

# The Power of Words: Family Language Politics and Hierarchies in Multilingual Households: A Cinematic Insight from *Anatomy of a Fall*

Jiayang He

Film Academy, Sichuan University of Media and Communications, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Email: 643559311@qq.com (J.Y.H.)

Manuscript received December 13, 2024; accepted March 15, 2025; published July 30, 2025.

**Abstract**—Globalization increases cultural contact, which provides avenues for the exploration of intercultural communication but on the same note brings about intercultural tension and complications concerning multilingualism in family language policy. Such family language policy studies typically concentrate on children's language acquisition, cultural identity, and language choices, as well as intergenerational interactions, Power relations within the family, for example, have been understudied. This study focuses on the movie, *Anatomy of a Fall* about a multilingual family and, through analyzing the use of language, aims to show interactions between different cultures and where power lies. Altogether, the research evidence shows that language and communication problems exist and influence the relationship between various entities and power relations. This is because family members from different linguistic backgrounds are bound to have different social roles that may differ in some ways from those of their spouses, co-tenants, employers, employees, etc. Superimposing family language policies on the conflicts of the movie enriches themes since it reveals multiple ways of affecting a family. Robert McKee speaks about narratives being powered by conflict; in a multilingual family, languages, and cultures as methods of communication form conflicts. Understanding the impact of the family language policies concerning the possible change of power dynamics enables resolutions of inter and intra-cultural conflicts between diverse and indigenous populations. Studying changes in the details of traditional gender roles and emerging Intercultural patterns helps to know coping mechanisms for a peaceful, cohesive, and cooperative world. This makes the adoption of dynamic modes of communication a framework that enhances cultural appreciation, understanding, tolerance, and respect thereby setting up new paradigms.

**Keywords**—family language policy, power dynamics in multilingual households, cultural conflict resolution

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Anatomy of a Fall* is a French drama film by Justine Triet, with a multilingual cast, which pays great attention to the experience of a family in a personal and legal crisis. The need for such a film is proclaimed in contemporary cinema after the film has received an award at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival, which is Palme d'Or [1]. The plot is based on Sandra Voyter, a sex-motivated German writer of bestseller novels, her French husband Samuel Maleski, and her 11-year-old son, Daniel who is half blind. Living a quiet happy life in suburban Grenoble in the French Alps they seem to have everything they need, but when Samuel is murdered, everything changes. Sandra is considered for trying to murder him and she denies the charges. She asks for her old friend Vincent Renzi, who is a lawyer to defend herself. During trials, Sandra is exposed to lots of embarrassment, and at last, Daniel the key witness acts as a

key eye-savior for her for her to be acquitted.

An important part of the movie is a court trial when a tape of Sandra and Samuel's argument is shown to be the main evidence. Although Sandra and Samuel reside in France, they speak to each other in English, and they do it to the point of conflict. In the recording, Samuel says that this family language policy makes him feel powerless, and deprived of autonomic decision-making. This scenario creates awareness that rather than just being a means of communication, language is also a rite, an indicator of the social unconscious, and an aspect of material culture associated with power and social identity [2]. The extra and excessive use of Language that seems to be intentionally given away as English, French, and German as much as possible constitutes one of the highlight features of the film; it brings eventually enlightening experience by giving the feeling and touch of flexibility and translanguaging and the concrete forms of cross-communicative interaction. From such an argument, it is clear that cultural barriers go beyond mere language issues, and may reflect relational breakdowns between people [3].

This study examines how language use within the family environment poses crucial issues regarding how family language policies function internally as power relations. The Family Language Policy or FLP is a relatively new area of study that assesses how families manage language use, selection, and acquisition within the home context [4]. Despite the large amount of research on FLPs about children's bilingual development, HL maintenance, or IILT, a lack of scholarship is dedicated to researching how these policies affect household power relations [5]. Language choice, as evidenced in *Anatomy of a Fall* is an arena of conflict that mirrors power relations at a societal level and the power of an individual.

There is abundant evidence of multilingualism in families in a time where globalization is rapid, international migration is rampant and transnational families are common [6]. This demographic change requires more focus on studying the impact of language practices with families on interaction and power dynamics. This read, conflict in the choice of language policy in their family-Sandra and Samuel is not uncommon among families with different languages. Piller states that language can be cohesive or divisive depending on how the interactional management of language is done [7]. It therefore guards this objective by presenting dynamics that are of great topical concern in society today.

As a result, this paper has two major objectives based on the film *Anatomy of a Fall*. First, it provides an innovative discussion on how kinship linguistic diversity impacts

intrahousehold power dynamics. This entails analyzing why power relations of this nature are established in multilingual contexts, using theories from sociolinguistics, and intercultural Commerce [8]. Second, from the perspective of scriptwriting and film techniques, the study describes how the multilingual character settings help build the conflict of the plot. Within this context, this analysis examines whether the linguistic elements are simply synthesized storyteller tools or constituents that contribute towards enriching the thematic concern of the story [9].

