

SUPPORTING BILINGUALISM, MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE EARLY YEARS



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We respectfully acknowledge the
Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria
and pay respect to Elders past and present of all
Victorian Aboriginal communities.

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A note on terminology

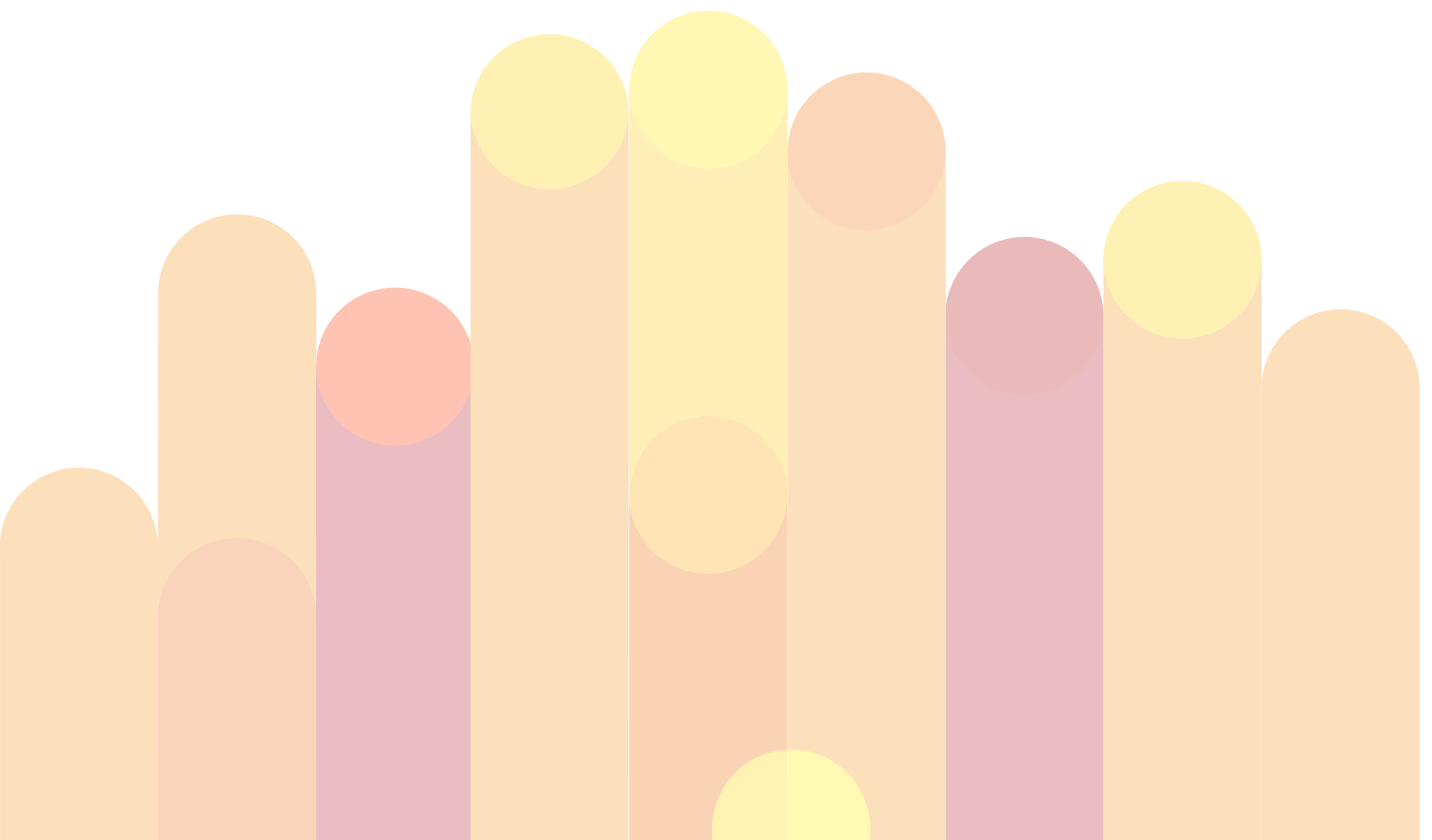
This practice guide makes a distinction between the term 'bilingualism', which refers to the ability of an individual to use two or more languages, and the term 'multilingualism', which refers to a societal characteristic and the practice of multiple languages within a group, community, region or country. Bilingualism and multilingualism are both assets and goals for Victoria's society.

The term 'family-language' refers to a child's mother tongue, first language, home language or heritage language. This term emphasises a rights-based approach to early years education and care, which supports young children to learn and respect the culture, languages and values of their family and communities.

In this practice guide, the term 'Koorie' includes both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria. Use of the terms 'Aboriginal', 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous' are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'Koorie English' refers to a localised Victorian variant of 'Aboriginal English', and is often the first language or home language of Victorian Koorie children.

This practice guide includes a glossary of all italicised terms.



Introduction

Supporting Bilingualism, Multilingualism and Language Learning in the Early Years has been developed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) to support the implementation of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

This practice guide facilitates reflection around linguistic diversity, multilingualism, children's multilingual development and language learning. Use this practice guide to support critical reflection on your practice, for discussion with a mentor or critical friend, or as a guide for discussion with your colleagues. Its scenarios and learning activities will support engagement with key concepts of the VEYLDF as they relate to bilingual children, families and professionals.

Purpose

The purpose of this practice guide is to:

- strengthen early childhood professionals' understanding of Koorie Languages in Victoria, bilingualism, multilingualism, and multilingual education in the early years
- highlight the importance of children's family-language in their learning, development and education
- guide early childhood educators to conceptualise their curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices from a multilingual perspective
- promote practices that acknowledge, respect and promote the multilingual heritage and potential of Victorian communities
- guide early childhood professionals to support equity, diversity and continuity of learning by incorporating children's languages, cultures and knowledge as the foundation and resource for teaching and learning
- improve the quality of engagement between early childhood educators, multilingual children and families, and other early childhood professionals
- emphasise the importance of the birth-to-eight-years period in the establishment of a strong foundation in the family-language for both simultaneous and subsequent bilingualism, including competence in English.

This practice guide draws on interdisciplinary research on bilingualism, multilingualism and multilingual education. It is designed to inform a greater understanding of bilingual learning and development in the early years, and guide educators in their approach to teaching and learning in multilingual communities. This guide emphasises the importance of understanding family-languages as the foundation, resource and outcome of learning.

Engagement with the learning activities will inform a greater understanding of multilingual teaching, and illustrate strategies and approaches to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for learning. This guide highlights the dynamic nature of bilingualism and considers a holistic approach to understanding bilingual learning and responding to the needs of bilingual children. It will support educators to support bilingualism, multilingualism and language learning.

How to use this practice guide

This practice guide presents concepts, scenarios and reflective questions that align with the Practice Principles and Learning and Development Outcomes of the VEYLDF. It foregrounds the importance of the reclamation of Koorie Languages in Victoria, and emphasises the value of linguistic diversity, multilingualism and bilingual learning and development in the early years.

The scenarios have been developed in consultation with a range of early childhood professionals from a variety of settings. They are designed to provoke critical discussions about how educators can incorporate children's family-languages into their day-to-day practice to personalise learning so as to support each child's emergent multilingualism. Each scenario begins with a link to the VEYLDF Practice Principles and key learning points. It concludes with reflective questions that serve as discussion prompts.

The flexible design of this practice guide provides the opportunity to either engage with one scenario at a time (for example, as part of regular team meetings) or to set aside blocks of time to look at the theoretical sections. The material can be used as a reference tool to help work through practice challenges. Group discussion will maximise engagement; however, this practice guide can also be used on an individual basis to guide reflection or support discussion with families and other professionals.

Before engaging with colleagues, each early childhood educator should become familiar with the discussion paper *Supporting Children Learning English as a Second Language in the Early Years (birth to six years)* (Clarke 2009), and the resource booklet *Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years (Birth to Six)* (Clarke 2011).

Linguistic diversity, bilingualism and multilingualism in Victoria

Linguistic diversity has always been a defining characteristic of ancient and contemporary societies living within the boundaries of the state of Victoria. Today, the Traditional Owners of Victoria are connected to 38 different language groups.

Settler and immigrant groups report using more than 250 languages. Victorians claim ancestries from more than 200 countries, with around half of the population (49.1 per cent) being born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas. This significant linguistic diversity is reflected in Victorian classrooms, where one in four students is bilingual.

Bilingualism is the way young children continue to use and develop their family-language, while also learning the languages of their community.

Multilingualism contributes to cultural and social development, and strengthens intercultural communication and understanding. It promotes equity, justice and social cohesion by empowering individuals and communities to sustain their cultural and linguistic heritage.

In Victoria, the rich array of languages and cultures enable many opportunities for valuing and strengthening multilingual capabilities, respecting cultural diversity, supporting common values and building social cohesion. (VEYLDF, p. 18)

Koorie Languages in Victoria

Victorian Traditional Owners have been and continue to be committed to the reclamation of Victorian Koorie Languages. Elders, respected community members, youth and community organisations are diligently working to relearn, strengthen and speak Aboriginal Languages.

