

Building on and Sustaining Multilingual Children's Cultural and Linguistic Assets in Superdiverse Early Childhood Education



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Abstract Australia is characteristically a super-diverse nation. This superdiversity includes varieties of cultural, linguistic, social, and religious practices that operate simultaneously within contexts of economic mobility, ethnicity, income, education, and immigration. Young children and their families living in super-diverse post-multicultural societies, such as Australia, encounter new potentialities and multiple experiences of identity negotiation, affirmation, and connection across diverse cultural, linguistic, and social landscapes. Growing up multilingual with diverse cultural practices means that identity is fluid and multiple, often changing and influenced by contemporary global issues. This chapter argues that educators can acknowledge this fluidity through representing children's cultural, linguistic, and social experiences that are contextual and reflective of their everyday life. In highlighting the significance of superdiversity, frameworks of critical intercultural theory and cultural literacy are used to examine data from two studies, the first of which examines discourses of deficit that are applied to Indigenous families and immigrant multilingual communities' approach to (dis)ability. The second study examines the impact of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies that position multilingual children and their families as capable, and agentic communicators. Conclusions highlight the importance of superdiversity, interculturality and cultural literacy that enable pedagogies to build on and sustain the diverse linguistic and cultural assets of young multilingual children and their families.

Keywords Early childhood education · Superdiversity · Critical intercultural theory · Cultural literacy · Pedagogical practices

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1 Introduction

Australia is one of the most diverse multicultural/multilingual nation states in the world with more than 250 ancestries and 350 languages spoken in the community. The numbers of people who use a language other than English at home have increased to more than 5.5 million since the 2016 census, 24% speaking a language other than English at home. Almost half of the population have a parent born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics ABS, 2021). Like many other post-colonial nation states, Australia has a vibrant Indigenous history, a colonial past and an increasing diversity of languages, dialects, cultures, gender fluidity, family types (including LGBTQIA+), lifestyles, income levels, abilities, urban and regional communities. Vertovec's (2010) notion of super-diversity encapsulates the mixing of cultural, linguistic, and social groups within multiple identity locations, often influenced by contradictory socio-cultural, religious, and political allegiances. Superdiversity goes beyond ethnicity as a singular social category to encompass the layering of other variables such as immigration status, restriction of rights, global labour markets shaped by the interplays of gender, age, religious values, regional, national and local cultural values and practices (Jones Díaz, 2016; Vertovec, 2007; Vertovec et al., 2018). It also adopts an intersectionality approach that does not essentialise 'race', ethnicity, and cultural and linguistic practices, but rather permits a greater incorporation and recognition of cultural, linguistic, and social difference beyond multiculturalism. This is increasingly relevant to post multicultural countries, as well as other immigrant-receiving nation states that in the past were countries from which people emigrated (Jones Díaz, 2016). In this chapter, I draw on Vertovec's (2010) notion of post-multiculturalism that recognises the significance and value of cultural differences (alongside gender, sexuality, age and (dis)ability).

Therefore, in a globalised world, finance, media, communication technologies, free markets, and global capitalism merge in the context of rapid change and ongoing technological advances, consequently extending their reach and impact across multiple fields. Globalisation has also resulted in not only the global rise of English, but transmigration and transnational population flows, fluid labour markets, advanced technologies, and media communications (Jones Díaz, 2016). Moreover, with the intensification of migration, contact between languages, cultures and identities has reached unprecedented levels (Blommaert, 2010; Li, 2018; Romaine, 2011).

1.1 *Super-Linguistic Diversity*

Vertovec's (2007) notion of super-diversity can be extended to include super-linguistic diversity where there is growing emphasis on the relationships between multilingual practices and globalisation. The reality is that most of the world's population are multilingual, and there are large numbers of languages spoken in many immigrant-receiving superdiverse countries. The life-trajectories of culturally and

linguistically diverse (CALD) communities encompass thriving hybrid language practices that operate across multiple social, cultural, and economic domains (Creese & Blackledge, 2018; Jones Díaz, 2016). Within these domains, there are contact zones where encounters of linguistic and cultural diversities become interconnected with power and identity negotiations.

