Family domain is crucial for language maintenance. It is also a critical avenue for children’s language acquisition (Edwards 1985; Fishman 1991; King and Fogle 2006). In Spolsky’s language management theory (2009), family is one of the key domains for language management. In this study, we will focus on family language planning in Hakka families in Balik Pulau, Penang. Structured interviews were conducted in November 2012. In total, 9 Hakka families were interviewed. In each family, one parent and one child were interviewed. This paper will examine family language planning from three perspectives: ideology, practice, and management (Spolsky 2009). The results show that Hakkas in Penang give great importance to Mandarin and almost abandon Hakka in the family domain. However, they still have strong Hakka identity and some parents have started to speak Hakka with their children consciously. Multilingual capacity is a common expectation from parents. With multilingual input in the family domain, most of the children are passive bilinguals or multilinguals. The regional prestige dialect Hokkien is part of the repertoire of these Hakka families. However, there are no intentional efforts from the parents to teach Hokkien to their children. Conscious language management is only found for Mandarin and sometimes for English. This is resulted from the parents’ language ideology that Mandarin is the most important language for Chinese Malaysians and English is an international language for their children’s future career.

Keywords: Balik Pulau, Hakka, family language planning.