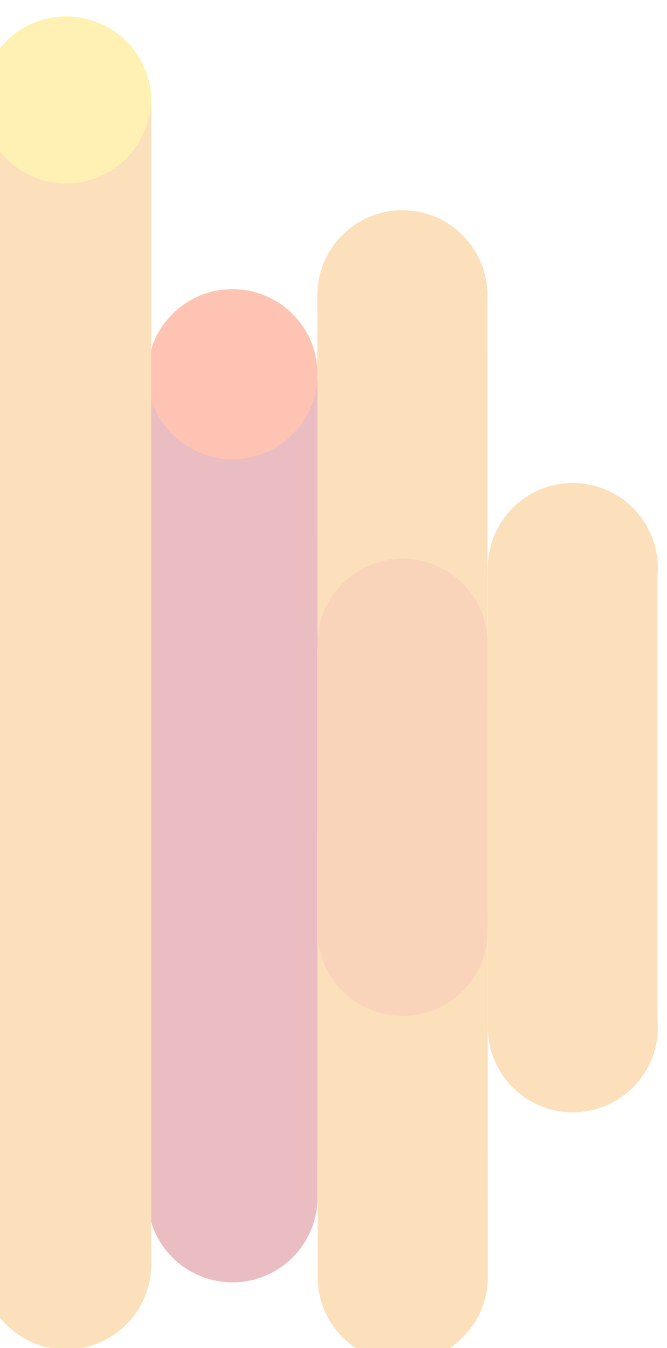
The Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Aboriginal people as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge-holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage. This includes intangible cultural heritage such as language. At a local level, Registered Aboriginal Parties and other Traditional Owner organisations are the voice of Aboriginal peoples in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

Languages and identity

Before the arrival of Europeans, Koorie people often learnt multiple Languages, including the Language of the Country where their family was located, as well as the Language of the neighbouring Country. Each Language contained sacred, cultural and scientific information, which was passed orally from generation to generation. Language has developed from a holistic knowledge of the land and water. Koorie people have a rich tradition that passes on knowledge about stories, songs, dance, music and art.

Early settlement led to the discontinuation of widely spoken Aboriginal Languages. This included the removal of Koorie children through practices that led to the Stolen Generations and resulted in Koorie people being unable to speak their Languages because of the fear that their children would be taken away. Assimilation policies continued into the early 1970s, and the intergenerational trauma created through these practices continues.

Koorie Languages are an intrinsic part of Koorie identity, history and culture. Koorie Languages belong in and emerge from 'Country'. Written with a capital 'C', Country refers to the traditional lands of a particular Language or cultural group, for example, Boon Wurrung Country. This is commonly seen and heard in phrases such as 'Welcome to Country', 'Acknowledgement of Country', 'I grew up on Country' and 'We're taking students and families back to Country for Language and culture workshops'. While a Language name is often the same name for Country and for people, sometimes the name of the Language is different. For example, Wurundjeri people from Wurundjeri Country in parts of Melbourne and surrounds speak the Woiwurrung Language (VAEI 2017).



Importance of language learning

The Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) was established in 1994 with the goal of 'retrieving, recording and researching Aboriginal languages', which have been lost since colonisation (VACL 2019).

The Victorian Koorie Languages in Schools program, first piloted in 2012, has spread across the state. In 2018, more than 1800 Victorian students were involved in learning a Victorian Aboriginal language. This schools program has been made possible by a collaborative partnership between VACL, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI), the VCAA, and the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The role of VAEAI, as the peak body for and about Koorie education and training in Victoria, is to advise and support education providers in establishing a language program, and in engaging with Traditional Owners, their Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) and local Koorie community members to develop or deliver Language programs and curriculum resources.

The *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026* sets out the Victorian Government's framework for improving outcomes for Koorie learners across the early childhood, schools, training and skills, and higher education sectors. *Marrung* was developed in partnership with the Koorie community, including VAEAI, the Department of Education and Training's principal partner in Koorie education. Action 2c specifically relates to Koorie Languages in education:

Increasing the number of Koorie language programs in Victorian kindergartens and schools, by supporting community efforts at language learning through working with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages and providing assistance to support Koorie community members to undertake relevant language and teacher training courses.

Victorian Koorie Languages in the early years

Non-Koorie educators are strongly encouraged to collaborate with Elders and Traditional Owners in the development of a shared vision for teaching and learning respectfully on Koorie Country. Respect for the knowledge and traditions of Koorie people involves becoming familiar with the people and Languages of the land on which those Languages are taught and learnt. Young children thrive through connecting to the place that surrounds them. Learning Koorie Languages creates opportunities for children to become more richly connected to the Country of the First Peoples.

Families and kinship members have primary influence on their children's learning and development. They provide children with the relationships, opportunities and experiences that shape each child's sense of belonging, being and becoming. (VEYLDF, p. 5)

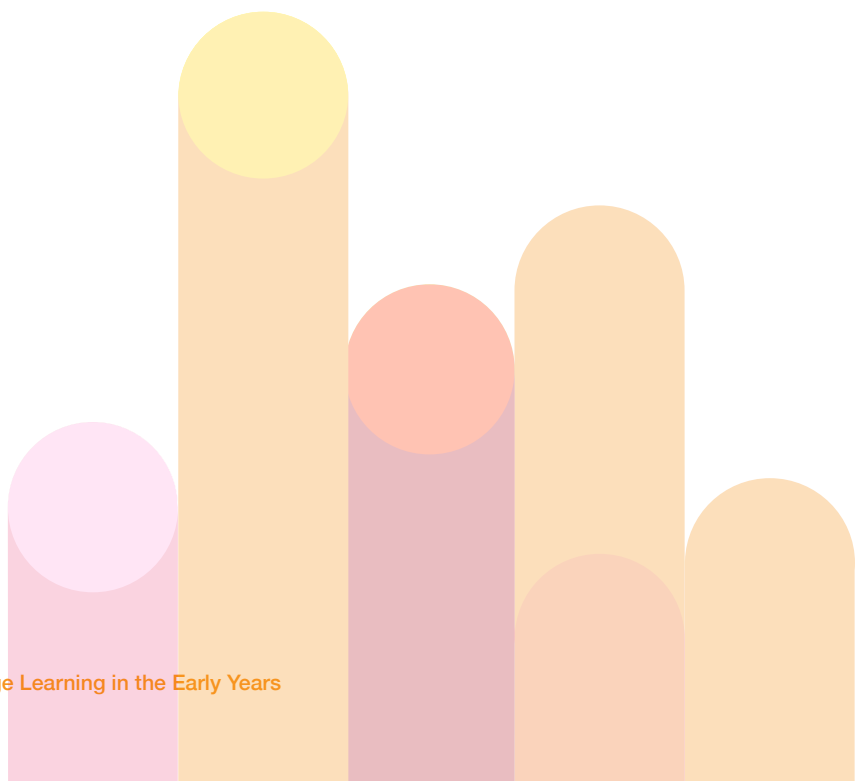
Languages in Victoria since 1834

The first permanent European settlement in what is now known as Victoria was established in 1834. Most immigrants to Victoria initially came from the British Isles, including Ireland and Wales, which led to English becoming the dominant language. In the mid-1800s, the Victorian gold rush brought new waves of immigrants from many parts of Europe, Asia and the Americas. For decades, the use of immigrant languages flourished because each linguistic community developed its own schools and press, and actively used its languages.

The introduction of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* marked a new era for languages in Australia, during which non-Europeans were excluded from entering the country (known as the 'White Australia Policy'). English gained complete dominance, particularly in education, as a result of this and other policies.

In the early 1970s, the shift to multicultural perspectives and policies supported the rights of all people and communities to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage and practices. The next decades marked productive periods for linguistic diversity and multilingualism, with the provision and development of community language schools, and efforts to promote language learning in schools.

Today, in addition to Koorie Languages, more than 250 languages are spoken in Victoria. In the 2016 Census, the languages most commonly used in Victorian homes, apart from English, were identified as Mandarin, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese, Punjabi, Hindi, Sinhalese and Spanish.



A rights-based approach and the ecological model of multilingualism

A rights-based approach to the education of bilingual children highlights the importance of supporting the right of children to learn their family and community languages to a proficient and fluent level.

It acknowledges the cultural, ancestral and spiritual value of languages, and promotes equity and diversity. It promotes bilingualism for all children, and features multilingualism as an asset and a goal for Victorian children, families and communities. It supports language learning, bilingual experiences and interactions, and *translanguaging*. Languages are accorded a high and equal value, the space to be featured and represented in the physical environment (such as in signs, meetings, labels and resources), and the time to be used, learnt and practised by children, families and educators.

