Competence in multiple foreign languages as cultural capital in family language policy: Parents' perceptions

Hao Xu, Xia Li, Zhibin Shan

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Abstract: Family language policy for children's foreign language learning has emerged as an important topic for research on language education policy and second language learning in general. Whilst there is no shortage of studies that examine how parents engage in the formation and transformation of family foreign language education policies, little has been known as to how parents perceive the value of multilingual competence which influences their decisions about how their children's foreign language learning should be planned and resourced. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, this multiple-case study explored the perceptions of the parents from 16 middle-class families with children aged 6-14 in Shanghai via interviews (with their children as well) and textual data. Data analysis reveals that parents perceived the language-derived cultural capital as measured by its exchangeable social benefits at present or in the future. Their perceptions were thus divided as manifested in the three distinctive approaches they took to conceptualise their children's competence in multiple foreign languages as cultural capital, i.e., the extra-point view (language competence as advantage), immediate deficiency view (lack of such competence as immediate disadvantage), and prospective deficiency view (lack of competence as disadvantage in a future scenario).

Keywords: multilingualism; foreign language learning; family policy; cultural capital;

parents

Résumé : La politique linguistique familiale concernant l'apprentissage des langues étrangères des enfants est devenue un sujet important pour les recherches sur la politique d'éducation linguistique, et sur l'acquisition des langues secondes en général. Si de nombreuses études ont examiné la manière dont les parents s'engagent dans la formation et la transformation des politiques familiales de l'apprentissage des langues étrangères, la manière dont ils perçoivent la valeur de la compétence plurilingue des enfants reste à découvrir, d'autant plus que ces perceptions parentales influencent les décisions de planifier et de financer l'apprentissage des langues étrangères de leurs enfants. S'appuyant sur la notion de capital culturel de Bourdieu, cette étude de cas multiples a exploré les perceptions des parents de 16 familles de classe moyenne à Shanghai ayant des enfants âgés de 6 à 14 ans par des entretiens (avec leurs enfants également) et des données textuelles. L'analyse des données révèle que les parents ont perçu le capital culturel dérivant des langues étrangères tel qu'il était mesuré aux avantages sociaux échangeables à présent ou à l'avenir. Leurs perceptions étaient ainsi divisées en trois catégories, comme le montrent les trois approches qu'ils ont adoptées pour conceptualiser la compétence en de multiples langues étrangères de leurs enfants en tant que capital culturel, à savoir la perspective du point supplémentaire (la compétence linguistique est un avantage), la perspective du déficit immédiat (le manque de cette compétence est un désavantage immédiat) et celle du déficit prospectif (le manque de la compétence est un désavantage dans un scénario futur).

Mots-clés : plurilinguisme, apprentissage des langues étrangères, politique familiale, capital culturel, parents, parents

1 | INTRODUCTION

Family language policy and planning, as is "shaped and enacted in interaction with wider political, social and economic forces" (Curdt-Christiansen & Gao, 2021, p. 353), has emerged as an important topic for research on both language education and language policy and planning. The scope of family language policy and planning research can be as broad as involving all kinds of languages such as home language, second language, and foreign language (Wan & Gao, 2021). Whilst there is no shortage of research that unravels how home-language or second-language family policy is situated in and influenced by the socio-political circumstances surrounding the family (Shen *et al.*, 2021), relatively little has been revealed about such dynamics entailed in family policy regarding foreign languages, i.e., languages which the child learns as deposited social advantage to improve her/his competitiveness for a future scenario (Hennebry & Gao, 2021).

The social nature of foreign language, in a context where one's linguistic competence does not always "enhanc[e] immediate communication" (Shan & Xu, 2022, p. 2), has persisted as a kind of cultural capital, i.e., knowledge and skills possessed by an individual that can be exchanged presently or later for social advantage (Sullivan, 2007). Thus, how family policy for foreign language learning is formed and transformed still needs to be further examined, given the distinctive nature of foreign language as a different social entity. The way such policies are shaped and reshaped is fundamentally influenced by how parents, as well as their children in some cases, view the value of foreign languages as cultural capital, and view children's prospective competence in foreign languages as the outcome of their present learning investment.