Regarding these aspects, the study aims to contribute to the gap in the literature regarding the effects of FLPs on family power systems. Moreover, it carves out the relationship between language and representation in film, providing additional information on the applicability of multilingualism in the production of storylines that mirror reality. Indeed, the choice of the film *Anatomy of a Fall* makes a lot of sense when selected as a case study because it presents us with a multilingual family as the center of the action and where language takes on a central role.

It is essential to know how own relationships of the families might be affected by FLP and more broadly, as societies are becoming increasingly language-diverse. Arguing that the micro-social level analysis of family dynamics might shed a lot of light on the macro-level social relations and discourses, Lanza and Lomeu Gomes adumbrate the role of multisided ethnography [10]. From the vantage of such views, how language becomes identified with conflict falls into perspective, as do relations between individual agency and received culture.

Furthermore, it is reviewing the movie from the perspective of a scriptwriter that helps to be able to notice how the use of language diversity can contribute to the creation of the plot and the characters. McKee has defined conflict as the true element of stories [11]. As in many other works by the author, an emphasis on activism increased heterophobia, and the use of immigrant jargon is continually integrated not only to enhance the verisimilitude of the narrative but also to advance the key dramatic action in *Anatomy of a Fall*. The students were able to understand friendships and relationships by observing how the characters' language use fitted in with their identities and their relationships with each other.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs discourse analysis techniques in researching and comparing the script of *Anatomy of a Fall* and reviewing other literature on how FLP and the generation of conflicts add plot in movies. From the research data, Chinese scholars' perception of family language planning is the use and acquisition planning done by the family members within the family domain. It captures not only the family language practices and reasons for it but it also indexes how elements within and beyond the family converge [12].

The most talked about issue concerning family language policies is indeed domestic language planning in dialect regions [4]. Multilingual FMLP in dialect regions is a component area in analyzing multilingual FMLP. Each can represent the relations of power between the members of the family. By integrating the aforementioned two and comparatively analyzing both, the options for investigating

multilingual FL will be broadened and the factors of the underlying causes will be identified.

In an international context, the debates principally center on the internal and external antecedents of FLP, the dynamic processes of this concept and, its intersubjectivity. Family language policy has emerged as an object of investigation of linguistic and multicultural families during the last twenty years, and more and more scholars have turned to more professional and scientific approaches to its analysis in connection with several disciplines. Drawing concepts and research methods from education, sociolinguistics, analytical and developmental psychology, political science, and ethnology, they have been gradually leading the family language planning research toward scientific, systematization, and theoretical development [13]. Describing family language policies, using sociological theories, and considering the family as a community of practice, the relative conjunction of the process of acquiring community membership and regulating discourse is explored [14].

Even though language socialization takes place in a larger social context, analyzing the family as a community of practice helps to concentrate on language socialization in certain contexts [15]. The family is a social institution recognized as the foundation of society influencing stability and development. Thus, it is possible to examine the tendencies in social development by studying family language policy planning. The aforementioned work integrates family language policy with sociological theories from a micro level that allow the investigation of power relations between members of the family with certain social phenomena along with the development of a new research direction for family language planning grounded on sociological theories.

Though, the global economic development and the consequent raising of the discussion about family language planning, many ideas still have not enough analysis. While work has been done in China for these multilingual or dialect-speaking families using questionnaires, surveys, and interviews based on macro-level family language policies; little research has been done to understand the rationale behind these family language policies from a heuristic perspective like political, and economic or socio-cultural aspect and the dynamics of power relations between different members of the family coming out of these policies. The methods are somewhat restricted, they need more scientific procedures. Studying multilingual family language planning and language policies will improve family language corpora as well as establishing systematic language policies in the short time associated with increasing numbers of multilingual families due to globalization to maintain healthy linguistic life and social stability for challenges posed by development. Although the number of studies on family language planning has grown more mature internationally, little has been done domestically. Specifically, there is a scarcity of systematic and fairly encyclopedia-style overviews of its definition, research history, subject distribution, methods, theories, and research topics as a field [16]. From the discussions of countries globally, definitions, and frameworks of family LP have been defined, but empirical methods to solve the series of family and social problems provoked by this phenomenon are insufficient.

In the family shown in the movie, Sandra is a successful bestselling novelist. Her husband Samuel during the narrative was a writer, who however decided to abandon writing and earn a living for the family a rare twist of the traditional family patriarchal roles. In traditionally stereotyped families' women are supposed to be tender, passive, and family centered in their approach. The husband's relative weakness and the corresponding independence of Sandra, a career-oriented woman is a reversal of the stereotype of a family and women. Sandra's achievement and 'pull herself up by the bootstrap's ladies' get external suspicion and hostility. From the lens of gender stereotypes in its operation society does not take kindly to women being the successes in their careers within the family which suggests prejudice on issues to do with women being successful in what is technically a man's world.

