3 Researching social and affective factors in home language maintenance and development: A methodology overview

The present handbook is the first volume that brings together the different strands in research on social and affective factors in home language maintenance and development. It therefore presents the first opportunity to explore some of the diverse methodological questions and considerations raised in the field over time, and to discuss how different contexts and foci have impacted on research in this area. This chapter seeks to provide a birds-eye view, bringing together, critiquing, and contrasting methodological considerations across the different sub-areas. The chapter is not intended as a step-by-step guide on how to carry out research. Our focus here concerns what types of research have been conducted on social and affective factors in home language maintenance, and to provide some initial pointers to what we perceive as potential pitfalls and challenges in this research field.

We begin with general observations about the research in this field in section 1, pointing to commonalities and overlaps in research designs and data collection methods. We then organise our discussion across the three levels of analysis set out in the structure of the handbook – micro, meso, and macro. In section 2 we address issues at the micro level, considering research on bilingual speakers and their families. We move to the meso level in section 3, turning to research on home language maintenance and development efforts as initiated and carried out by speaker communities. Section 4 addresses the macro level, and considers societal regulation of minority languages and their use. As these three sections make clear, studies on the micro, meso, and macro levels delimit their participant cohorts and data sources in different ways, according to their distinctive research questions and foci. Section 5 addresses a number of pitfalls researchers can and do encounter in the field, while section 6 discusses general research challenges. Section 7 concludes the chapter with brief summary and an outlook to future developments in this growing research area.

1 Research in the field

The complexity of research in the field is a direct consequence of the diversity of contexts in which this research takes place. This diversity is reflected in the variety of...
actors who operate in a range of social environments at the micro, meso, and macro levels, each actor with their own particular needs, experiences, and expectations.

At the micro level, actors are individuals (invisible planners, Pakir 1994) such as parents and children. Actors at the macro level are bodies of authority, such as departments of education, which have the power to manage change in language policy and planning (visible planners). The meso level constitutes the grey area between micro and macro levels (Hult 2010). Actors at this level are communities, whose members take joint action in response to pressures from below (at the micro level, such as needs of minoritised families) and from above (at the macro level, such as educational policies and their implications). These actors become research participants for studies in the field, and as we illustrate through the remainder of this chapter, the different factors surrounding participants (e.g., their backgrounds, needs, experiences, expectations) inspire different research aims and foci, and motivate different approaches to data collection and analysis. The overwhelming body of research on social and affective factors in home language maintenance and development aims to explore the personal experiences of participants, to investigate the cultural traditions or praxis of groups in particular contexts, or to examine discourses and policies. This research has a view to not only documenting and understanding current situations, but also to managing linguistic diversity, and/or to advocating for social change.

The last decades have seen a proliferation of research methods in the field, and thus the overview in a single chapter cannot do justice to them all. Readers may find it useful to consult the several comprehensive overviews of relevant research methods that have been employed in bilingualism and second language acquisition research (e.g., Copland and Creese 2015; Dörnyei 2007; Hinkel 2011; Li and Moyer 2009). In the following discussion we focus on some data collection techniques used in the field. These techniques are identified in Table 1. We are mindful to note that these techniques are among many that researchers have used seeking to tap into affective and social aspects of home language maintenance and development. Other techniques include narrative inquiry (Liu and Lin 2018), biographical accounts (Kramsch 2006), linguistic landscapes (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006), linguistic portraits (Wilson 2020), and diary studies and language logs (King and Logan-Terry 2008).

Each row in Table 1 represents a level of analysis: the micro, meso, or macro level. The columns reflect the data analysis continuum from single-method pure qualitative studies to single-method pure quantitative studies. Mixed-method studies are identified along the continuum. These include studies where two or more different types of data are analysed only qualitatively (“mixed qualitative”), only quantitatively (“mixed quantitative”), or both qualitatively and quantitatively (“mixed qualitative–quantitative”). The cells of the table identify the type of data (e.g., “interview”, “survey”) with a bracketed reference to a study exemplifying this approach.
Here it is useful to acknowledge a few challenges in reviewing the methodologies used in the field; we discuss some of these further in the remainder of the chapter. The number of qualitative studies, particularly mixed qualitative studies, far exceeds the number of studies in the other categories. This concentration is arguably related to the area of research, as social and affective factors are well suited to