Previous studies on family policy for children's language learning have investigated how family language policy and planning is dynamically shaped by the interplay between factors in private family contexts (e.g., family culture and tradition, and parents' socio-economic status) and the broader society (e.g., political and socio-cultural factors) (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020).

For instance, Zheng and Mei (2021) reveal how agentive parents are subject to their socio-economic status when investing in children's language learning. Curdt-Christiansen's (2016) study probes into how language ideologies underpin family language use and practice. This line of research has also suggested that parental language beliefs, derived from their own personal experiences, help shape their viewpoints on language learning and optimise learning resources for their children (King & Fogle, 2006). Similar findings have also been reported in the self-portrait study by Liu and Lin (2019) reflecting on their own bilingual parenting experience, which was greatly influenced by socio-cultural factors. As can be seen, these studies lend much insight into researchers' work of conceptualisation and theorisation that helps explain how family and the environment interact, particularly as influenced by the dominant language ideologies and family's economic status (Zhunussova, 2021). However, previous studies do not seem to have adequately addressed the processes of parents' decision-making as informed by their perceptions of the value of language learning. How parents understand the value of languages not only constitute a factor that interacts with other factors in the context to influence their children's language learning; their perceptions of such value, i.e., the diverse ways they understand and interpret the value of their children's language learning (Moskowitz, 2005), are a complex system that involves such cognitive processes as parents' value judgments about language learning and their predictions about how children's language learning should bring added value over time. For instance, in the foreign language context, parents' perceptions may pertain to how they perceive the value of their children's multilingual competence and how they draw on their beliefs, for the purpose of increasing such value, to make decisions about how foreign language learning should be planned and resourced at home. To address this gap in literature, this study aims to answer the following questions:

(1) What are parents' perceptions of the value of their children's competence in multiple foreign languages as cultural capital?
(2) How do parents' perceptions influence the family policy for foreign language

learning?

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Multi-competence as cultural capital

As an individual's linguistic competence is valuable to her/his personal and social life (Shwayli & Barnes, 2018), language learning has long been taken as a means for the learner to acquire cultural capital, a Bourdieu's (1977) concept denoting the social value entailed in an individual's knowledge and skills that increase her/his chances of success in society. Multi-competence, which refers to the mastery of multiple languages by a single mind (Cook, 2016), should thus possess higher value as cultural capital than the mastery of only one language. Therefore, it should be worthwhile to investigate how multi-competence as cultural capital is perceived and pursued, particularly in a foreign language context where multi-competence is understood as competence in multiple foreign languages.

However, previous research seems to have been more concerned about how the cultural capital the learner already has impacts on her/his language learning (Peterson & Heywood, 2007). For instance, Mu's (2014) study indicates that cultural capital, as well as other forms of capital, positively contributes to Chinese Australians' Chinese heritage language proficiency. There are also studies that explore the impact of cultural capital on the learning of foreign languages. For instance, Wu and Tarc's (2021) study on rural lower-class Chinese college students who learned English as a foreign language has found that lack of cultural capital may have resulted in a habitus characterised by "[a] narrow, test-oriented focus, and [a] lack of confidence and initiative in English language learning" (p. 1), which then affected their language learning. As can be seen, these studies have not been totally dedicated to examining the outcomes of language learning as cultural capital, although they do unpack how such outcomes are facilitated by cultural capital or constrained by its lack.

A much smaller number of studies have explored the cultural capital entailed in language learning outcomes. For instance, Soltanian and Ghapanchi's (2021) study

reveals how pre-service teachers of English as a foreign language valued English due to the cultural capital it might bring for them in the future. Similarly, Moskal (2014) investigates the complex interaction between language, cultural capital transferability, and social positioning among Polish immigrant children in Scotland. Despite their same focus on multi-competence as cultural capital, these studies worked with participants who had immediate or impending needs for multi-competence. In other words, existing research does not seem to have investigated how learners with future needs for multi-competence, i.e., the vast majority of foreign language learners, as well as their parents who plan and support their foreign language learning, view language learning as a means to acquire cultural capital. Even fewer studies may have investigated the perceptions of the learners' parents of multi-competence as cultural capital, and how such perceptions influence or even determine parents' family language policy. In the context of this study, multi-competence refers to learner's competence in multiple foreign languages.