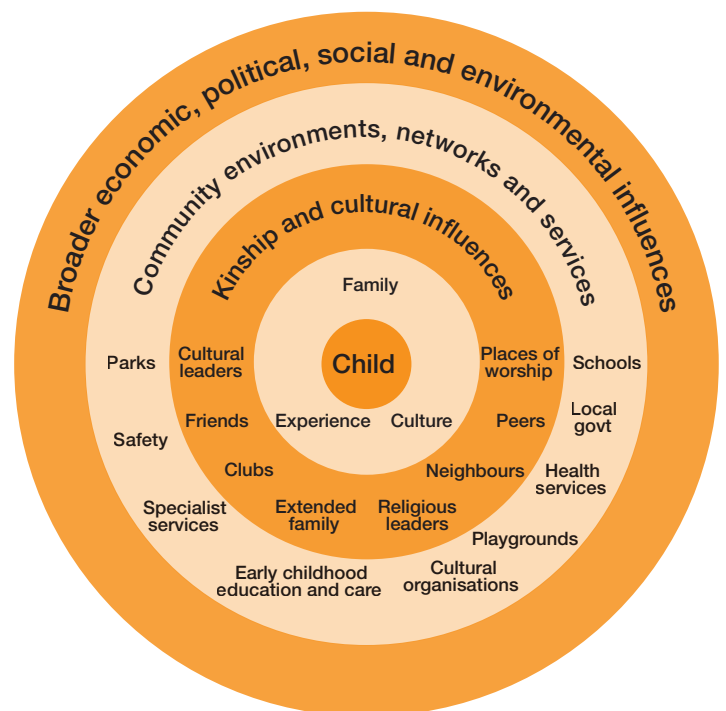
Bilingual educators are good models for the use of family-languages in the educational context. They *scaffold* children's language and bilingualism through the use of *translanguaging* strategies, and support the development of metalinguistic awareness. They showcase linguistic diversity and ensure equitable opportunities for bilingual learning. English-monolingual teachers also promote family-language use in strategic situations, model a language-learning disposition, and support the learning of English and the development of language and communication skills.

Following the ecological model, which was adapted from Bronfenbrenner, and underpins the VEYLDF (see Figure 1) early childhood education and care is underpinned by an integrated and holistic vision of each child's context, reality, strengths, needs, interests, achievements and goals. Children's language acquisition and learning trajectories are shaped within these dynamic and interrelated systems, and shape the ways they identify and associate with their cultural and linguistic communities and family context.

Nurturing a *multilingual ecology*:

- acknowledges the cultural and linguistic practices of all children and families
- promotes multilingualism, multimodal communication, multiliteracies and intercultural understanding
- values diversity and strives for equity
- inspires creativity and innovation
- communicates a multilingual vision for learning
- enables and enriches bilingualism and multilingualism.

Figure 1: Ecological model of child development adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979) (VEYLDF p. 5).



Upholding, respecting and supporting children's rights

Early childhood educators and professionals play a crucial role in collaborating with families to enable and support each child's language learning and bilingualism. Early childhood educators and professionals:

- ensure children's rights and experiences are recognised and valued, and that all children enjoy equitable access to resources and learning opportunities that are relevant to their lives, knowledge and cultures
 - recognise that languages are inextricably linked to children's identity, culture and heritage, as well as to their linguistic and cognitive development and academic success
 - nurture a *multilingual ecology* by designing multilingual learning environments and pedagogical practices that offer children rich opportunities to practise their languages and bilingualism, and explore language differences and linguistic diversity
 - collaborate closely with families to support and extend the practice and learning of languages and literacies
 - promote intercultural awareness and understanding, and support children to strengthen their sense of identity, belonging, and connection to place and community
 - acknowledge the nuances and influences of each child's bilingualism, and how they plan, alongside parents and carers, to respond to each child's language-learning needs
- adopt holistic and integrated approaches to enable and extend children's bilingualism
 - affirm each child's identity, *funds of knowledge* and language practices, and use these as the foundation and resource for teaching and learning
 - recognise the differences between monolingual and bilingual learning, and personalise the curriculum to provide *multilingual* and *multimodal* opportunities for children to use their family-languages and learn additional languages
 - ensure all children are supported to extend their *linguistic repertoires*, and strengthen their languages and communication skills
 - advocate for cultural and linguistic diversity, and multilingualism
 - support *multiliteracies* and different modes of language, communication and self-expression.

Bilingualism in the early years

In this practice guide, bilingualism is used to describe an individual's ability to use two or more languages. For the purpose of this guide, children who are exposed to the use and learning of two or more languages are recognised as bilingual, even if they are only at the beginning or emerging stages of bilingualism.

The early years are essential to children's full and continuing development, and a critical period for language acquisition and learning. Early childhood bilingualism is common and natural, as infants and young children can acquire and differentiate multiple languages simultaneously or sequentially from birth onwards. Early bilingualism should be recognised as an asset that yields innumerable long-term benefits that all children can take advantage of throughout their childhood, youth and adult life.

Young children's bilingual development can be broadly considered in these two categories:

- **simultaneous bilingualism** – where young children acquire multiple languages from birth. For example, where each parent speaks a different language, also called the 'one parent – one language' approach; or instances where both parents are bilingual. Infants can differentiate between two languages from very early on. It is common for *emerging bilingual* children to *translanguage*, or mix their language, particularly when interacting with other bilingual children
- **sequential bilingualism** – where children acquire one language in the home and learn a second or third language in the early childhood setting or school.

These categories are not clearly distinguishable as children may transition from the home to early childhood settings or other multilingual contexts from an early age. Nonetheless, they serve to emphasise how children's language acquisition and learning is influenced by different input patterns, as well as the timing and length of exposure to different languages.

A holistic perspective and dynamic model of bilingualism

A *holistic perspective of bilingualism* moves beyond the understanding of languages as discrete and autonomous systems that are used separately and independently. It recognises a child's *linguistic repertoire* as a complex phenomenon consisting of multiple codes and modes of expression that always relate to a child's social and linguistic context. This shift emphasises the social nature of language; the uniqueness of each child's language practices; and the importance of *multiliteracies* and *multimodalities*. It highlights the dynamic and interconnected ways in which young bilingual children draw on different features of their *linguistic repertoire* to make meaning, to communicate and to expand their knowledge and proficiency in each language.

This model of *dynamic bilingualism* recognises bilingual language practices as fluid, coexisting, and interdependent. It supports children to make use of their complete *linguistic repertoires* in a dynamic meaning-making process. This enables them to draw on their existing *linguistic repertoires* to make sense of, and build and extend new language and knowledge. The dynamic use of multiple languages in bilingual discursive practices is also known as *translanguaging*. When applied in teaching and learning, *translanguaging* supports the development of multiple linguistic identities, affirms children's heritage, cultural background and knowledge, and ensures *continuity of learning* and equity.

Emergent bilingual learners: Different languages, unique languagings

Young children come to know language, and different ways of using language, through their relationships with their family, kin, communities and environments. Children learn and speak the languages that are valued in the environments in which they learn and interact with others.

Bilingual families develop unique language dynamics, routines and practices that are contingent on each family's background, interests, goals and lifestyles. Children negotiate and develop their languages and identities through interaction with others, and bilingual children flourish and succeed in learning environments that nurture a *multilingual ecology* in which educators, families and early years professionals collaborate to provide rich bilingual learning experiences and outcomes.

Bilingual children use their *linguistic repertoires* to support their meaning-making process, to build on their knowledge, and extend their abilities and skills. Children's family-languages are a foundation and resource for learning, the conduit for cultural, religious and spiritual knowledge of language, and the legacy and heritage of their parents and ancestors. Children's use of language, known as *languaging*, is influenced by the power relations and language dynamics of their learning contexts. The space, value, input and practice dedicated to each language determine the way children become aware of their bilingualism and use their languages.

The following section provides an overview of strategies and approaches that early childhood educators can use to respond to the bilingual realities, strengths and needs of children and families.

The VEYLDF acknowledges that every child will take a unique path toward achieving the five Outcomes, and that all children will require different levels of support, some requiring significantly more than others. (VEYLDF, p. 4)

Responding to children's bilingualism and language learning needs

Early childhood educators should plan and implement strategies and programs that are relevant to the language-learning realities and needs of each child and family. They do this by building their understanding of the multifaceted and multilayered nature of multilingual contexts, and the individual experiences of each child.

Early childhood educators support children's learning and development when they:

- understand the family-language practices and learning contexts of each child
- design holistic approaches to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for learning that take into consideration children's *linguistic repertoires*, *funds of knowledge*, communities and identities, and are tailored to meet their linguistic and academic needs
- implement collaborative strategies with families and other early childhood professionals to enhance language learning and support bilingualism
- provide rich and relevant resources that support learning, fluency and proficiency in each language
- nurture a multilingual learning ecology that promotes the cultural, linguistic, social and creative value of multilingualism, advocates for bilingual education, and supports languages teaching and learning.

The multilingual contexts and practices that bilingual children experience are unique and dynamic; however, it is possible to assess broad aspects from common situations that may arise. Table 1 summarises some multilingual scenarios that educators might encounter.

