



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TESOL ASSOCIATIONS

**ACTA PRINCIPLES
FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Working Document

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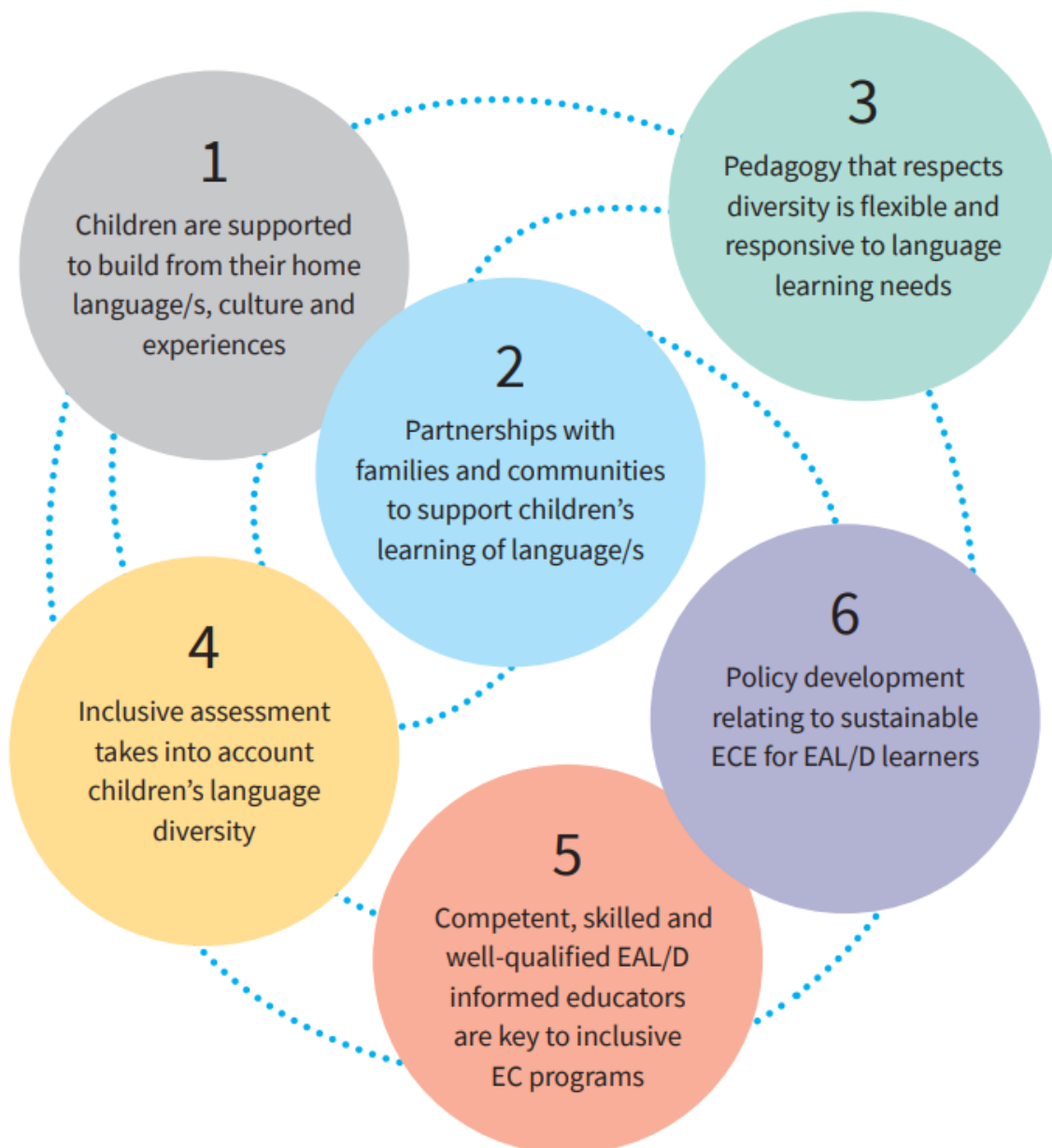
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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|---|
| AERO | Australian Education Research Organisation |
| ACARA | Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority |
| ACTA | Australian Council of TESOL Associations |
| ACEQA | Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority |
| AITSL | Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership |
| ATWD | Australian Teacher Workforce Data Collection |
| DESE | (Commonwealth) Department of Education, Skills and Training |
| EAL | English as an Additional Language |
| EAL/D | English as an Additional Language or Dialect |
| ECE | Early Childhood Education |
| EYLF | Early Years Learning Framework |
| ITE | Initial Teacher Education |
| LBOTE | Language Background Other Than English |
| NQF | National Quality Framework |
| NQS | National Quality Standards |
| QITE | Quality Initial Teacher Education (review) |
| SNAAIC | Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care |
| TESOL | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| TRA | Teacher Regulatory Authority |