Super-linguistic diversity operates at communicative levels of society where linguistic practices go beyond co-existence to an interconnected and combined use of resources to generate new identities, values and practices (Li, 2018). In this context, Blommaert's (2010) notion of multilingual repertoires is useful in understanding the complex use of linguistic resources in more than one language for meaning making in social settings within contexts of 'extreme mixedness' (p. 102). King and Bigelow (2018) argue that in fluid and multilingual contexts individuals use a wide range of linguistic resources to communicate and connect with others.

Therefore, in many super-diverse nation states, linguistic diversity is the norm, often characterised by cultural and linguistic practices operating simultaneously in contexts of postcolonialism and immigration. For example, much of Australia's diversity is found in the cultural and linguistic repertoires of adults and children living in multilingual families and communities in linguistically diverse highly urbanised and peri urban communities. In this chapter, I use the term multilingualism to also include bilingualism as the issues addressed are relevant to both bilingualism and multilingualism.

1.2 Super-Diversity and Equity

King and Bigelow (2018) suggest that when considering all the dimensions of superdiversity, greater educational equity can be achieved, in which educators and policymakers are able to re-frame outdated notions of difference. They argue that this would entail the recognition of heterogeneity of student populations through which a social justice framework is adopted and the quest for universal approaches to learning in policy is abandoned, where the focus is more on strengthening the capacities of students. This is most pertinent for multilingual children who spend many hours in early childhood education (ECE) settings where the official language is used exclusively, and often minimal opportunities are available for them to use and extend their diverse linguistic repertoires in their home language. This may include children from Indigenous backgrounds and children with disabilities. It is within this context that educators can recognise and acknowledge the diverse experiences of language, identity and communication practices significant to children's and families' lived experiences of ECE (Chan & Ritchie, 2020; Jones Díaz, 2016; Poyatos Matas & Cuatro Nochez, 2011).

The research problem highlighted in this chapter examines the differences between pedagogies of deficit versus pedagogies of possibility in view of how these discourses inform educator's practice when working with diverse children, families and communities. The research question inherent in both studies is: How do

educators' views and understandings of superdiversity in relation to multiculturalism, multilingualism, Indigeneity and refugees influence their pedagogical practices? Therefore, this chapter examines data from two studies, the first of which examines the impact of deficit narratives on cultural minorities. The second study underscores the significance of strength-based multilingual pedagogy that builds on the cultural and linguistic capital of multilingual children, families, and educators. However, before embarking on this discussion, it is important to provide an overview of deficit theories and assumptions applied to children from super-diverse backgrounds, particularly those from CALD and Indigenous communities and families with disabilities.

1.3 Deficit Theories and Assumptions About Children from Super-Diverse Backgrounds

In Australian education, notions of deficit have been applied to children from minority backgrounds since colonisation. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, theories of cultural deprivation or 'deficit theory' were applied to Indigenous, working-class and immigrant communities. During this period, genetic deficiency was the popular explanation for the failure of these communities to succeed in education (Germov, 2004; Knight, 2002). These deficit explanations were informed by assimilationist social policies of monoculturalism through which cultural and linguistic difference was directly equated with cultural deficiency. There was denial that difference mattered and children from Indigenous and immigrant backgrounds were constructed as 'underachievers', 'slow learners', 'lazy' and expected to assimilate. Representations of Australian Aboriginality were constructed by discourses of deficit which framed Aboriginality in a "narrative of negativity, deficiency and disempowerment" (Fforde et al., 2013, p. 162).

As the language and cultural backgrounds of children from Indigenous and immigrant communities were viewed as an impediment to their educational capabilities, the solution to correcting these linguistic deficits was to teach them English to overcome the handicap. They were viewed as victims of their cultural, linguistic, social, and racial backgrounds and their families and communities were to blame for their situation (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2016).

Assumptions of deficit are also applied to children with disabilities. Macartney and Morton's (2013) study of families' experiences of early education with children identified as '(dis)abled' highlights ways in which children's impairments were the ultimate defining explanation for behaviour, participation, and learning. They argue that this perspective not only decontextualises learning and teaching but also draws attention away from the multiple influences that the environment has on children's learning. They also assert that a singular focus on the 'individual' further attributes the problem to that person with little regard for the importance of pedagogical practices on children's learning. These issues also apply to children and families from immigrant, refugee, and CALD backgrounds in their approach to (dis)ability.

