mum: ye::s.
      ((elevator chimes, recording ends))
```

In lines 33–34, Mum issues a directive to Cheryl to correct her non-specific friends' use of "to wear your shoes." The friends are thus a proxy for Mum to teach Cheryl. In her directive, Mum first referred to the expression "to put on your shoes" as the 'standard' one, then uses a negation ("not") to reject the local colloquial expression. Further, Mum uses the obligation modal "must," signaling her strong stance toward this language rule (see also lines 13–14, Excerpt 2 below). Perhaps because Cheryl only claimed rather than demonstrating understanding (Sacks, 1995) (line 37), Mum reissues the directive in lines 44–45. After Cheryl displays her understanding by repeating the expression treated by Mum as standard (line 46), Mum moves on to model the pronunciation of two linguistic items often considered 'mispronounced' by locals, the phrase "excuse me" and the word "colleague" (e.g., *Campus Magazine*, 2018; The Smart Local, 2014; also see Deterding, 2007, for a linguistic description of the phonological features of Singapore English). It is worth noting that Mum's bringing up of these two items is not tied to any previous activity or turns in their conversation. Rather, it constitutes a language lesson in which Mum asserts a standard language ideology (see also Excerpt 2). Further, in directing Cheryl to reproduce the linguistic forms deemed correct (line 45) and in modeling them (lines 47–52), Mum socializes Cheryl into this ideology. In turn, by complying with Mum's directives, Cheryl aligns with Mum's language ideology.

Not only did a subscription to a standard language ideology mean a rejection of the local colloquial language variations, it also at times revealed the parent's linguistic insecurity. In Excerpt 2, Mum treats her own language usage as a "mistake" while upholding a correctness norm. The excerpt starts with Mum getting Cheryl's attention via the term of endearment "meimei" (younger sister) then reminding Cheryl of her teaching of the phrase "excuse me."

Excerpt 2: "Excuse me" Cheryl (age: 3;11)

```

01 Mum: meimei:. (.) you still remember::, (0.3) mummy:, teach you:,
02 (1.0)
03 Mum: excuse is not excuse anymore:
04 [ɛkskjus] [ɛkskjus]
05 |what do you call that.
06 (0.9)
07 Che: <<excuse me>>.
08 [ɛkskjus]
09 Mum: ↑no::, excuse me!
10 [ɛkskjus]
11 Che: excuse me.
12 [ɛkskjus]
13 Mum: mummy also made the same mistake.
14 Che: exCUse me:.
15 [ɛkskjus]
16 Mum: say >exCUse me!<
17 [ɛkskjus]
18 Che: >excuse me!<
19 [ɛkskjus]
20 Mum: then ah:: (0.5) okay. (0.2) you cannot say almond.
21 [ælmən]
22 >you must say< <ALmond>.
23 [ɑ:mən]
24 Che: almond.
25 [ɑ:mən]
26 Mum: almond.
27 [ɑ:mən]
28 → Che: almondmon.
29 [ɑ:mənmən]
30 Mum: excuse me::
31 [ɛkskjus]
32 Che: excuse me:
33 [ɛkskjus]
34 Mum: almond.
35 [ɑ:mən]
36 Che: >almond<.
37 [ɑ:mən]
38 Mum: <nasi: lemak.> ((Malay dish often (mis)pronounced as "nasi lemak"))
39 [nasi lemak]
40 → Che: <nasi lemak xxx xxx.>
41 [nasi lemak]
42 Mum: |ey ↑say <nasi lemak.>
43 [nasi lemak]
44 → Che: <nasi lemakmakmak.>
45 [nasi lemakamama]
46 Mum: ((creaky voice)) |ey::
47 (1.5)
48 Mum: ↑↑excuse ↑me:::.
49 [ɛkskjus]
50 Che: excuse me mama.
51 [ɛkskjus]
52 Mum: excuse ↑me:::.
53 [ɛkskjus]
54 Che: excuse me people?
55 [ɛkskjus]
56 (0.3)
57 Mum: what else?