Table 1: Overview of data collection methods, sorted by level of analysis (rows) and type of data analysis (columns).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Mixed Qualitative</th>
<th>Mixed Qualitative-Quantitative</th>
<th>Mixed Quantitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview (Fogle 2013)</td>
<td>Interview + Observation (Curdts-Christiansen 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group (O’Rourke and Nandi 2019)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey + Observation (De Houwer and Bornstein 2016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Action research (Patrick, Budach and Muckpaloo 2013)</td>
<td>Ethnographic (Blackledge and Creese 2009)</td>
<td>Survey + Interview + Observation + Testing + School certificate data (Oriyama 2016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview (Yelenevskaya and Fialkova 2003)</td>
<td>Interview + Observation (Arnberg 1984)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview + Focus group (del Puy Ciriza 2019)</td>
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<td>Interviews + Focus group (Björklund 2013)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Interview + Fieldnotes + Linguistic landscaping (Cunningham 2019)</td>
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contextualised in-depth qualitative inquiry. Some cells in Table 1 remain empty, as we were unable to locate relevant quantitative studies, particularly at the meso level. We tried to categorise analysis methods more narrowly and to link them to different types of data. However, this proved too difficult to complete, given the dearth of detailed reporting on data analysis methods in many studies and that the same type of data can be analysed from different angles. As Table 1 reveals, for instance, observations can be analysed in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Data collection and data analysis methods thus combine flexibly, eluding clear-cut systematisation.

In the following sections we explore the basic characteristics and peculiarities of research at the three levels of analysis, from micro to macro. In each case, we briefly discuss research participants, research aims and foci, and research designs.

2 The micro level: Researching bilingual speakers and their families

2.1 Research participants

The very notion of what constitutes the “family” in home language contexts has recently undergone critical discussion (Lanza and Lomeu Gomes; Palviainen, both this vol.). A Western idealised conceptualisation of the family containing two married parents and one or more biological children has attracted most research attention to date. Yet this simplified view of a family does not necessarily represent current contexts accurately. In any particular context, single-parent families may be common, as could be separated parents, multi-generational cohabitation, same-sex relationships, and so called “living apart together” couples. Moreover, a family may include adopted as well as biological children. In other environments, the distinction between family and community may not be all that relevant to the research participants themselves. Self-reflection about one’s own pre-conceptions on what constitutes a family is necessary before seeking research participants and designing research instruments (Palviainen this vol.). If a researcher implements a research plan that assumes a family consists of two parents, one male and one female, then single-parent or same-sex families are excluded by default. The family unit is not always clearly defined in research, and when delimitation of a family is too narrow to fit families participating in research, relevant data may be overlooked and thus not collected and analysed.

Investigations of language from a familial perspective have drawn participants from a wide range of sociolinguistic environments. However, of all the different language parental constellations, the one that has received most attention is in “WEIRD” (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic) contexts
(Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010; Lanza and Lomeu Gomes this vol.), where one of the parents speaks the societal language, and the other parent has emigrated to that country (e.g., Döpke 1992; Lanza 1992, but see Nakamura 2016 for a non-Western example). A restrictive Western focus is also found in families where parents share the same non-societal language, typically in families with two parents who are migrants to these “WEIRD” countries.

Non-migrant families with parents who share a language but live within inherently multilingual milieus bring a novel set of research contexts to be investigated. Some of these contexts have received considerable research attention, e.g., contexts in Singapore (Curdt-Christiansen 2016), while elsewhere, research published in English has been limited in many of the most multilingual societies in the world, particularly in Central and South America, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Further sites of investigation into home language maintenance have focused on families belonging to autochthonous minority communities (Smith Christmas 2016), families with transnationally adopted children (Fogle 2013), and families struggling with disability (Cheatham and Lim this vol.). Contemporaneous families are found in diverse and varied configurations, residing in diverse and varied sociolinguistic environments. Any particular family could contain any constellation of members, drawn from any of the groups mentioned above.

