

## **Families' and educators' perspectives on multilingualism and languages learning for young children attending ECE settings and CL Schools**



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**Welcome and  
acknowledgements**



**Always Was Always Will Be**

# Acknowledgement of Country



We would like to acknowledge the Wangal, Bediagal, Gadigal, Darramuragal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which this paper is presented. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which you all work today and any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating today.

We also pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Indigenous peoples and their ongoing cultures, languages and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

# Overview

## Data collected from two studies

- Study 1: Birth to Five (two ECE settings - one bilingual LDC/PS, one PS with HL support program).
- Study 2: Persian CL Schools (four schools).
  - Educators' reflections on their setting's pedagogical practices and family experiences and perspectives of their children's maintenance of the use of their HL at the setting.
  - Gaps in policy and pedagogy for languages learning in Australia strongly impact on the effectiveness of HL support and languages teaching and learning in ECE and CL schools.

# Linguistic diversity in Australia

- In 2020 in Australia over 7.6 million overseas-born inhabitants and 29.8% of Australia's population were born overseas (ABS, 2021).
- In 2016, more than 300 languages spoken at home (ABS, 2016). 21% speaking a language other than English (LOTE) at home with higher numbers in large urban centres (ABS, 2016).
- The number of people in 2016 identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin is on the rise, increasing from 2.5% of the Australian population in 2011 to 2.8 % (ABS, 2016).

## Linguistic diversity in young Australian children (AEDC, 2018)

- 323 different languages spoken.
- 25% of children speak languages other than English at home.
- 17.2% of Indigenous children speak languages other than English at home.

**Australia's super diversity is apparent in the linguistic repertoires of children growing up on multilingual families / communities in urban and periurban communities in Australia (Jones Díaz, 2018).**

# Linguistic diversity in Australia

- Ideally, this super diverse reality should lead to active to government policy that favours multilingualism but hardly the case in ECE.
- Lack of investment, policy guidelines, curriculum frameworks and pedagogical support that promotes the retention and extension of young of the home language.
- Increased recognition of the varied intellectual, linguistic, cultural, familial and economic benefits of bi/multilingualism.
- ECE and CL schools play a major role in facilitating these benefits.



# Significance of the studies

## Birth to Five Study

- Increasing recognition by families of the importance of raising their children bi/multilingually, despite the silences of extending children's HL in ECE settings for parents and educators (Robertson, Drury & Cable 2014; Jones Díaz, 2015).
- Increased attention to family policy and strategies adopted by parents in the home (Schwartz, 2012; King, 2016; Tijana Hirsch & Jin Sook Lee, 2018).
- Few studies have addressed the role of ECE and findings of these studies are often unknown to educators and families of young children (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2016; Jones Díaz, 2018, Escudero et al, 2020).
- Limited research on parents' perspectives of how educators facilitate, promote and extend their children's HLs in ECE and CL schools.



# Significance of the studies (cont)

## Persian CL School

- First study of Primary school Persian heritage language learners in Sydney
- Parents' and educators' right to comment on, or have input into, school programs (Marsh, 2009)
- Limited research on different stakeholders' (including students, teachers and parent) perspectives about CL learning (FECCA, 2011)
- Limited studies on primary school CL learners (Kondo-Brown & Brown, 2008)



# Context of the studies

## Birth to Five study

- Eight children, eight parents, four educators across two ECE settings. One setting was a bilingual LDC preschool (LDC/PS). The other setting was a preschool (PS) (4 - 5 year olds).
  - Four parents (2 from PS and 2 from LDC/PS).
  - Three teachers (2 from PS and 1 from LDC/PS).
- Inner city and north western suburbs of Sydney | super diverse communities.
- Broader research program to investigate the needs and demands of bi/multilingual families regarding HL support as well as the impact of distinctive models of bilingual and HL support that extend children's languages learning.
- Settings chosen based on their pedagogical approaches towards bilingualism and HL retention
- Quantitative and qualitative approach - observations of children, interviews with educators and parents.
- Data analysis, Nvivo software to organize the data into key themes and sub-themes (Hughes & Jones, 2003).
- Drew on Foucauldian thematic Discourse Analysis (FDA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Mullet, 2018; Ussher & Perz, 2019).

# Persian CL School Study

- 35 students, nine parents, seven teachers across four schools
- Case study (focus group interviews, class observations, interviews)

This presentation focuses on Early years of schooling (K-2)

- School 2: Year 1 (1 student), Year 2 (2 students)
- School 3: Year 1 (3 students), Year 2 (5 students)

Total number of students representing early years of schooling across four Persian CL schools :11 students

Due to lack of research into Persian community language learning, observation of one of four schools followed by a pilot study of four Persian community language schools and the major study focused on Persian language learners access to the language, their motivation and their identity.