Using realist social theory, Mirvahedi defines family language policy as the way that families manage language choices in everyday life [17]. The interest of this work stems from the need to close the gap that exists between the agents and structures of practice and the need to go beyond the macro level context to explain further how family interactions impact the process of language maintenance or language shift. The research used quantitative data gathering techniques, with interviews and participation observations of multilingual communities to analyze the external influence on their selection of languages through social factors such as acculturation, educational, and economic motives. The given results prove, that FLIP is an ongoing process influenced by both the outside world and the family's values and objectives. The minority languages in families are in a way threatened because of pressure exerted by dominant language practices in the broader society. Some of the general policy implications of the study's findings include: To continue to encourage multilingual practices within families, there is a need to recognize the generally felt difficulties that families have and to support practical and family-endorsed policies and initiatives for the maintenance of minority languages.

Amin discusses the concept of family language policy through a review of the types of strategies employed, the constraints to their implementation, and the effects on the learner. The research is important as it demonstrates how family language practices help children realize their linguistic development as well as academic achievements in multicultural contexts. In turn, the study uses qualitative research where he conducts interviews with parents and teachers as well as observations of family communication to discover how language policies of the family affect children's educational achievements. The findings show that parents use different language policies, one parent one language or dominant language but they encounter some difficulties based on social consequences, academic requirements, and children's rejection of the minority language. This study identifies that FL has a direct impact on children's language development and their performance in academic endeavors. The study proposes that universities, colleges, schools, and policymakers provide more support and service to families who wish to use multiple languages in their home, to ease the burden of managing the languages at home practice [18].

In terms of how the family responsibilities were divided in

the film they also had intersecting themes of gender, career and family, and personal and social identity. It gives people the understanding that gender does not have to deeply present a set role type and that the roles are changeable because of the individual's free will. In addition, the family context in which Sandra and Samuel were raised also makes them very suitable candidates for the examination of family language policies. Thus, such a multilingual family increases the power interrelations among the family members and intercultural communication phenomena affect this power position. This study seeks to untie dynamics such as how the family members publicly proclaim, paint, poster, assert, and stake their identity and status; and how language is used to index and re-produce intra-family power relations. These aspects of the plot can also be used to offer an understanding of social relations and gender roles, as well as function as case studies of language usage and identity construction in multi-lingual families.

Family language planning includes three components: language beliefs and attitudes, language use, and language bureaucracy. Since communication barriers caused by language can be managed, provided family language policies are reasonably set, they must be done so. It is quite easy to ignore the role of power relations and discourse rights within the family; hence, the analysis of this topic and possible remedies should be conducted.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative research approach, and critical discourse analysis to examine the process in which family language policies affect power relations within the multilingual family. The role of interpersonal tensions in a multilingual family using the film *Anatomy of a Fall* as the main data source Exploring: The picture was chosen as an example with which we can analyze language use in communication within the family as a microcosm of internal power dynamics and such interpersonal communication phenomena as intercultural communication.

Data collection entailed observing and writing down the main characters Sandras and Samuel's dialogue, major episodes where the power of choice language arises. These specific interactions were chosen because they cover paramount issues to do with language, identities, and power in the family. Therefore, by examining these dialogues, the study intends to discover the subliminal use of language as a factor to convey individual needs, and assert domination.

Influenced by Critical Linguistics and Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar the theoretical framework focuses on language, power, and ideology. This approach makes it possible to isolate those language traits that are related to power and ideologies. Vocabulary, grammar, and structure of text have been compared to identify patterns of language use that reflect power relations. The use of modal verbs, pronouns, and thematic progressive cities was analyzed to capture how Sandra and Samuel share or contest control in their interaction.

To establish the credibility of the findings with the paradigm, the study findings were compared with other similar research on family language policy and dynamics of power in multilingual homes. This includes; Research, that based its findings on the social factors affecting language

choice prevalent within families and the subjection to external societal, educational, and economic factors within a family. The incorporation of a priori theory increases objectivity to the interpretations and gives more structure to the analysis.