2.2 Aims and foci of research

Studies on home language maintenance from the familial perspective have varied aims and research foci. We have identified two primary strands of research foci, which are also reflected in the handbook structure. These are: (1) affect in multilingual settings; and (2) policies, practices, and ideologies in multilingual families.

The aims within the first strand of affect-focused research are often two-fold: (1) to document affective issues associated with families in varied multilingual contexts, and (2) to discuss and implement these research findings into real-world contexts where deeper understanding of the issues may lead to actual improvements in the quality of life for individuals and their families. Focus areas include socio-emotional well-being (De Houwer this vol.), anxiety (Sevinç this vol.), identity (Tseng this vol.), and intergenerational challenges (Purkarthofer this vol.). Research in the second strand aims to understand how various factors ultimately influence the transmission and maintenance of languages. This is especially relevant to the topic of home language maintenance, as the family domain has been identified as the “critical domain” of intergenerational language transmission (Spolsky 2012), and the rupture of intergenerational language transmission can be seen as a strong indicator of language shift (Fishman 1991). Focus areas of research in this second strand include family language policy (Lanza and Lomeu
Gomes (2019), home language strategies and practices (Schwartz (2019)), the association between context-specific factors and these practices (Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2019)), and child agency (Smith-Christmas (2019)).

2.3 Research designs

Typical research designs in family studies draw on various means of data collection. These designs mostly use qualitative approaches based on interviews, observation, or a combination of both. Some have used quantitative approaches, with surveys the most common. Some studies mix qualitative and quantitative methodologies, but there is still a lot of scope for innovative research designs combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The current focus of family research is overwhelmingly on single-point studies. Longitudinal studies have much to offer to the field, and while potentially difficult to conduct, would create considerable new knowledge on how key issues evolve over time in given contexts.

The focused participants in this research area are often the children of multilingual families. Despite this, research designs often centre their data collection on the parents in such families, particularly mothers, for example by interviewing mothers about home language regimes without including the perspectives of children or fathers. Including all relevant actors in a research design is not always practicable, possible or ethical, but critical evaluation of why a particular study did not include certain family members would both be informative and signal the researcher’s awareness of this need.

Studies should also more carefully critique the sources of their data, particularly data collected by self-reports vis-à-vis data of actual language use. Self-reports may differ from actual language use for several reasons (De Houwer 2009; Hult 2014), and the literature has frequently observed discrepancies between stated language policies and actual language practices (Palviainen and Boyd 2013; Schwartz 2008).

3 The meso level: Researching communities

In this section we move our lens on research from the more intimate social unit – the family – to the larger social unit – the community – and hence from the micro to the meso level. We direct our attention to home language maintenance and development efforts as initiated or carried out by speaker communities. As in the previous section, we briefly delimit the key notion and identify the typical participants of such research. We then overview common research aims and foci, and identify key features of research at the meso level, highlighting the inherent difficulty of evaluating it.
3.1 Research participants

In sociology, the notion of “community” is generally defined rather broadly as a social unit whose members share some norms, beliefs, values, or other salient characteristics (Crow 2007). Communities also tend to share a sense of joint delimited space, be this geographical (e.g., a country, region, city, or suburb) or, as more recently acknowledged, virtual (e.g., a joint communication space on a platform such as Facebook). This delimited space enables members of the community to jointly plan and carry out initiatives, and hence to act as a unit, and to form (lasting) relationships with one another.

In the context of home language maintenance research, a community is then understood as a group of people who form a social unit based on shared home language(s) (for a problematisation of the notion of “home language”, see Eisenchlas and Schalley this vol.), oftentimes shared cultural practices and values, and a geographical or virtual space affording members opportunities to foster relationships with each other. Communities can differ greatly in their size, level of institutionalisation, and visibility. Examples include church groups, cultural organisations, and community language schools, as well as informal gatherings of people who may share some of the characteristics described above but have not formalised their links with each other (such as informal playgroups and regular get-togethers). Such communities usually cater to their individual linguistic and cultural needs through joint member action.