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34 Che: excuse me elephant:?
[ɪkskjus]
35 Mum: hh. hh. hh.
36 Che: excuse me giraffe? excuse me .hh (.) zeɪtɪbra?
[ɪkskjus] [ɪkskjus]
37 (0.2)
38 → Che: excu:se me: (.) popotamus?
[ɪkskjus]
39 Mum: potamus?
40 → Che: excuse me:::
[ɪkskjus]
41 Mum: hipo:tamus ah.
42 Che: yeah.
43 (0.2)
44 Mum: hippo(.) <popangnus>. hip- (.) hippo-potangnus.
45 (0.3)
46 Mum: say hippo:potangnus.
47 (0.3)
48 → Mum: I hope I (.) pronounce it (.) correctly.
49 Che: ex|cuse me:::
[ɪkskjus]
50 Mum: |pronuncia- pronunciation. say (.) pronunciation.
51 Che: excuse me: (.) crocodile:?
[ɪkskjus]
52 Mum: crocodile?
53 (1.0)
54 Mum: oh:::
55 Che: very scared.
(continue to talk about crocodile))

In line 3, Mum elicits the ‘correct’ pronunciation of “excuse” from Cheryl. After Cheryl successfully provides the expected form in line 8 (following Mum’s exposed correction of Cheryl’s mispronunciation, lines 6–7), Mum shares that she “also made the same mistake” (line 9). This reveals Mum’s awareness of the gap between her own language use and a ‘standard’ usage.

Later, Mum initiates repair of an animal’s name (line 39), which Cheryl has produced as “popotamus” (line 38). However, Mum’s uncertainty about the ‘correct’ pronunciation of the target word is seen in her hesitation and repeated attempts to produce the word (line 44). Most clearly, Mum’s linguistic insecurity is again visible in her self-doubt statement in line 48, in which she judges her own language use against a “correct” pronunciation.

In addition to showing Mum’s socialization of Cheryl to a standard language ideology, Excerpt 2 also reveals Cheryl’s agency. While Cheryl generally complies with Mum’s requests to repeat after her, she also transgresses the boundary of the language teaching activity and transforms it into play a few times (lines 17, 23, 25). Although Mum sanctions against this transgression (lines 24, 26), Cheryl initiates another playful trajectory by adding different people and animals to the target phrase (“excuse me”) (line 29 onward). Further, it is during this playful activity that Cheryl reverts to the pronunciation of “excuse” that Mum previously treated as unacceptable (line 40); however, it is not corrected by Mum this time, perhaps due to Mum’s focus on the pronunciation of another word, “hippopotamus.” Cheryl’s actions here suggest that although the parent may attempt to socialize the child into a language ideology in very clear terms and with initial conformation by the child, the child may subvert the parent’s agenda in subtle ways.

Excerpts 1 and 2 illustrate that the Singaporean parents in the data explicitly enforced a correctness norm in conversations with their children. The parents’ monolithic standard language ideology was often manifested as the preference of an exo-normative standard and rejection of local colloquial English features, sometimes also revealing the parents’ own linguistic insecurity. The child mostly complied with the parent’s agenda, but also diverged into play and usage of the ‘incorrect’ language form.

6.2. Distancing from a non-Singapore English variety

Sometimes, a parent extends the correctness norm to the Singapore English variety but not another variety. In Excerpt 3, Jayden and Dad are making pretend food with playdough. Jayden volunteers the name of a shape as “rectangle” but Dad initiates repair. Jayden then self-repairs and produces a more advanced word, “hexagon,” pronouncing the final vowel as an open low vowel [ɒ] and putting a secondary stress on the final syllable, as typical in American accent.

Excerpt 3: Hexagon (age: 3;8)

1 Jay: and this is the (0.3) rectang- ih. (0.3) ih. (0.3) ahm:: rectangle..
 2 Dad: mm. that's not a rectangle.
 3 → Jay: <hexagon on:e>.
 [ˈhɛksəˈɡɒn]
 4 Dad: ↑↑hexagon. ↑ve::s!
 [ˈhɛksəɡən]
 5 (0.2)
 6 Dad: ↑wow. you know that's a hexagon. ↑ve↑ry ↑goo::d!
 [ˈhɛksəɡən]
 7 → not hexagon darling. ihexagon.
 [ˈhɛksəˈɡɒn] [ˈhɛksəɡən]
 8 (0.2)
 9 → Jay: hexagon.
 [ˈhɛksəɡən]
 10 Dad: ↑WOW. (0.2) how many sides does a hexagon have.
 [ˈhɛksəɡən]
 11 (1.7)
 12 Dad: did- did you learn that in:: in enrichment classes?