The ethical issue that might prevail in this dissertation is nearly negligible because the work mostly relies on public documents and data. However, they still paid respect to the ability and property rights of the authors, and all the information and citations were cited as they should be. Thus, while concerned with the textual analysis of cinema as a cultural product, the study links the theoretical and the practical regarding the sociopolitical uses of language and power therein in multilingual contexts. This methodological approach allows for a detailed and complex understanding of the interrelations between family language policies concerning internal power dynamics. By engaging in critical discourse analysis, the present study advances the knowledge of how language mediates family affairs, especially in the globalized multi-lingual context.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

##### *A. Theoretical Overview and Corpus Background*

###### *1) Theoretical overview*

The term "Critical Linguistics" was coined by the British linguist Roger Fowler in 1979 [19]. Critical linguistics as a branch of social analysis is a theoretical approach used to discuss language about social and politics. The following discloses the hidden ideological connotations of language form and goes even further to expose the symbiotic connection between language, power, and ideology. Critical Linguistics was developed in the late 1970s in Britain by such specialists as Roger Fowler and Gunther Kress. This work refers to linguistics per the philosophers of the Western Marxist group known as the Frankfurt School.

The paradigm of Critical Linguistics comprises two key tenets: the language as the component of social practice and, second, the language as the tool that represents the relations of power. It stresses the credentials that language is not only a medium of communication but also a bearer of ideology. Some of the notions constituting Critical Linguistics are transitivity, modality, transformation, classification, coherence, order, and unity. In particular, these concepts help the analyst in the process of domination of power relations and ideological elements within a text [23].

According to Fairclough, language and discourse are social practices and CDA should not confine themselves to the analysis of the discourse, the process of its production, and interpretation [20]. They should be able to describe how discourse is related to the processes of its production and the social context: situational and social context. Fairclough divides discourse into three levels: interact, textual, and contextual. Corresponding to these levels, he proposes a three-step method for critical discourse analysis:

1. **Description:** Analyzing the linguistic features of vocabulary, grammar, and text structure using the tools of functional grammar.
2. **Interpretation:** Studying the relationship between the discourse and its production and distribution.
3. **Explanation:** Analyzing the relationship between

communication and social context.

This three-level model links Discourse with its construction and enactment and is employed as the metalanguage for the Ideological Analysis of news texts. Critical linguists engage in critical evaluations of the mass language and relate the social beliefs contained in them. Their main analysis instrument is modern linguistics with Systemic Functional Grammar by Halliday in focus position [21].

Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory (1980) offers new perspectives and approaches to the analysis of discursive practices and has therefore informed critical discourse analysis [22]. As noted by Halliday from a sociological and anthropological point of view, all kinds of aspects of social culture make up the edifice of social reality meanings which can be viewed as a total symbolic system. Language has three major functions: Ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. Therefore, the register of language use type is intimately connected with the genre of discourse and language choice. It has been seen how the major features such as organizational structure, field, tenor, and mode reflect the social purpose of the text. Systemic Functional Grammar correlates language with social structure and sociocultural context in almost equal measure. Since language forms are primarily defined by their social roles, the primary reasons should be discerned from the standpoint of the social-communicative roles accomplished by the discourse.

More specifically, the critical discourse analysis theory centers language in social practice, defining discourse as the form in which language occurs and becomes concrete as social practice. In other words, critical discourse analysis operates social analysis from the linguistic plane, where the social and linguistic analyses are integrated seamlessly. It understands language as a meaning potential that is, a range of meaning options availed to language users (Lanza, 2007). Therefore, it is only possible to extend the cognitive analysis concerning the meaning of films by revealing the expressive means and features of the scripts and dialogues and understanding what ideological content the film being studied wants to convey beyond the film's profound message.

###### *2) Corpus background*

*Anatomy of a Fall* is an upcoming film by French Filmmaker Justine Triet which is a Franco-German Production film. Angelle Triet's Cinematic masterpiece made it to the 76th Cannes International Film Festival as revealed by this site, and was awarded the Palme d' Or hence making her the third women director to acquire this award in the history of this event. The film is based on a falling death case happening in the French Alps and raises and solves a lot of themes such as marriage; mother-son relationships; gender and occupation roles; and justice based on a dramatic trial process in the courtyard. How language, power, and ideology are represented in this film make the movie perfect to use in analyzing it with Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis.

It is sufficient to note that normally Justine Triet's works are cast and set through complicated female characters and deep social themes. Her creative theory peruses the roles and views of females. In her films, she mostly focuses on the theme of a working woman and how she conquers and fights

various difficulties in her given profession as well as in her private life. Besides emphasizing the independence and success of women and their ability to work, Triet takes the inner life and social position of women as the subject of study and analyzes women's identity and gender relationships.

In her movies, Triet often reflects the personal experience of her point of view of social problems, primarily concerning gender roles and family structures. Gender stereotypes, relationship power dynamics, and the status of women are some of what she often depicts in her productivity. For instance, in *Anatomy of a Fall*, the original plot is told employing stereotypically masculine-masochistic and feminine-mis transgressive perspectives to discuss society's silent subjugation of women. Her films are not just the stories of herself or some individual, but a real investigation of society, femininity, and humans. Her work that reveals both Triet's creative philosophy and stylistic peculiarities in full measure is *Anatomy of a Fall* where she strives to understand and deconstruct the problem of woman identity, marital relations, and legal justice. By illustrating these social issues, Triet's films constitute great theory and analysis data for Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis.