In ECE, a dominant theoretical framework that underpins policy, curriculum and pedagogy is developmental psychology (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2016). Within this paradigm, notions of childhood and identity are limited to chronological, fixed, linear and universal stages of growth and development. Little attention is paid to the diverse influence of social and cultural lived experience, rendering children from diverse backgrounds devoid of agency and lacking in cultural and linguistic assets. Such denial of children's multiple and often contradictory experiences of social, cultural and linguistic practices pathologises difference as abnormal, deficient, lacking and at risk. This is embedded in discourses of deficit, characterised by assumptions most often applied to socio-cultural minorities which for the most part belong to super-diverse communities.

2 Theoretical Frameworks

In highlighting the significance of superdiversity and its implications for pedagogy, the discussion below examines frameworks of interculturality, cultural literacy and critical intercultural literacies in relation to post-multicultural, superdiverse societies in the context of communication practices, relationships, inequality, power and identity.

2.1 *Critical Interculturalism*

Questions of interculturality co-exist in super-linguistic diversity, and are major issues for post multicultural nation states, as well as for linguistic majorities and minorities (Blommaert, 2010; May, 2012). According to UNESCO (2006), interculturality aims to achieve “a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understandings of, respect for, and dialogue between different cultural groups” (p. 18). However, Caneva (2012) argues that interculturality is limited in its critique of ethnocentrism, racism and inequality, and falls short of providing a critique for examining ethnocentric attitudes towards cultural differences. Interculturality emphasises interpersonal relations, rather than group exchange, which underestimates the structural problems faced by cultural minorities and immigrants (Barrett, 2013). Importance is on the processes of interactions and relationships between different cultural groups, rather than understanding that these interactions are often constructed within broader societal structures and inequalities. Furthermore, Reid et al. (2016) argue that the presence of children from multiple language and cultural backgrounds alone does not necessarily mean an openness to the linguistic and cultural assets that they bring to educational settings, and that diversity itself does not produce equity and inclusion automatically. Therefore, a theoretical approach that requires a more nuanced and critical understanding of the construction of power relations and how diverse

children negotiate their multiple identities in contexts of diversity and difference is of crucial importance.

Guilherme and Dietz (2015) argue that the tendency to use interculturality uncritically, manifesting as a softer version of multiculturalism, needs to be challenged. This involves the recognition that interculturality should encourage critical reflection on the 'self' and the 'other' in contexts of inequality and difference. This requires a recognition that the use of language and communication occurs in culturally, linguistically, and socially situated contexts where power relations and diversity co-exist.

2.2 Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy has its roots in the early work of Street (1984), who argued against traditional notions of literacy as static and autonomous. He proposed an ideological model of literacy "as a social process, in which socially constructed technologies are used within institutional frameworks for specific social purposes" (p. 97). Therefore, literacy constitutes much of our everyday social practice through which meanings are represented in oral, written and visual contexts; this enables us in a variety of ways to 'read' and interpret situations, share, construct or deconstruct meanings about the world. In this process, our values, attitudes, aspirations, opinions, goals, and ideas about the world are communicated.

Contemporary views of literacy as social practice can be extended to textual and communicative practices of interaction. Maine et al. (2019) argue that cultural literacy engenders intercultural dialogue, through the opening of communicative spaces with inherent democratic potential. They suggest that if Street's ideological model of literacy as social practice can be understood as fluid and dialogical, a similar view of cultural literacy can be applied. There is less emphasis on accessing fixed cultural knowledge and more attention to "creating and responding to culture through social practices and engagement" (p. 388). Informed by Street's definition of literacy as social practice, they propose the concept of a dialogic model of cultural literacy which addresses the importance of going beyond individuals and their relationship to culture, towards engagement with others through which social interaction is key to understanding both one's own cultural identity and that of others. This includes the recognition that cultural and linguistic practices create fluid and changing interactions within the dialogic space of communication. Therefore, given our increasingly globalised, super-diverse world, the relationship between communication and culture is ever more present as we progressively encounter people from different social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. In this context, interactions and communication styles are mediated by diverse cultural norms, values, beliefs, ways of knowing and describing objects, events, practices, and relationships (Reid et al., 2016; Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2016).