# Social research framework (Layder, 1993)

Four components of a social research:

**Context** (CL provision in Australia)

**Setting** (CL school, home)

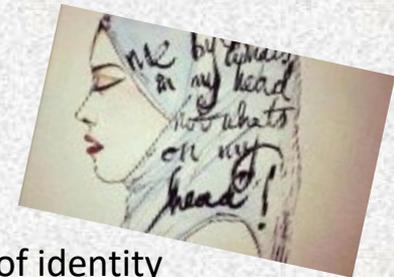
**Situated activity** (Access to Persian language resources)

**Self** (Identity and motivation)

# Theoretical Frameworks

Drawing on sociocritical theory (Bourdieu, 1990, 1991) and cultural studies (Bhabha 1994, Hall 1996) provides rigorous explanations that afford understandings of

- The production of linguistic inequality in pedagogical approaches and policies towards HLs in Australia.
- A departure from deficit discourses of bi/multilingualism, embedded in a monolingual mindset informing educational policy and pedagogy in Australia, including ECE (Slaughter and Hajek, 2014).
- A transactional process through which social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital and prestige is afforded to the legitimate language (Bourdieu, 1991).
- In providing early bilingual education, children's, families' and educators' HLs become legitimate forms of these capitals, through which their linguistic habitus and agency are enabled and deployed.
- Identities are transformed, negotiated, contested and hybridised across different competing discourses, practices and positions (Hall, 1996), through which multilingual children experience through their languages.
- Hybridity, diaspora and the 'third space' (Bhabha, 1998) enables new potentialities of identity location for bi/multilingual children and their families.



# Key findings (across the two studies)

## **1. Parents' rational for HL support and use**

- Intergenerational communication to sustain family bonds
- Intergenerational communication and cultural identity
- Economic imperatives for languages learning

## **2. Educators and parents' perspectives on pedagogical approaches**

- Parent concerns for the need for intentional teaching
- Educators' perspectives towards intentional teaching
- Use of resources and teaching materials

## **3. Concerns for continuity for their children's use of HL beyond ECE and CL School**

- Parents' perspectives about HL maintenance beyond ECE
- Gaps in the provision of Persian across K-12 in NSW

# Birth to Five Study

## Finding 1: Parents' rationale for HL support and use

### Intergenerational communication to sustain family bonds

Relationships are maintained through the use of the home language.

- Grandparents utilise their linguistic and cultural resources to support their grandchildren emotional wellbeing and cultural capital.

*When Grandma was here, she taught Miya to recite Tang poems. She did recite a lot of poems, ... You know, in China, if a child can recite Tang poems, everyone will applaud. She will think she is good. And she enjoys being praised (PS/P1).*

- Following Bhabha notion of 'third space' (1994) the relationship between culture, identity and space is fluid, changing and agentive.
- Opportunities for meaning-making and identity construction through diverse literacy practices and cultural representations (Conteh and Brock, 2011).
- Hall (1996) framework of identity highlights belonging, solidarity and collectivity. HL retention and early bilingual education is critically important in this process (Jones Diaz, 2016).

*For me {the HL} is our language of love. Our heritage, family roots and identity is expressed through language (LDC/PS P1).*

# Persian CL School

## Finding 1: Parents' rationale for HL support and use

### Intergenerational communication to sustain family bonds

*... all my family and relatives are in Iran, and my children will not be able to communicate with them if they do not know Persian(S2/P2).*

*I saw this happiness in those kids who are doing very well and those who are coming here willingly ... there is a child whose grandmother and his parents encourage him to come. He is so eager to learn the language and he loves Persian very much (S3/T1).*

*... my nephew cares about his background and his origin and he is willing to speak Persian with his grandfather (S2/T1).*

# Intergenerational communication and cultural identity

All parents had strong attitudes towards retaining their children's HL, believing it essential to maintaining strong links to cultural values and heritage.

*I have seen many kids of Chinese descent here completely stop speaking Chinese when they reach their adolescence, ... they completely deserted a lot of Chinese qualities. As a result, they have a huge generational gap with their parents. I think ... their problem is not only a generational gap, it is more about a gap between two cultural backgrounds. This gap is beyond repairment for me (PS/ P1).*

- Concepts of hybridity and diaspora (Bhaba, 1994; Hall, 1996) enable understandings of how contemporary cultural and intergenerational experiences impact on HL maintenance in bi/multilingual families HL
- Language retention and identity negotiation are inextricably linked, in the multiple and hybrid ways of belonging across diverse cultural, linguistic and familiar landscapes (Jones Diaz, 2016). Third space identity is contested, negotiated and re-negotiated.