In *Anatomy of a Fall*, there are many and various considerations of social questions, the Family language, policies and the power relations that they presage among its members, the implicit biases and agendas targeting women vantages of the society, the relationships between family roles and sexual relations. If a critical discourse analysis of this film is done, it would be easier to understand how language is used as a tool for voicing inability to societal oppression while at the same observing how this film gives ideology a constructive discourse. This analysis provokes an effort toward a new kind of research approach to the socio-cultural portions of the movie and stimulates reflection and debate concerning the social relations in it.

### B. Case Analysis

#### 1) The impact of family language policies on power relations in multilingual families

Therefore, in deconstructing SAMUEL's and SANDRA's dialogue, It is noticed how the construction of linguistic logic in their dialogue reflects how each of them differs in their views towards power and individual requirements. SAMUEL, when telling the story said: 'We take what we need,' meaning that entailing resources is one of the ways of asserting the legitimacy and fulfillment of the individual's needs. However, he immediately transfers the accusative connected with "You Impose Everything" to SANDRA, who becomes the leading figure of the social process. This means that the partner especially SANDRA dominates in the relationship. This means that the power relations in the relationship are unbalanced especially since SANDRA dominates the relationship. In particular, when referring to "Daniel should only hear French", SAMUEL does not only perceive himself as responsive to SANDRA's prescriptions, but also formulate himself as the defender of Daniel's language exposure within the family, and directly commands SANDRA to alter her behavior.

Analyzing from the viewpoint of modal verbs it becomes clearer, that SAMUEL employs the strongly obligatory "have to" in "you have to follow", expecting to keep up the passive

image and role of SANDRA and augment discontent with her active position. However differently, SANDRA manages to incorporate the negative modality "don't have to" in "but we don't have to meet the other on their turf." SAMUEL himself gives his perspective on the concept of balance of power and this opinion is counteracted by 'equality' and the 'free-will' form of their relationship which indicates her thoughtful analysis of the current affairs and assertiveness. In a broader sense of the discussion, the micro-analysis revealed a complex pattern of their power struggles and their individualistic self-editorial needs by focusing on the acquisition/imposition, active/passive positioning, and the presence of the modal verbs in the discursive interplay.

SAMUEL has accused SANDRA of stealing the time originally set for him yet does not have any accountability for his decisions. SAMUEL shows that he is mentally unstable by the tone he uses and the amount of fussiness in his actions. Though there are solutions suggested by the analyses from SANDRA to his demands, SAMUEL persists in whining over the absence of rights.

After that, SAMUEL finally mentions the problem of family language policy. He angrily exclaims that in their own country...in his own country, they should speak SAMUEL's mother tongue. Earlier, they even used to speak English at home only. Their argument over the language issue is as follows:

**SAMUEL:** They are escorted by the locals; each in our territory what we can take is what we do. Except that you are not alone in your jungle, I live with you and you enforce everything. Look, you impose your rhythm, your use of time, you even impose the language! Even when it comes to language, I'm the one meeting you on your turf: We speak English at home when Daniel should only hear French, and We speak English at home when he should learn French only.

**SANDRA:** We hardly ever speak.

**SAMUEL:** You've never wanted to learn French, just like you've never sacrificed a second of your time. Everyone always has to meet you on your turf.

**SANDRA:** Bullshit, I'm not on my turf. I don't speak my mother tongue.

**SAMUEL:** Yes, but you don't speak mine either! Even though we live here!

**SANDRA:** Well, yes, it's a middle ground. I'm not French and you're not German, but we don't have to meet the other on their turf, we create a middle ground. That's what English is for, it's our meeting point, you can't blame me for that.

**SAMUEL:** but we live in France!!! That is our reality! Stop being evasive! Daniel hears you speak in a language that has nothing to do with his life. And you imposed this on him, like everything else. We're on your turf, all the time, and I just have to follow.

**SANDRA:** But we're in your country. Every single day I have to accept living in your hometown. The people you grew up with look down on me whenever I don't make the effort to smile. You don't think me living here counts as meeting you on your turf?

When confronted in the scene, language and territory become the problems of SAMUEL and SANDRA. By employing manipulations of perspective points and logical categories, they reveal and react to issues on power relations. SANDRA begins with the option "you don't speak my

language” and very successfully builds it into the position “we come up with a compromise.” It equally explains the rationale with which the woman decided to justify English as the communication language in their family and, at the same time, introduces her as considering a middle ground between their cultural and language barriers. Responding to the labeling of her actions as ‘impose’ in interaction with SAMUEL, a kind of unilateral exercising of power, SANDRA proposes the existence of a ‘middle ground’. Not only does she alter the foundation for their interaction but she also tries to level what may appear to be an uneven power dynamic that they share and shows that she craves equal communication.