2.3 *Critical Intercultural Literacies*

Critical intercultural literacies aim to go beyond negotiating meaning systems in different cultural contexts to critical reflection of how one's cultural knowledge and experiences inform and construct communication practices. This requires reflexivity which involves a critical awareness of the 'self' in relation to others (McNay, 2013). Reflexivity refers to the awareness of one's own biases and prejudices which influence the way one operates in the world (Robinson & Jones Díaz, 2016). An important aspect of intercultural communication necessitates a disposition of engaging in and learning from matters of difference, marginalisation, and otherness. To enact critical cultural literacy within contexts of intercultural communication, the willingness to be transformed and changed is crucial. This implies going beyond one's familiar cultural and linguistic mindset to engage with and be transformed by cultural and language differences, diverse identities and power relations that impact on communication.

3 Methodological Approach of Study 1 and Study 2

The data from the two studies discussed in this chapter incorporated case study approaches informed by critical theory and cultural studies (Bhabha, 1994; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Foucault, 1974; Hall, 1994, 1996). The aim of the first study was to investigate the impact of contemporary social issues of diversity and difference in the lives of children and families in Australia in view of how they are addressed in ECE settings. The second study aimed to investigate educators' and parents' perspectives on pedagogical approaches that support and extend children's home languages. In both studies, the data were analysed using Nvivo software to organize the data into key themes and sub-themes (Hughes & Jones, 2003). Nvivo was also used to manage the organization of coded data into nodes, which were subsequently sorted into categories, common themes and patterns of meaning, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Mullet, 2018). This was then applied to the research questions underpinning these studies. CDA is a qualitative approach that describes, interprets, and explains the operations of discourse in maintaining and legitimising inequalities (Mullet, 2018). In education it is useful in examining the relationship between teaching and learning and the influence of teachers' ideological perspectives on their practice (Llewellyn, 2009; Tamatea et al., 2008). The discussion that follows presents the findings of each study after the methodology pertaining to that study.

4 Study 1: Diversity and Difference in the Lives of Children and Families

This research was conducted across six ECE settings in metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales (NSW). Data collection practices included interviews; focus groups and participant observation; and field notes to ascertain the contradictions, and fluidity of pedagogical practices and family lived experiences of diversity and difference. Nine interviews were conducted with educators (directors, teachers, and playgroup workers) and three focus groups were held involving seven parents and three educators. In total there were 19 participants. In this chapter, the data from one director, one teacher, one playgroup worker and one parent are reported. Ethics approval was granted for this research by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the researchers' university (Ethics no H12055). Pseudonyms are used for all participants' names in this study.

The questions in both the interviews and focus groups centred on three key areas, including: (a) the impact of contemporary social issues on the lives of children and families in view of how children understood and responded to topics relating to diversity and difference; (b) the study of how discourses of contemporary global problems are constructed in news media and by educators, families and children; and (c) the analysis of how ECE settings addressed these concerns in pedagogy, policy and practices in terms of how educators understood superdiversity in relation to multiculturalism, Indigeneity, refugee and asylum seeking, gender and sexual diversity. This also included their understandings of equity, economic disadvantage, and globalisation. In this chapter, matters pertaining to the third key area are discussed in view of educators' understandings of the impact of superdiversity in relation to multiculturalism, Indigeneity, and refugees. During the interviews, questions related to (dis)ability were raised, and therefore the intersections between cultural and linguistic diversity and (dis)ability are also examined.

4.1 Findings and Discussion

The following discussion reports on the findings of Study 1. Highlighted is how the persistence of deficit approaches applied to Indigenous and immigrant multilingual communities reinforce normative discourses of deficit which position these communities as victims of their own circumstances. This study also draws attention to educators' reluctance to engage in critical reflexivity in their communication practices with Indigenous families and the tendency to apply deficit discourses to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families in their approach to (dis)ability.