In line 4, Dad strongly accepts Jayden's label of the shape, by repeating the word “hexagon” and adding a “yes” with emphasis. Further, Dad gives an overt positive assessment of Jayden's knowledge (line 6). Right within the same compliment turn, Dad issues an explicit correction of Jayden's pronunciation (line 7). By lowering his pitch and using the endearment term “darling,” Dad softens the correction and marks it as a side-sequence (Jefferson, 1972). However, by reproducing Jayden's articulation and negating it, then modeling his pronunciation for Jayden to repeat, Dad is constructing a clear norm of correctness, in which a pronunciation pattern that aligns with Singapore English is treated as correct but a pronunciation pattern that aligns with American English is considered incorrect. Although it is unclear whether Dad and Jayden orient to these variants as belonging to these English varieties, what is clear is that Jayden adopts this norm and repeats Dad's pronunciation pattern (line 9), thus taking up the language ideology introduced by Dad.

When Jayden produced a linguistic form that Dad deemed non-conforming to the ‘standard,’ Dad rejected Jayden's knowledge source as an authority. We will examine examples of these cases in Excerpts 4 and 5.

In Excerpt 4, Jayden produces the word “answer” in American pronunciation. Dad is familiar with Jayden's source of linguistic knowledge but distances away from it. Unlike in the excerpts above, here, Jayden resists Dad's norm. We join their conversation as Dad is reading to Jayden a book, which contains the word “answer.”

Excerpt 4: Answer (age: 3;10)

1 Dad: okay we need to find four super letters in this story.
 2 and then we'll get our super story
 3 answered. says Wyatt.
 [ɑːnsəd]
 4 Jay: [answer:..
 [ænsə]
 5 Dad: tks. ↓<ɑːnɪsɔw>.
 [ɑnsə]
 6 Jay: \$↑ANSw(h)er\$.
 [ænsə]
 7 Dad: ↑answer. just because you watch the tivi
 [ænsə]
 8 it says answer so it has to be a:answer.
 [ænsə] [ænsə]
 9 (0.5)
 10 Dad: ↓answer. [says wyatt.
 [ɑnsə]
 11 Jay: [\$answer:\$
 [ænsə]
 12 Dad: are you ready super [readers?
 13 Jay: [\$ANSWER!\$
 [ænsə]
 14 Dad: <it's ↑time to trans↑fo↑rm>. get ready super you:?

As soon as Dad completes the word “answered,” Jayden corrects Dad by pronouncing it with a different initial vowel closer to American English than Singapore English (line 4). Dad pauses the progressivity of his reading activity, as seen in the turn-initial tongue click (line 5), then he rejects Jayden's correction by reproducing his original Singapore English pronunciation. Dad's lowered pitch and falling intonation on the word “answer” asserts a claim of independent knowledge (Brazil, 1997), signaling that this pronunciation pattern is established and accepted knowledge.

Jayden, however, insists on his American-style pronunciation, upgrading his position with louder volume and an animated voice (line 6). At the same time, this oppositional turn is also construed as humor by Jayden, as hearable in his smiling voice with a slight laughter token. Jayden seems to be employing a language varietal contrast for initiating play.

Dad does not join in the language play nor does he back down from his position. First, Dad focuses on Jayden's pronunciation by repeating it with the same raised pitch as Jayden did. Then, Dad adds an accusation. By using the word “just”

(“just because you watch the TV”), Dad accuses Jayden’s subscription to the television as the source of linguistic knowledge to be “an unjustified ... sense of determined entitlement” (Schegloff, 2007a, pp. 449, 459–460). This is consistent with Dad’s formulation of Jayden’s pronunciation as being completely dictated by this non-authoritative source rather than based on any justification (“it has to be answer”). Further, Dad trivializes Jayden’s linguistic source by using the pronoun “it” to formulate the speakers as an object (“it says”) rather than people (e.g., “they say”). In other words, Dad maintains an ideology in which the television is an unwarranted and inappropriate language authority to which one should not subscribe. Instead, language authority is implied to be the people in the local community, including Dad. In the next turn (line 10), Dad uses his pronunciation of “answer” with lowered pitch when he resumes reading by reproducing the interrupted turn earlier (line 3). In doing so, Dad completely disregards Jayden’s pronunciation and asserts the local variant as the legitimate one over the variant introduced by Jayden.

