AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TESOL ASSOCIATIONS

ACTA PRINCIPLES

FOR

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Working Document
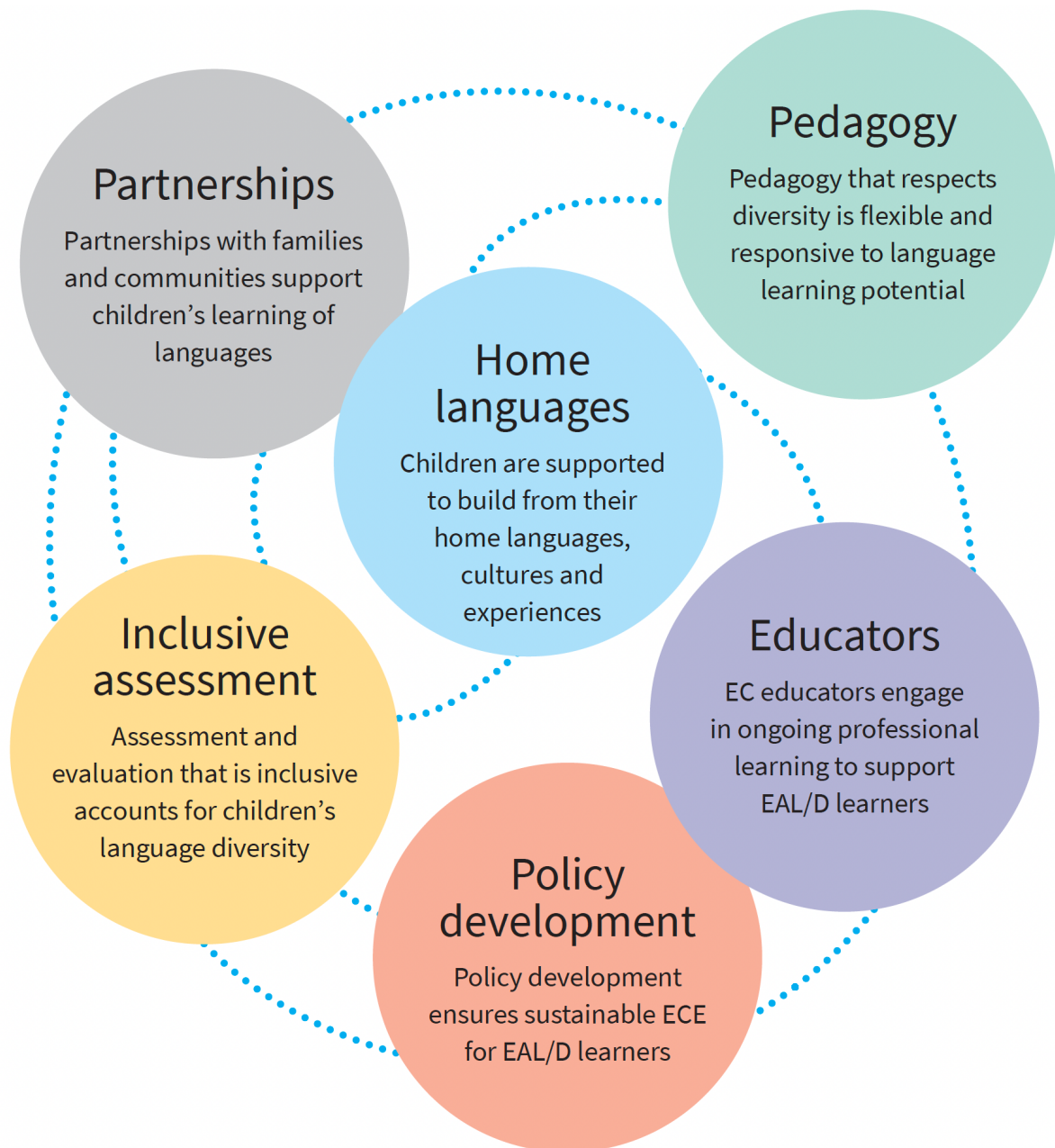
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ABBREVIATIONS

AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
ACARA	Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
ACECQA	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
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
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
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Partnerships
Partnerships with families and communities support children's learning of languages

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

Home languages
Children are supported to build from their home languages, cultures and experiences

Inclusive assessment
Assessment and evaluation that is inclusive accounts for children's language diversity

Educators
EC educators engage in ongoing professional learning to support EAL/D learners

Policy development
Policy development ensures sustainable ECE for EAL/D learners

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: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, newly arrived, migrant and Australia-born children, and refugee and refugee-background children 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, vocational education and training (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 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 ACTA *ECE principles* focus on language, culture and experiences of all EAL/D children, including Indigenous EAL/D learners. The six principles have a particular emphasis on the maintenance of home languages and promoting children's multilingual development and are outlined below in Figure 1.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF Version 2.0) as part of the National Quality Framework (NQF) (ACECQA, 2021), is the stepping-off point for the ACTA *ECE Principles.* The EYLF V2.0 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 (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE] (2022).

The ACTA *ECE Principles* build on the EYLF V2.0 Principles – 'Respect for diversity', 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives' and 'Equity, inclusion and high expectations', and 'Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators'. 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 'educators' from the EYLF V2.0 to refer to "… early childhood teachers, educators and support workers who work directly with children to promote learning, development and wellbeing in early childhood settings" (AGDE, 2022, p. 66).