4.2 Persistence of Deficit and White Australia Narratives

Australia's colonial past is embedded in Eurocentric constructions of white supremacy and institutional racism. This has led to the persistence of deficit and white Australian narratives about Indigenous people. The comment below from Helen, a parent from one of the focus groups, highlights the persistence of these narratives around Indigenous Australians:

It is really interesting that the Aboriginal people, being the traditional owners of this land, actually stand out more than people from other countries. They [migrants] seem to blend in quite well unless there's extreme headwear and that sort of stuff. I just find that ... Aboriginal people do stand out a little bit more I think because they go more by their traditional way, whereas people who come over here are more wanting to do things our way; not speaking in Indian or whatever, that they really want to blend in. Yeah ... I guess there's still a little bit of anger there from the Aboriginal community. I don't know if that's got anything to do with the divide, but I guess, yeah, it's interesting that they do; they do stand out more (Helen).

Helen's view of difference is constructed through a deficit lens using normative assimilationist comparisons between Indigenous and migrant Australians. She draws on the discourse of the model minority suggesting that migrants who '*blend in quite well*' and '*do things our way*' show a sign that they want to blend in. Stratton (2009) argues that the key to model minority status is through the acceptance of the dominant white culture's values and goals, which implies a version of assimilation. In this context, blending in and conforming to dominant cultural norms and language is indicative of the good migrant. Fforde et al. (2013) argue that while deficit discourses are expressed through overt racism, there are also covert, "nuanced subtle and insidious manifestations" of racism (p. 166). Helen's reference to '*our way*' suggests that Indigenous people remain outsiders, incapable of blending into the Western system. They are blamed for their marginalisation and their anger is constructed as failure to '*blend in*' at the expense of following '*their traditional way*'.

Helen's views raise critical issues in view of how educators work with families, in the recognition that family perspectives and attitudes towards minority groups, particularly Indigenous Australians, impact on children's understanding of racial minorities and racial inequality. Robinson and Jones Díaz (2016) argue that matters deemed controversial or difficult, that are associated with social justice, are often considered by educators as 'private' family matters, and consequently are avoided and silenced. They propose that educators' responsibility is to engage and communicate with families, offering alternative narratives and discourses around inequality and discrimination. This involves a critical reflexive approach through which intercultural literacy plays an important role. As highlighted earlier, central to reflexivity is developing critical self-consciousness in relation to the Other. In this context, educators are prepared to involve parents, such as Helen, in deconstructing deficit, colonialist and assimilationist discourses about Indigenous and immigrant Australians.

4.3 *They Didn't Feel That They Connected*

Discourses of managerialism have become normalised within the last 20 years, whereby pedagogy has become the tool in which market-oriented skills are prioritised to compete in the global economy (Giroux, 2011). Giroux argues that there has been a move away from teachers as being transformative intellectuals informed by principles of social justice and equity. This has resulted in the stifling of critical thought in education at all levels to produce student passivity and teacher routinisation. In the interview below with two educators from one of the ECE settings, Sandra, the educator and Jessica, the Director, reflect on an incident involving an Indigenous family who left the centre:

We ... had a family that ... they didn't feel that they connected ... and felt they didn't build the relationship. That ended up quite a ... concern ... We ... discussed and revisited our approach and our attitude ... but that was disappointing ... to feel that someone hasn't built that relationship. (Sandra).

It appears that the onus was on 'them' (the family) to connect and build relationships with the educators. While there was an attempt by the ECE setting to revisit their approach, it didn't seem to go far enough and perhaps the focus was limited to the management of the issue. In the extract below, Jessica reflects on the conversational practices between the educators and the families:

You know if we're thinking about families that [are] hard to connect with, it wouldn't necessarily just be related to [cultural diversity] ... It's more families that we connect with personally. ... that we would have things in common with. We've had several conversations in staff meetings around that for us just to be ... aware. Because we noticed that there are some families who are coming in and staff will just naturally be drawn to them. They're very chatting. They're very friendly. So, we're having more conversations with those families about their children, and their children's interests. I had become aware that there were several families who were more introverted, tended to slip in quietly, get their children, and away, and staff were just allowing them to do that. So, I raised that as a concern because I felt the children of those families then were really being quite disadvantaged because we knew less about them. So, staff really took that on board, and ... made efforts towards going to those families, striking up conversations. So, that has been an improvement in our practice, I think. But that wasn't necessarily related to cultural diversity, I don't think. (Jessica).