Jayden seems to resist Dad’s course of actions and authority, however. He again overlaps with Dad to repeat his pronunciation (line 11), his smiley voice signaling the continued frame of play (there may also be visual cues not available in audio data). Dad’s refusal to co-construct this playful frame is seen in the fact that he does not produce any uptake but proceeds with reading the next lines in the book. Jayden maintains his disruption of Dad’s agenda and, by the same token, ideologies, by entering into Dad’s turn space with a louder production of his pronunciation (line 13). But Dad asserts his agenda and linguistic authority by continuing reading (line 14) and Jayden gives up after this point.

This excerpt strengthens the finding in Excerpt 2 that the child might introduce a playful frame to override the parent’s agenda; in this case, to oppose a linguistic form that the parent presents as correct. This opposition then initiated a negotiation of linguistic authority between the parent and the child. In this negotiation, the parent first identified then trivialized and rejected the child’s source of linguistic knowledge as external to the speech community to which the child should belong.

A more subtle rejection is seen in Excerpt 5, in which Jayden pronounces “gas” in American-style pronunciation and Dad distances away from it without modeling the correct pronunciation as in Excerpt 4. In this excerpt, Mum and Dad are talking about the guests to be invited to Jayden’s birthday party. Jayden overhears their conversation and notices the word “guests,” which he misunderstands to be “gas.”

Excerpt 5: Gas (age: 3;11.5)

```

4 Mum: Dan, Tailing:,
5 Dad: yeah. see lah? I forgot. >if you can invite, you invite<.
6 Mum: how about the:::
7 Dad: ah no no I said- I said guests can invite >also<.
8 (1.0)
9 Jay: ↑GAS?
    [gæs]
10 Dad: not ↓ga:s. not that ↓ga:s. it's (.) <↑guests>.
    [gæs] [gæs]
11 Jay: guests.
12 Dad: not the same ↓ga:s that you learn from
    [gæs]
13 your science alliance, ↓ga::s, liquid and solid?
    [gæs]
14 (1.5)
15 Mum: >did you< invite Marina::,
    ((Science Alliance is an American TV show
    lah is a Singlish discourse particle))

```

In line 9, Jayden repeats a word from Dad’s turn, “guests,” with rising intonation, a practice he sometimes utilizes to request linguistic information (see Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2021). Of importance here is the fact that he pronounces the vowel with a low front vowel [gæs] similar to an American accent rather than with a low back vowel [gas] as in Singapore English.

Dad orients to Jayden’s request by repairing Jayden’s understanding (line 10). He negates the word used by Jayden (“not gas”), then negates it again with further specification (“not that gas”). Dad’s second negation with the distal indexical “that” shows both recognition of Jayden’s source of linguistic knowledge and alienation from this source (Schegloff, 2007a, p. 456).

Dad expands his explanation even after Jayden has reached mutual understanding and accepted the repaired item given by Dad (“guests,” line 11). Dad’s deliberate attention to Jayden’s language use is seen in lines 12–13, when Dad traces the source of Jayden’s linguistic knowledge to an American television show called Science Alliance, and even provides a phrase from the show in which the word “gas” appears. Dad’s formulation of the source deserves closer examination. In line with the distancing that occurs in line 10, Dad refers to the television show as “your Science Alliance.” First, Dad’s formulation of the show by its name without any qualifier signals Dad’s knowledge that the show is “expectedly recognizable” to Jayden (Schegloff, 1972, p. 92). Second, Dad’s use of the pronoun “your” constructs the show as something distinctively in Jayden’s domain and with which Dad does not affiliate. That is, Dad’s formulation of the television show implies Jayden’s membership in the category of Alliance Show viewers and Dad’s non-membership in that category. Further, in pronouncing the word “gas,” Dad consistently brackets it by lowering his pitch and lengthening the vowel in an exaggerated manner, signaling his non-membership in the category of people who pronounce the word in that way. In contrast, when Dad says the word “guests” he pronounces it with raised pitch and a firm voice, thus signaling its correctness and claiming ownership.

