Teacher perspectives on students' use of their multilingual resources

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"It's like the elephant in the room"

- *Mary*

Research Problem

- **Australian secondary education**
  - Monolingual English medium?
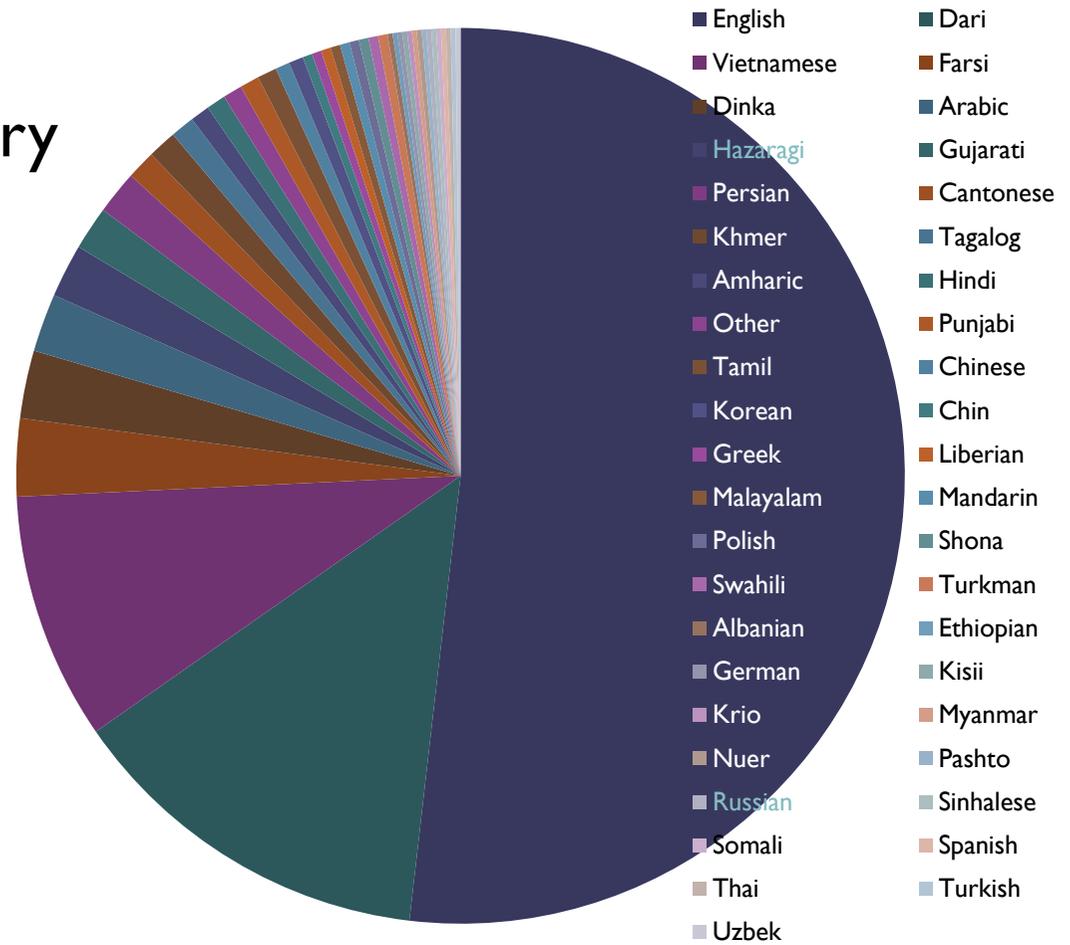 - Multilingual students
  - Engaging, achieving, belonging

How are students' linguistic resources employed to support learning within this system?

Research Site

- South Australia
- Adelaide inner North
- Catholic girls secondary
- Year 8 – 12
- 600 students
- Culturally & linguistically diverse

Home Languages

English
Vietnamese
Dinka
Hazaragi
Persian
Khmer
Amharic
Other
Tamil
Korean
Greek
Malayalam
Polish
Swahili
Albanian
German
Krio
Nuer
Russian
Somali
Thai
Uzbek

Dari
Farsi
Arabic
Gujarati
Cantonese
Tagalog
Hindi
Punjabi
Chinese
Chin
Liberian
Mandarin
Shona
Turkman
Ethiopian
Kisii
Myanmar
Pashto
Sinhalese
Spanish
Turkish

Scope

Research Questions

1. **What multilingual resources for learning do students have?**
2. **In what ways do they use them for school based learning?**
3. **How does the school cater for their use?**
4. What are the key themes, similarities and differences in the views of students and staff?
5. **What are the factors associated with school and staff support for students' multilingual resources in school based learning?**
6. What are the factors associated with students' use of their multilingual resources for school based learning?