YEARS BEFORE SCHOOLING

The six *ECE Principles* as the EYLF V2.0 (AGDE, 2022) contend that:

> *Communication is crucial to belonging, being and becoming. Starting from birth, children communicate with others using eye contact, whole body movements, gestures, sounds, language, digital and assisted communication. They are social beings who are intrinsically motivated to interact, exchange ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings. They use a range of tools and media, including music, dance and drama, to express themselves, connect with others and extend their learning.*
>
> *Children's use of their home languages underpins their sense of identity and their conceptual development. Children's sense of belonging is strengthened 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 (p. 57).*

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 learning 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 languages. This involves encouraging families/carers to continue using home languages 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 across Australia in the years before schooling. These settings include for-profit and not-for-profit playgroups, early childhood 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 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. Early childhood 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 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 languages 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).

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Principles of diversity and inclusion 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 V2.0 supports encouraging appreciation of linguistic diversity and responding to 'children's expertise, cultural traditions, and ways of knowing, and the multiple languages spoken by some children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children' (AGDE, 2022, p. 21).

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 (ACECQA, 2021), 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 diversity and inclusion.

A home language-based EAL/D approach is about catering for diversity and inclusion. It means that EAL/D informed educators simultaneously support the use and development of home languages in ECE settings, while also planning intentional use of play-based opportunities for English language learning. Language underlies literacy and such an EAL/D approach will provide a firm foundation for literacy development in the early years.

AUSLAN AND KEY WORD SIGN

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

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.

Users of Auslan and other sign languages employ 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.). The *ECE Principles* focus on spoken, home language-based EAL/D programs.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The *ECE Principles* identify a range of considerations for promoting 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly those located in rural and remote regions of Australia, and migrant and refugee communities, especially those located in low-income areas.

Resourcing

- Making available resources for promoting language and communication skills in children's first languages
- Raising awareness that commercialised resources (such as phonics programs) may be inconsistent with additional English language learning practices
- Developing resources using a range of scripts that reflect the languages of 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 become 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 pressure to reduce the course duration of EC teacher education programs, which could further restrict the ability of course providers to incorporate a 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 learning studies, and use of 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

Undertaking 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 this 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.

National Leadership

National leadership is needed to generate an EC home language-based EAL/D approach for children and their families/carers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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.

PRINCIPLES

HOME LANGUAGES

Children are supported to build from their home languages, cultures and experiences.

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 languages underpins their sense of identity and their conceptual development" (EYLF 2.0, Outcome 5; AGDE, 2022, p. 57). 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 languages culture and experiences can be supported, for example, by:

Early childhood settings
- 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
- implementing a strength-based pedagogical approach to children's language learning
- 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 in children by demonstrating that their languages and ways of communicating are valued
- recognising that children should continue to be users of their home languages
- supporting children to build from their home languages, culture and experiences to help strengthen their linguistic resources
- providing opportunities for children to use their home languages
- providing opportunities for using English as an additional language and/or dialect

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 with their children at home and in the community
- encourage families/carers to continue to develop their children's home languages in family/carer contexts; explain the importance of home language/s development in the acquisition of an additional language
- plan for learning in and through home language where relevant; for example, in remote Indigenous communities

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with families and communities support children's learning of languages.

"Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers" (AEGD, 2022, p. 15). 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 languages 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 settings
- 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, such as libraries, 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
- 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
- engaging sensitively 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, and refugee contexts.

Recommended Actions

Early childhood education departments (State, Territory and Commonwealth)
- provide EC settings with substantial and sustained support for communicating with EAL/D families; for example, by:
  - developing guidelines and/or kits which settings 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

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

PEDAGOGY

Pedagogy respects diversity and is flexible and responsive to language learning potential.

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, religions, spiritual beliefs, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They also value children's unique and diverse capacities and capabilities and respect families'/carers' home lives (AEGD, 2022, p. 16). 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 realised in pedagogy; for example, by:

Early childhood settings

- learning more about the home languages of the children, their families/carers and local communities
- developing EC educators' awareness that children might have complex home language backgrounds
- 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 the EC setting
- 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
- being aware that communication and social skills may differ across cultures
- developing communication and social skills in home languages and/or EAL/D
- 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

INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT

Assessment and evaluation that is inclusive accounts for children's language diversity.

Inclusive assessment and evaluation "are part of an ongoing cycle that includes observing, documenting, analysing, planning, implementing and critical reflection" (AEGD, 2022, p. 25). Inclusive ECE assessment and evaluation take into account the diversity of children's language backgrounds and their EAL/D proficiency development. This allows Early Childhood educators to see the full picture of children's language repertoires and EAL/D learning journeys and progress. Further, this contributes to a holistic account of these children's learning, 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 educators who speak the children's home languages to assess children in their home languages, where possible
- identifying children who are EAL/D learners and who will benefit from language support (including Indigenous children and other born-in-Australia children with 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
- adjusting assessments to take into account children's conceptual and linguistic proficiencies in their home languages, where possible
- 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 which incorporates assessing children's home language abilities in the relevant settings.

EDUCATORS

EC educators engage in ongoing professional learning to support EAL/D learners.

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 needs strengthening.

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, and:
    - 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

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policy development ensures sustainable ECE for EAL/D learners.

More needs to be done to ensure that every child has access to high quality ECE, regardless of their 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 for 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 ECE 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.

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Key Organisations

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

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), https://www.aracy.org.au/

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

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

SNAICC – 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/

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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