Early childhood professionals recognise multilingualism as an asset and support children to maintain their first language, learn English as an additional language, and learn languages other than English. (VEYLDF, p. 12)

Table 1: Examples of multilingual scenarios in early childhood education

Bi/multilingual context	Children’s bilingual experiences
Koorie Languages	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owner Koorie families learning and reclaiming traditional Koorie Languages. • Koorie families whose first or heritage Language is outside of Victoria maintaining or learning and reclaiming their heritage Language/s. • Use of Aboriginal English (Koorie or other variety) at home and in community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may or may not have had exposure to their family’s Koorie Languages and other Aboriginal Languages. • Children for whom English is the dominant language who are participating in Language reclamation and learning. • Children may have had exposure to Koorie English.
Bilingualism and multilingualism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parents/carers use a community language; one or both parents/carers may or may not be English-speakers; English use is limited in the home context; families may or may not have strong connections to their linguistic community. • This could include first- or second-generation Australians, recently arrived migrants, families from refugee backgrounds and families currently seeking asylum. • Each parent speaks a different language (one parent – one language); one parent is monolingual, the other parent is bilingual; and/or both parents/carers are bilingual. This could include: families where one parent is a recent migrant; families composed of different <i>heritage language</i> groups; families where both parents/carers are recent migrants and speak multiple languages at home, including English; and families for whom English is the dominant language but who also use other languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may have had limited or no previous exposure to English. • Children require bilingual support to facilitate self-expression, social interactions, group participation and <i>continuity of learning</i> in cognitive areas in and beyond the English language. • Families may require bicultural support during the process of settling into their local community. • Parents/carers may require interpreting and translating services. • Parents/carers may require support connecting to other community services, and/or other members of their linguistic community. • Children for whom English is the dominant language who are also learning a different language.
Heritage languages	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers speak English predominantly and may or may not know their heritage language; parents/carers may or may not use the heritage language but the grandparents and extended family do; parents/carers have an interest in teaching and/or learning the heritage language; English may or may not be the dominant language in the home context. • This could include Aboriginal Languages. This could include second-, third- and/or fourth-generation Australians. • English and different English varieties are also <i>heritage languages</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children for whom English is the dominant language who are also learning their <i>heritage language</i>. • Children who may or may not have consistent exposure to the <i>heritage language</i>.

Bi/multilingual context

Children's bilingual experiences

Australian Sign Language (ASL) – Auslan

- One or both parents/carers are deaf or hard of hearing and use Auslan and/or English; hearing parents/carers may or may not have Auslan as their primary language and may or may not speak English; parents may be learning Auslan; parents/carers may use a different sign language and are learning Auslan.
- This could include: families for whom Auslan is the primary language; families for whom Auslan is an additional language; families for whom Auslan is an additional sign language; and migrant families who use other sign languages.
- Children who are Auslan users may or may not use or have had exposure to English.
- Children who may or may not be deaf or hard-of-hearing and are learning Auslan as an additional language.
- Deaf or hard-of-hearing children of migrant families may or may not use Auslan, and may or may not have had exposure to English.
- Children may or may not have access to hearing-impaired communities and culture.
- Children may or may not know either Auslan or English, but communicate through mime and their own signing system.
- Children may have varying degrees of hearing impairment.
- Parents and carers may require support in connecting with other community services and members of the Auslan community.

English-monolingual

- Both parents/carers are English-monolingual speakers.
- Parents/carers may be interested in supporting their child to access the benefits of language learning and bilingualism.
- English-monolingual children who may or may not have had exposure to other languages and multilingualism.

Shifting from a monolingual mindset to bilingualism and multilingualism

A *monolingual mindset* separates the use of languages to confined interactions or spaces. Shifting from this to an integrated and holistic approach to teaching and learning with bilingual children affords them opportunities to express themselves freely, confidently and creatively. It provides opportunities for practising family and community languages in the education and care setting.

Subtractive bilingualism

Shifting from a monolingual mindset supports a move beyond models that result in *subtractive bilingualism*, when the learning of the dominant language comes at the expense of the family-language. Both abrupt and prolonged transitions to English-monolingual educational environments reduce the opportunities for bilingual children to use their family-language as a medium and resource for further learning. The implicit dismissal of children's family-languages as the foundation and goal for learning may lead to *language shift*, where children replace the use of the family-language with the dominant language, and *language attrition*, where children lose the ability and motivation to use and learn their family-language.

English-monolingual programs include:

- **submersion** – a model of monolingual teaching and learning, where bilingual children have no choice but to attend settings in languages they do not understand. Monolingual approaches devalue children's languages, cultures, identities and self-esteem
- **transitional** – approaches that provide weak forms of support to children's family-languages. Bilingual practices are kept to a minimum, and literacy in the family-language is also limited.

Additive bilingualism

Additive bilingualism refers to the learning of an additional language that is unlikely to threaten, displace or replace the first language. This type of bilingualism is usually experienced by children who have a strong educational foundation in their family-language, and are supported to use it in the learning of additional languages. Additive models may include:

- **language maintenance** – there is a focus on bilingualism and *biliteracy*, and programs vary widely in the amount of time and effort dedicated to each language. Children's family-languages should be included in teaching and learning where possible, particularly in the early years
- **immersion** – the second or additional language is used as a method of teaching and learning, but children's family-languages are not ignored. Educators and parents/carers collaborate to promote the learning of the family-language.

Recursive bilingualism

In moving towards a multilingual perspective of teaching and learning, early childhood educators consider the importance of their role in planning, teaching and advocating for children's bilingualism. Integrating the VEYLDF principles and vision for early childhood education and care, educators support Koorie children to learn and reclaim their ancestral languages.

Recursive bilingualism refers to the development of bilingualism after the language practices of the community have been suppressed. The efforts of Koorie communities and migrant communities to relearn their ancestral language practices, and reconstitute new functions for their languages, are efforts to maintain their heritage and cultural identities, and shape future generations. This is also commonly referred to as language reclamation or language revival.

The acquisition and maintenance of first or home languages has a significant and continuing role in the construction of identity. (VEYLDF, p. 18)

Dynamic multilingualism

A holistic understanding of bilingualism affirms and builds on children's knowledge and identities. *Dynamic bilingualism* recognises the fluid, multilayered and complex nature of bilingual practices; understands *translanguaging* as a common discursive practice of bilingual speakers; and acknowledges the interrelated nature of language learning and bilingual development. Some dynamic models of bilingual teaching and learning include:

- **revitalisation** – focusing on reclamation and learning of Koorie Languages. The goal is bilingualism, proficiency and fluency in the family and community languages
- **developmental** – emphasising the family-language and community languages to different degrees. The goal is bilingualism and the revitalisation of *heritage languages*
- **poly-directional** – using both languages as a resource for learning. The goal is bilingualism and supporting multilingualism and intercultural capabilities. It may involve multiple groups, with children experiencing different points of the bilingual continuum
- **multiple multilingual** – including more than two languages in the curriculum and weaving them into daily routines to support children's language learning and bilingualism. These situations involve bilingual educators and monolingual educators working in partnership to provide bilingual learning experiences.

The VEYLDF seeks to recognise all children as rights holders and full members of society, capable of participating in their social worlds through their relationship with others. (VEYLDF, p. 4)

Nurturing a multilingual ecology

A *multilingual ecology* draws on and supports the different linguistic realities, values, dynamics and vision of each member of a learning community. Educators collaborate with children and families to develop responsive approaches to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment that value and recognise children's family-languages and *funds of knowledge*. Educators foster a multilingual awareness and a curiosity and disposition to language learning. They enable access to quality language input and bilingual resources, and rely on collaborating with other professionals to ensure relevant teaching strategies and assessment for learning. An integrated approach in early childhood education fosters a sense of belonging and facilitates transitions and *continuity of learning*, supporting *emerging bilingual* children to extend their *linguistic repertoire*, and encouraging monolinguals to learn new languages.

Nurturing a *multilingual ecology* in early childhood settings:

- ensures equal access, equity and justice in education
- makes learning relevant for all children, contributing meaningfully to their lives, personal development, learning outcomes, academic success and wellbeing
- enables children to practise and develop their family-language, and facilitates the acquisition of additional languages
- understands and acknowledges that children learn languages in different ways and contexts depending upon their cultural background and their individual personality
- responds to each child's linguistic, cognitive, psychological, emotional, physical and social realities, development and needs
- supports children to develop *language awareness*, *multiliteracies* and effective communication skills
- promotes intercultural communication and understanding
- supports social participation, innovation and creativity.

Table 2 outlines possible strategies that early childhood educators and professionals can adapt to the specific needs and characteristics of their learning community and setting.