*It has to be {that our son} stay{s} close to the roots of where I am from and for him to ... value that background ... through the language. .. I got ... family back in Argentina and ... {my} dad doesn't speak English and so [my son} is able to fully communicate with anyone in Argentina ... {and} when my parents visit, without any trouble whatsoever. And so, there is a whole cultural and social thing that relates to being bilingual (LDC/PS P2).*

- HL retention and social capital of the family enables the exchange of linguistic capital and successful HL maintenance.

# Persian CL school

## Intergenerational communication and cultural identity

Identity formation forms a continuum from imposition to negotiation.

*I make Iranian food, even if they don't like it. I also make the food they like, but I believe they should appreciate our food ... I do my best for New Year celebration and they know that It is very important for me and everything should be perfect (S2/P2).*

*...he should always remember that his parents and grandparents are Iranian ... He has an Iranian background... he should be proud of his background .... (S2/P1)*

- Identity is constructed through interaction and negotiation with others (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).
- Parents' choice of food is regarded as a means for both negotiation and imposition of Iranian identity.
- Identity negotiation as a sign of family interaction and engagement is identified by De Fina (2012).
- In multilingual contexts where different language and identity ideologies challenge each other, negotiation of identities occurs in order to decide what language should be spoken.
- Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 3) suggest that the negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts can be through private decisions such as celebration of particular holidays, food choices and clothing.

# Economic imperatives for languages learning

The linguistic capital of home languages such as Mandarin is increasing due to China's economic and geopolitical power (Lee 2019).

This plays an important role in parental decisions to maintain the home language.

*I think in the present and future, China is so powerful. There are also a lot of Mandarin requirements here. Therefore in my view speaking two languages means possession of two technical skills (PS/P1).*

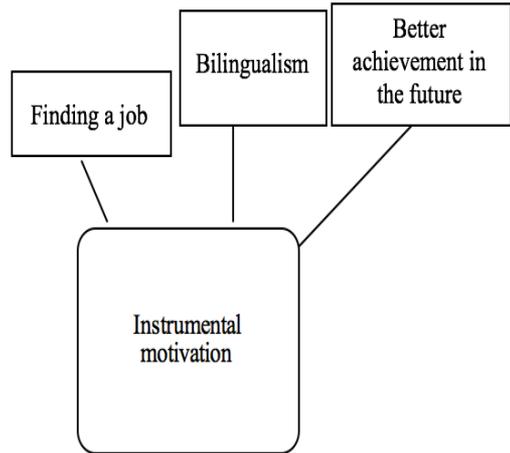
A similar rationale for the maintenance of HL was provided by another parent, who pointed to the economic and career benefits of being bilingual:

*Bilingualism is an advantage in this globalized world and I want my child to benefit in the future by having a second language (PS/P2).*

Following Bourdieu (1991) the provision of early bilingual education enables children's HLs to become legitimate forms of cultural, linguistic and social capital which is converted to forms of economic capital in a globalised world.

# Economic imperatives for languages learning, Persian CL school

Parents' instrumental and emotional motivation and perceptions imposed on their children: Future success at the university level, achieving better results for their Higher School Certificate (HSC), finding a job such as a Persian translator.



Identity, culture and future career option.

Possibilities for the future, and the learner's desire for the future, leads to learner's investment to learn a language (Norton, 2000).



# Finding 2 (Birth to Five study)

## Educators' and parents' perspectives on pedagogical approaches

### Concerns for the need for intentional teaching - Parents

Parents and educators recognised that ECE is not well equipped to integrate bilingual education in the ECE and more work and support is needed:

*I would like to see ... more of structured activities, ... around ... the HL language. I know that they do cooking ... reading and they have these extra-curricular activities. ... more of it is in English because the preschool teacher speaks in English, ... but maybe adding a special, HL lesson... where kids start to apply specifically numbers and letters in HL and they start learning the literacy as well as they do in English (LDC/PS P2).*

*We aren't really strategic about how we support children's linguistic needs. ... And this is where where we really need to attract . . . people to the industry who have a diverse background, because otherwise, . . ., these children are going to lose their language (PS T1)*

- Highlights the importance of professional development for educators.
- In settings where multilingual linguistic markets flourish, the role of bi/multilingual educators and their work is legitimised.
- This in turn facilitates conversion strategies for accumulating linguistic, cultural and social capital for children, families and educators.