ACTA PRINCIPLES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



INTRODUCTION

This *Early Childhood Education (ECE) Principles* document is a statement of the Australian Council of TESOL Association's (ACTA's) beliefs and values about home language-based English as Additional Language and/or Dialect (EAL/D) education in the Early Childhood (EC) years with a focus on the education of children in the years before schooling. The *ECE Principles* encompass all EAL/D learners: newly arrived, migrant and Australia-born children, refugee and refugee-background children, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children functioning at all levels of home language and English language proficiency. The *ECE Principles* bring together the shared thinking of a large group of early childhood practitioners and researchers with EAL/D expertise from across Australia. The *ECE Principles* document is intended to raise awareness of issues to do with language/s for practitioners, researchers, policymakers, key stakeholders and State, Territory and Commonwealth governments.

The *ECE Principles* reinforce the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention), which underpin the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DET, 2019). 'The Convention states that all children have the right to an education that lays a foundation for the rest of their lives, maximises their ability, and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages' (DET, 2019, p. 5). The *ECE Principles* also align with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, which states 'that every young child has the opportunity to benefit from structured play-based learning before they start school' (DESE, 2020, p. 3). In particular, the Council of Australian Governments is committed to closing the gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and ECE plays a critical role in achieving this outcome (DESE, 2019). Target 3 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020) states that: Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education.

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) is the peak body representing State and Territory associations of educators dedicated to furthering the learning of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). Association members include EAL/D teachers, consultants, curriculum developers, teacher educators, other academics and researchers in school and preschool, tertiary, adult migrant, VET and community education settings. ACTA is committed to strengthening ECE for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and acknowledges the role of early childhood education in recognising and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in advancing reconciliation. This *ECE Principles* document presents ACTA's proposals for improving home language development and EAL/D provision in the Australian early childhood sector catering for children from birth to five years of age.

ACTA invites feedback on the issues raised in this *ECE Principles* document with the intention of refining further thinking into key principles and ideas that shape this working document. Please share your feedback at ecprinciples@tesol.org.au.

ORGANISATION OF THE ACTA *ECE PRINCIPLES*

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is the stepping-off point for the ACTA *ECE Principles*. The EYLF provides a set of standards, practices and principles to guide early childhood professionals in the education and development of children between the ages of birth–five years (DET Australia, 2019).

The *ECE Principles* build on EYLF 'Principle 4 – Respect for Diversity' and 'Outcome 5: Children are Effective Communicators' by outlining six principles that focus on the language, culture and experiences of EAL/D children, including Indigenous EAL/D learners. The six principles have a particular emphasis on the maintenance of home languages and are outlined below in Figure 1. The principles interact to provide a comprehensive overview for developing a home language-based EAL/D approach to Early Childhood Education. The ACTA *ECE Principles* use the term 'Early Childhood educator' to include any person who works with young children from birth to five years of age in an early childhood education setting and are thus consistent with the EYLF.

YEARS BEFORE SCHOOLING

The six *ECE Principles* are designed, like the EYLF, ‘to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children across the birth to five age range’ (DET, 2019, p. 22). As the EYLF (DET, 2019, p. 28) states: ‘From birth children experience living and learning with others in a range of communities. These might include families, local communities or early childhood settings.’ The EYLF continues:

From birth children communicate with others using gestures, sound, language and assisted communication. They are social beings who are intrinsically motivated to exchange ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings, and to use a range of tools and media including music, dance and drama, to express themselves, connects with others and extend their learning ... Children’s use of their home languages underpins their sense of identity and their conceptual development. Children feel a sense of belonging when their language, interaction styles and ways of communicating are valued. They have the right to be continuing users of their home language as well as to develop competency in Standard Australian English. (DET, 2019, p. 41)

The early childhood years are a foundation for language learning. The *ECE Principles* advocate for all educators to be provided with the opportunity to gain an understanding of language acquisition to ensure that children are exposed to positive experiences with language/s and provided with a supportive environment for interacting and communicating. *The ECE Principles* promote the importance of maintaining home language/s. This involves encouraging families/carers to continue using home language/s with children.