Both sides build a logical sequence based on two major topics of discussion: ‘turf’ and language’. Such claims of affirmative ethnic custom and language are reinforced by SAMUEL at the repetition of the word “France!!!”. To this, SANDRA, smartly, navigates back to their communal tenancy setting with “in your country.” This way, they not only provide the relevant responses that keep the conversation afloat but also continue the discussion toward the same foundational directions of territory and language heightened problems. It is pertinent to note that this dialogue structure proclaims their obsession for a personal stand as well as demonstrates their endeavors to build consensus out of discord and bargaining.

SAMUEL proceeds from the idea that because they live in France, the characters should speak French while English is irrelevant for their lives. He claims that, through SANDRA, the English language is forced on DANIEL as everything else is forced on him by her. Although he claims to be against the language policy, she soon learns that SAMUEL believes that not incorporating their first language at home has made him lose some rights.

SAMUEL has speech fear in that he is a prone candidate to lose discourse power. It appears that the English spoken at home is also a means SANDRA seizes to retain her personality; as for SAMUEL, he considers his wife’s choice as a form of ‘family domination,’ because he wishes his wife would immerse herself into the French culture entirely for him. For SAMUEL, this would be a compromise from the usually headstrong wife. This misunderstanding is not only semantic but also semiotic, mirroring the contradiction that dominates inside the family in connection with issues of culture and identity.

Thus, what the reader can deduce is that there is apprehension in SAMUEL in this family due to, or as an outcome of rivalry at the subconscious level with SANDRA’s competence and strength. English is the major global working language, which is why it remains the primary language in this Franco-German family. This choice of family language policy efficiently addresses the inequality that your child and his siblings would experience, and minimizes its unfairness to them while being advantageous to your son DANIEL in terms of his coming future. However, there is a stubbornness to power relations in the family in which SAMUEL wants the power relations in favor of the family’s male. He fails to see that the family relocated to the house between London and the French border due to DANIEL’s blindness and from a bustling city to a village in the snowy region. It is also a compromise from SANDRA to

move to SAMUEL’s hometown. In coming to this country for her family, she has made many sacrifices which SAMUEL not only never observed but also reacted like accusing SANDRA of never giving a warm behavior to his friends and family. SAMUEL has been hurt by the character, SANDRA who does not depict the stereotypical female character.

As a means of people’s interpersonal communication, language affects lives in the special context of multilingual families experiencing the effects of intercultural communication. This paper has shown that due to language barriers, miscommunication and even failures are bound to happen. That is why the failure of communication in this movie is caused not by lack of dialogue and different perceptions of reality between the family members; moreover, there is no hierarchy in power status within the family here. On the one hand, language is and is used in everyday practice by people, while on the other hand, people also unconsciously contribute to the evolution of language. Family language policies receive little attention in multilingual families or families living in dialect regions. Generally, the language used is that of the particular region in which the family is built. But this is made at the sacrifice of one of the members of the multilingual family. Especially for children growing up in multicultural families, an unfamiliar language can lead to feeling lonely and helpless which cannot be overcome. Hence, more focus should be given to the disadvantaged ones in multilingual families in the study of modern public language life.

## *2) Reflecting the impact of family language policies through film*

A combination of the family language policies to the films’ conflicts helps in the enhancement of themes of the story as well as the demonstration of the multifaceted impacts of these policies. Regarding the concept of Family language policy, it refers to the processes of planning the use of language by the members of the family. This policy is not only about children’s language and its use but also about value, power, status, and relevance attributed to different languages by the family members. Family language policy is aimed at the establishment of conditions favorable to the development of children’s multilingualism and reflects the cultural patrimony and identity of the family.

In movies, the use of multilingual families is seen as the representatives of a multicultural society and as an opportunity to demonstrate family interaction in different linguistic and cultural environments. This setting can build up ideas like language and ethnicity, domination and subordination, multiculturalism, and assimilation. In works chosen by the audience, the voices of multilingual families, therefore, communicate to audience members the relevance of language diversity and efforts to sustain and pass on minoritized languages and cultures amidst globalization.

It is thus possible to deepen the antagonisms created in movies clarifying the communication processes and the misinterpretations that occur due to family LEP. During the process of storytelling, family members will face communication difficulties every day because of the difference in language policy, and thus the misunderstanding and conflict progression will easily happen. For instance, in some crucial family meeting the parents try to explain their

concerns and guidelines to their kid in their first language and the child cannot understand anything as it is beyond his or her comprehensible language. Such scenes can raise dramatic conflict at the same time submitting the issues concerning language policies in the interaction of families.