2.2 | Parents' perception and family language policy

Recently, there has been a growing body of research on the influence of parents' cognitions on family language policy. This line of research is characterised by a psychological trait approach, i.e., taking cognitions as a relatively enduring individual difference (Gugliandolo *et al.*, 2015). For instance, Seo (2021) investigates how parents' language ideologies, mediated by beliefs as a psychological trait, affect the formation of family language policy and home language practices. Song (2019) also reveals how immigrant parents' mixed views, a trait similar to beliefs, about the socially dominant language and their own heritage language influence the family policy for their children's language learning.

Although this approach enables the researchers to identify crucial psychological factors that impact on parents' family language policy, it does not seem to be able to fully unveil the cognitive processes by which psychological factors contribute to the policy. Thus, in this study, we draw on a social cognitive approach to examining parents' cognitions as well as how they influence family language policy (Moskowitz,

2005). Such an approach, highlighting the social cognitive aspect of parents' cognitions, focuses on parents' perceptions as a lens of observation, i.e., to observe how parents link their own cognitions and the social realities they perceive, and to unveil how parents make decisions as they process such social realities. Perception is generally defined as a mental impression, encompassing both the result and processes of an individual's cognition (McDonald, 2012). Thus, the adoption of perception as a lens of observation would enable us to more closely examine the relationship between parents' family language policy, as the result of their social cognitive processing, and the processes of their cognition via which they manifest and utilise their understandings of multi-competence as cultural capital.

Based on this social cognitive approach to parents' perceptions, we construct a three-layer conceptual framework for this study. The surface layer is parents' experiences that help form and transform their perceptions of the value of their children's competence in multiple foreign languages. The experience layer provides the researchers with direct access of observation, as experiences can be explicitly reported and narrated. Closely associated with experiences are perceptions as the middle layer, which are formed via cognitive processes based on experiences. Perceptions serve as the backbone of our conceptual framework for this study, because to delve into the underlying cognitive processes we need to analyse and interpret the perceptions to identify the social information which is perceived by the parents, to observe how they understand the information as it is, and then to examine what inferences they make about the information (Lockwood *et al.*, 2020). Underneath perceptions is the deep layer of the social cognitive approaches parents take to conceptualise their children's competence in multiple foreign languages, which is a theoretical construct, i.e., an explanatory concept that is not itself directly observable but that can be inferred from the analysis of concepts in the middle and surface layers.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Research design

This qualitative case study adopted a multiple-case design, because it aimed to probe into the complex dynamics involved in parents' experiences and perceptions (Yin, 2018). The multiple-case design could better help the researchers identify a wide range of such experiences and perceptions which could then be categorised to help answer the research questions. Specifically, this study examined how parents valued their children's competence in multiple foreign languages primarily via interviews with the parents and their children as the major source of data. Textual data served as a supplement to the dataset such as emails between the parents and the researchers, and social media posts saved by the parents which included contents related to children's foreign language learning. Data analysis followed the content analysis strategy proposed by Cohen *et al.* (2018), because content analysis was best suitable for the purpose of extracting substance from the more contextualised reality shown in the data. In the current study, content analysis might better help the researchers extract parent's perceptions from their experiences which were more contextualised.

3.2 | Context and participants

All of the participant families were local residents of Shanghai, China, currently living in its urban areas. All of the parents and their children were born and brought up in Shanghai. They were purposively selected from the respondents to a large-scale questionnaire survey that investigated parents' investment in their children's multiple foreign language learning. Those among the respondents were invited to participate in this study who had claimed in the questionnaire survey to have all of the following features:

(1) s/he was now in a nuclear, middle-class family with one or two children who was/were between 6 and 14 years old (i.e., between 1st-grade in primary school and 8th-grade in junior high school);
(2) s/he and her/his spouse both had a master's or doctoral degree; and

(3) both parents were willing to participate in the study.