Data

▸ Students (Focus Groups, Artefacts)
▸ **Staff (Questionnaire, Interviews)**
▸ School (Artefacts)

▸

Methods

Staff questionnaire

‣ 35 staff

‣ 18 questions:

  ‣ Observations

  ‣ Attitudes

  ‣ Strategies

‣ Chocolate Frogs

Staff interviews

‣ 10 Volunteers

  ‣ Teachers

  ‣ School Leaders

  ‣ Support Staff

‣ Following the survey

‣ 2013-2014

Interview participants

Name	Role	Years Teaching	Age	Native Languages	Additional Languages
Audrey	Visual Arts	30+	50s	English	Spanish, French (Beginner)
Clare	HASS, Religion	30+	60s	English	French (Beginner)
Dennis	IT	3	20s	English	German (Beginner)
Ellie	Careers Counsellor	8	40s	English	
Gerta	English, Languages	4	20s	English	Italian (Professional), French (Limited)
John	Maths, Physics	18	60s	Russian	English (Professional)
Judy	Languages, Visual Arts	3	20s	English, Mandarin, Cantonese	Japanese (Beginner)
Mary	Leadership, IT, HASS	19	40s	English, Ukrainian	Italian (Limited)
May	Leadership, English	20+	40s	English	Italian (Limited)
Steve	Leadership, Drama	20+	50s	English	Travelling languages

Main Findings

- Teachers observe student language use
- Teacher attitudes range:
  - Active
  - Passive
  - Resistant
- Very individual approaches
  - Linked to early teaching contexts?
  - Linked to own language learning & use?

▸ "It's a big part of who they are"

- Mary

▸ "They find it easier to think from different perspectives … So they also tend to be more open minded"

- Judy

▸ "They're actually using high skills"

- Gerta

▸ "Heavy duty analysis is probably more easily conducted in your first language"

- Dennis

▸ "You can connect into that language, their own language learning to learn [English] better"

- Mary

▸

Value of Languages
• Identity
• Socialising
• Perspectives
• Multilingual skills
• Cognition
• Transition
• Language learning
• Low English proficiency

- "In their own language, they came up with an additional 4 points"

  - Judy

- "I've tried to get them to record themselves on their phones in their home language first."

  - Mary

- "She took Oberon's part ... and then she translated that into Dinka, and then she said it in Dinka"

