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Consistent and Persistent: Key to success of lone fighters on the home language maintenance front

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Project Funding

Australian Postgraduate Awards Scholarship awarded to Dr Van Tran

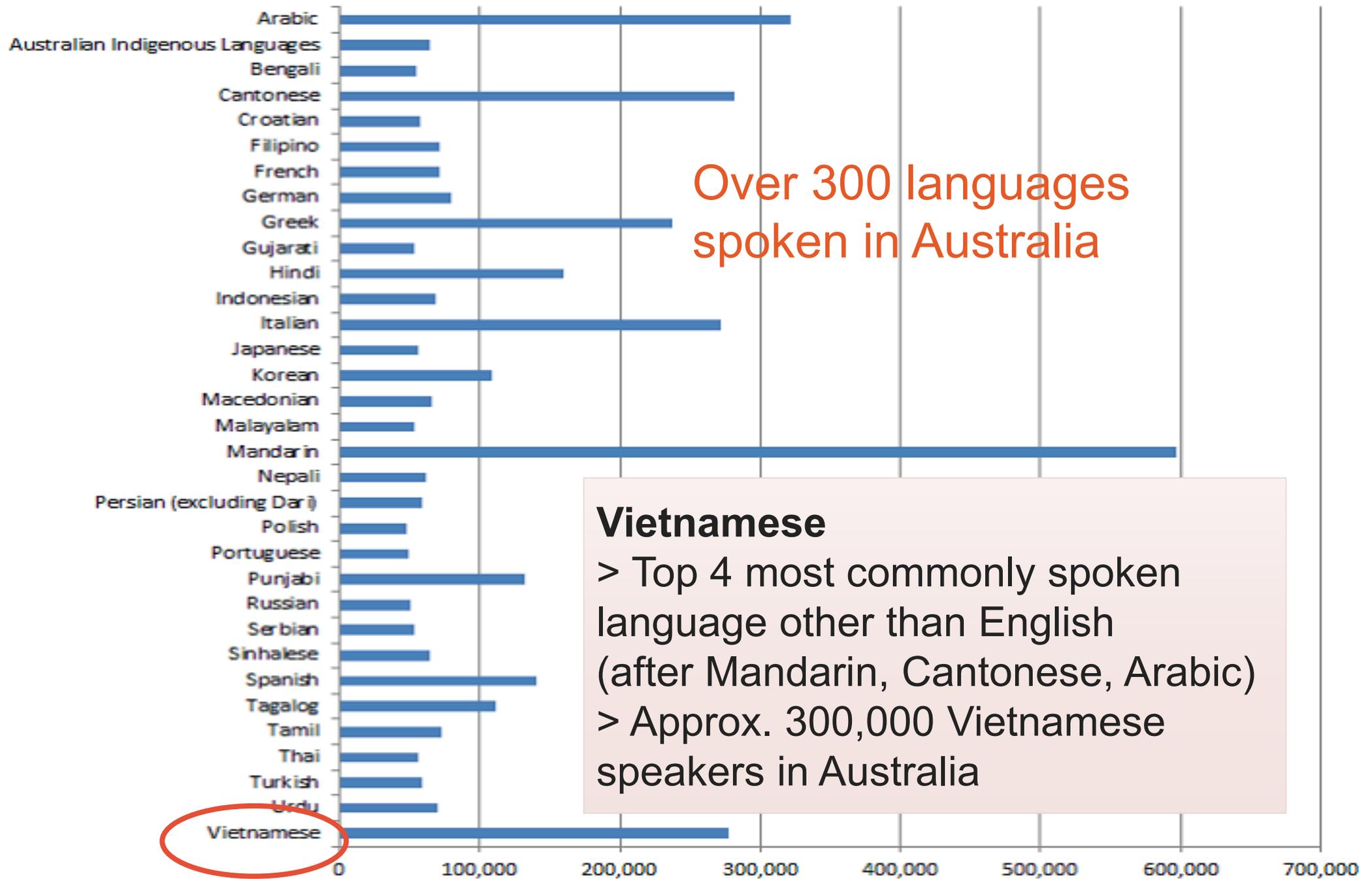
Australian Research Council Discovery Grant (180102848)
awarded to Prof Sharynne McLeod and Dr Sarah Verdon

VietSpeech

<https://www.csu.edu.au/research/vietspeech/>

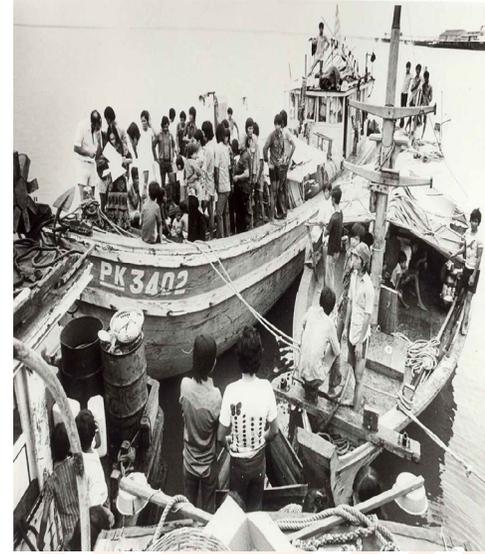


Source: Customised table from ABS 2016, from <https://www.racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/australias-cultural-diversity/diversity-of-language/>