While Jessica reflects on the importance of making a concerted effort to communicate with families on a day-to-day basis with whom that they have less in common, the focus appears to be making the ECE setting more parent friendly. Jessica's comment that this strategy '*wasn't necessarily related to cultural diversity*' suggests a reluctance to engage in critical reflexivity into how the setting could have prevented this situation from re-occurring, particularly in view of communicating with Indigenous families. It appears that the focus remains at a mainstream level of communicating with all families. The settings' solution to make 'efforts to strike up conversations' may not necessarily prove effective, especially for Indigenous families who may shy away from this, feeling intimidated and overwhelmed. In this

context, families are seen as homogeneous entities through which a monocultural approach is adopted. Rather than disrupting or challenging communication practices that are limited to symbolic gestures of inclusion, deficit systems and ideologies remain intact, which only serves to perpetuate inequality and uniformity.

4.4 Deficit Discourses Applied to CALD Families in Their Approach to (Dis)ability

Frameworks of cultural practices and ethnicity are partial explanations of the diversity of experiences in terms of how families access services (Cardona et al., 2005). When ethnicity and culture are understood as 'problems' that need to be 'fixed', this reinforces cultural practice and identity as static and unified (Hall, 1994, 1996). In the extract below, the playgroup worker, Fay, reflects on her interactions with a woman from a CALD and refugee background whose child has a (dis)ability.

Explaining the ... problems with their children are often difficult because the parents don't want to accept it ... one mother did not want to recognise there was a problem with her boy. I observed him interacting with other children and he was borderline autistic but to make sure, we needed a medical examination of the child. The mother was very upset. (Fay).

From the mother's perspective, her doctor had said that her child, 'was normal'. Perhaps it would have been a surprise for her to learn about an impending medical examination of her child. In this context, Fay appears to be more focussed on the mother's denial of the possibility that her child could be borderline autistic, and less interested in the mother's previous cultural lived experiences and medical knowledge of her child. This in turn produces a narrative of deficit, where the educator has perhaps positioned the mother as difficult, and therefore a problem. Macartney and Morton (2013) argue that it is dangerous to assume that providing 'inclusive' environments is a straightforward and predictable process. They emphasise the importance of educators developing open, responsive and attentive listening practices towards Others, which include immigrant parents' approach to their children's (dis)ability. Furthermore, the prevalence of discourses explaining the reluctance of CALD families to access (dis)ability services because of shame was noted by Cardona et al. (2005). They argued that despite existing differences between CALD and Anglo-Australian families, in terms of cultural perceptions of family responsibility, (dis)ability and illness, viewing culture and ethnicity as homogenised frameworks of reference offers limited explanations about the diversity of experiences of service usage, including ECE. These concepts run the risk of becoming a singular framework of reference to explain disadvantage and exclusion from participation in service usage. Often ethnicity and culture are understood in terms of 'problems' or 'barriers' inherent in CALD communities.

5 Study 2: Supporting and Extending Children's Home Languages

The study was conducted across two ECE settings in urban regions with CALD communities in Sydney, Australia. These settings included a Spanish bilingual long day care (LDC)/preschool setting for children 6 months – 6 years of age, and a preschool for children four-five years of age which employed a Mandarin-speaking educator whose specific role was to support and extend children's Mandarin. Data collection practices included interviews, participant observation and field notes to ascertain the level of multilingual support afforded to the children attending these settings.

Interviews were conducted with four educators (one director and room leader/educator from the Spanish bilingual LDC / preschool setting, and one director and EC teacher from the preschool setting), and four parents from each setting to investigate their perceptions of the settings' programs to examine the ways in which children's home languages were valued and supported at the settings. Eight children (one child of each parent) were observed for the duration of the study. In total there were 20 participants. In the broader study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were incorporated, using participant observations and field notes to capture children's use of their home languages and English throughout the day in the ECE settings. Since the focus of this chapter is based on educators' perspectives, information from the children and parents is not included (see, Escudero et al., 2020 for quantitative findings from the participant observation data from the bilingual long day care / preschool setting). Ethics approval was granted for this research by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics no H12904). Pseudonyms are used for all participants' names in in this study.