This selection would enable us to recruit participants whose family policy was independently considered and made, i.e., not overtly influenced by grandparents, whose participation would add to the complexity of the ecosystem of family foreign language policy, or the family's economic disadvantage. It should also be noted that in the current context of China's basic education, children between 6 and 14 years old were attending elementary and junior high schools when there was still sufficient time allowed for foreign language education.

Sixteen families agreed to participate in this study, and also formally consented to their children's participation and our use of all of their data, based on the ethical approval obtained from the authors' university prior to participant recruitment. Table 1 below is a summary of participants' vignettes:

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

As can be seen, among the 32 parents, 17 had a doctoral degree while others had a master's degree. Eight families had two children while the others had only one child by the time of their participation in the study. Exactly half of the 24 children were male/female. Approximately half of them (11 children) were learning one or two foreign languages other than English such as French, Spanish, and German.

3.3 | Data collection

As mentioned above, data was primarily collected via interviews with the participant families. A two-phase interview was conducted via Tencent Meeting, an online conferencing service, with each of the 16 families between October 2021 and April 2022. In the first phase of each interview, the first author interviewed both parents, followed by the second phrase in which the child or children joined in the interview while the parents remained in the interview. Table 2 below shows the lengths of the interviews:

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

In the first phase of the interview, the interviewer asked the parents about (1) how they planned their child/children's foreign language learning, (2) why they thus planned, and (3) how they implemented or would implement their plans. Examples of specific questions are shown in Appendix 1. In the second phase of the interview, the interviewer asked the child/children about their foreign language experiences and what role(s) their parents played in their foreign language learning. Examples of such questions are shown in Appendix 2. The interview data was transcribed and proofread prior to data analysis. All of the interviews were conducted in Chinese, and interview extracts were translated into English as they were presented in this paper.

Besides interview data, we also collected 51 entries of textual data as a supplement to the dataset. These textual data included 22 emails between the parents and the interviewer before and after the interview discussing related issues. They also included 18 Wechat (a social media) posts shared by the parents which they had saved to their favourite folders. These posts contained contents related to children's foreign language learning. Another 11 entries of textual data were e-copies of certificates their children were award for passing international or domestic language examinations.

3.4 | Data analysis

Guided by the conceptual framework of the study, data analysis generally adopted the method of content analysis (Cohen *et al.*, 2018), to reveal parents' perceptions of the value of their children's competence in multiple foreign languages. Three rounds of data analysis were conducted. In the first round, we sorted out extracts that showed parents' experiences of family policy making and implementation. Codes were entered to represent their policies as well as policy-related experiences, such as "two foreign languages as a mandate (a parent reflecting on why he asked his children to learn at least two foreign languages)," "reaching B2 at the age of 12 (a parent describing her current efforts to help her child gain such proficiency in English)," and

“intensity needed for productive skills (a parent elaborating on the reason why she sent her child to a summer camp every year targeting at training English speaking skills).”

In the second round, these coded extracts were more closely analysed to identify parents’ perceptions entailed therein. Specifically, how parents understood and interpreted their experiences (Moskowitz, 2005), which is the working definition of perception for this study, was identified and analysed. This round of data analysis directly contributed to answering the first research question. It should be noted that only perceptions that pertained to the value of children’s competence in multiple foreign languages were selected for further analysis in the third round, which was dedicated to unravelling the underlying patterns that governed parents’ perceptions as social cognitive processing. In so doing, the third round of analysis would be more conducive to the answer to the second research question.

Textual data provided by the parents were analysed together with the interview data from the parents. Interview data from the children were analysed only in the third round of data analysis to triangulate the researchers’ understanding and analysis of the data from the parents. To ensure the trustworthiness of data analysis, the first author invited a colleague who was experienced in qualitative data analysis to examine a sample of the analysed data from each of the three rounds. Extracts where disagreement arose were then discussed until consensus was reached. Due to participant participants’ unavailability, we were unable to double-check with them on these instances of disagreement, which should be a limitation of the study.