ECE programs for children are located in urban, regional, rural and remote communities across Australia. Different cohorts from linguistically and culturally diverse communities participate in ECE, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrant and refugee groups, and communities from varying socio-economic backgrounds. EAL/D learners thus bring with them a variety of cultures, language backgrounds, experiences, and levels of EAL/D proficiency. This diversity characterises early learning environments throughout much of Australia. These settings include (but are not limited to): for profit and not-for-profit playgroups, childcare centres, kindergartens, preschools, community-based services and family day-care programs.

HOME LANGUAGE-BASED EAL/D IN ECE

A home language-based EAL/D approach recognises that a child’s development in their home language or home dialect is the foundation for all future learning. A home language-based EAL/D approach in ECE therefore supports children learning in a language, or languages, that they speak at home and in their communities. From this starting point, with the appropriate pedagogical support, a child can more effectively learn English as an additional language and/or dialect.

ECE programs have an impact on the sustainable long-term development of human capital and outcomes such as social cohesion and economic attainment. ECE is the most significant developmental phase in a child’s life, during which the foundations of motor skills, cognitive functioning, linguistic competency and socio-emotional capacity are laid.

Evidence shows that learning first in a home language that a child understands supports cultural identity and a sense of belonging to a family and community. Intergenerational transmission of knowledge and language impacts future participation in society (UNESCO, 2020).

A home language-based EAL/D approach within early learning settings supports the maintenance and development of home language/s through intergenerational transmission, thus enabling continued meaningful communication between children, their parents, grandparents, extended family and community. It also makes the ECE program more meaningful for children and their parents/caregivers. Use of home languages in ECE settings fosters the growth of positive cultural identities and boosts the confidence and self-esteem of multilingual speakers. Initial literacy acquired in the home language can serve as a bridge for more effective acquisition of pre- and early literacy skills in English and other languages and dialects (UNESCO, 2020).

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Principles of inclusion and diversity underline the *ECE Principles*; in particular, ‘Principle 3: Pedagogy that respects diversity and is flexible, responsive to language learning needs’ and ‘Principle 4: Inclusive assessment takes into account children's language diversity’. Early Childhood Australia (ECA, 2016) states that ‘Inclusion ensures that all children participate meaningfully while learning and interacting in programs that acknowledge each child’s strengths and interests, so that they are supported to be active’ (p. 2). The EYLF supports ‘encouraging appreciation of linguistic diversity’ (DET, 2019, p. 30) and ‘responding to children’s expertise, cultural traditions, and ways of knowing, the multiple languages spoken by some children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’ (DET, 2019, p. 16).

It is about every child accessing, participating meaningfully in, and experiencing positive outcomes from ECE programs. Inclusion is important as it nurtures diversity and enhances children’s experiences in quality ECE. Inclusion underpins the National Quality Framework’s principles of equity, inclusion and diversity. Inclusive practice is about children’s diversity being reflected in ECE settings. The ACTA *ECE Principles* build on principles of inclusion and diversity

AUSLAN AND KEY WORD SIGN

The *ECE Principles* focus on spoken, home language-based EAL/D programs. Sign language users, such as Auslan users who are deaf or hard of hearing, use a visual-kinaesthetic modality to convey messages without speech. Sign and spoken languages are different in a range of ways. They use different grammatical features and vocabulary to express language. Spoken language conveys messages through words and sounds in sequence while sign languages use a combination of sign, fingerspelling, physical posture or facial expression (Victoria State Government, n.d.).

Auslan is the majority sign language in Australia and the first language of the Australian Deaf Community. Auslan is different from signed English and has its own distinct linguistic elements, grammar and vocabulary. Key Word Sign is a different communication system from Auslan. It has been designed for children with communication and language delays. It uses single Auslan signs to support spoken language.