While the notion of “community” is used widely in research, it is rarely defined clearly, and research studies often do not explicitly delimit who constitutes the focus community. Furthermore, a community comprises an aggregate of actors, but only some of them can be included as participants in research studies. Typically, participants are the members who are seen or position themselves as representatives of the community. Thus, there is no guarantee that these actors’ views truly represent the views of the whole community, which may be more heterogeneous than the representatives may portray. An additional issue is that participants usually self-select to some degree (as they have to consent to participating in a study), so researchers can reach only a specific part of a community. Critics claim that this – and researchers’ frequent use of convenience sampling – result in biased participant groups. Researchers therefore need to always be very explicit about the criteria guiding selection of research participants, and possible effects of these on research results or findings. Such considerations may lead to improvements in the reporting of research studies (see also section 5).

1 Tyrrell (2015: 13) suggests the notion translocal for non-geographical joint spaces, to highlight the “‘simultaneous situatedness’ across different spaces” that individuals experience. These spaces include “home, school and other social (including virtual) spaces” (Tyrrell 2015: 13).
3.2 Aims and foci of research

Reflecting the diversity of community types, studies on home language maintenance at the community level have a variety of aims and research foci. Research has mostly investigated (1) objectives of the communities; (2) initiatives and programs put in place to achieve these objectives; and (3) the effectiveness of these initiatives and programs.

In the context of home languages, community objectives typically include advocating for community needs, supporting social justice and inclusiveness, developing strategies for home language maintenance at the community level, creating a sense of a cultural identity, and fostering strong links to the home culture.

Studies are conducted in various research contexts and across diverse sites. This handbook illustrates some of the focus areas and research perspectives. Major ones include: (1) motivations, operations, and success of community language schools (Nordstrom this vol.); (2) counteracting geographical and linguistic isolation through new technologies that form translocal virtual communities (Hatoss; Little; Palviainen, all this vol.); (3) revitalising language through community efforts (Mayer et al. this vol.); and (4) effects of macro level policies on the community and its members (Albury; Annamalai and Skutnabb-Kangas; Liddicoat, all this vol.). Yet research in the field is patchy, creating potential – indeed, need – for further systematic inquiries. Part of the research challenge lies in identifying relevant meso level activities and their actors, as many that could helpfully contribute to knowledge pass by unreported (e.g., informal playgroup activities).

3.3 Research designs

As the meso level is a fluid interface between the micro and the macro levels, many research designs and methods used at this level overlap with those used at the two levels on either side (such as ethnographic studies, interviews, surveys, and observations). Here we focus attention on features of research designs that are particularly distinctive to the meso level.

The sharing of norms, values, and beliefs by community members leads to the development of joint goals and actions. Community research often orients to community activities that are transformative and address issues of advocacy, social justice, and inclusiveness. Therefore, in addition to descriptive studies, research is often undertaken through collaboration between researchers and communities, and aims to drive social change. Typical examples of this collaborative approach are action research (e.g., Patrick, Budach, and Muckpaloo 2013) and intervention studies (e.g., Hatoss this vol.). These approaches seek to generate materials and knowledge to benefit the community in the longer term. One of the main challenges, however, is evaluating such research activities, as their impact needs to be measured. This is
problematic for two reasons in particular. First, some of the benefits, and costs, are appreciable only in the long term, and second, it is generally difficult to demonstrate a causal relationship between the research activities undertaken and social or other changes that may transpire subsequent to the research. Furthermore, given that collaborative research is always – at least initially – a local response to local issues, the abundance of confounding factors that influence research findings and evaluations makes it hard to generalise from the research, its findings, and its consequences beyond the particular context then under the lens.

4 The macro level: Researching bodies of authority

In this section, we focus on research at the level of society at which actors are bodies of authority governed by common laws and regulations. These macro level authorities exert regulatory power or influence at the nation-state level (e.g., national government) or above (e.g., the European Union or UNESCO, as official bodies of authority), and also below (e.g., through regulating the national education system). Let us give an example here to illustrate the distinction between meso and macro levels. Community language schools and other forms of education arising from community level initiatives for minority language education are grassroots initiated, bottom-up meso level activities, whereas the macro level on the other hand focuses on top-down processes, e.g. the ones that regulate formal education provisions (Shohamy 2006; see also Liddicoat 2014 and May 2015 on interaction between these two levels).