4 | FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will first present the findings as organised by the three approaches emerging in data analysis that the parents took to conceptualise their children’s competence in multiple foreign languages as cultural capital. Then we will discuss the findings in response to the research questions raised earlier.

4.1 | Extra-point view: “Advantage lost is no disadvantage whatsoever”

Although all of the parents agreed about the value of their children's multi-competence, parents from No. 1, 4, 8, and 11 families perceived such competence as advantage "[which] is not a must, like answering an extra-point question in a test" (Mother 4, interview, December 2021; i.e., interview with the mother from No. 4 family). Father 8 and Mother 11 further elaborated on this perception in the extracts below:

> Foreign languages are, as we see, only a necessary skill for a minority of language specialists such as translators and interpreters … Foreign language learning takes too much time and effort. The gains are not worthwhile. Take myself for example, I learnt English from junior high school to my doctoral stage, only to end up with little functional mastery of it … If [my] children were interested in the language itself, I wouldn't object to that. If this is not the case, it looks quite fine with me if they don't learn very much. It is just a kind of option, like you have so many choices at a buffet. Why must we choose something not delicious or nutritious? (Father 8, interview, April 2022)

> Mastery of a foreign language *is* an advantage, but this advantage doesn't seem to mean much … Even if you don't speak a foreign language, your life won't end or be seriously affected … This advantage, when lost, will become no disadvantage whatsoever. (Mother 11, interview, November 2021)

These parents obviously did not consider foreign language learning as necessary, and thus did not attach much value to their children's multi-competence. Their children also expressed similar attitudes, for instance, Mother 11's son said that he did not "care much about English learning because maths is what really matters" (Child/Family 11, interview, November 2021). Parents' own experiences may have played a role as they formed such a perception. Like Father 8 and Mother 11, Mother 1 and Father 4 also complained about their unsuccessful and even miserable experiences of learning English as a foreign language. Such experiences directly led to their perception of the poor cost-effectiveness of foreign language learning.

Parents with such a perception all favoured, as their family policy, a "flexible approach to guiding [their] children's foreign language learning, depending mostly on the children's willingness" (Father 1, interview, October 2021). Specifically, the parents were most likely to resist an elaborate plan, as can be seen from the extract below:

> We hope the children can be learning foreign languages at ease … There is no need to set a specific goal to pressurise them. It is more important to preserve their interest in languages. (Mother 8, interview, April 2022)

In summary, some parents' perceptions of the value of their children's multi-competence can be well conceptualised as an extra-point view, considering foreign language learning only as a means to gain advantage.

4.2 | Immediate deficiency view: "They should keep up with the 'first-class' Joneses"

While parents holding an extra-point view seemed to take lightly about their children's multi-competence, parents who were fairly anxious about their children's falling behind others in foreign language learning took it more than seriously. Among the 16 families we interviewed, seven families (2, 6, 10, 13-16) were obsessed with or even agonised by a perception that if their children did not excel in foreign language learning as compared with their peers, their chances of future success would be jeopardised. We thus conceptualise this perception as an immediate deficiency view, i.e., the children were immediately reduced to a state of deficiency if they failed to keep outscoring others in language examinations or other forms of assessment. Below are two typical extracts that illustrate such an immediate deficiency view:

> My children should strive to keep themselves in the first phalanx [i.e., belonging to the most excellent group]. You know, if you fall behind, you are immediately losing the vantage point. You have to always excel, so that in the future you won't lose any opportunities that may come to you only by chance. You can't rely on chance to get the

chance. (Mother 2, interview, October 2021)

> As to language learning, at least they should keep up with the Joneses. To be more exact, they should keep up with the "first-class" Joneses … Since the beginning of this school year [i.e., September 2021], many of my daughter's classmates have already learnt a second foreign language, say, French or German. She has to get started as soon as possible. We are already losing more than six months. (Father 6, interview, March 2022)