It is clear from Excerpts 4 and 5 that Dad maintains an ideology in which Singapore English pronunciation is the norm and American accent is an external norm not to be upheld in the family.

6.3. Dual orientations to overt prestige and covert prestige

Although in most cases, the parents in the data oriented to the overt prestige of a ‘standard’ language and rejected local colloquial features of English, there was also evidence of covert prestige being assigned to the local colloquial variety. In Excerpt 6, Mum and Dad are talking about multiplication tables when Jayden interrupts with an announcement that the times table sheets are “brokening” (Jayden’s unique word).

Excerpt 6: Brokening (age: 3;8)

```

1  Jay: ↑I took the paper off this time (0.2) [ table is <brokening>:.
2  Dad: ((talking with Mum)) we:ll
3      maybe because you don't practice this very much=
4      that means you've not been using it a lot lately,
5      (0.2)
6  Dad: for me:: [ I'm using at school a lot lah. so:::
7  Jay: [↑DADDY: ↑DADDy:: ah. this table of- (.)
8  Dad: mh?
9  Jay: two table of- (.) five table (.) of time table
10     is brokening already:.=
11  Dad: =it's <$brokening$>?
12  Jay: [yeah. <all [brokening::>
13  Dad: °hah° [HAH HAH HAH hah hah hah hah
14  Dad: .hhh it's bro(h)ke(h)ning. heh hh. hh. [hh. hh.
15  Jay: [yea:h.
16     (0.7)
17  Dad: $what's brokening. =>what is something< that's $brokening:.$
18     (.)
19  Jay: it's all <brokening::>
20  Dad: hhh. hhh. hhh. $what is it- what is brok-
21     what does <brokening> mea:n.$
22  Jay: on YOU!
23  Dad: hhh. hh. hh. $what?< on me?>
24     (1.2)
25  Dad: >you say< all your what? three ta- [ times table?
26  Mum: $your two ta(h)ble:, th(h)ree
27     table:, [ times table:,$
28     your two table, your three table, $all breaking is it:.$
29  Dad: brokening.
30  Dad: $brokening ah:.$ is it?
31  Dad: it's broken::
32     (0.5)
33  Dad: it's breaking::
34     (0.4)
35  Jay: °wh[y::°.
36  Dad: [but it's not brokening ↓boy:↓. it's either breaking or broke:n
37     $you don't say [it's brokening$ hh. heh heh heh [h
38     it's brok- [it's brokening:
39  Jay: hah hah [hah
40  Mum: [we have the::: (0.3) ↑MAKE of a: h::undred percent
41     singaporish english.
42     (1.0)
43     ((followed by an activity shift))

```

When Jayden first reports the accident with the times table being “brokening” (line 1), Dad overlaps to continue his conversation with Mum (lines 2–6) and there is no uptake. When Jayden successfully reproduces his announcement in full (lines 7–10), Dad initiates repair of the word “brokening” (line 11). Dad’s use of repeat repair signals that he can recognize Jayden’s word but cannot understand its meaning (see Schegloff et al., 1977; Kitzinger, 2013). At the same time, Dad’s smiling voice is a pre-laugh that singles out the laughable. Dad does not wait until Jayden completes self-repair (line 12) but overlaps with Jayden and laughs in large, hearty tokens (line 13). What Dad has done thus far constitutes a *laughing at* sequence (Glenn, 2003; Jefferson, 1972): the laughable is Jayden’s word form, the first laugh is produced by Dad, and there is no shared laughter by Jayden. A *laughing at* sequence, however, may turn affiliative (Jefferson, 1972; Glenn, 1995, 2003). What happens next suggests the affiliative rather than disaffiliative nature of Dad’s actions. In line 14, Dad produces a repetition of Jayden’s words in the prior turn plus laughter tokens, which is “a way of appreciating something just said” (Glenn, 2003, pp. 113–114).

As typical with affiliative laughs, this sequence closes (Glenn, 2003): after a pause (line 16), Dad shifts to a different repair (line 17), one that concerns the object that is “brokening” rather than the word “brokening” itself. Of note, Dad reproduces both Jayden’s word “brokening” and smiling voice, thus implicitly accepting the word—for the time being—and maintaining the appreciative stance. Jayden’s repair (line 18) does not resolve the trouble source since he refers to the object via a pronoun (“it”). He also repeats his word form “brokening,” perhaps in recognition of Dad’s heightened interest in the word and as an invitation for further affiliation with Dad (see Glenn, 2003, p. 120).