The renowned American director Robert McKee wrote in his book *Story: The Only Way that anything develops in a story is through conflict*. He summarizes three types of conflict: Individual-level conflict, interpersonal conflict, and extra-personal conflict. Inner conflict means contradictions and conflicts that appear in a character's mind due to the conflict inside the main character's soul and makes the latter's emotions more varied. The conflict a person has within them is portrayed in the movie *Anatomy of a Fall*, SAMUEL's internal battle. He is perplexed by the fact that he cannot square work and life with creation. Out of this desire to keep on creating, he starts defending with SANDRA resulting in new fights and issues with family relationships. Therefore, he acquires depressive emotions; finally, depression and the medication to the deceased individual become significant aspects in the definition of suicide or homicide to SAMUEL.

Internal or external conflicts permit characters in the story to develop or transform, to have spiritual or moral changes happen to them so that they cannot only evolve within the storyline but progress spiritually or morally within the particular contour of their personalities. Secondly, inter-group conflict is a confrontation between two or more people in a dispute over issues of character and will. Character is a buried form of conflict; static conflict. These are inherent contradictions that produce manifest conflicts at the level of will, which makes characters act in one or another way, this is what conflicts between individuals look like. On this account, this study holds the view that conflict emerges progressively; conflicts interplay with their antecedent. For instance, the cause of the fight between SANDRA and SAMUEL is that SAMUEL feels that he has been greatly wronged, he succeeds in perceiving social injustice between him and SANDRA; therefore, they start quarreling, a key plot of the movie.

Finally, the last conflict is the conflict between people and reality. SANDRA is a German, in which the woman under study changes her language and way of life fundamentally when she emigrates to France. This involves learning a new language to be able to adapt to this area's society; communication differences due to culture and ways of life are causes of conflict inducement. In this paper's opinion, the choice of a multilingual family in the film contributes positively to the dramatic nature and the potential of the conflict in the story.

The story reaches the peak of the change of the language policy with the family. For instance, a viewership of a particular incident (for instance, a family emergency or a culture-venture event) makes the family members understand that language is a communication tool as well as a channel of culture and emotion. As a result of combined endeavors family members start coming into understanding with each other in borne languages. Not only does the process dissolve the first dramatic conflict, but it also shows that practical FL policies are dynamic and adaptable as well.

In today's world, the necessity for the interconnection of

countries for social, economic, cultural, and health aspects of production cannot be overemphasized. Countries are not isolated anymore; they have interactions with other countries more often. With the enhancement of the communication process at the international, regional, and sub-regional levels, questions of intercultural communication arise. Different cultures come out and rise to a global level starting from countries, through ethnic groups in connection with the world's development and technological progression. As stated by Gao Yongchen, in *Cultural Globalization and Intercultural Communication Research* cultural globalization can be simply understood as the process through which, through the exchange, integration, mutual penetration, and complementarity, cultural endowments of different nations transcend their own regional and modal restrictions, and attain internationalization and cultural acknowledgment in humanity's appraisal and choice. Intercultural communication can have many effects, because of which people face issues like communication barriers and cultural and habitual conflicts. From the perspective of globalization, intercultural communication research and application become significant for international exchange and management.

The movie most often used in class which is *Anatomy of a Fall* successfully presents examples of turmoil resulting from intercultural interactions. Sandra is a German lady and during the trial session, she finds herself having to explain herself in a language she half-baked. As she is more fluent in English, French law sometimes forces her to speak French in court. This not only complicates her communication strategy but also adds to her tense state in the court. Language barriers painted a picture of the struggle between Sandra and her surroundings. An example is her muscle twitches during pronunciation and the hard-pressed effort of switching between two languages when in a situation of cultural dilemmas. By both audiovisual methods, the film also conveys the feelings of loneliness and pressure experienced by a woman living in a foreign country. However, Sandra does not capture the linguistic and cultural barriers imposed by the action that needs to be performed. As much as she does not stop explaining herself, she does not stop trying to get her message across as well. In court, she shows the ability to keep on trying and trying to attempt and strive to at least minimize and accept the refugees and cultural differences as well as gaps between them: getting across her message is all that is needed for others to listen and give a shot at accepting those refugees. 'Crisis' if you're into synopses of the symphony that is the story. So long as the conflict dominates our thinking and feeling, we are unaware of the passage of time that we are undergoing. Sandra's presence on the stand and the build-up of the trial can in a similar way give the audience, and direct their attention, a similar feeling to the storyline.

Moreover, conflicts due to intercultural communication are also described in the movie *Desert Flower*. *Waris Dirie*, moving from Somalia to the UK and other Western countries, has problems both with language use and with the underlying cultural differences and clashes emerging from language distinctions. One scene in the movie shows more or less how Waris has a particular language disorder. When she goes to a hospital because of physical discomfort, a male African nurse is called to interpret because of language differences. But that



is not what happens, the nurse simply humiliates and scolds her in Somali, while also leaving Waris feeling very upset and helpless instead of relaying the doctor's words properly. This scene also shows the clash that forms from differences in communication through language, the war in social relations around Waris, the effect of cultural bias as well as traditionalism within her as an interplay of intercultural communication. Therefore, barriers arising from the use of language may turn into a strength in defining conflict films since they make the plot more dramatic.