The VEYLDF celebrates the wealth of learning and experience that is available within local communities. (VEYLDF, p. 4)

Table 2: Possible strategies for nurturing a multilingual ecology

Learning environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the setting’s signage and information is provided in all the family-languages and English. • Provide access to translation or interpreting services when required. • Enable spaces that feature and support children’s language learning and bilingualism. • Celebrate multilingualism by designing experiences that nurture the curiosity and disposition of bilingual and monolingual children to learn and develop respect for languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use multilingual resources (that is, bilingual educators, bilingual books, texts, multimedia, posters, labels, pictures). • Separate and distinguish the use of different languages respectfully and meaningfully.
Pedagogy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish respectful and responsive relationships with children and families. • Adopt a vision of multilingualism, and share the curiosity, enthusiasm and commitment to linguistic sustainability and diversity. • Advocate for children’s bilingual development, and highlight the importance of the birth-to-eight-years period in the establishment of a strong foundation in the family-language for both simultaneous and subsequent bilingual children. • Encourage families to persevere in using and teaching their language(s), promote multilingualism, and support bilingual learning and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange information with families, and learn and share strategies, achievements and tips for bilingual experience, teaching and learning. • Access bilingual support to facilitate and support children’s participation, social interaction, play, exploration, emergent literacy and bilingual learning. • Support bilingual interactions and development. • Use <i>multiliteracies</i>, <i>multimodalities</i> and multilingualism as resources in teaching and learning. • Practise, listen to, use and learn multiple languages.
Curriculum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on children’s understanding of linguistic, cognitive, emotional and social knowledge and strengths. • Support children’s use and learning of family-languages, English and other community languages. • Support the development of children’s bilingual identities, by foregrounding their connection to their family’s history, heritage and languages. • Collaborate with families to coordinate bilingual teaching and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with bilingual educators and professionals to enable the self-expression and communication of <i>emerging bilingual</i> children, and support bilingual interactions and development. • Develop children’s metalinguistic awareness, critical thinking and communication skills. • Respond to children’s interests and support <i>multiliteracies</i>, <i>multimodal</i> communication and multilingualism.
Assessment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement bilingual assessment practices and instruments. • Collaborate with families, bilingual educators and professionals to assess children’s linguistic, cognitive, social and emotional learning holistically and bilingually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access bicultural support to enable partnerships, integration and participation of children and families in bilingual teaching and learning.

Collaborative partnerships with families

Language, bilingualism and language learning are social practices and as such they are supported by the dynamics, networks and interactions that take place within each learning community. Early childhood educators recognise that each family is unique, and establish strong relationships and pathways of communication with parents and carers, so as to support children's language learning and bilingual development goals and learning outcomes.

Collaborating with children and families in planning, teaching and learning entails developing a shared vision to support children's use of multiple languages across different contexts. Understanding each family's beliefs, values and priorities towards languages and bilingualism allows educators to support children's transitions as well as their experiences of languages and language learning.

Research reveals that families have a wide range of attitudes towards languages and bilingualism. Some parents/carers value the time and quality of input they dedicate to teaching their family-language; others may feel pressured to shift to English and, willingly or unwillingly, disregard the use of their family-language. Some families

value their family-language, but may not have the linguistic community to support this language learning and use. Early years educators encourage parents/carers to continue using and teaching their family-language and support them by providing useful resources and strategies. Educators ensure *continuity of learning* by collaborating with parents/carers to incorporate family-language practices in the early childhood program, at home and in community.

The relationships and partnerships with extended family and kin, linguistic communities, bilingual and bicultural support services, community hubs and organisations cannot be underestimated. Nurturing a *multilingual ecology* requires the participation and collaboration of different players in the community. Educators rely on these partnerships to develop learning programs.

The five Outcomes ... support collaborative approaches between professionals and with children and families to build continuity across early years settings and programs for children from birth to eight years. (VEYLDF, p. 17)

Cooperative multilingual teaching and learning

A multilingual approach to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment moves beyond a *monolingual mindset*, and the practical separation and omission of children's languages and literacies from the curriculum, to integrate the identity, languages and cultural values of all families as the foundation and resource for learning. Acknowledging, respecting and responding to children's language-learning needs and bilingualism in a dynamic and holistic manner requires educators to establish strong communication pathways and collaborative partnerships with parents, carers, other professionals and community organisations.

Nurturing a multilingual ecology that sustains the cultural and linguistic practices of minority groups enables early childhood educators to provide continuity of learning, and extend learning that is relevant and meaningful for each child and family. Underpinned by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989),

and the Practice Principles and Learning and Development Outcomes of the VEYLDF, a holistic, dynamic and multilingual approach to teaching and learning in early childhood enables young children to continue practising and learning their family and community languages. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 14 states that 'Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.'

Multilingualism, *multiliteracies* and language learning are an asset, a resource and an outcome of learning for all Victorian children. Given that languages and language learning are social practices, cooperation, collaboration and leadership are the key to providing rich multilingual learning experiences for children across different contexts.

Realising Victoria’s multilingual potential in early childhood education and care communities

Recognising and promoting multilingualism and bilingual learning and development is a collective effort that requires cooperation and collaboration between educators, families and other early childhood professionals.

Table 3 outlines some perspectives on acknowledging, respecting and practising bilingualism and multilingualism in early childhood education and care settings.

Table 3: Bilingualism and multilingualism in early childhood education

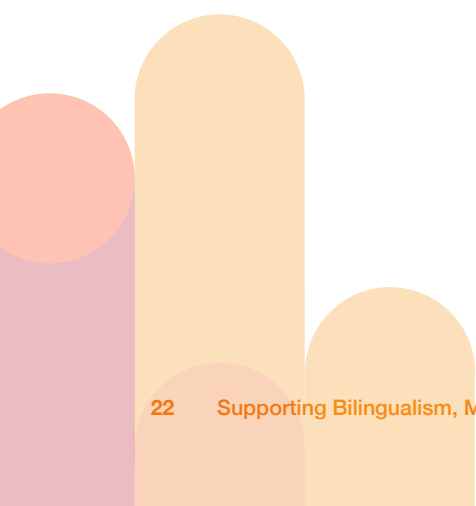
Family-languages as a right	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate and acknowledge the right of the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land to reclaim, learn, use and teach Koorie Languages.• Acknowledge and respect the unique and prime place of Koorie Languages, ancestral traditions, cultural practices and protocols.• Uphold the right of each child to use and learn their family-language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise bilingualism and language learning as dynamic and fluid.• Enable children’s self-expression, communication and learning through holistic approaches.• Build on children’s interests, strengths, culture and knowledge.• Provide opportunities to use and expand children’s linguistic identities and repertoires.
Family-languages as a foundation of curriculum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nurture a multilingual ecology that reflects and represents family-language practices.• Incorporate the multilingual resources of families, communities and professionals to develop multilingual learning programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create rich opportunities and respectful spaces in which to learn and practise children’s family-languages every day.
Family-languages as a resource for learning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use children’s languages and funds of knowledge to make meaning, and support and extend learning.• Encourage parents to continue using the family-language across different contexts to support comprehension, reflection and understanding of events that take place in the educational setting.• Strengthen communication with bilingual parents and carers (for example, sharing daily classroom/home activities with families can be a way of coordinating efforts to reinforce language and concept development across the home and early childhood education and care settings).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share information with parents and carers concerning languages use, learning, experiences and achievements.• Offer bilingual experiences and activities (for example, reading, discussing stories, socio-dramatic play, arts and crafts, songs and rhymes).• Affirm the value of linguistic diversity.• Explore creativity and innovation.• Recognise multilingualism as an asset of Victorian communities.• Understand each family’s contribution to the cognitive, social and emotional development and wellbeing of their child.

Translanguaging pedagogies

- Translanguaging strategies are designed to explain concepts, support language learning, construct meaning, establish connections and create new meanings.
- Translanguaging refers to the dynamic and fluid language practices of bilingual people.
- Translanguaging strategies are most effective and relevant when used by bilingual educators.
- Bilingual educators prioritise the use of family-languages, and use English purposefully and strategically to aid comprehension, focus attention and scaffold language and communication development.
- Bilingual educators alternate languages when working in groups (that is, use the family-language with bilingual children, and English with English-speakers).
- Bilingual and monolingual educators collaborate to plan translanguaging strategies that complement learning and development in both languages. They reflect on the purpose and effectiveness of translanguaging strategies. They view translanguaging as an ongoing pedagogy rather than a transitional approach to English-monolingual learning.
- Monolingual educators can use words or features of different languages to support translanguaging (that is, greetings, phrases, rhymes, songs, words). They support bilingual children to gain metalinguistic awareness and to feature their language practices.

Biliteracy, multiliteracies and multimodalities

- Biliteracy refers to communication that occurs in two or more languages in or around writing/reading. Developing literacy in two or more languages is beneficial at the individual and social levels. Everyday activities include emergent reading and writing in both languages across the curriculum. Literacy skills in the family-language can transfer to the additional language with adequate support.
- The concept of multiliteracies is broader than biliteracy, and includes visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes of literacy, and promotes the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Multimodalities are the full range of resources that children use to make meaning, construct knowledge and communicate. Educators support different modes (for example, verbal, non-verbal, signs, sounds, gestures, gaze, movement, music, pictures, art).



Learning activities



Koorie Languages

VEYLDF Practice Principles focus

- Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
- Reflective practice
- Partnerships with professionals
- Partnerships with families

Key learning points

- Educators recognise and acknowledge Victorian Koorie people as the Traditional Owners of the land.
- Educators ensure Koorie children and families have access to holistic and culturally safe and inclusive early childhood services.
- Educators acknowledge and respect Koorie protocols for incorporating Aboriginal Languages, perspectives and practices in the early childhood curriculum and program.
- Educators support children and families to connect with the local community, and learn about its Koorie history, culture and language.

Scenario

The Early Learning Centre (ELC), a long day care setting, acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and water where children, educators and families live and learn. The ELC has established strong learning relationships with local Elders, community members and organisations, who guide and support educators to incorporate their Language and knowledge into the centre's program.

The educators at the ELC are committed to improving educational access, experiences and outcomes for Koorie children. One child, Antonio, and his family identify with the local Koorie Traditional Owner group and Language, while another child, Alissa, and her family identify as Torres Strait Islander. The educators support all families to draw upon local knowledge and expertise to inform (where possible) local, place-based approaches to curriculum.

By undertaking cultural and professional learning, the educators gain insight into culturally sustaining practices that embed local Koorie history and connection to Country. Through collaboration with their local Koorie community, Traditional Owners and project officers from VAEAI and VACL, the educators have developed a local Traditional Owner Language program that integrates learning across other areas of curriculum.