With the trouble source unresolved, in line 19, Dad re-initiates repair, but he revises his turn several times, going from a focus on the “brokening” object (“what is it”) to the word “brokening” (“what does brokening mean”). After a response from Jayden (line 20), which Dad treats as being unclear (line 21), Dad, now joined by Mum, re-initiates the repair initiation one more time, upgrading it into the form of candidate understanding (Schegloff et al., 1977) about what object Jayden may be referring to as being “brokening” (lines 21–23).

In Dad’s offering of the candidate understanding, Dad also other-repairs Jayden’s word form into the standard “breaking” (line 26). Importantly, Mum other-repairs Dad’s repair to revert back to Jayden’s original form, “brokening” (line 28) and Dad concedes to Mum’s correction (line 29). It appears that the parents are in alignment in their appreciation and validation of the child’s creative, non-conventional language use.

Only after Dad has acknowledged Mum’s correction, and by extension, Jayden’s language form, does Dad produce correction by modeling two possible correct language forms (lines 30–32). When Jayden elicits further explanation from Dad (line 34), Dad takes up the legitimized slot to directly reject Jayden’s form (“but it’s not brokening”), state the linguistic rule about what is correct (“it’s either breaking or broken”) and issue a directive against the use of “brokening” (“you don’t say it’s brokening”) (lines 35–36). While possibly raising Jayden’s language awareness, Dad’s turn clearly indexes the belief that only some language forms are legitimate, and that language correctness is important. At the same time, Dad’s use of the term of endearment “boy” in his direct rejection of Jayden’s form (“but it’s not brokening boy”) indicates affiliation and perhaps tolerance of Jayden’s deviant form. Further, as Dad issues the directive against rule violation, he repeats Jayden’s words in a smiling voice and mixed with laughter tokens, renewing the appreciation of Jayden’s unique form. All these features of Dad’s turn design suggest that in socializing Jayden to a correct language norm, Dad is also displaying dual orientations to two language ideologies: one in which correctness is overtly valued, and another in which creative word formation is covertly appreciated.

Perhaps due to the parents’ treatment of his original language use as noteworthy and affiliation-promoting, Jayden repeats it in his next turn even after Dad’s statement of the rule (lines 35–36). Dad responds to it, this time not with disallowance but with appreciation through laughter (line 38). Mum joins Dad in overlap and produces a commentary that sums up what has transpired so far: “we have the make of a hundred percent Singaporish English” (lines 39–40).

This particular turn performs complex actions and deserves close examination. On the one hand, by referring to a language form that Dad has treated as deviant from linguistic norms as “Singaporish English,” Mum is also construing the local variety (Singlish) as non-conforming to ‘standard’ norms.² On the other hand, this non-conformation is treated by Mum as positive. Mum characterizes Jayden’s unique language use as not only belonging to but also completely representing the local variety of English (“one hundred percent”). With the selection of the noun “make,” she formulates this language variety as a recognized and established entity, like the make of a car or watch. Mum’s use of the collective pronoun “we” and the possessive verb “have” in a declarative construction assigns significance to Jayden’s linguistic creation and invokes a sense of pride. These formulations legitimize and celebrate Jayden’s on-the-spot linguistic creation. Taken together, Mum’s turn communicates a language ideology in which the local language variety is ‘non-standard’ but deserving appreciation.

Finally, the parents’ language ideology is also discernible by the organization of the sequence itself. By choosing to respond to Jayden’s “brokening” first with appreciation, then with correction, and then back to appreciation, the parents orient dually to ‘standard’ norms and local colloquial norms, via their correction and appreciation of the child’s non-standard creativity.