ACTA acknowledges that incorporating Auslan into an ECE program supports inclusive and accessible practices for deaf and hard of hearing children, while exposure to other communication systems supports the development of language and communication skills of hearing children.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The *ECE Principles* identify a range of considerations for home language-based EAL/D learning and development in ECE, including:

ECE Programs

- Providing support for a quality home language-based EAL/D approach for migrant and refugee communities, especially those located in low-income areas, and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly those located in rural and remote regions of Australia

Resourcing

- Making available resources needed to promote language and communication skills in children’s first languages in ECE
- Raising awareness that commercialised resources such as decontextualised phonics approaches are inconsistent with preferred language learning practices
- Developing resources that use a range of alphabets or scripts that reflect the languages used by children and their families/carers

Assessment

- Developing and promoting assessment and evaluation approaches that account for children’s language diversity (i.e. language backgrounds, EAL/D development)
- Using inclusive assessment approaches, ideally through assessment in home languages and/or through a quality home language-based EAL/D approach in ECE programs

Transition to School

- Promoting positive transitions from ECE to primary school through a home language-based EAL/D approach in ECE programs. The focus on whether children are ‘ready’ for school should be reconsidered in line with relevant research. The question is not *Are children ready for school?* but rather: *Are ECE centres and schools ready for the children entering them and, if not, how could they be made ready?*

Family and Community Partnerships

- Encouraging families/carers and communities to support intergenerational transmission of home languages
- Using, where possible, home languages to communicate with parents/caregivers
- Supporting parents/carers to share their funds of knowledge within ECE settings

Teacher-Education and Professional Learning for all ECE Educators

- Including home language-based EAL/D unit content in teacher education courses at certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This is of particular importance given the current reduction of the course length in EC teacher education program. This reduction leads to little, or no attention given in ECE courses to home language-based EAL/D approach.
- Supporting members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and ethnic minority groups to be trained and certified as teachers and associate teachers
- Providing ongoing professional learning in home language-based EAL/D pedagogy and language acquisition studies
- Training of educators to use home language resources
- Encouraging multilingual EC educators to use and promote their languages within centres
- Formative training in first language provided through the development of language-based certificate programs

Research

- Funding longitudinal research to provide robust evidence on the effectiveness of a home language-based EAL/D approach in ECE programs for (i) well-being and learning, (ii) transition to schooling, (iii) linguistic and cultural preservation, and (iv) more inclusive national growth

Advocacy

- Supporting advocacy within local communities for an ECE home language-based EAL/D approach in ECE programs. This includes: (i) explaining the rationale for a home language-based EAL/D approach in ECE programs to parents/caregivers and the local community and (ii) seeking funding for workshops on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and local community-groups knowledges of culture, art, folklore, dance, stories and so on that can be shared and included in ECE programs.

COVID-19 IMPACT

In Australia, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families/carers and communities has not yet been fully realised. COVID-19 conditions have exacerbated community vulnerability, leading to child development risks and increased pressure being placed on educational programs that cater for families/carers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. The Front Project reports that ‘Some children may have missed out on ECE during COVID-19, due to illness, fear of catching COVID-19 and lockdowns, as well as changes in parents’ work and economic circumstances’ (The Front Project, 2021, p. 33). Families/carers increasingly relied on parent-only care to protect children from catching and transmitting COVID-19 (Hand et al., 2020). This resulted in many children experiencing disrupted ECE program attendance and unsettled routines in the home. For these reasons, quality ECE programs are vitally important as families/carers return to workforce participation and children begin to return to ECE services. For children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, home-language EAL/D programs are needed more than ever as they transition from the home environment to an ECE setting.

National leadership is needed to generate an EC home language-based EAL/D approach for children and their families/carers, including Indigenous EAL/D learners. ACTA calls on Commonwealth and State and Territory education departments and ministers to commit to building dedicated, high quality ECE services for EAL/D learners with a focus on the maintenance of home languages alongside the learning of English as an additional language and/or dialect.

PRINCIPLE 1:

Children are supported to build from their home language/s, culture and experiences

Explanation

A child's language/s, culture and real-life experiences are the foundations on which the beginnings of early learning build. Children's use of their home language/s underpins their sense of identity and their conceptual development (EYLF, Outcome 5; DET, 2019, p. 41). A home language-based EAL/D approach supports the linguistic and cultural environment in which children are located and values the linguistic experiences they bring to the ECE setting.