It is quite obvious that parents holding this immediate deficiency view took their children's excellent or more excellent peers as a reference point. Father 6's daughter seemed to concur with him that "you can't compare yourself with the kindergarteners, nor can you do so with senior high school students … you should compare with your own classmates" (Child 1/Family 6, interview, March 2022). This may have had much to do with the parents' own experiences of the stiff competition in their school years, as Mother 10 said that "[she] used to have to be among the top five out of more than 700 students for over 12 consecutive examinations in a year to win an opportunity as an exam-free student into university" (interview, October 2021). Likewise, Mother 15 told the interviewer how she had missed the opportunity to go to a world-renowned Japanese university as a state-sponsored research fellow just because she failed the Japanese language exam after an intensive language course for the candidates (interview, April 2022). In other words, parents' immediate deficiency view may have stemmed from their own experiences of being positioned as "deficient" and thus losing an "opportunity" immediately or shortly after.

Thus, these parents were more inclined to be aggressive in their family policy for children's foreign language learning. They were actively engaged in discussions about promoting young learners' multi-competence, for instance, "with members of social media communities like Wechat groups" (Mother 14, email). They were also keen on "plan[ning] the best route for the child's multilingual development" (Father 16, interview, April 2022) and "study[ing] issues such as when to start learning a second foreign language, which is the best choice as a second foreign language, how to balance the learning of two or more foreign languages, and what examinations are the

best to assess [the child's] progress in each of the multiple languages" (Father 13, email). In summary, parents with the immediate deficiency view took their children's lack of multi-competence as immediate disadvantage that needed to be instantly addressed with decisive interventions.

4.3 | Prospective deficiency view: "An unhappy childhood for a happy adulthood"

Perceptions of the parents from Families 3, 5, 7, 9, and 12 could be conceptualised as a prospective deficiency view, which was a different approach to the family policy for children's learning of multiple foreign languages. Parents holding this view took their children's lack of multi-competence as a potential threat to their future survival and development, rather than an immediate disadvantage as compared with their peers at the current moment. The following two extracts clearly show the characteristics of this prospective deficiency view:

> We must plan for the future. Investment in education is not for today … The mastery of multiple foreign languages is sure to be a must in 20 or 30 years' time if you want to be somebody. (Mother 3, interview, December 2021)

> Of course we also hope to let the children have a happy childhood – they don't have to do anything more than the minimum requirement of the school. Such a happy childhood can never be followed by a happy adulthood. I would rather let them have an unhappy childhood as a deposit to be withdrawn for a happy adulthood. (Mother 5, interview, January 2022)

As can be seen, the prospective deficiency view was characterised by strong faith in the causality between childhood learning investment and adulthood success, or more precisely, in the causality between lack of investment and unlikelihood of success. Investment in multiple foreign language learning would be "'reimbursed' by a future advantage when the languages are needed for real-life use such as in study-abroad and job-hunting situations; similarly, failure to make enough efforts now will be 'revenged'

by a future disadvantage for which there may be no remedies in adulthood" (Father 7, interview, March 2022).

The majority of parents (7 out of 10) holding the prospective deficiency view shared with us their own positive experiences of being rewarded by earlier investment in foreign language learning at school or university. For instance, Mother 9 told the first author in an email that she "learnt by herself in university French, Spanish, and a bit of Arabic. […] [She] was not surprised when [she] was appointed chief director at a branch of her company which was newly established in Morocco. [She] was the only candidate."

Therefore, the parents believed that their children's multiple foreign language learning should be thus planned as to aim at gaining advantage or avoid being disadvantaged for a future scenario. Although their daughter was only a first-grade pupil, the parents from Family 12 had already collected plenty of information about the language requirements for university application in many Western countries. They shared with the interviewer six Wechat posts that provided detailed guidance about how language learning should be planned for children who intended to study in first-class universities overseas. In summary, parents with the prospective deficiency view took their children's lack of multi-competence, particularly when it was needed in the future, as a disadvantage that would hamper their long-term development.