  - Steve

- "They stood up and said … the Hail Mary and the Our Father in their language"
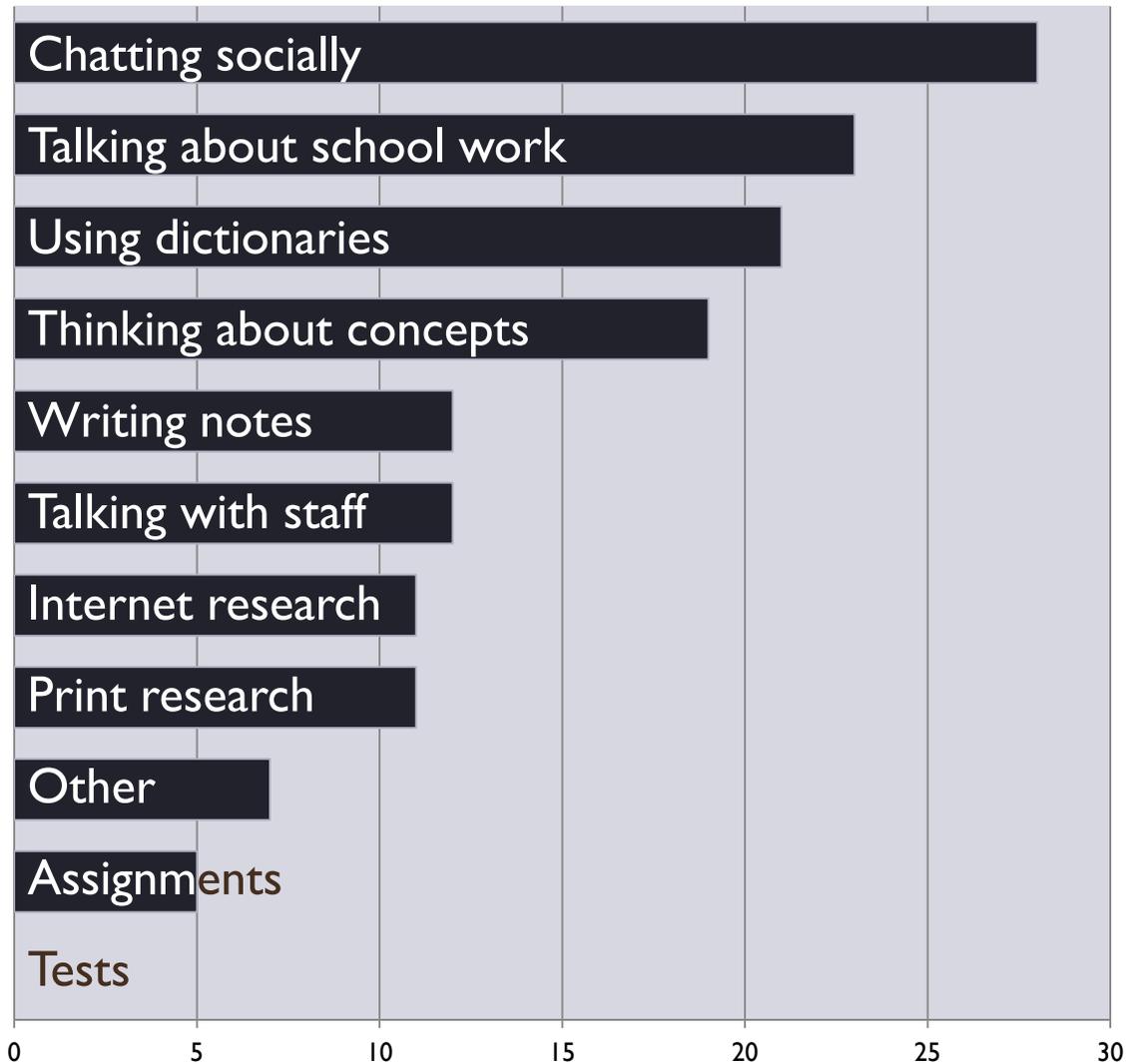
  - Clare

- "We've had a senior student who we've had permission from the family for them to be involved with interpreting"

  - Ellie

Active inclusion

- Different levels of success

- Lack of policy support

- Lack of training

- Addressing:

  - Cognition

  - Reception

  - Production

  - Roles in school

▶ "We don't use them as much as we should, so I don't know what the role should be"

- Gerta

▶ "I think it's just the act … of not saying no to their home language. Then naturally they will want to use it"

- Judy

▶ "They are helping each other and I am happy with this. I do not interfere"

- John

▶ "I haven't thought about what I'd like to do … I sort of go with the flow"

- Judy

▶ "I mean half the trouble is remembering that you can do this at all"

- Dennis

▶

Passive support

- Recognise value
- Lack strategies
- Student driven
- Benefit from training, awareness

"I think we have got a group of teachers that would be really, *it is not to happen in my class*"
- *Audrey*

"Girls have said, *we can't... we get into trouble*"
- *Audrey*

"You don't want to ostracise the other students that don't have a different language"
- *Gerta*

"They've come here to learn English... So you just end up ... insisting upon that English"
- *Steve*

"You shouldn't be speaking another language, because your English is very good!"
- *Clare*

"A huge thing about this is fear … Staff's fear. Teachers' fear"

- *Steve*

Resistance

- Other teachers

- Justification

  - Monolingual rights

  - Learning English

  - Transition

- Teachers:

  - Control

  - Anxiety

▶ "Students have got all the variety, and not the teachers"

- *Dennis*

▶ "Perhaps they don't have a model of discourse … there is no value or no knowledge in that other thing. That we keep hidden"

- *Steve*

▶ "I'm sure you can use language to connect to the community more"

- *Gerta*

▶ "It's fraught socially, and it's fraught publicity wise … what message does it send?"