Implications for Practice

Home language/s culture and experiences can be supported, for example, by:

Early Childhood centres

- acknowledging each child's linguistic, cultural, and family/community identity
- valuing and understanding the importance of bi/multilingual development
- creating language and culture 'friendly' learning centres to make visible the languages and cultures of children through multilingual and multicultural resources
- attracting community educators who speak the children's languages

Early Childhood educators

- developing an understanding of the different language backgrounds children bring with them to the early childhood setting
- building 'language awareness' to begin recognising complex or shifting home language backgrounds
- considering each child's language and communication (and other development) needs
- creating a sense of belonging for children by demonstrating that their languages and ways of communicating are valued
- recognising that children are continuing users of their home language/s)
- supporting children to build from their home languages, culture and experiences to help strengthen their linguistic resources
- providing opportunities for children to use home language/s with other speakers of those languages
- providing opportunities for using English as an additional language and/or dialect
- implementing a strength-based pedagogical approach to children's language learning

Recommended Actions

Early Childhood education departments (State, Territory and Commonwealth)

- facilitate the development of materials for supporting bi/multilingualism and language learning from birth to five years

Early Childhood educators

- explore materials about 'how' to value and support home languages, especially the development of creative ways to include speaking and listening in home language
- sensitively explore with families/carers the languages they speak to their children at home and in the community
- encourage families/carers to continue to develop their children's home language/s in family/carer contexts; explain the importance of home language/s development in the acquisition of additional language/s
- plan for learning in and through home language where relevant; for example, in remote Indigenous language speaking communities

PRINCIPLE 2:

Partnerships with families and communities to support children's learning of language/s

Explanation

Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers (DET, 2019, p. 13). ECE professionals acknowledge and respect linguistic and cultural diversity by partnering with local communities. Growing partnerships with families of EAL/D children is important to ensure a welcoming and culturally safe environment. Interactions with parents/carers are seen as opportunities to promote home language use. Collaborative decision-making with families/carers about children's language/s and learning is central to program development. Transparency with families/carers and communities regarding support structures and networks is key to fostering home language development and cultural connections.

Implications for Practice

Building community and family partnerships can be supported, for example, by:

Early Childhood centres

- consulting with families/carers and communities about the use of language/s in the ECE environment
- employing bi/multilingual educators, including assistant teachers and ancillary staff
- providing outreach services to linguistically and culturally diverse communities
- making provisions for low literacy parents/carers and including parents/carers from oral language traditions and alternative dialects
- facilitating the creation of bi/multilingual resources by parents/carers and the local community

Early Childhood educators

- communicating with EAL/D families/carers through bi/multilingual assistance
- incorporating community and other resources into programs
- engaging in home visits and other community interaction
- considering the need for language awareness initiatives with families/carers and communities to better understand the children's EAL/D needs, especially Indigenous EAL/D learners
- drawing on the knowledges and skills of community elders
- collaborating and accessing community resources such as libraries
- setting up two-way communication with parents/carers about the role of family languages and cultural practices to ensure that children's family members feel comfortable to spend time at the centre
- carefully engaging in discussions with local communities around language awareness in situations where the children's home languages might not be easy to identify. This is especially relevant to some Indigenous EAL/D contexts, and some refugee contexts.

Recommended Actions

Early Childhood education departments (State, Territory and Commonwealth)

- provide EC centres with substantial and sustained support for communicating with EAL/D families; for example, by:
 - developing guidelines and/or kits which centres can use to plan multilingual engagement with families/carers and the community. For example, cultures, languages and dialects can become a resource for both community building and enhancing ECE.
 - supporting the employment of EC educators who use community languages, and designing appropriate certificate-level training
 - providing access to ECE centre-level grants to develop and implement a multilingual approach to community building and education

Early Childhood educators

- provide all EC educators with access to professional learning opportunities in cross-cultural and intercultural communication and ways of working with linguistically diverse families/carers and communities

PRINCIPLE 3:

Pedagogy that respects diversity is flexible and responsive to language learning needs

Explanation

There are many ways of living, being and knowing. Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families/carers and communities. Respecting diversity within the curriculum means valuing and reflecting the practices, values, and beliefs of families/carers. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families when they value children's different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families'/carers' home lives (DET, 2019, p. 14). Pedagogy, therefore, must respect and engage with diversity, and be flexible and responsive to language learning needs.