4.1 Research participants

At the macro level, research data are often written documents, such as laws and policies on different levels of organisation of the society. These documents are interpreted to echo the values and ideologies of society. However, individual representatives of bodies of authority (such as representatives of schools or municipalities) also often act as research participants in their capacity as professional stakeholders. Whereas individuals at the micro level represent themselves, and at the meso level position themselves as parts of and actors within a community, individuals at the macro level act as spokespersons for the bodies of authority they represent. Hence, researchers interpret for instance teachers expressing their attitudes and beliefs on multilingualism as representing the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of those in the formal education system (Cunningham 2019; cf. Mary and Young this vol.).
4.2 Aims and foci of research

Research conducted on the macro level also presents a variety of aims and research foci, with studies investigating ideologies, legislation, policies, affordances, practices, and stakeholder attitudes, and the interaction between them. This research aims to: (1) document and critique the current state of affairs; (2) advise on best practice and provide recommendations to stakeholders; and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of policy changes and macro level initiatives.

In the context of home languages, macro level actors’ objectives typically concern legislation in relation to minority language policy and language planning, and regulation of educational provisions for minority language speakers. Macro level actors pursue these objectives through regulating, controlling and steering members of society, i.e. these actors simultaneously represent and execute power. Most countries and autonomous regions in the world have legislation regulating the use of languages at some level (Leclerc 2019), for example stating which language(s) can be used in official institutions. However, not all countries acknowledge the linguistic rights of speakers of its indigenous, colonial, and/or immigrant (minority) languages (Fishman 1999). The language of schooling as well as languages taught within formal education have a recognised and profound impact on the maintenance and revitalisation of languages all around the world (e.g., Liddicoat 2008; Annamalai and Skuttnabb-Kangas this vol.). Yet states do not necessarily offer education in or on a minority language. As Annamalai and Skuttnabb-Kangas, Paulsrud, and Yaşmur (all this vol.) illustrate, the organisation of minority language education can take almost any guise, from rejection, to indifference, to supporting inclusive education on the grounds of social justice and linguistic rights.

Much of the research conducted and discussed in this volume has legislation and policy documents as a starting point, when, for example, addressing research questions about official institutions implementing policy into practice (Annamalai and Skuttnabb-Kangas; Paulsrud; Yaşmur; all this vol.). Studies on multimodal uses and displays of language in public spaces also often take policy documents as a starting point (Buckingham 2018; Gorter 2018), as do studies on educational provisions offered and implemented (Paulsrud this vol.). The social regulative and legislative systems themselves are also subject to extensive research, addressing questions about the content of policy documents or about educational provisions (Liddicoat this vol.), as well as the attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders (Albury; De Houwer; Mary and Young, all this vol.; Lundberg 2019).

4.3 Research designs

Research focusing on the social and affective factors associated with home language maintenance and development on the macro level utilises many of the
research designs and methods of data collection used on the other two levels. It thus shares both the benefits and the concerns associated with those levels, as discussed above.

A research design distinctive to the macro level is policy document research. Here, regulations and policy documents are not merely used as supplemental background information as in other studies. Rather, they are analysed in their own right to identify, describe and compare different contexts or to follow longitudinal changes and developments across documents. Macro level policy document research thus specifically studies the values and ideologies of society.

5 Pitfalls

This section summarises some of the pitfalls we encountered in the body of research across the field of social and affective factors of home language maintenance and development. The first pitfall concerns the absence of generalisability of research results, given the uniqueness of each research context. We then focus on the restricted geographical research locations and participant populations. Finally, we discuss the underreporting of both data collection and data analysis methods.

5.1 Lack of generalisability

As we have discussed briefly above, and illustrated in Table 1, much research undertaken within the field at large presents in-depth, small-scale, qualitative descriptions of heterogeneous and complex realities in single-point studies. These studies have identified important social and affective factors in home language maintenance and development, but the effective disentangling of the interplay of these various factors remains a challenge. Moreover, studies with single-point design do not enable researchers to identify correlations between factors, let alone to effectively investigate causes and effects. Thus, the current scarcity of longitudinal studies leaves researchers unable to assess the medium-to-long-term effects of initiatives and practices at the different levels. These issues consequently make generalisations from research data contestable at this time.