Some topics that can also be explored by implementing the local Koorie Language program are:

- children's interconnectedness with the natural environment
- local plants, animals and life cycles
- gardening and composting
- the importance of caring for and protecting the land and waterways
- sustainability and sustainable practices
- children's sense of place, belonging, community and responsibility
- valuing and respecting tradition and heritage
- local stories
- intercultural understanding.

The ELC has incorporated this action within its Reconciliation Action Plan. The Koorie Language program supports the local community to reclaim its language. The ELC educators consult with and are guided by VAEAI and VACL educators.

Antonio and his family identify as Traditional Owners from the local area, and they are actively involved in community activities.

Alissa and her family are from the Torres Strait. After consulting with VAEAI and VACL, Alissa's parents are happy for Alissa to learn local Koorie Language words and stories. Traditionally, Australia's First Nations peoples learnt the language of the Country they visited, as this is consistent with traditional practices and protocols. The educators support Alissa and her family to incorporate Torres Strait Islander culture and Language into their learning program through sharing songs and stories. All children in the ELC have the opportunity to learn from and about First Nations peoples, languages and cultures.

Reflection questions

1. How would you begin planning a Koorie Languages program in your service setting?
2. How would you engage your service community in a Koorie Languages program?
3. How can you encourage Koorie families to use and be involved in your service?
4. How can you better identify the cultural backgrounds of all Koorie children in your service to individually support continuity in their cultural learnings?
5. How can your language program support or stimulate local Koorie Language reclamation and revitalisation activities?



... strong learning relationships with local Elders, community members and organisations

Language, bilingualism and learning outcomes

VEYLDF Practice Principles focus

- High expectations for every child
- Reflective practice
- Partnerships with families
- Partnerships with professionals

Key learning points

- Educators adopt a holistic approach to bilingualism and multilingualism. They recognise children's *linguistic repertoires* as one whole and affirm the cultural backgrounds of bilingual families.
- Educators extend children's language learning and support their bilingual development. They enable *emergent bilingual* children and their families to participate and collaborate in all aspects of the program.
- Educators demonstrate respect for children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds by engaging in collaborative partnerships with bilingual families and integrating family-languages in their curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices.

Scenario

Chloe and her family moved from Guangzhou to Melbourne eight months ago. She is four years old, and attends long day care five days a week. Chloe's parents describe her as a creative, playful and talkative child. She speaks Mandarin, and only started learning English on arrival in Australia. Lately, Chloe's parents have noticed that being in the long day care setting is influencing Chloe's mood and interactions. They worry that she is increasingly reluctant to attend the centre, and often complains about not being understood by her educators and peers. Chloe's parents share these concerns with Chloe's educators, pointing to the language barrier as the main cause for her distress.

Daniela, the centre director, places a strong emphasis on creating learning environments that foster *continuity of learning* and smooth transitions. She understands that Chloe is proficient in Mandarin, and therefore the centre's approach has been to support Chloe to learn English as an additional language. However, after speaking with Chloe's parents, Daniela realises the centre needs to change its approach to respond better to Chloe's needs by facilitating her communication in both English and Mandarin.

Daniela collaborates with Sharon and Trudy, the kindergarten educators, to assess how Chloe has settled into the kindergarten over the past months. They report that at first Chloe would often speak to them in Mandarin; however, over time she learnt that they did not understand her messages and became silent. Sharon and Trudy understand that supporting children's communication is crucial for their developing sense of identity, wellbeing and belonging.

To facilitate Chloe's interactions, meaning-making and English-learning, Sharon and Trudy have implemented a visual schedule and cues, and rely heavily on non-verbal communication. They also use various one-on-one and small-group activities to engage Chloe in social, emotional and literacy learning. Generally, they find Chloe is keen to participate in the program. However, despite these efforts Sharon and Trudy often experience the frustrating limitations of not sharing Chloe's first language and realise that many reactions are not being communicated. They realise they need to create opportunities where Chloe can express herself freely.

Daniela, Sharon and Trudy decide to take a holistic approach to Chloe's *emergent bilingualism*. To integrate Chloe's knowledge and language skills in Mandarin in the curriculum, Daniela invites Yitong, a bilingual educator who works at the centre, to collaborate with the kindergarten team.

Yitong works in the two-year-olds' room, so the educators rearrange their schedules and rotations to allow Yitong to spend time with Chloe.

By collaborating closely, Sharon and Yitong gain a better understanding of Chloe's *linguistic repertoire* and skills. They draw on the notion of *linguistic interdependence* to develop learning activities. These activities provide rich language opportunities for Chloe to affirm the value of her home language with Yitong and develop her English abilities (listening, speaking, literacy) with Sharon and Trudy. The educators regularly reflect on and communicate about their interactions with Chloe so they can best support Chloe to establish connections between her languages and become aware of her *emerging bilingualism*. They also aim to offer meaningful experiences that extend Chloe's cognitive skills (knowledge and concepts) and *biliteracy* skills.

Daniela creates a *multilingual ecology* at the centre. She ensures that all the visual communication, labels, signage and print materials reflect Chloe's bilingualism. Sharon, Trudy and Yitong select bilingual books, music and resources to support *biliteracy* development and bilingual play and interactions. Sharon and Trudy have also taken on the challenge of becoming *emergent bilingual* educators, and are excited to learn simple characters, words, phrases and songs in Mandarin.

Daniela communicates the new approach and strategies to Chloe's parents. She invites them to collaborate as partners to support Chloe's *emergent bilingualism*. Daniela reassures and plans with the family to maintain and strengthen Chloe's first language at home and in the community. Sharon invites the parents to participate in the program, and makes time to interact with them daily to share Chloe's experiences, ideas and achievements. The educators understand that building strong partnerships with bilingual families is crucial for the child's bilingual learning and development.

Reflection questions

1. How do the educators transform their curriculum, assessment and pedagogical approach to better respond to Chloe's emergent bilingualism and learning needs?
2. How is the new approach likely to advance Chloe's learning and development outcomes?
3. How do the educators' strategies influence the learning experiences of children, families and educators in this centre?
4. What resources and/or professional learning could you seek out to enhance your capacity to teach *emergent bilingual* children in your service?

Linguistic diversity, multilingual communities and advocacy

VEYLDF Practice Principles focus

- Equity and diversity
- Respectful relationships and responsive engagement
- Partnerships with families
- Partnerships with professionals

Key learning points

- Educators have the power to transform their learning community by advocating for children's rights and developing practices that acknowledge, practise and promote multilingualism and *intercultural understanding*.
- Educators develop curriculum, assessment and pedagogical approaches that respond to children's language-learning needs and *emergent bilingualism*.
- Educators nurture an awareness of multilingualism and bilingualism and support parents to teach and learn their family-language.

Scenario

Emily teaches in a sessional kindergarten where children and families speak 21 different languages and have cultural backgrounds from 15 different countries. Emily's program is founded on a vision for multilingualism that seeks to educate the community about the value of multilingualism. Emily views multilingualism as a way to support and respect the cultural and linguistic heritage of all families. Her aim is to nurture children's *emergent bilingualism* so they can achieve their maximum potential in a learning environment that responds to the linguistic diversity of the community and generates *intercultural understanding* and respect.

Emily understands how place, cultural background and socioeconomic circumstances affect families' engagement in children's learning. She uses a pedagogical framework that embeds the world views, knowledge, abilities and realities of all members in her community. This is designed to promote communication, diversity, curiosity, integrity, open-mindedness, reflection and willingness to learn from one another.

Emily's mission, vision and values are underpinned by a strong advocacy for children's right to learn and maintain the language of their family, and to learn English. She advocates for children's freedom of expression because she is aware that English-monolingual education can exclude bilingual children from accessing learning, social participation and play, and may lead to *language shift* or loss. Emily understands that the historical and social conditions of an English-language society affect the range of resources that are available to support the learning of young children from Indigenous and minority language groups. Therefore, she strives to transform mainstream educational practices by establishing strong partnerships with bilingual families, educators and community organisations.

By accessing bilingual resources, she can personalise curriculum, assessment and pedagogy in ways that acknowledge, represent and respond to the needs, strengths, differences, contexts, interests and realities of each child.

Emily grounds her curriculum in an acknowledgement and observance of Koorie people and their Elders, communities, knowledge and traditions. Emily adopts a co-learner disposition to plan, implement and assess teaching and learning. She plans to explore with Traditional Owners, VAEAI and VACL how to incorporate local Koorie Language words and stories into her daily practice.

In her kindergarten session, Emily also draws on the interests and experiences of the children. Most children have family and friends living overseas, or have travelled to other cities and countries. This provides a foundation on which to base discussions about the histories and trajectories of families, and to build children's understanding and awareness of difference, diversity and the world. In collaboration with parents and carers, Emily plans learning activities that extend children's language learning, and experiences where children are exposed to multilingualism and *translanguaging*. Her multilingual awareness generates a contagious curiosity and enthusiasm for language learning and encourages all members of the kindergarten community to get involved.

Emily has strong professional relationships with bilingual educators and community members and organisations. She works closely with bilingual educators who visit the kindergarten to read books or sing songs with new children and help her plan a responsive curriculum. The local library serves as a community hub for families to organise bilingual story times and playgroups, and offers a wide range of bilingual books, music, movies and other multimedia. In response to parent feedback, the local primary school is also implementing multilingual activities to support children's transitions and bilingual learning.