Implications for Practice

Attaching value to children's different language capacities and abilities can be embedded in pedagogy; for example, by:

Early Childhood centres

- learning more about home language/s of the children, family/carer and local community
- developing EC educators' understanding that home language/s backgrounds of the children might involve complex language awareness initiatives
- developing resources with bi/multilingual picture story books and charts in a range of languages
 - providing EC educators with professional learning and resources to support their enactment of play-based EAL/D pedagogies
 - facilitating research on pedagogy to support EAL/D learners

Early Childhood educators

- becoming aware that children can learn more than one language simultaneously
- providing opportunities for adults and children to use home languages and EAL/D in everyday talk
- including EAL/D pedagogy in the planning cycle
- using EAL/D pedagogy that draws on children's language and learning strengths
- facilitating learning of concepts, skills and knowledge in home languages and/or EAL/D in a play-based learning environment
- developing communication and social skills in home languages and/or EAL/D
- being aware that communication and social skills may differ across cultures
- encouraging oral language development in all languages
- listening/viewing/reading stories, rhymes and songs in a range of languages, including where possible children's home languages

Recommended Actions

Early Childhood centres

- develop and use of a range of multimodal and multilingual resources

Researchers and Early Childhood educators

- establish communities of practice and collaborate in developing pedagogies for EAL/D learning and development
- develop EC educators' stories and models of EAL/D practice to be included in EC framework resources

PRINCIPLE 4:

Inclusive assessment takes into account children's language diversity

Explanation

Assessment for children's learning refers to the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand (DET, 2019, p. 19). It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes observing children's learning, assessing, planning, implementing plans and reflecting on the enactment of the planning cycle. Inclusive ECE assessment takes into account the diversity of children's language backgrounds and their EAL/D proficiency development, which may impact on their language and communication. This allows Early Childhood educators to see the full picture of children's language repertoires and EAL/D learning journeys and progress. Further, this provides a holistic account of what children who are EAL/D have learned, which may have an impact on language and communication

Implications for Practice

More inclusive assessment and evaluation of the learning of diverse children who are EAL/D learners could be achieved, for example, by:

Early Childhood centres

- collaborating with families/carers, and with support from educators who are speakers of the same language as the children, to assess children in their home languages, where possible
- identifying children for whom English is an Additional Language and who will benefit from language support (including Indigenous children and other born-in-Australia cohorts who may be hard to identify due to complex language backgrounds)
- developing a range of observational, qualitative assessments of children's capacities, noticing and valuing linguistic, cultural and learning strengths of children who are EAL/D learners
- embedding language learning opportunities purposefully in planned learning experiences, and ensuring that observational assessments of children's EAL/D learning are systematically recorded
- reflecting on whether the use of measures such as developmental milestones and outcome tools in EC settings capture the communication and language capabilities that children who are EAL/D learners demonstrate at home
- collaborating with parents/carers and same language educators to document language/s backgrounds and language/s use; for example, when considering intervention approaches and writing transition documents for school
- using visuals and concrete materials to support children's self-assessment of their EAL/D learning; where possible, using home language for children's self-assessment of their learning

Early Childhood educators

- reflecting on whether observational assessments undertaken during planned learning activities sufficiently supported children who are EAL/D learners
- consulting with family/carers about children's home language development and communication

Recommended Actions

Researchers and Early Childhood educators

- develop EC educators' stories of an EAL/D approach to assessment for learning to be included in EC framework resources

Australian Governments (State, Territory and Commonwealth) and researchers

- exercise caution when interpreting data about EAL/D children's results in a range of government assessment measures, including the results of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)
- undertake research on differentiating the early stages of first language acquisition while children learn an additional language
- develop resources, tools and training for an early childhood EAL/D approach to assessment for learning
- develop resources, tools and training for assessing EAL/D children in home language in the relevant settings

PRINCIPLE 5:

Competent, skilled and well-qualified EAL/D informed educators are key to inclusive EC programs

Explanation

This means the upskilling of EC educators with essential knowledge and skills for a home language-based EAL/D approach. Currently, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is not heavily featured in accreditation requirements and educators' professional learning in the area is limited.