4.4 | Discussion

So far, we have examined the three different views held by the parents regarding the value of their children's competence or prospective competence in multiple foreign languages as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Sullivan, 2007). The extra-point view entails parents' perceptions of multiple foreign language learning as a means to acquire cultural capital that is not indispensable to their children's future success. The deficiency views, whether the deficiency manifests itself immediately or in the future, reveal parents' perceptions of their children's multi-competence as cultural capital that plays a pivotal role in their success. The immediate deficiency view tends to problematise any signs of weakness and call for immediate intervention, while the

prospective deficiency view is more concerned about how lack of multi-competence may pose a hazard to their long-term development.

All of the three views are derived from parents' different perceptions of their children's multi-competence as cultural capital, thus revealing the nature of their perceptions as a kind of social representation projected to the value system of their socio-cultural contexts (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000; Moscovici, 2000). In other words, parents' perceptions of the value of children's multi-competence serve as a lens through which the complex interplay can be observed between parents' social cognition and the wider political, social and economic forces that shape and, in the meantime, are agentically shaped by such cognition (Curdt-Christiansen & Gao, 2021). In a word, this study has further unveiled how parents' agentic roles in the family policy for their children's multiple foreign language learning are enabled and moderated by their perceptions as social cognition.

The findings of the study also reveal that there exists a baseline of parent's family language policy that differentiates the three views of the parents illustrating their visions for their children's future. The baseline serves as a starting point for the policy decisions which reflect the different values as perceived by the parents of children's multi-competence. In other words, in the foreign language context as the current study is situated, parent's estimation of the value of children's multi-competence as cultural capital can be taken as a starting point as we comprehend the family language policy they formulate and implement. Because the starting point differs across parents, their family language policy should not and could hardly be solely compared on the basis of their behavioural and emotional investments in terms of either quantity or quality. Future research could further explore how such a starting point, i.e., the one set by the perceived value of multi-competence as cultural capital, may be combined with other sources of reference that jointly position parents' perceptions that influence their policy decisions. To summarise, the study has revealed how cultural capital entailed in children's multi-competence, as is in parent's perceptions, can vary in response to not only the contextual value of multi-competence but also its temporal value. The difference

between the extra-point view and the deficiency views pertains to how much cultural capital is entailed in contextual terms: in the context of families whose parents hold the extra-point view, multi-competence does not seem to entail as much cultural capital as that in the context of families in which parents hold either of the deficiency views. The difference between the two deficiency views, however, reflect the temporal dimension of cultural capital entailed in children's multi-competence, which has been rarely examined and illustrated in previous studies. Whilst immediate deficiency addresses contemporary realities, prospective proficiency projects to future realities that are by and large conceived by parents based on their experience, aspiration, prediction, and imagination.

This study also suggests that parents' own foreign language learning experiences may strongly influence their perceptions of the value of multi-competence as cultural capital. As is shown in the findings above, parents holding the immediate deficiency view seemed to have personal experiences of being immediately reduced as "deficient" due to lack of multi-competence; likewise, parents with the prospective deficiency view may have experienced the lagged effect of lack of multi-competence to their disadvantage in the long run. This indicates that parents may pass down in their family policy for children's foreign language learning their own experiences, lessons, and reflections. Thus, parents' past experiences may provide a nexus, mediated by their perceptions, between their own socio-cultural contexts and those of their children's. In other words, parents' perceptions may transcend their own contexts, extend to their children's, and influence the family policy in a fashion that intends to reproduce or avoid reproducing certain learning outcomes (Gao, 2012; Nishioka & Durrani, 2019).

Despite the aforementioned contributions of the study to the literature on family language policy and planning, there are also limitations to note. First, as we focused on parent's perceived values of foreign languages as a totality, we did not closely examine how different languages might represent distinct values as cultural capital. Thus, future studies may need to further elucidate the complexities that are involved in cultural capital as perceived by parents with reference to each different foreign

language. Second, owing to methodological constraints, we failed to conduct individual interviews with each of the parents, thus unable to capture potentially differing views held by the two parents in a family. Besides, as the study has focused mainly on parents' personal learning experiences as a source of influence on their perceptions of the value of multi-competence, other essential nuances that may cause such influence may have been overlooked such as differences in children's age and other facets of their school learning. Also, the study does not seem to have sufficiently addressed the role of school foreign language education, whose changing dynamics may also impact on parent's family language policy (Liu & Wang, 2020). Therefore, future research can further explore how the dynamics within the family and beyond the family may impact on both parents' perceptions and their family policy.