The Vietnamese in Australia

- First wave: refuge + family reunion (1970s-1980s)
 - Second wave: study + skilled employment (1990s – present)
 - Currently 2nd - 3rd generation
 - Research: the risk of language lost in 3rd generation
- Critical period to maintain home language



Credits: National
Museum of Australia

Limited research has been undertaken exploring how Vietnamese families use English and maintain Vietnamese



Credits: <https://family.lovetoknow.com>

Context of study

VietSpeech: A project on Vietnamese-Australian children's speech and language competence

Study 1: Adults' and families' language and culture

Vietnamese-Australian families' linguistic multi-competence and language maintenance ($n = 271$)

Study 2: Bilingual speech production

Australian Vietnamese-English-speaking children's speech acquisition in Vietnamese and English

Study 3: Experts' advice

Development of a multilingual speech program

Study 4: SuperSpeech program

Feasibility and efficacy of a Vietnamese-Australian children's speech and language maintenance program



VietSpeech: Publications (so far)

1. McLeod, S., Verdon, S., Wang, C., & Tran, V. H. (2019). Language proficiency, use, and maintenance among people with Vietnamese heritage living in Australia. *Journal of Monolingual and Bilingual Speech*, 1(1), 55–79. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jmbs.10973>
2. Tran, V. H., McLeod, S., Verdon, S., & Wang, C. (2021). Vietnamese-Australian parents: Factors associated with language use and attitudes towards home language maintenance. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1904963>
3. Tran, V. H., Verdon, S., McLeod, S., & Wang, C. (2021, in press). Family language policies of Vietnamese-Australian families. *Journal of Child Science*.
4. Tran, V. H., Wang, C., McLeod, S., & Verdon, S. (2021). Vietnamese–Australian children’s language proficiency and use. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069211034587>
5. Wang, C., Verdon, S., McLeod, S., & Tran, V. H. (2021). Profiles of linguistic multicompetence in Vietnamese-English speakers. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 30(4), 1711–1727. https://doi.org/10.1044/2021_AJSLP-20-00296
6. McLeod, S., Margetson, K., Wang, C., Tran, V. H., Verdon, S., White, K., & Phạm, B. (2021). Speech acquisition within a 3-generation Vietnamese-English family: The influence of maturation and ambient phonology. *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699206.2020.1862915>

CHILD

- Age
- Sex
- Birth order
- Migration status
- Commencement of education
- English usage
- Attitude towards home language maintenance
- Perception of identity
- Exposure to language and culture
- Other factors



PARENT

- Home language input
- Attitude towards home language maintenance
- Language proficiency
- Perception of identity
- Socio-economic status and education
- Parent-child relationship
- Other factors



C,

FAMILY

- Sibling presence
- Grandparent/relative contact



COMMUNITY

- Home language communities
- Home language schools
- Home language-immersed education
- Teacher/peer influence
- Religion



Factors associated with Vietnamese-Australian children's home language maintenance and English proficiency

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Age

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Other factors

English written proficiency positively associated with Vietnamese written proficiency



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Other factors: Intention of future residence in Vietnam

parent's partner's age

parent's income



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Aim of this study

To explore Vietnamese-Australian families' experience of successful home language maintenance in terms of language practices, language ideologies, and language management.

Theoretical framework

Spolsky's Language Policy Theory (2004)

Language Policy

Language proficiency and desire to use/not to use a language



Language practice



Language ideologies



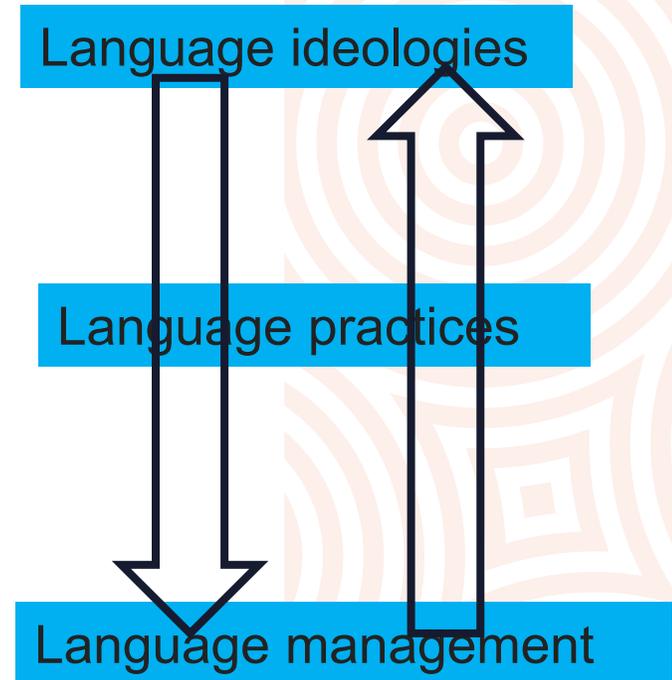
Language management

Method

- Seven parents (five families) whose children achieved high bilingual proficiency scores in the speech and language assessment of the VietSpeech research program were invited to participate in a focus group.
- Discussion was guided by a set of questions regarding home language maintenance (e.g., reasons, difficulties, practices, recommendations).
- 2-hour discussion was transcribed and translated into English by one of the researchers who is a NAATI-accredited translator.
- Thematic analysis of the bilingual transcription in NVivo was conducted and checked by the authors. Member checking was undertaken via emails to the parents.