A way forward could entail ensuring that qualitative research findings can be aggregated, similar to the aggregation found in meta-analyses carried out on quantitative results. However, this would require careful reporting on study participants and procedures, over and above reporting on the features directly relevant to the research questions of a particular study. It would open up the field for meta-studies that in turn would produce generalisable and quantifiable findings. Only then will researchers be able to provide convincing advice on matters of home language
maintenance at the three levels, thus informing non-academic stakeholders as well as other interested academics.

5.2 Restricted research coverage

As we indicated above, research to date has shown a clear bias towards the study of “WEIRD” contexts (Lanza and Lomeu Gomes this vol.), which means that non-Western, non-industrialised contexts remained under-researched. This assessment applies to all three levels. At the micro level, research has typically focused on idealised Western family contexts, ignoring disadvantaged populations in terms of economic resources, educational background, or special needs. At the meso and macro levels, research focuses noticeably on a select number of industrialised countries that traditionally have been strong targets of migration, and where most of the internationally visible researchers in the field are based.

However, studies researching other contexts and participant populations are becoming more common, as evidenced by abstract booklets of recent conferences on bilingualism, and by major international congresses hosted in non-OECD countries. One clear example is the World Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA), held in South America for the first time in 2017. Student and staff mobility are fast becoming another source of cross-fertilisation in research perspectives and interests.

5.3 Data collection: Limited reporting

Underreporting is a limitation noticeable in both qualitative and quantitative studies, mainly in participant sampling, participant demographics, and the socio-cultural context in which data collection takes place. This may impact negatively on the interpretability of the research findings and obscure their contribution to existing scholarship. As we mentioned above, for qualitative studies this may also restrict the generalisability of findings. Quantitative studies, on the other hand, risk brushing over important individual background factors. This could skew data by conflating diverse populations, thus negatively affecting studies’ credibility and their capacity to truly represent diverse participants.

Another pitfall relates to justifying a researcher’s choice of data collection methods. Qualitative studies tend to be labour intensive, even when the pool of participants involved is small, as they often involve collecting multiple types of data, including the use of elaborate ethnographic collection methods. In this context, triangulation (a “mixed qualitative” approach) is often seen as best practice. However, any combination of data collection methods needs to be properly justified. Merely referring to excellent introductions to chosen research methods
(such as Copland and Creese 2015) does not suffice as justification for a researcher’s choice, nor does merely including a reference to the creator of a data collection method that a researcher wants to apply.

The development of stricter codes of reporting and clear justification guidelines would improve research practices, thus helping to avoid or overcome the above-mentioned pitfalls.

5.4 Data analysis: Lack of procedural information

Presentation of data analysis procedures may also have shortcomings through underreporting. Research concerning social and affective factors in home language maintenance seldom adequately explicates its methods of data analysis (e.g., it may just state that a “thematic analysis” has been carried out). This underreporting and vagueness on the analytic steps of research may have unintended consequences. First, the objectivity of the research process and its results may be compromised since the analysis cannot be independently verified (e.g., how excerpts were selected for analysis) and thus the researcher’s subjective interpretation can weigh too heavily. Second, lack of transparency in the data analysis process hinders replicability of studies. It is therefore of utmost importance that researchers are explicit and transparent about the data analyses they have conducted.

6 Challenges

In this section, we discuss three particularly significant challenges that impact on research in the field. The first concerns the requirement for ethical conduct at all stages of research, from participant recruitment to data storage and archiving. Parallel to this, and often in tension with ethical considerations, the second challenge concerns data management issues, ranging from questions of data coding to storage and sharing. The third challenge concerns what happens with the findings after research has been conducted, in terms of disseminating results to different stakeholders and across disciplines.

6.1 Ethical considerations

As research in this area is so diverse, every research design can involve specific ethical challenges. We thus concentrate our attention on a few general considerations.