7. Conclusion

The analysis above showed that the Singaporean parents in the data utilized a range of formulations to index their stances toward different language varieties, such as obligation modal (*must*), negation (*you cannot say X, not X, you don’t say X, it’s not X*), pronouns (*your, it, we*), indexicals (*that*), adverb (*just*), terms of endearment (*meimei, darling, boy*), pitch changes, and laughter. Through these selective formulation designs and through the sequential organization of actions such as directives, modeling, corrections, insistence, and appreciation of their children’s language use, the parents socialized their children into a complex and dynamic ecology of language ideologies. In this ecology, Standard Singapore English variety was upheld as being correct, a non-Singapore English variety (American English) was dismissed as being from an unacceptable external source, and Singapore Colloquial English was at times rejected as incorrect but also at other times tacitly celebrated with pride. The analysis shows that the parents’ beliefs about the relative prestige of these varieties appear to be intertwined with their ideology regarding creativity and language source. It is important to note that the parents’ explicit correction or teaching episodes related to language ideologies was not triggered by the necessity to solve intersubjectivity problems. This provides empirical evidence that beliefs about language varieties are of practical concern for the parents.

The children most of the time conformed to the parents’ ideologies by repeating or aligning with the parents’ modeling of the standard variety (Excerpts 1, 2, 3). However, sometimes the children subverted the parents’ language ideologies by initiating a playful frame or withholding response to the parents’ elicitation of language repetition (later part of Excerpt 2, Excerpt 4). Further, we showed a case in which a child insisted on his own variety preference in opposition to the parent’s preference (Excerpt 4). The negotiated and multifaceted nature of language ideologies was most visible when a child initially

² Mum’s very formulation of this variety as “Singaporish English” is itself a convention-breaking invention on the spot.

produced an innovative non-standard form (“brokening”) and received both correction and appreciation from the parents, which in turn triggered the child to reproduce his unique language form (Excerpt 5).

The analysis thus showed that language ideologies are situated and mediated through social interaction, and in the process, are made available for co-construction, negotiation, and contestation. As the parents expressed and socialized the children into their varietal ideologies, the children aligned with this socialization but also exercised agency regarding linguistic variety preference and activity preference.

Our analysis revealed how beliefs about language varieties in the larger Singaporean society (e.g., Bokhorst-Heng et al., 2010; Cavallaro et al., 2014) are made alive—expressed, enforced, and negotiated—in family discourse. Through this process, young children are socialized into and take up ideological stances about language as part of their sociolinguistic competence development. Previous research has focused mainly on adults’ and children’s stated beliefs about Singapore Standard English and Singapore Colloquial English (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Farrell and Tan, 2007; Rubdy, 2007; Bae, 2015; Kang, 2012), and there has been virtually no research on how adults and children co-construct and negotiate these language ideologies in their everyday interactions. As demonstrated in our study, language ideologies—as cultural values into which children are socialized (see also Riley, 2012)—are situated in the language choices and interactional practices in the family.

Talk-in-interaction is “the primordial site of human sociality” (Schegloff, 1987, p. 102), or more specifically, it is “the fundamental resource through which the business of all societies is managed, *their cultures are transmitted, the identities of their participants are affirmed, and their social structures are reproduced*” (Heritage, 2001, p. 47, emphasis added). For this precise reason, research on language ideologies in society needs to address how they are talked into being in cross-generational interactions.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions (following Jefferson, 2004).

Symbols	Meanings
.	A period indicates falling intonation
?	A question mark indicates rising intonation
,	A comma indicates slight rising intonation
↑	An up-arrow indicates raised pitch in the next syllable
↓	A down-arrow indicates lowered pitch in the next syllable
:	A colon indicates sound stretch or lengthening
<u>word</u>	Underlining indicates stress
WORD	Capital letters indicate louder volume
°word°	Degree signs surround quieter speech
<word>	Inequality signs pointing outward indicate slower speech tempo
>word<	Inequality signs pointing inward indicate faster speech tempo
word-	A hyphen indicates a cut-off sound
[	Long square brackets indicate the beginning of overlapped talk
h.	An “h” followed by a period indicates audible outbreath
.h	An “h” preceded by a period indicates audible inbreath
wo(h)rd	An “h” in parentheses indicates inserted laughter tokens during speech
hih, heh, hah	Various laughter tokens
\$word\$	Dollar signs surround a word delivered with a smiley voice
!	An exclamation point indicates excited tone
(number)	A number in parentheses indicates silence measured in seconds
(.)	A period in parentheses indicates silence of about one tenth of a second
((notes))	Double parentheses indicate transcriber’s notes
xxxx	A series of x’s indicates unintelligible speech
[IPA symbols]	Pronunciation details of the word above (bolded symbols indicate analytical focus). See IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) sound chart.

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