## Finding 2

### Educators' and parents' perspectives on pedagogical approaches

#### Educators' perspectives towards intentional teaching

Possible binary tension between care and education

*... the teachers interact with the children all the time in [the HL], using many resources. The parents like ... [that] the children are going to learn another language, ... we are not a language academy. Our target is to provide care ... that the children feel safe, happy and the [HL] is something that we do all the time and they learn from it. It is not that we provide language class for an hour a day like other places (LDC/PS T1).*

- Conflation of intentional teaching with quantifying learning outcomes and testing.
- In the of the absence of policy and a pedagogical framework informs models for informal approaches.

*These children don't really belong, and they're not really becoming, and they're not really being who they are ... without bilingual teachers, without the research, ... new knowledge ... those children would still be feeling somewhat disconnected (PS/T2).*

- T2 points to the EYLFA (DEEWR 2009) for direction in her settings' approach to HL maintenance in the absence of a national policy.

## Finding 2

### **Educators' and parents' perspectives on pedagogical approaches**

#### **Leadership and advocacy for HL and bilingual support as key to inclusion and quality**

*... I need to ... really look at {how we can support} those families who have just moved to Australia . . .  
but I think in terms of critical reflection, our job now, {is to} advocate for HL maintenance (PS/T1).*

- T1's emphasis on the critical role that educators play in advocating for bilingual education represents the interplay between cultural and symbolic capital.
- Symbolic is the full sum of all accumulated prestige of cultural, social and economic capital symbolised through titles, prestige and authority (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).
- Educators' embodiment of cultural and symbolic capital is contingent upon their professional knowledge, which positions them as powerful advocates, for the reproduction of linguistic capital in the languages represented at the setting.

#### **The role of curriculum frameworks in the absence of national policy in supporting HL use in ECE**

- Limitations to its utility in providing explicit pedagogical intent that support and extend children's bi/multilingual repertoires.
- Both T1 and T2 draw on the EYLFA (DET, 2009) to provide necessary justifications for validating and supporting children's HL's given the current policy vacuum in Australian early education.

# Finding 2 (Persian CL)

## Educators' and parents' perspectives on the pedagogical approaches

### Use of resources and teaching materials

*In regards to resources, I believe teachers should agree upon certain resources and stick to them. If it is not possible across other Persian schools, at least, this school should do that. Because as soon as the school principal and school administration changes, everything changes. They sometimes stick to textbooks from Iran, another time they use the materials they have developed themselves. Sometimes they follow other schools curriculum. They should at least agree on one thing and they should not confuse children (S1/P1).*

Ad hoc curriculum and lack of a unified curriculum among four Persian schools appears to result in students' and parents' search for better Persian language learning by moving between those schools. (Now we have the unified curriculum but is it going to be used by the teachers in different schools?)

### Limited time for CL schools

*The only problem is our limited time (S2/T1).*

### Parents' support and involvement

*Much support and encouragement must be provided by parents. Number of students should increase and parents should involve and support the schools (S3/T1).*

*I think parents play the most significant role (90%) when their children are very young ... Parents should plan to take children to Persian school, till they gradually get motivated.(S2/P2).*