5 | CONCLUSIONS

This multiple-case study, drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) concept of cultural capital, examined the perceptions of the parents from 16 middle-class families with children aged 6-14 in Shanghai via family interviews and textual data. Data analysis reveals that parents perceived the language-derived cultural capital as opposed to its exchangeable social benefits at present or in the future. Their perceptions were thus divided as manifested in the three distinctive approaches they took to conceptualise their children's competence in multiple foreign languages as cultural capital, i.e., the extra-point view (language competence as advantage), immediate deficiency view (lack of such competence as immediate disadvantage), and prospective deficiency view (lack of competence as disadvantage in a future scenario).

Some implications regarding family language policy and planning can be discerned. Parents may need to be more critical of their perceptions of the value of children's multi-competence as cultural capital, as are closely associated with their own successful or unsuccessful experiences. Though important and valuable, these perceptions may not always accurately represent the cause-and-effect relationship between language learning investment and its outcomes, particularly in a supposedly

new socio-cultural context surrounding their children. On the other hand, parents' family policy may also be affected or even misguided by their perceptions as are likely to be narrowed by their limited personal experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Examples of questions during Phase 1 of the interview

- What have you done or what do you plan to do about your child/children's foreign language learning? What do you expect your child/children to achieve in foreign language learning?
- Why do you think they need to learn [the specific language(s) the parents mentioned]? What are the benefits? What may be the long-term benefits?
- What kind of investment have you made in your child/children's foreign language learning, for example, time, money, and other resources?

Appendix 2. Examples of questions during Phase 2 of the interview

- What foreign language(s) are you learning now? How did you get started learning it/them?
- How do you learn the foreign language(s)? For example, what textbook do you use? Who teaches you? How do you learn it/them at home?
- Does your mom or dad help you with your learning? If so, can you tell me a story about their help? Have they ever been mad at you when you do not learn well enough?

TABLES

Table 1. Participants' profiles

Family No.	Mother's Degree	Father's Degree	Child 1			Child 2		
			Gender	Language(s)	Age	Gender	Language(s)	Age
1	Master's	Doctoral	Male	English, French	9	Male	English	6
2	Master's	Master's	Male	English, Spanish	11	Male	English	7
3	Doctoral	Doctoral	Female	English, French, German	13	Female	English, French	6
4	Master's	Doctoral	Male	English	14	Female	English	9
5	Doctoral	Doctoral	Male	English, German	12	Female	English, German	10
6	Doctoral	Master's	Female	English, French	11	Male	English	8
7	Doctoral	Master's	Female	English	10	Female	English	7
8	Master's	Doctoral	Male	English	13	Male	English	11
9	Doctoral	Master's	Male	English, French, Spanish	8	——	——	——
10	Master's	Doctoral	Female	English, Spanish, French	10	——	——	——
11	Doctoral	Master's	Male	English	7	——	——	——
12	Master's	Master's	Female	English, Spanish	6	——	——	——
13	Master's	Doctoral	Male	English	9	——	——	——
14	Master's	Master's	Female	English, French	10	——	——	——
15	Doctoral	Doctoral	Female	English	8	——	——	——
16	Doctoral	Doctoral	Female	English	6	——	——	——

Table 2. Interview lengths (min)

Family No.	Phase 1	Phase 2	Full Length
1	80	24	104
2	90	15	105
3	96	15	111
4	102	35	137
5	91	30	121
6	90	18	108
7	81	20	101
8	86	37	123
9	78	36	114
10	91	15	106
11	73	28	101
12	92	27	119
13	73	33	106
14	97	24	121
15	80	25	105
16	102	28	130
Total	1402	410	1812
Average	87.6	25.6	113.3