Research in the field often revolves around investigating potentially vulnerable individuals or groups of people, such as children and migrant populations.
Focussing on social and affective factors frequently leads to the collection and handling of sensitive information, which must be treated in an ethically responsible manner. Ethical research needs to be grounded in an honest relationship between researcher and participants. The researcher must obtain participants’ informed consent to participate, which is not necessarily a straightforward process since participants need to be made aware of the purpose of the research project and how any data concerning them will be handled. This process is further complicated for those working with children, as children cannot usually consent by themselves to participate in research until they reach a certain age, depending on local laws and regulations. Furthermore, researchers need to take into account potential intercultural differences when working with diverse populations, as ethical concepts may not translate readily between cultures (Copland and Creese 2015).

Ethical research designs critically consider whose interests are being met, and who is really benefiting from a study (Canagarajah and Stanley 2015). Researchers themselves often benefit professionally from any research output generated from a project, but ethical research should be mindful of the well-being of individuals, families, communities and institutions involved, and ensure participants are not harmed in any way. Recognising that research participants may experience anxiety, stress, guilt, and damage to self-esteem during the data collection process (Murphy and Dingwall 2001), researchers should attempt to design research instruments in ways that lessen the likelihood of participants’ distress. At the same time, however, we need to acknowledge that the type of research reported in this volume has the potential to give participants a voice and thus an opportunity to redress injustices. Thus, clear benefits may result for the participants involved as well as for the researcher.

### 6.2 Data management

Management of research data involves questions around the handling, organisation, and storing of data throughout and following the research process. This topic continued to gain traction in recent years, particularly given the opportunities and challenges afforded by ever-developing digital technologies (Berez-Kroeker et al. 2018; Thieberger and Berez 2012). Data management needs to be carefully planned for each stage of the research process, including the data collection, preparation, and analysis phases of a research project as well as general data storage (including archiving the data past the lifetime of the research project). Such considerations are important in relation to not only primary data (e.g., audio and video recordings, observational notes), and secondary data (e.g., transcriptions and annotations), metadata (e.g., contextual/situational information), administrative data (e.g., workflow and data versioning information), but also to tertiary data (e.g., analytical findings) (see Thieberger and Berez 2012).
Researchers are encouraged (or even required, e.g., when applying for research funding, European Commission 2016) to formulate an explicit data management plan that clearly sets out their data management strategies. Although the issue of data management is not near the forefront in this handbook, we expect it will become a serious challenge in the future that researchers will need to address head-on. Calls for replicability – where new data are collected under the same circumstances, and the results are confirmed by a follow-up study – have been superseded by calls for reproducibility – where collected data are made accessible for re-analysis, thus providing scientific accountability of the original results (Berez-Kroeker et al. 2018). The former often appears impossible in our field (due to a multitude of moderating factors), but the latter is most certainly achievable. Moreover, making existing data accessible and achieving comparability across data sets will allow researchers to analyse a larger collection of data, thus moving from small-scale projects and case studies to carrying out comparative larger-scale research. This could be to the benefit of all, also enabling more reliable generalisations to be drawn from the data.

6.3 Dissemination of findings

Research findings surely need to be disseminated. However, researchers working on social and affective factors that impact on home language maintenance and development at times may feel they are caught between a glass ceiling and a “glass floor”, in a position from which information flows neither upwards nor downwards. Sometimes they may feel they are between “glass walls” that isolate them from others working on similar matters in related fields. But if researchers want their research to be effective in creating social change, they need to find ways to disseminate research findings beyond academia, to reach a range of diverse stakeholders. This task involves identifying and addressing a number of challenges that seem to hinder the flow of information in every direction.

As to the glass ceiling, research findings need to urgently flow upwards to the macro level of language planning, so policymakers have robust and reliable data to inform decisions about language provision. Yet as we discussed above, much research in the field seems to be qualitative, involving small-scale projects or cases. While this research can undeniably be very sound, it does not have the “numerical power” needed to engage policy makers. Findings from purely quantitative large-scale studies may seem more convincing. However, here we urge caution, since these studies so loved by policy makers may also involve risks. First, Eisenchlas and Schalley (2017) found substantial confounding factors and methodological limitations in meta-analyses of correlates of bilingualism, including a lack of terminological clarity that may lead researchers in the field to inadvertently discuss phenomena that are slightly different while assuming uniformity of
interpretations. Second, a publication bias (de Bruin, Treccani, and Della Sala 2015) may often prevent publication in the scholarly literature of papers reporting on negative or no effects, thus providing a misleading picture of a phenomenon.