## Finding 2

### Educators' and parents' perspectives on pedagogical approaches

#### Qualified teachers

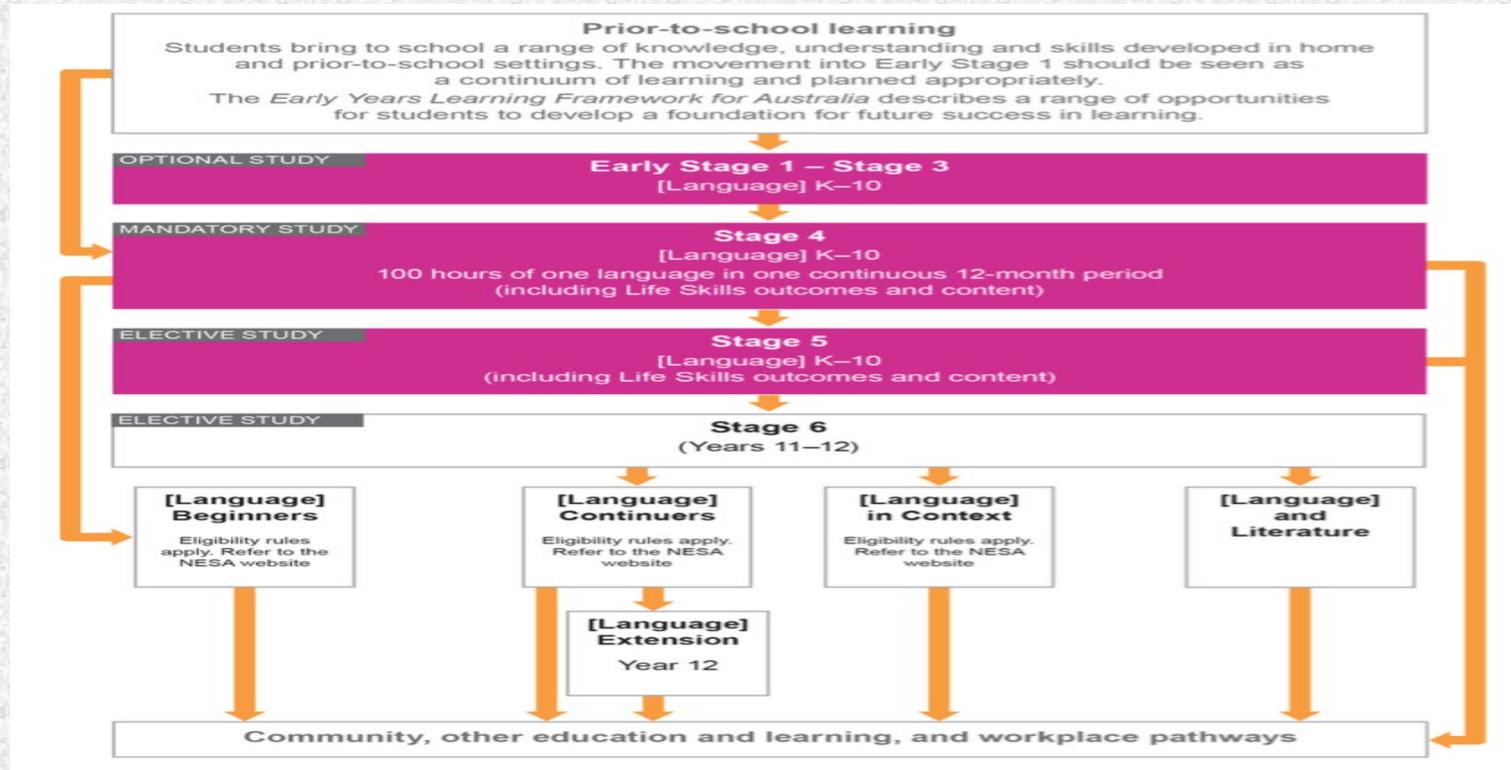
*It is very important that the teachers have proper training and teaching experience to be able to use the existing resources and apply them in their classroom. We need experienced teachers to know how to use the resources ... They should update their teachers. The teachers should work harder and have teaching plans ... Some teachers just let the kids have fun and enjoy their times in the classroom without proper learning. Unfortunately, they allow people to teach here before making sure they have teaching experiences. First we need to train teachers. (S2/P1).*

*... Australian education system is different from what we have in Iran (S2/T2).*

- Cruickshank et al.(2018) and Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009) support both teacher supply and teacher training which confirms qualified teachers and **continued quality teaching**.
- The necessity for **continued quality CL learning** is highlighted by Cruickshank et al.(2018).
- Mismatch between what parents expect (in terms of resources, teacher qualification) and what teachers expect (parents support and involvement) necessitates that both parent and teacher voice should be heard through a mutual relationship between them (Jones Diaz, 2016).

# Finding 3

## Continuity for HL use beyond ECE and CL Schools Gaps in the provision of Persian across K-12 in NSW





# Finding 3

## Continuity for HL use beyond ECE and CL Schools

### Parents' perspectives about HL maintenance beyond ECE:

*Yeah, it is a bit of a fear that when he starts school, he's going ... to leave {the setting} where he's got all these teachers that speak [the HL] and get into a more English speaking world. ... that may hold him back in terms of incorporating his {HL} in learning how to speak and write ... (LDC/PS,P2).*

- The concerns over the transition into primary school in the context of limited bilingual education or limited resources to ensure continuity of language learning and HL maintenance, echos research on the status of bilingual education in primary and secondary education in Australia (Molyneux 2009; Lo Bianco & Slaughter 2017).
- Official recognition of a language is symbolic of recognition which provide a positive context for transmission of a language to future generation (Liddicoat, 2020).
- Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of legitimacy, the lack of institutional policy direction and support for HL and bilingual programs reinforces the legitimacy of English and the marginal status of languages education across all educational sectors (Heller, 1996; Jones Diaz, 2013).

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