Results: Four key themes

1. **Motivations** for maintaining home language
2. **Challenges** in maintaining home language
3. **Practices/strategies** for successful home language maintenance
4. **Recommendations for support** from the government



Results: Parents' motivations for HLM

- Communication with grandparents and relatives
- Maintenance of cultural identity
- Parents' need to speak their home language
- Cognitive and emotional benefits



"I think what really matters is their identity. I know they will grow up with the influence of Australian culture but I believe there will be a time when they ask themselves where they belong to. I think if they can speak Vietnamese, they will understand part of their identity is Vietnamese, which helps them to feel they have a firm root. That's why I think I want to preserve the language for them for that helps them understand they are Vietnamese." [Em thì em nghĩ một cái quan trọng nữa về vấn đề identity. Khi mà lớn lên ở đây cháu sẽ chịu ảnh hưởng của văn hóa Úc, nhưng sẽ có một lúc nào đó nó sẽ tự hỏi là mình thuộc về đâu. Khi mà em nghĩ nó có tiếng Việt, nó có gốc nào đó, nó sẽ hiểu được cháu có một phần là người Việt nam, giúp cho cháu có một gốc vững, đấy là cái em mong muốn giữ để thông qua ngôn ngữ của mình để con hiểu là con là người Việt, con nói tiếng Việt.]

Results: Parents' challenges in HLM

- Children starting school and growing older
- Parents' lack of time and persistence
- Insufficient support in terms of formal Vietnamese education
- Education, resources, and teacher quality

“When they get to high school, they also have other languages to learn. Now we also need to think of what is more important in life. At school, the subjects are compulsory. They also need to learn those stuffs to compete in their future work. They will have to choose between family [home language] and the other stuffs. Everyone has only 8 hours, we have to allocate it properly. Time is the child’s time, not only parents’ time.” [Lên high school là có các language khác nữa. Bây giờ mình cũng phải để ý language nào quan trọng hơn trong cuộc sống. Ở trường nó bắt buộc phải học như thế. Các bạn ấy cũng cần học những cái đấy để compete trong công việc nữa. Lúc đấy nó sẽ đặt cái family của mình vào sự lựa chọn, thời gian ai cũng có 8h thôi, và mình phải allocate thế nào cho nó đủ, nó phải dàn trải nhiều hơn. Cái thời gian của đứa bé nữa chứ ko phải chỉ là của bố mẹ.]



Results: Parents' strategies for successful HLM

- Speaking Vietnamese all the time
- Keeping strict family language policy
- Teaching Vietnamese
 - directly using textbooks and
 - indirectly through regular activities including book reading, daily interactions, and watching Vietnamese TV
- Being consistent and persistent!



“As for my family, since the children were small, we have been keeping a rule that if our child finds it hard to say a sentence in English, we accept his English sentence but then he would have to say that in Vietnamese again. My son knows that so since small, he is always aware if he wants to tell his school stories in English, he would have to tell in Vietnamese as well, so he would switch back to Vietnamese right away.” [Nhà em thì từ khi các bạn còn bé đã thống nhất, tạo một nguyên tắc trong nhà em nếu con nói một câu mà thấy khó bằng tiếng Việt thì bố mẹ chấp nhận con nói bằng tiếng Anh nhưng sau đấy phải nói lại bằng tiếng Việt. Bạn ấy biết như thế từ nhỏ nên khi đi học về mà muốn kể chuyện bằng tiếng Anh thì bạn ấy ý thức được là phải nói cả bằng tiếng Việt cho mẹ, là bạn ấy sẽ nói lại ngay bằng tiếng Việt.]

Results: Parents' recommendations

- Changes in language education policy and advocacy
 - access to formal Vietnamese education outside Bankstown or Cabramatta
- Better resources
 - Vietnamese language textbooks, bilingual books, education information
- Raising public awareness of the importance of home language maintenance

“It’s important to raise the awareness of language learning, of the importance of mother tongue maintenance. That’s the key thing. Once we can solve that, other problems will be solved. It’s important to change perceptions.” [Làm sao mình lan tỏa được việc học ngôn ngữ, giữ tiếng mẹ đẻ là quan trọng, đây là bản chất của vấn đề. Khi mình đã giải quyết được vấn đề này mình sẽ follow up được nhiều cái khác. Cái đây là cái perception thay đổi, làm tổng thể, ở các mức độ khác nhau.]

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Implications

- Children starting childcare/ preschool education early are at a higher risk of losing their home language
- Starting home language education early is important
- Home language maintenance requires an ecological approach – it must be supported in all contexts: family, community, school, media, government and society





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