These two issues may lead policymakers to make decisions based on data that is potentially methodologically flawed or skewed. Furthermore, purely quantitative research may inform about results found on aggregates of participants, but says nothing about what motivates these participants to act as they do. We thus see advantages of mixed methods research combining quantitative and qualitative research methods in a way that the findings validate and reinforce each other – showing not only how much of what, but also how and why. This approach can thus satisfy macro level planners without sacrificing rich insights into the human experience that characterises qualitative research.

As to the “glass floor”, we argue that scholars need to find ways to translate their findings to the broader population. Researchers in this field are often motivated by a commitment to social justice and equity (Annamalai and Skutnabb-Kangas this vol.; Eisenchlas and Schalley 2019) and therefore are well-suited to take an activist role in supporting bilingualism. This role could involve a wide variety of activities ranging from lobbying educational institutions and interacting with traditional and social media to amplify the message, to delivering workshops in the community addressing the benefits and challenges of bilingualism and debunking some widespread myths and misinformation.

Finally, we need to deal with the “glass walls” that separate and compartmentalise disciplines. As stated in Eisenchlas and Schalley (this vol.), bilingualism is a complex phenomenon, and as such, it can be, and needs to be, studied from a variety of perspectives. While an impressive amount of research has been conducted following diverse disciplinary traditions, scholars are yet to find a “common language” to engage across disciplinary boundaries. This would entail, among other measures, developing codes of good/best practice that rigorously inform how research in each discipline is conducted, development of reporting procedures that make findings intelligible across fields of study, and identifying and making explicit the disciplinary assumptions and biases under which research in the field is conducted.

7 Conclusion and future directions

In this chapter, we have taken a birds-eye view of the aims and methods of data collection and analysis within research on social and affective factors on home language maintenance and development. We noted there is a motivated methodological bias towards qualitative research designs, data collection methods, and analyses. However, we believe that if research on social and affective factors in home language maintenance is to have an impact on decision makers, the field’s
future opportunities lie in the use of mixed quantitative–qualitative approaches, aggregation of current research results, careful selection of research participants, and rigorous reporting of data collection and analysis methods, in order to gain generalisable and reliable results. There is also room for more interdisciplinary research, combining sociology, political science and (social) psychology with linguistics in general and with applied and educational linguistics in particular, to account for the complexities of topics researched in this field.

As a specialised area in bilingualism research, the study of social and affective factors in home language maintenance and development is still somewhat under-researched in comparison to the study of linguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of language development and use. For example, during the last decade, less than a quarter of the original research articles published in the *Heritage Language Journal*, which is dedicated to disseminating results on all aspects of heritage language research, focused on social or affective factors. However, the field is growing rapidly. This handbook is a step in that direction, and new dedicated journals are also emerging to disseminate research findings and generate interest more broadly.

As authors of a few chapters in this volume have explored, researchers in this field are experiencing new challenges and realities that will impact on how research in this field is conducted in the future. In particular, technological changes are already transforming actors and their behaviours at the three key levels. At the micro level, new technologies allow families to effectively communicate with others across borders and spaces (Palviainen this vol.) and to take their children’s home language development into their own hands by accessing digital resources from around the world (Little this vol.). At the meso level, technological developments foster the creation of translocal communities, whose members are linked through virtual joint spaces (Hatoss this vol.). Finally, at the macro level, digital technologies are now reducing the (often negative) impact of monoglossic language policies, as more individualised educational activities can support children’s home language development and thus acknowledge these children’s linguistic rights. Such technological advances thus bring with them challenges and opportunities to our data collection methodologies. Communication modes are changing, and participant populations are more dispersed geographically, but the importance of research across all three levels in this field is unlikely to diminish.

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