The research questions in the interviews with educators and parents focussed on four key areas, including: (a) validation and support to children's home languages at the setting; (b) opportunities afforded to children to use their home languages throughout the day at the setting; (c) parents' perspectives and experiences of their children's maintenance and use of the home language in the setting and (d) the pedagogical practices and policies implemented at the settings that support the retention and extension of children's home languages. As this chapter is a critical contrastive analysis of deficit-based discourses versus cultural and linguistically responsive discourses applied to Indigenous and CALD communities, information pertaining to the preschool setting is the primary focus because it highlights educators' critical reflexive positioning in discourses of multilingualism. Therefore, matters pertaining to the first key area are discussed in view of educators' perceptions of the impact of home language validation and support at the setting.

5.1 *Findings and Discussion*

In contrast to the ways in which families with (dis)ability are constructed as deficient in Study 1, the data reported below highlight the effectiveness of strength-based culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies. Study 2 draws attention to the impact of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies of multilingualism where the educators engage in critical intercultural reflexivity and cultural literacy in relation to their work with Mandarin-speaking families, children, and educators to build on and sustain multilingual children's linguistic capabilities at the setting. In this study, the role of reflexive and supportive communication is key to the maintenance of home languages and cultural practices. It also highlights the importance of critical reflexivity in legitimising the cultural and linguistic capital of multilingual educators.

5.2 *Supporting Multilingual Families in Raising Multilingual Children*

Questions of identity constructed through cultural and linguistic practices are major issues for both linguistic majorities and minorities (Blommaert, 2010; May, 2012). For multilingual families, these issues are significant due to pressures from community attitudes, educators, and other professionals to abandon their home language in preference for English. As information about the benefits of multilingualism is not often made known to young parents, silences are created around their capacity to raise concerns regarding their children's multilingual trajectory (Jones Díaz, 2018). Consequently, these families often consider the home language as an impediment to their children's academic success, insisting that their children rapidly learn English as they transition into the ECE setting and beyond into primary school. This often results in the abandonment of the home language in preference for Speaking English (Schwartz, 2010). Newly arrived migrant families can be unsupportive of home language use in ECE settings, and this was evident at the preschool setting. In the extract below, the Director, Molly, from the preschool setting comments on concerns of parents from Mandarin-speaking backgrounds regarding English:

I know a few of the parents, no no no, ..., we don't want our children speaking Mandarin all day, we want our children to speak English. And at that point, I really recognize [the] dilemma that they had. (Molly).

Molly's critical reflection highlights the need for educators to fully engage in conversations with families around the importance of maintaining the home language. In understanding the complexities of raising multilingual children, particularly when English unknowingly 'takes over' family interactions, it is crucial that educators develop respectful and sensitive communicative practices around these issues. This is especially relevant for interracial or interethnic families where more than

one language and/or dialect is spoken. Ongoing support and encouragement regarding families' concerns is necessary. This involves conversations with families about the importance of the home language as a resource and asset for learning and the negotiation of identity and sense of 'self'.

Furthermore, challenges that are linked to the immigration experience can include anxiety and separation from family and the home country. For young multilingual children, these issues are exacerbated when there is no home language support at the EC setting. In the comment below, the educator Kiera, from the preschool setting reflects on her lack of insight into one of the children's cultural and linguistic isolation as that child transitioned into the preschool setting:

She misses her friends. She misses school ... she misses everything there. And ... she ... just ... didn't want to invest in friendships here, or really have anything to do with the teachers because she missed her teachers [from her home country]. And ... it wasn't until the bilingual teacher came and talked to her that we understood this situation, ... how she's been feeling for months and months And I didn't know because I didn't speak [her] language. (Kiera).

Kiera's reflexivity of her limitations as a monolingual educator enables a recognition of her lack of preparedness to facilitate the child's linguistic and emotional needs. She was not aware of the power of home languages in supporting multilingual children's emotional needs and communicative capacity until the arrival of a bilingual teacher, whose multilingual assets not only helped appease the child, but to extend her learning in Mandarin. This highlights the need for professional development for educators to understand the crucial benefits of early childhood multilingualism in promoting intellectual, linguistic, sociocultural, and familial benefits for children and families. This also points to the important role multilingual educators play in supporting and extending children's multilingual potential (Jones Díaz et al., 2022).