“

... in a learning environment that responds to the linguistic diversity of the community

Reflection questions

1. How does Emily frame her approach to multilingualism and bilingual education?
2. How does Emily generate an awareness of multilingualism and *intercultural understanding* in her learning community?
3. How could your advocacy influence the learning experiences of children and families within your learning community?

Partnerships with bilingual families and professionals

VEYLDF Practice Principles focus

- Partnerships with families
- Partnerships with professionals
- Integrated teaching and learning approaches
- Equity and diversity

Key learning points

- Educators engage and collaborate with multilingual families to actively support their children's learning and development.
- Educators recognise each family's languages and multilingualism as a resource for teaching and learning.
- Educators implement programs to support children's bilingualism and multilingualism.

Scenario

Melissa is an English-monolingual educator working with bilingual children and families in an early childhood setting. She understands that each family's structure, lifestyle, interests, goals and community engagement influence its language practices and choices. Melissa knows that bilingual families are their children's primary source of language knowledge. From their first meeting, she discusses each family's language practices, and acknowledges the different challenges that parents and carers face when trying to maintain the family-language alongside English.

Melissa understands that part of her role in this partnership is to encourage parents to participate and collaborate to support their child's bilingual development. When required, she seeks the support of translating and interpreting services to communicate with parents in their family-language. By establishing strong relationships and collaborative partnerships with parents and carers, Melissa aims to support the children's continued concept development and academic progress in their first language, while learning an additional language. She adjusts her interactions with each family to find appropriate and achievable ways for all families to reach this goal.

Melissa is aware that bilingual children use their languages in a dynamic and flexible manner. She explains to parents that to minimise language loss, parents need to be strongly committed to the consistent use of their family-language and resist the shift to English or mixing languages. She advises parents to try to expand the contexts where they model the family-language to increase the opportunities for exposure and practice. To understand the type of exposure and contexts that shape each child's bilingualism, she gathers important information about the family structure, the languages spoken by each member (including grandparents and extended family), their cultural and community connections, the attitudes towards different languages and bilingualism, and the pressures to use English at home (for example, the parents may speak different languages, or older siblings may speak English only).

In discussions with parents, Melissa explains that the proficiency developed by bilingual children in their two languages is the foundation for their academic and intellectual development. To build on the cognitive and linguistic benefits of bilingualism, children need continued development of both languages.

To support parents' capacity to engage in literacy activities with their children, Melissa offers access to the setting's bilingual library, and encourages parents to read, sing, rhyme and play with the child in their family-language. Melissa also encourages them to reach out to the local library to access a variety of bilingual resources, such as books, music, movies, playgroups and story times. These connections are particularly useful for new migrants and bilingual families whose languages are not widely spoken or who may have difficulty connecting with others who speak the same language. Melissa has developed a resource guide that provides parents with relevant information about raising children bilingually (useful websites, applications, language schools, bilingual services and organisations) and has it translated into the languages of her community.

Melissa and her team use their daily interactions with parents and carers (face-to-face, written, phone and email communication, or short conversations at drop-off and pick-up times) to involve and exchange information about children's experiences and learning. They ask parents to reinforce the ideas and concepts explored on that day (for example, counting, seasons, days of the week, colours, animals). When educators and parents collaborate in teaching, concepts become more meaningful to the child, as they can make associations about these concepts across languages.

By encouraging families' participation in the program, Melissa nurtures a *multilingual ecology*. She also supports parents' involvement in the program by working around their availability, providing the necessary materials and space to contribute in a range of ways. Some parents read or tell stories in their family's language, others teach or record songs and rhymes. Some also choose to share traditional clothing, cooking and food; others enjoy doing art, crafts, carpentry, building, gardening, pottering about, weaving or science experiments with the children. Melissa recognises that special celebrations offer rich multilingual and intercultural experiences for children and so invites families to plan for and share the celebrations that are relevant to them.

Collaborating with bilingual educators to plan for children's bilingual experiences is an important aspect of the program.

Reflection questions

1. How does Melissa develop collaborative partnerships with bilingual parents and educators?
2. How does Melissa ensure bilingual parents and carers are supported to collaborate in bilingual teaching and learning, and to participate in the program?
3. How does Melissa help parents build their capacity to raise their children bilingually?
4. How would you nurture a multilingual ecology, bilingualism and biliteracy development in your early childhood setting?



... bilingual children use their languages in a dynamic and flexible manner

Curriculum and pedagogy

VEYLDF Practice Principles focus

- Reflective practice
- Integrated teaching and learning approaches
- Equity and diversity

Key learning points

- Educators uphold the right of children and families to learn and use their languages across all learning contexts.
- Educators consider children's strengths and their family's *funds of knowledge* as the foundation of curriculum and pedagogy.
- Educators plan and implement programs, curriculum and pedagogies that support the bilingual learning and development and multilingualism.

Scenario

Chris, Phuong and Kay are educators in an early childhood setting. They recognise the powerful influence of their role in supporting children's bilingual learning and development. They know that a child's first five years are critical for language development. This development influences the child's thinking and problem-solving processes, as well as their social and emotional experiences and learning. The educators focus on creating a curriculum that ensures *continuity of learning* for *emergent bilingual* children by adopting a holistic view of bilingualism and culturally relevant pedagogies. They design and implement language-rich environments that reflect the linguistic diversity of the community, and encourage families to participate in sharing their linguistic knowledge. Educators and bilingual parents, carers and other practitioners work together to nurture a *multilingual ecology* that offers meaningful opportunities for children to learn languages and develop bilingually.

Chris is an English-monolingual teacher with professional training in teaching English as an additional language. Being the son of Macedonian migrants, he knows that languages are fragile and children can lose the ability to communicate in their family-language if it is not maintained. Chris knows bilingualism is a practice that carries social, emotional, cognitive, academic and professional outcomes for young *emergent bilingual* children. From his own experience of language loss, he knows that raising children bilingually in a monolingual society is not an easy task, particularly in households where parents speak different languages, or where a lack of time or resources affects the family's routines and interactions.

Chris consistently promotes the use and value of children's languages, and affirms their bilingualism by making children feel proud of what they know and do in their family-language. He often asks *emergent bilingual* children, 'How do you say that in Somali/Dinka/Cantonese?' When designing the learning environment, he reserves a dedicated space for resources that reflect the languages spoken by families in the community. Children in the classroom are learning Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese, Somali, Hindi, Dinka, English and Auslan. This language area has bilingual books and multimedia through which educators and children can engage in the exploration of words, meanings and sounds. Chris finds opportunities to practise words and simple phrases in other languages with children during random conversations. Counting, names, colours, days of the week, the weather, families and communities are familiar topics with which to practise concepts in two or more languages. Chris relies on the use of Google Translate or BabelFish, when needed, to support these interactions.

Chris collaborates with bilingual educators and parents to extend bilingual teaching and learning. Phuong speaks Vietnamese, and Kay knows Arabic and Auslan. They work with Chris to plan bilingual experiences for children who are learning these languages. They implement a 'one educator – one language' approach, and therefore Phuong and Kay avoid using English when working with speakers of their languages, and only shift when it is necessary to translate meanings to include other children and facilitate communication within a group. Phuong and Kay use *translanguaging* as a pedagogy on specific occasions to support children's metalinguistic awareness. This might happen by reading and discussing a story in the family-language (one-on-one, or in small groups), and then encouraging children to retell or act out the story for their English-speaking peers.

Phuong enjoys engaging in one-on-one and small-group activities in Vietnamese. She is aware of children's home experiences, and usually plans interactions that extend the activities they do at home. Kay, on the other hand, focuses on catering for different levels of proficiency in Arabic, and plans for children's interactions by using fun games where children can *scaffold* each other's language through play. Many Arabic speakers in the classroom are multilinguals who are learning other languages such as Somali, Dinka and Tigrinya. This means that they might be familiar with different forms and uses of Arabic at home. Kay also works closely with Tony and his mother Anna, who are deaf and users of Auslan. Chris is involved in this collaboration, as are other inclusion support professionals. Chris and Kay have included signing as part of their interactions with children.

The educators rely on the use of technology to support multilingual learning. They use various websites to access multilingual books, as well as translation websites and online dictionaries to model the search for and recognition of words in different languages. They also rely on email communication with parents to share daily activities so they can reinforce concepts at home, and to exchange useful websites and resources.

“

... educators focus on creating a curriculum that ensures *continuity of learning* for *emergent bilingual* children by adopting a holistic view of bilingualism

Reflection questions

1. How do the educators' approaches uphold children's right to learn their family-language and the language of the community?
2. What actions and precautions do educators take when planning curriculum, activities and pedagogies for *emergent bilingual* children?
3. How could you improve your approach to teaching and learning with *emergent bilingual* children and their families?

Assessment for bilingual learning and development

VEYLDF Practice Principles focus

- Assessment for learning and development
- Equity and diversity
- Integrated teaching and learning approaches

Key learning points

- Educators understand the intersections and differences of assessment for language learning and assessment for bilingual cognitive development.
- Educators understand bilingualism as a continuum, and personalise assessment of each emergent bilingual child.
- Educators develop equitable assessment practices that match the bilingualism and bilingual context of each emergent bilingual and their family.