- *Steve*

▶ "The world doesn't function that way"

- *Mary*

▶

Institutional

- Teacher language profiles

- English monolingual assumptions

- Implications

- Languages

  - family

  - students

- The multilingual world

Additional Findings

Teachers

- "English only"
- Want control
- Behavioural effects
- Identify social chat
- Different responses

Curriculum

- English assessment
- Language development
- Expanding languages program

Institution

- Engaging community
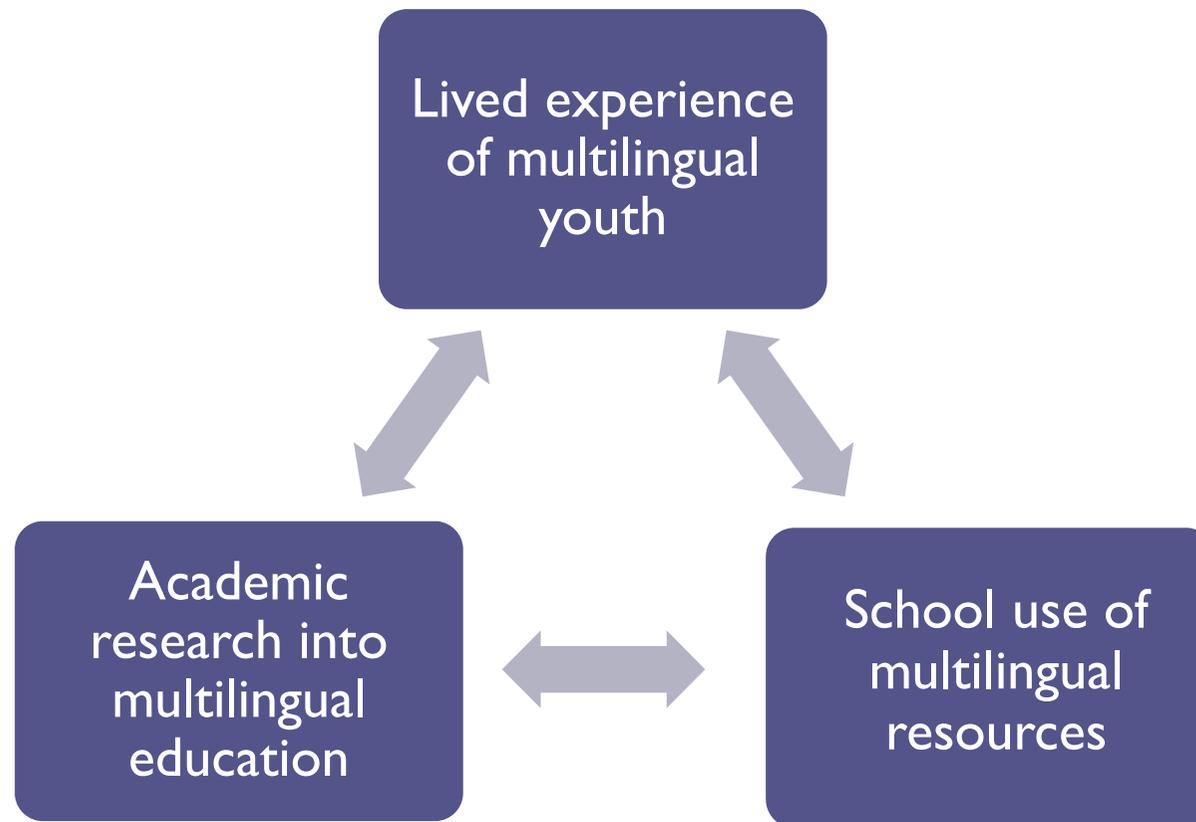- Invisible & inaudible languages
- Teacher training and awareness

Next Steps

- Comparison with student data
- More detailed analysis – looking for
  - Alignments & gaps
  - Risks & opportunities

Conclusion

▸ Many implications for teaching and learning

▸ Teacher training, school policy, classroom practice

"We should be encouraging students to learn the best way that they can learn. So if that is the multilingual way, then that's what we should be encouraging."

- Gerta

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Strategies with students

▸ Give explicit permission to use L1

▸ Research

  ▸ Especially primary research – interviews, questionnaires

  ▸ Also secondary – online, documentaries, print

▸ Note taking

▸ Group work

▸ Peer teaching

▸ Learning vocabulary

▸ Production for a specific audience

▸