5.3 The Role of Multilingual Educators in Pedagogies of Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

In the extract below, Molly reflects on the importance of being strategic in the employment of multilingual educators:

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

Molly's admittance to not being strategic in supporting children's linguistic potential is highly reflexive when she recognises that being strategic around employing multilingual educators builds on and recognises the expertise of early childhood multilingual educators. Bourdieu (1990, 1991) argues that cultural capital ascribes forms of advantage that some people acquire through family and life experiences. This includes linguistic capital inherent in the language resources and literacy

practices acquired in childhood. Bourdieu (1993) claims that linguistic markets operate within social fields when “someone produces an utterance for receivers capable of assessing it, evaluating it and setting a price on it” (p. 79). His use of a market analogy draws attention to the ways in which languages have certain value in social fields and the value ascribed to a particular language depends on the laws that are determined by the market operating in various social fields (Jones Díaz, 2011). Therefore, in ECE settings, where multilingual educators are strategically employed to extend and sustain children's multilingual repertoires, this in turn legitimises children's and families' cultural and linguistic capital.

In understanding the specific expertise of multilingual educators in building and supporting the cultural and linguistic assets of multilingual children, the extracts below highlight the connections with multilingual families by integrating the home language into the curriculum as a bridge to learning:

Bilingual education is about trying to connect the home language with what's happening within the ... environment. So, ... [a bilingual teacher] who can facilitate that, [is] important. ... and just having the connection with the families in that way as well. (Kiera)

Below, Molly describes specifically how multilingual educators scaffold and extend children's home languages:

[The children] seem ... a lot more confident [and] ... more involved in the program. ... we are getting insight into their thinking that we never had before. You know ... [the bilingual educator] is sharing with Kiera and ... me and we're going wow, imagine that they were thinking that! ... So it's been quite ... a ... revelation ... how much more comfortable our families are feeling, how ... a lot more [are] smiling and ... I can see ... [that] they feel really valued. (Molly)

Molly and Kiera's emphasis on the cultural and linguistic expertise that multilingual educators bring to their setting highlights the interconnections between social, linguistic, and cultural capital. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as accumulated resources that are accessed through networks, relationships, and social groups. It provides a potential tool for conversion to other forms of capital such as linguistic and cultural capital. In settings where there is a healthy appetite for multilingualism to flourish, the role of multilingual educators strengthens relationships with all families through their cultural and linguistic connections. These conversion strategies facilitate intercultural communication through the accumulation of linguistic, cultural, and social capital as children develop friendships and relationships with peers and educators at the ECE setting.

6 Conclusion

In post multicultural societies such as Australia, super-diversity, globalisation, interculturalism and cultural literacy is of increasing importance due to the layering of variables related to immigration, human rights and global labour markets — all of which are shaped by interactions of gender, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, class,

religious values, languages and cultural practices. Therefore, an intersectionality approach towards diversity and difference permits a greater incorporation and recognition of cultural, linguistic, and social difference beyond multiculturalism. In this context, notions of super-linguistic diversity enable greater insights into how communication, interactions and relationships between people are central to social, cultural, and linguistic practices.

In understanding the socio-historical context of educational approaches towards difference, deficit discourses have often been applied to children and families from Indigenous and immigrant backgrounds, and families and children living with (dis)abilities. Unfortunately, the implications of these deficit narratives continue to linger where minorities are often constructed as devoid of agency, with limited capacity. This in turn constructs children and families from diverse communities as marginal, unequal and culturally deficient. In response to these issues, critical interculturalism and cultural literacy are useful in enabling a move beyond a simplistic focus on the 'Other' to a more nuanced and reflexive approach that recognises the power relations that exist between social, cultural and language groups. This requires critical reflexivity of the 'self' in relation to the 'Other', particularly in contexts of diversity and difference, inequality, and marginalisation.

In highlighting the utility of critical interculturalism and cultural literacy for ECE, educators' perspectives of diversity and difference are key to building and sustaining children's cultural and linguistic potential. This also includes facilitating equitable relationships and communication practices with Indigenous families, CALD families of children with (dis)abilities and multilingual families. Furthermore, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies of multilingualism, informed by critical intercultural reflexivity and cultural literacy, effectively facilitate the cultural and linguistic assets of multilingual children, families and educators.

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