Scenario

Avita and her team work in a long day care setting. They recognise assessment as an ongoing aspect of teaching and learning. Working with *emergent bilingual* children requires them to involve bilingual parents and other bilingual practitioners in assessment practices. This allows them to learn and understand the individual circumstances that shape each child's language learning and bilingual experiences. For instance, in Avita's setting there are some *simultaneous bilingual* children who have been learning two or more languages since birth. There are also *sequential bilingual* children who have been learning their family-language exclusively during their early years and have recently started learning another language, such as English. There are also *sequential bilingual* children who speak only English but have extended family (for example, grandparents) who teach them their *heritage language*, or parents who have an interest in language learning and bilingual education.

Each child's bilingualism and language proficiency is unique, and usually depends on the language practices, choices and context of their families. As the educational leader, Avita understands the importance of bilingual assessment in planning an equitable curriculum and pedagogy for *emergent bilingual* children. She relies on the expertise of bilingual parents to gather information that helps her assess children's learning. Through conversations with parents and carers, she aims to learn about the complex, dynamic and interrelated nature of children's bilingualism, as well as the relationships that contribute to children's language learning.

Avita collaborates with the bilingual educators at the centre, and with external bilingual practitioners, to plan a relevant curriculum, assess its effectiveness and select relevant resources. Bilingual educators focus on working with *emergent bilingual* children one-on-one or in small groups. Their interactions focus on supporting children's first language abilities (listening, speaking and emergent literacy), and seeking ways to extend their current level of development and proficiency. In doing so, the bilingual educators work to strengthen children's bilingual identities, nurture an awareness of the value of multilingualism, and promote their cultural heritage and *intercultural understanding*.

Avita and her colleagues use a wide range of assessment strategies in teaching and learning. This includes planned play and interactions, conversations, interviews, story comprehension and retelling, picture cues, observations and recordings. In their assessment, the educators distinguish between children's language learning, and children's use of their languages in cognitive and literacy tasks. The educators understand assessment as an ongoing practice that is integrated in a culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogical approach. Avita advocates for a bilingual approach to assessment and learning as the most appropriate and relevant for young *emergent bilingual* children.



... educators understand assessment as an ongoing practice that is integrated in a culturally relevant curriculum

Reflection questions

1. How does assessment for learning and development inform the educators' curriculum and pedagogy?
2. What assessment strategies do the educators use in teaching and learning?
3. How would you improve assessment practices for *emergent bilingual* children in your setting?

Glossary

Aboriginal English – an Australian English dialect commonly used by Aboriginal peoples across the country with regional variations such as Koorie English.

additive bilingualism – where a second language is added to a child's native language without replacing it.

bilingual – in this guide, used to describe a person who uses two or more languages.

bilingualism – in this guide, refers to an individual's ability to use two or more languages.

biliteracy – refers to instances where communication (reading and writing) occurs in two or more languages.

context – the setting where interaction and communication occurs; that is, the surroundings, circumstances and supports that are shaped by family, culture and experience.

continuity of learning – an emphasis on providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transitions. This helps children to feel secure and confident, understand the traditions, routines and practices of the contexts where they interact, and feel comfortable with the process of change.

culture – includes the customs, traditions, world views, interactions, routines, rituals, meanings, beliefs, attitudes, everyday behaviour and social understandings of a particular individual, family, group, community or society.

dynamic bilingualism – the full use of an individual's linguistic repertoire in flexible and interrelated ways to communicate and engage in collaborative tasks.

emergent/emerging bilingual – in this guide it is used to describe a child at beginning or emerging levels of learning their family-language and additional languages of their communities.

equity – the quality of being fair and just. Equity in early childhood education and care means that the rights of the child to fully participate in these spaces are honoured. Equitable practice values and respects diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender and ability. Barriers to achievement are consciously addressed within a strengths-based approach in consultation with children, families and communities.

family-language – refers to a child's mother tongue, first language, home language or heritage language. This term emphasises a rights-based approach to early years education and care that supports young children to learn and respect the culture, languages and values of their family and community.

funds of knowledge – the knowledge that individuals, families and communities bring to the school and share in interaction with others. It includes ancestral, heritage and family languages and language practices.

heritage language – the native, home or ancestral language of individuals, families and communities (may include Indigenous, settler and migrant languages).

holistic perspective – treats the languages of bilingual children as coexisting in one single linguistic repertoire and understands the interrelatedness of languages in communicative action, teaching and learning.

identity – an individual's unique combination of values, beliefs, views, experiences, cultures and languages, including their self-awareness and connections to broader groups and communities.

immersion – where the second or additional language is used as a method of teaching and learning, but children's family-languages are not ignored. Educators and parents collaborate to promote the learning of the family-language.

intercultural understanding – aims to develop knowledge, understanding and skills to enable students to demonstrate an awareness of and respect for cultural diversity within the community; reflect on how intercultural experiences influence attitudes, values and beliefs; and recognise the importance of acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity for a cohesive community.

Koorie English – a regional variation of an Australian English dialect commonly used by Aboriginal people across the country.

Koorie Language – refers to any Victorian Aboriginal language, collectively known as Koorie Languages and individually known by their distinct language names (for example, Woiwurrung, Boon Wurrung, Wemba Wemba).

language ability – the outcome and use of language learning, it provides an indication of current proficiency level and includes speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

language attrition – the gradual loss of a language by a person or group.

language awareness – an awareness of language as an important part of children's and families' identities; the process of familiarising children with many different languages to learn to value languages, bilingualism and multilingualism.

language loss – usually experienced by language groups as a result of the language having little or no status, and little perceived economic value or use in education and the community.

language maintenance – the continued use and learning of the family-language in contexts where it is not the dominant language.

language proficiency – an arbitrary measure of language learning according to nativist and universalist standards.

language shift – using the dominant language instead of the family-language. Using one language over the other language.

language skills – different aspects of language ability, including listening, speaking, reading and writing.

language socialisation – the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge and practices that enable them to participate effectively in a language community.

language vitality – the extent to which individuals maintain and use their family-language, including the contexts and purposes.

languages – languages are not autonomous, neutral and fixed codes, structures and systems, but are fluid codes framed within social practices. Speakers use language in negotiation and interaction with others. Languages are situated and dynamic. They carry psychological, linguistic, social, cultural, cognitive, intellectual, academic and political implications in our daily lives.

linguaging – the ways people use languages, such as to make meaning and interact as part of language learning. Language practices can be cultural, political and symbolic. They can serve as identity markers, and can be used for ceremonial, spiritual, ancestral and religious purposes.

linguistic community – a group of people who share common language practices.

linguistic interdependence – the notion that learning one language contributes to the development and learning of another language. It recognises a holistic understanding of a child's linguistic repertoire.

linguistic repertoire – the range of linguistic codes, styles, registers and dialects used in distinct languages. This concept applies to monolingual and bilingual speakers.

literacy and language skills – in the early years, literacy includes a range of modes of communication, including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, viewing, reading, drawing and writing. As children progress into and through the early years of school there is increased emphasis on texts and the child's writing. A consideration of children's language involves expressive and receptive language skills that include syntax (ability to form sentences), morphology (ability to form words), semantics (understanding the meaning of words/sentences), phonology (awareness of speech sounds), pragmatics (how language is used in different contexts) and vocabulary.

metalinguistic awareness – recognition of and reflection on the nature and functions of language.

monolingual mindset – a perspective that understands teaching and learning a single language (for example, monolingualism, monolingual identities, monolingual practices and monoculturalism).

mother tongue – may refer to the language learnt from the mother; the first language; an individual's most used or dominant language; the national language; or the language of cultural identity or affection.

multicultural – cultural practices associated with more than one cultural or ethnic group.

multilingual ecology – the entire range of language practices of all children in an educational setting, as well as in the interactions of all members of the learning community. A multilingual ecology fosters the use, learning and practice of languages. All languages are respected and assigned meaningful spaces in the learning program and environment.

multilingualism – in this guide, it refers to the practice of different languages as a societal characteristic and possession of a group, community, region or country.

multiliteracies – broadens the concept of biliteracy (which refers to reading and writing only) to include visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes of literacy.

multimodalities – the full range of resources that children use to make meaning, construct knowledge and communicate. Educators support different modes (for example, verbal, non-verbal, signs, sounds, gestures, gaze, movement, music, pictures, art).

reclamation – the process of reawakening and reconstituting the vitality of an ancestral language, relearning and revitalising its functions and use.

recursive bilingualism – refers to the development of bilingualism after the language practices of the community have been suppressed.

rights – legal, social and ethical principles of freedom and entitlement, according to legal systems, social conventions and/or ethical theories.

scaffolding – enabling self-expression, enabling bilingualism and language learning, supporting languages use, bilingual meaning-making and multilingual knowledge construction. It works towards intentional and achievable outcomes.

sequential bilingualism –

bilingual situations where an additional language is first learnt after the age of three years.

simultaneous bilingualism –

bilingual situations where acquiring a first and a second language occurs concurrently from birth or before the age of three years.

submersion – also known as ‘sink or swim’, a model of monolingual teaching and learning, where bilingual children have no choice but to attend settings in languages they do not understand. English-monolingual approaches are confirmed to be the least effective educationally for bilingual children.

subtractive bilingualism –

a process in which the dominant community language is learnt at the expense of the family-language.

transitional – approaches that provide weak forms of support to children’s family-languages. Bilingual practices are kept to a minimum and literacy in the family-language is also limited.

translanguaging – refers to the natural and flexible ways bilingual children use their languages across multilingual contexts. It also refers to teaching pedagogies that use bilingualism as a resource for learning by strategically alternating the use of languages to aid comprehension and support learning.

wellbeing – the result of the satisfaction of basic needs for tenderness, affection, security, clarity and social recognition, to feel competent, to have physical needs met and for meaning in life. It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience.

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