By the above-mentioned methods, family language policies can be easily connected with dramatic racy scenes in movies. On the one hand, this is informative for the scriptwriter, on the other hand, it is a layer that enhances and raises the topic within the film, for the benefit of the story narration and the movie's theme.

## V. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

A concern that arises when studying multilingual families in a particular country is that it is based on a movie known as *Anatomy of a Fall* restricting the validity of the study to other multilingual families. Despite, the positive features of exploring family language policies and mapping power relations within families, the study conclusions are based on a dramatized fiction rather than a fact. Furthermore, the gendered language relations provide little attention to other cultural, economic, or social factors that determine the roles of families in multilingual contexts. To improve the reliability of the research, a larger scale study using more different real-life case studies should be conducted.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author extends sincere gratitude to Professor Zijun Shen for her invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout the research and writing process of this paper. His insightful comments and meticulous feedback have significantly enriched the quality and depth of this work. The author is profoundly thankful for the mentorship provided by Professor Shen, which has been instrumental in the successful completion of this research.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Cannes Film Festival. (2023). *Awards 2023: The Complete List*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.cannes.com/en/cannes-cinema/the-festival-de-cannes.html>
- [2] P. Bourdieu, "Language and symbolic power," *Polity*, 1991.
- [3] W. B. Gudykunst, "Cross-cultural and intercultural communication," *Sage*, 2003.
- [4] K. A. King, L. Fogle, and A. Logan-Terry, "Family language policy," *Language and Linguistics Compass*, vol. 2, no. 5, pp. 907–922, 2008.
- [5] De Houwer, "Bilingual first language acquisition," *Multilingual Matters*, 2009.
- [6] S. Vertovec, "Super-diversity and its implications," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 1024–1054, 2007.
- [7] I. Pillar, *Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice: An Introduction to Applied Sociolinguistics*, Oxford University Press, 2016.
- [8] B. Norton, "Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation," *Identity and Language Learning, Multilingual Matters*, 2013.
- [9] S. Chatman, "Story and discourse: narrative structure in fiction and film," *Cornell UP. analysis? Quaderns de Filologia-Estudis Lingüístics*, vol. 11, pp. 9–34, 1978.
- [10] E. Lanza and R. L. Gomes, "Family language policy: Foundations, theoretical perspectives, and critical approaches," *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development: Social and Affective Factors*, vol. 18, pp. 153–173, 2020.
- [11] R. McKee, "Substance, structure, style, and the principles of screenwriting," *Alba Editorial*, 1997.
- [12] X. L. Curdt-Christiansen and J. Huang, "Factors influencing family language policy," *Handbook of Social and Affective Factors in Home Language Maintenance and Development*, pp. 174–193, 2020.
- [13] X. Yin and G. Li, "Language solidarity, vitality, and status: Sibe family language attitudes in North-western China," *Current Issues in Language Planning*, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 446–465, 2021.
- [14] A. M. Epp and L. L. Price, "Family identity: A framework of identity interplay in consumption practices," *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 50–70, 2008.
- [15] E. Ochs and B. B. Schieffelin, "The theory of language socialization," *The Handbook of Language Socialization*, pp. 1–21, 2011.
- [16] J. Cleland, S. Bernstein, A. Ezech, A. Faundes, A. Glasier, and J. Innis, "Family planning: the unfinished agenda," *The Lancet*, vol. 368, no. 9549, pp. 1810–1827, 2006.
- [17] S. H. Mirvahedi, "Examining family language policy through realist social theory," *Language in Society*, vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 389–410, 2021.
- [18] M. Y. M. Amin, "Family language policy: A comprehensive analysis of strategies, challenges, and impacts on children's education," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, vol. 13, no. 7, pp. 218–225, Fowler, R. (1979). *Linguistics and, and versus, poetics*.
- [19] P. Bourdieu, "Language and symbolic power," *Polity*, 1991.
- [20] N. Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, vol. 270, London: Routledge, 2003.
- [21] J. T. Cervera, M. L. Postigo, and R. D. Herrero, "What is critical discourse analysis?" *Quaderns de Filologia-Estudis Lingüístics*, vol. 11, pp. 9–34, 2006.
- [22] W. L. Ballard, "MAK Halliday, language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning," *Language in Society*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 84–89, 1980.
- [23] Z. Shen, H. Hu, M. Zhao, M. Lai, and K. Zaib, "The dynamic interplay of phonology and semantics in media and communication: An interdisciplinary exploration," *European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2023.

Copyright © 2025 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).