Recommended Actions

ACTA, in consultation with EC academics and practitioners

- initiate teacher and teacher educator professional standards for TESOL for ECE
- advocate for career pathways in the field of EAL/D and ECE

Australian Governments (State, Territory and Commonwealth)

- fund development of EC teacher education courses that are inclusive of EAL/D needs.
- fund educator capacity building in EC teacher education in the area of EAL/D.

Teacher Registration boards (States and Territory)

- require EC teachers/educators to undertake regular professional learning in TESOL in ECE

Teacher Education courses

- provide EC educators during certificate, diploma, undergraduate and graduate courses with upskilling in an EAL/D informed approach in a context of an increasingly overcrowded teacher education curriculum:
 - include units on EAL/D pedagogy and language acquisition within the play-based EYLF philosophy
 - create opportunities for teacher educators to undertake practicum placements in the area of ECE EAL/D expertise

Early Childhood centres

- provide educators with ongoing professional learning in home language-based ECE EAL/D pedagogy and language acquisition (including for specific contexts; for example, Indigenous EAL/D contexts)

Early Childhood educators

- undertake professional learning, both generalised and targeted to specific contexts, as needed; for example, Indigenous EAL/D contexts

PRINCIPLE 6:

Policy development relating to sustainable ECE for EAL/D learners

Explanation

More needs to be done to ensure that every child has access to high quality ECE, regardless of a child's geographical location or household income, linguistic and cultural background, and Indigeneity status. ACTA expands on Early Childhood Australia's four core recommendations for operating ECE services, focusing on EAL/D children, including Indigenous EAL/D learners (<https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>). ACTA's four core considerations are:

- **Access:** Many families/carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with EAL/D learners, including Indigenous EAL/D learners, face accessibility issues, including those living in remote, rural and regional areas as well as those in capital cities
- **Affordability:** Many families/carers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds with children who are EAL/D learners cannot afford to access ECE. This includes newly arrived refugee families/carers who receive limited access to free childcare
- **Inclusion and Reducing Vulnerability:** Along with ECA, ACTA believes there needs to be substantial investment in inclusion support and capacity building to respond to increasing demand and pressures on EC educators and teachers. This is a critical issue given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young children and their families/carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with EAL/D learners, including Indigenous EAL/D learners
- **Stability:** A substantial number of workforce initiatives exist. These include training subsidies for qualifications and professional learning that focus on the needs of EAL/D children and their families/carers, including Indigenous EAL/D learners. This training could be made available to Early Childhood employers and trainees.

Implications for Practice

It follows that there is need for

- development of a range of policies to engage with the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse EAL/D learners, including EAL/D Indigenous learners, and their communities
- funding for research in this area
- embedding a home language-based EAL/D approach in national policy and ECE guiding documents
- giving ACTA a voice at the national, State and Territory ECE policy table to contribute expertise with regard to EAL/D policy priorities and the creation of structures to facilitate policy translation in practice

Recommended Actions

Australian Governments (State, Territory and Commonwealth)

- research to be conducted into the field of policy development and ECE structural issues for EAL/D children
- commitment to continuous funding for quality EAL/D in ECE
- EAL/D children to be included in existing targeted ECE program funding. This requires identification of EAL/D community needs in consultation with EAL/D communities
- increase opportunities within current policy priorities for inclusion of EAL/D children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D children
- ensure Early Childhood Education programs engage with EAL/D pedagogy and assessment
- fund development of curriculum and assessment materials that align with and elaborate on the EYLF framework for EAL/D learners
- fund development of tools for interpreting EAL/D children's results in a range of government assessment measures including the results of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

FRAMEWORKS AND RESOURCES

National Early Childhood Education Frameworks

Under the National Law and Regulations, services are required to base their educational program on an approved learning framework. The EYLF is the approved learning framework for ECE and care settings, and the Victorian Development Framework (VEYLDF) is also approved. For further information see:

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks>.

Childcare Inclusion Support Program.

<https://www.dese.gov.au/child-care-package/child-care-safety-net/inclusion-support-program>Inclusion Support Program

Department of Education and Training [DET]. (2019). *Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/201802/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf

Department of Education Skills and Employment. (2020). *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (D20/327384).

<https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

Early Childhood Australia (ECA). *Code of Ethics*.

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>

Early Childhood Australia (ECA). (2016). *Statement on the Inclusion of Every Child in Early Childhood Education and Care*.

<https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Statement-of-Inclusion-2016.pdf>

National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for 2016 and 2017.

<https://www.dese.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education/resources/national-report-national-partnership-agreement-universal-access-early-childhood-education-2016-2017>

National Quality Framework (NQF). *Raising Children*.

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/work-child-care/understanding-child-care/national-quality-framework>

Provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services across Australia.

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework>

Secretariat of National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care [SNAICC] (2012). *Learning from good practice: Implementing the Early Years Learning Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*.

<https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/02901.pdf>

Secretariat of National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care [SNAICC] (2015). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's cultural needs*.

<https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/02932.pdf>

State/Territory ECE Frameworks and Supporting Documents

Department of Education, Training and Employment (Queensland) (2013). *Foundations for Success – Guidelines for extending and enriching learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Kindergarten Year*.
<https://www.foundationsforsuccess.qld.edu.au/sites/ffs/files/resources/foundations-for-success.pdf>

Northern Territory Government (2018). Northern Territory Preschool Curriculum.
https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/359778/preschool-curriculum-revised-2018-version.pdf

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2018). *Early years curriculum guidelines*.
https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ey_cg_06.pdf

Queensland Government's position on ECE policies for how ECE should work in Queensland and how this links with the national framework.
<https://alt-qed.qed.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/early-childhood-education-and-care>

School Curriculum and Standards Authority (Western Australia) (SCSA). *Kindergarten curriculum guidelines*. (2018).
https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/media/documents/outline_downloads/Western-Australian-Kindergarten-Curriculum-Guidelines-pdf.pdf

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). Supporting Bilingualism, Multilingualism and Language Learning in the Early Years.
<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/ey-curriculum-resources/Pages/LanguageLearning.aspx>

Victorian Development Framework (VEYLDF).
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veylframework.pdf>

Other Relevant Documents

Australian Human Rights Commission – Building belonging: A toolkit for EC educators on cultural diversity and responding to prejudice.
<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/building-belonging-toolkit-early-childhood-educators-cultural-diversity-and>

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2011). The Victorian Government's Vision for Languages Education, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

Department of Education and Training (2016). Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

Leung, C., & Parsons, E. (2019). Guiding principles and strategies for practitioners working with learners who use English as an additional language (EAL) in early years foundation stage (EYFS) settings, The Bell Foundation.
<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2019/01/Guiding-principles-for-EYFS.pdf>

Ministry of Education, New Zealand. (2017). *Te Whāriki: Early childhood curriculum*.
<https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/te-whariki/>

National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update Literature Review (ACECQA, September 2021).
https://www.mq.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1189427/2021NQF-ALF-UpdateLiteratureReview.PDF (see Appendix 3 for International documents)

Washington State Department of Early Learning (2021). *Early Learning and Development Guidelines*.
<https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/early-learning-washington-state/early-learning-and-development-guidelines>

Reports

Australian Human Rights Commission (2015). Supporting young children's rights: Statement of Intent (2015-2018). https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/supporting_young_children_rights.pdf

OECD (2020). Education Working Papers No. 251A Strong Start for every Indigenous child. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ebcc34a6-en>

Productivity Commission. (2015). Childcare and early childhood learning: Inquiry report. <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childcare/report>

The Front Project. (2022). *Supporting all children to thrive: The importance of equity in early childhood education*. <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/>

Key Organisations

Australian Education Research Association (AERO), <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/>

Early Childhood Australia (ECA), <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>

Free Kindergarten Association (FKA) Children's Services, <https://fka.org.au>

SNAaIC – National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, <https://www.snaicc.org.au/>

The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACEQA), <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), <https://www.acara.edu.au/>

Thrive by Five, <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/>

Thanks to all those who have contributed to the ECE Principles, including Early Childhood practitioners, researchers, policymakers and others interested in the field of TESOL.
This ECE Principles highlight powerfully why home language-based EAL/D early childhood education is not only important but matters in the lives of young children, families, communities and the nation.

For more information on ACTA go to our website: tesol.org.au
To provide feedback on the ECE Principles please email: ecprinciples@tesol.org.au